

## **The Future of Teacher Education and Teaching: Another Piece of the Privatization Puzzle**

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### **Abstract**

*Recent concerted efforts of government and business to privatize public education are well-documented, but less attention has been paid to what these trends are likely to mean for the future of teaching and teacher education. Based on a review of two reports offering recommendations for reshaping teacher education, of a variety of relevant financial data, of efforts to implement scripted materials in classrooms, and of overt hostility toward the NEA, the authors argue that efforts to undermine teaching as a highly-skilled profession with union support are already well underway. Much evidence suggests that current "reform" strategies are intentionally driving well-educated professionals from the classroom and that once a teaching shortage has been exacerbated, teaching will be virtually fully deskilled. At this point, "teaching" will be provided by alternate "delivery mechanisms" that make teachers virtually obsolete. These developments are desirable to business and government first, because privatization of education will not produce maximum profits until labor costs are reduced, and second, because professional teachers largely oppose the lie that standards and accountability as they are being implemented will benefit poor children. Stakeholders—most especially the education community—need to understand, publicly name, and then oppose current threats to the teaching profession which play a role in the privatization efforts that threaten not only public education but democracy itself.*

The future of teacher education in the United States is at the moment a prominent issue. For example, the National Council for Teacher Accreditation (NCATE) has been busy revising its standards and working with learned societies to do the same, and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) as well as the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) have weighed in with their strategies. And, of course, we have the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation calling for well-prepared teachers in every classroom by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Advice on how we should set about educating such "well-prepared teachers" and what the definition of "well-prepared" should be—has come not only from academics but from government and business sources as well. A group called The Teaching Commission has issued one report, *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* (2004), and the National Business Alliance with other groups, such as The Business Roundtable and the National Association of Manufacturers, has issued another, *Investing in Teaching* (Koppich, 2001). Clearly, we are in a time when the preparation of teachers is a concern reaching far beyond colleges of education. Because current initiatives will shape not only the future of teacher education but also of the teaching profession itself, they spark several important questions: "Why this great interest, especially on the part of government and business, in how teachers are prepared? Who exactly stands to benefit, and how, from government and business sponsored initiatives?" Of course, all would-be education policy writers claim always and everywhere that their motivation is a sincere commitment to the future of all children, especially those who are now being poorly-served by schools. All such claims, however, need to be tested for evidence, to be examined through a variety of lenses and from multiple perspectives before we can trust them. When the claim of business and government to be motivated solely by concern for children is examined in the context of recent developments elsewhere in the education arena such an altruistic claim becomes highly suspect. In fact, children are likely to benefit least—if they benefit at all—and there is a good bit of evidence that they may in fact be harmed by the reforms (see Hinchey, 2004). Instead, a variety of business interests are the most likely major benefactors.

To understand and accept this assertion, it is necessary, first, to remember that suggested reforms for teacher education are not being designed in a vacuum.

Therefore, to understand business' interests in this area, it is necessary first to consider the current context of educational reform in general and the ways in which its various strands come together in a single, common goal: one way or another, to take control of education away from the public and to put it entirely into private hands. Professional teachers who insist on classroom autonomy and who wield political power in the form of powerful unions are a significant stumbling block on that path, one that the recent government and business lobbyists with an interest in teacher preparation seem intent on eliminating. Both the future of public schools and the future of teaching itself are now at stake—and with them, nothing less than the future of a genuinely democratic American society.

### **Privatization: Legislation and Promotion**

It has become so widely understood that efforts to privatize public education are ongoing on several fronts that a center for studying the trend is already in place. Teachers College, Columbia University, is home to the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education (NCSPE), which describes its ambitious mission as including “research, evaluation, conferences, publications, and dissemination on a full range of issues regarding privatization of education from pre-school to higher education, both national and international”; the many research publications available there as well as links to hot topics, to a number of pro- and anti-privatization organizations, and to substantive resources on such topics as for-profit schools, politics of privatization, and tuition tax credits offer more than abundant evidence that efforts to privatize public schools are multi-faceted, strongly supported, and making significant progress (<http://www.ncspe.org>, n.d.).

Anyone not closely following the trend to privatization might well be surprised at the extent to which various efforts in this direction are already thriving. As of 2002, voucher programs were operating in Cleveland, Milwaukee, and some rural Vermont and New Hampshire counties, while at least thirty-one cities were offering privately supported vouchers or scholarships to needy students (Hadderman, 2002). In November of 2003, Republican leaders in Congress agreed to legislation on a groundbreaking effort to implement the first-ever federally funded school voucher program involving some \$13 million in federal funds in Washington, D. C. (Hsu, 2003). And, despite ongoing legal challenges to Florida's existing voucher legislation, Governor

Jeb Bush has recently called for an expansion that would make an additional 170,000 students eligible for the voucher program (Sack, 2005).

Indeed, school choice—the rationale for vouchers and charter schools—is an integral part of NCLB legislation. Although much of the choice rhetoric purports to focus on public schools, in fact the choice movement does a great deal to promote private schooling. The Supreme Court has already ruled, for example, that vouchers may be used for religious education—important to many choice supporters. And, the current administration openly favors not only choice but also private options. One link on the NCLB website is to the U.S. Department of Education’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, where President George W. Bush’s commitment to private schooling is made explicit:

The paramount goal is compassionate results, and private and charitable groups, including religious ones, should have the fullest opportunity permitted by law to compete on a level playing field. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

While NCLB rhetoric certainly seems to be promoting choice among public schools, a strategy most palatable to the general public, it concurrently promotes private school choice as desirable, appealing to parents interested in a private religious education for their children, preferably at public expense.

While NCLB presents choice as a mechanism for putting control into parents’ hands—a goal that certainly sounds democratic and desirable—it is concurrently a mechanism for putting public funds not only into religious schools, but into private pockets as well. Here, the government’s support of charter schools is instructive. As of January, 2004, there were 2,996 charter schools operating in the U. S. (“Charter schools”), a number likely to continue increasing given that the NCLB website contains a link titled “Supporting Charter Schools” (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.). The U.S. Department of Education supports another web site, US Charter Schools [sic], which describes charter schools as “innovative public schools providing choices for families and greater accountability for results” (2004).

For all this talk of charter schools as public institutions, however, commercial interests are heavily involved. While the apparently parent-oriented website Center for Education reform, for example, has as its motto “Making Schools Work Better For

All Children,” it heavily promotes charter schools and other choice plans—and has the tell-tale designation of a .com, indicating that it is a site with commercial interests. The link to efforts to move students out of existing public schools under the guise of “choice” is self-evident and promotes the government’s obvious goal of alternative education options—but to what extent is there a profit motive here?

Actually, a whole industry has grown up around the concept of charter schools, no matter their promotion as public entities. The Educational Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) at Arizona State University has been tracking a growing trend for charter schools to hire for-profit education management companies (EMOs) to oversee their operation—an arrangement analogous to the HMOs currently managing health care systems. In its 2002-2003 report, EPSL found that 74% of schools managed by EMOs were charter schools; within a year, that percentage had risen to 81% (“Annual report,” 2004). While it’s true that this number represents a modest percentage of all existing charter schools (approximately 12% of some 2,996 schools), the fact that these contracts constitute fully four-fifths of EMO business makes it clear that charter schools are the primary target market. No matter how heavily government and others promote charter schools as innovations in public education designed to benefit children, it’s clear that they are already and increasingly generating new revenue for business—drained from existing public schools.

The EMO industry has not yet proved profitable, but rather than abandoning the school management takeover effort, the industry and privatization supporters instead trumpet the need for EMOs to be allowed to run schools as they see fit—including defining relationships (or lack thereof) with union labor—on web sites like those named above and in any other venue they can find. It is widely acknowledged that because education is so labor intensive—some 80% of an average school budget—a critical element of potential EMO profitability lies in finding ways to cut labor costs (Levin, 2001). That investors remain persuaded that EMOs *will* eventually turn a profit indicates that they are confident ways to reduce labor costs are forthcoming. More on what those cost-cutting strategies might be later; first, a closer look at the multiple ways corporations have already found to profit on a move toward private, for-profit education and at the amount of money involved.

### **Privatization: The Profit Motivation**

Again, those who have not been closely monitoring privatization strategies may be surprised not only by amount of money already being channeled into private hands but also by the amount of money at stake. In 1998, the education “market” in general was estimated at \$600 billion (billion with a capital B), and the K-12 share of it was estimated at \$310 billion (Buchen, 1999). The flow of these funds into private hands has already begun and has already produced impressive profits for business:

[T]hirty-two companies had a market capitalization of more than \$15.4 billion as of mid-June 2001. This is more than double the capitalization that existed less than two years earlier (Vedder, 2000, p. 21). This difference suggests that the market capitalization has risen by approximately 50 percent per year for at least the previous two years. Such a high rate of increase cannot be explained by the robust performance of equity markets in general during the same period. A majority of the companies in question are traded on the NASDAQ, whose overall average *declined* by 25 percent in that two-year period. Even the Dow-Jones Industrial Average was essentially flat over this interval. . . .

The thirty-two for-profit firms had sales over the previous year of more than \$6.1 billion—almost one percent of total education spending. Less than two years earlier, the trailing-twelve-months sales of the for-profit schools came to only \$3.9 billion. On an annual compounded basis, sales collectively rose approximately 25 percent. From 1998 to 1999, sales rose approximately 22 percent, suggesting that for at least three years the revenues of publicly traded for-profit school companies rose at a compounded annual rate of 20–25 percent. That market capitalization has been rising significantly faster than revenues suggests several possibilities, the most plausible being that investors have become more bullish about the industry. (Vedder and Hall, 2002, pp. 576-77)

That education *is* now an industry—despite its historical role as a public institution — is evident to readers of financial publications, while not apparent to educators busy reading academic journals or, more likely, student papers and exams.

No matter how hard researchers Berliner and Biddle worked in *The Manufactured Crisis* (1997) to debunk the idea that public schools are failing wholesale, and no matter how many others have followed in their footsteps trying to make the same point, continued alarms raised by government and others have helped create a climate in which the challenge to schools as public institutions can not only be made, but can be widely perceived as reasonable. One writer heralding the advance of privatization offers three reasons that the education industry can be expected to continue growing. The first, of course, is that the billions of dollars available are a strong incentive for

business to want to claim the territory. The second and third reasons stem from such government propaganda as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission, 1983), from President George W. Bush's many speeches proclaiming the "failure" of public education, and by members of such groups as The Business Roundtable and the National Business Alliance who echo the damning charges of failure:

Second, education has received such bad press that confidence in the established system is low, in spite of all the internal efforts at reform. In response to public education's many failures, home schoolers and charter schools have increased, and both are customers for educational products and services. Home-schooling parents regularly attend regional conferences at which exhibitors offer their products and services.

Third, education is there for the taking: The general attitude is that professional, public educators have had sufficient time to turn the system around. They have no one but themselves to blame for corrective intervention from the private sector, even if that intervention is financially motivated, and especially since these actions promise to achieve results. (Buchen, 1999)

While most professional educators would agree that there's a good bit of blame to spread around for less-than-ideal schools and teaching, a significant chunk of the blame goes not to educators, but to politicians without the will to adequately fund education—most especially the education of poor children in urban and rural schools where results chronically are lower than those in much better-funded districts. Still: the very politicians who lack the will to pursue equitable and adequate funding for education have successfully persuaded the public that it is teachers and public schools who have failed, opening the door to for-profit enterprises to step in as providers of everything from curricular materials and tests to management services—and much more.

Every step toward privatization opens a wider and wider range of possibilities for profitable "products." By tracing some of these—most especially the money to be made on curricular materials and on teacher "training" or "development"—the future of teacher education in a business-controlled world of education becomes alarmingly clear. Moreover, it circles back not only to for-profit schools but to the EMOs increasingly managing purportedly public charter schools and enjoying great success with investors.

## **Standards and Curriculum: For Sale**

Among the largest gains business has made since the implementation of NCLB are profits from the standards/accountability thrust of the legislation. The degree to which government and business have cooperated in imposing a “one size fits all” curriculum—a boon to publishers—is starkly evident in events that have already transpired. Among NCLB’s emphases is a move toward “curriculum reform” especially in the area of literacy, or more specifically “reading”; related events in that area are instructive about the implicit intent and effect of the legislation.

NCLB embodies four main reform principles that clearly impact the curriculum, outlined in government documents as:

1. Increasing accountability for student performance
2. Reducing bureaucracy and increasing flexibility for school districts.
3. Expanding academic options for parents
4. Emphasizing teaching methods that have been proven to work.

“Accountability,” of course, is code for assessment results, which historically means that someone has to come up with some numbers. Numbers come most easily from tests, and so teaching methods “that have been proven to work” generally means methods that increase the test score numbers produced by students. Two of the four directions, then, aim toward standardizing curriculum, tests, and teaching. The other two—couched as offering more freedom to districts and parents—involve options that come into play if accountability results prove less than desirable. Indeed, NCLB relies heavily on tests and scores and stipulates that schools that don’t demonstrate academic yearly progress in reading and math scores will be examined and further sanctioned if student performance doesn’t reach prescribed levels on standardized measures.

Before further deconstructing the many advantages to the for-profit sector embodied in NCLB, it’s important to note that ideological advantages are similarly embedded in this “reform” movement. Examined from a critical perspective with an eye to power relations and the impact of the policy on the least powerful—the most politically disenfranchised and most economically disadvantaged—the legislation is readily evident as simply another effort to keep power and wealth right where they currently

are. “Reform” and “standards” as they are used in this legislation are non-reflective terms, based on implicit assumptions that many educators would vigorously challenge. For example, they presume that the proposed changes are self-evidently good because any increase in numbers is a good increase, and they take for granted a view of “individuals as adaptable, manageable beings” (Freire, 1993, p.54 ); the assumption is that if students don’t do well, it’s because they and their teachers just aren’t trying. Moreover, to embrace the tandem measures adopting a fixed curriculum and standardized measures of achievement tied to it negates education as a process of inquiry and cultivation of individual critical intelligence (Apple, 1995; Freire, 1993).

This route to reform reflects the values and language of the dominant (power) group long promoting assimilation and maintenance of the status quo, and it reifies the process of blaming teachers and students for the failures of schools that stem from well-documented and historical funding inequities (see, for example, Kozol, 1991). After all, insisting that every student master the same curriculum will never substantively promote student achievement if some teachers continue to have a single class set of outdated textbooks that no student can remove from the classroom. Thus, NCLB does not genuinely focus on change; rather, it advocates a more strict imposition of conformity, of the banking model of education where the educators’ responsibility is to dispense knowledge deemed “appropriate” and “necessary” by the reformers. This approach reflects the factory model of education, where conformity and obedience to the will of “authorities”—far removed from the classroom—reign supreme. What is happening through this route to “reform,” then, is that policy makers at the federal and state levels—and not educators—are dictating curriculum through state adopted curricula and tests, hiking down the highway to the theoretical promised land of improved accountability.

Like many promised lands, however, this one is illusory. Such curriculum reform focuses on the shared goals of publishers and policy makers, not on best instructional practices for unique children, or informed teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). The goal lies in completing end products (i.e. passing the test, “mastering” the content), not in developing students who are critical thinkers ready to take on active citizenship in a pluralistic society. With the uncritical acceptance of a one-size-fits-all curriculum where performing to the “norm” is equated with success, this direction for reform clearly values conformity over independent thought,

reflection, or action, and it does little to acknowledge cultural identity, a student's primary language, or even the bicultural experiences of students of color (Darder, 1991). To value these "differences" would not serve the political agenda of assimilation to one American norm with a goal towards maximizing profit and minimizing conflicting ideologies of thought. A logical conclusion is that capital is the bottom line, not educational improvement for all.

Evidence that this is indeed the case already exists in abundance. A case in point is McGraw-Hill, a prime example of the government/business partnership in education. This corporation is profiting handsomely from the standards movement in general and from NCLB in particular. As the nation's largest manufacturer of K-12 classroom publications, with a total sales figure in 1999 of four billion dollars (Business Wire, 2001), the company said in a 2001 statement that SRA/McGraw Hill had a "stellar year" in 2000, with its phonics-based reading programs capturing 37 percent of the \$100 million spent on textbooks in Texas—when George W. Bush was governor. Indeed, the company, and the McGraw family, has extensive ties with President Bush and the Bush family. George W. Bush recruited McGraw-Hill officials to sit on his transition team before he took office, including Harold McGraw III (chairman, president and chief executive officer) and Edward Rust Jr. (a board member).

The intention to use new legislation to channel public funds into private pockets, including those at McGraw-Hill, became clear very early on in the implementation. One attendee at an early session intended to familiarize educators with NCLB's Reading First initiative, Lisa Patel Stevens (2003), has written a detailed report of its events that make clear what direction the government intended reading teachers to take from the start:

Although an explicit definition of reading was not provided, commercial reading programs enjoyed an obvious and exalted status during the three days of the meetings. In the portion of the session entitled "Leadership," Phyllis Hunter (2002) advised the participants, through her speech, that their first and most critical role as leaders was to "fully implement a comprehensive research-based reading program." This single statement was repeated almost 10 times in the handouts provided to participants and voiced no fewer than a dozen times during Hunter's presentation alone. In fact, Hunter asked the participants to read aloud the sentence with her at the start of the presentation.

In the portion of the meeting that was specifically entitled "Reading Programs," the focus of the context was primarily to show examples from "good programs

and bad programs” (Eichelberger, 2002; Robinson, 2002). Although copies were not provided to participants due to copyright issues, examples from good programs displayed on the projection screen were those that used synthetic phonics approaches and included direct quotations, or a script, for teachers. . . . [T]he presentations that made up the bulk of the three days’ meetings focused on reading programs. By name, Open Court and Direct Instruction were lauded through anecdotal stories provided by several of the speakers.

Conspicuously missing from this obvious endorsement, Stevens notes, was “discussion of the ethical consideration of seeming endorsements of Open Court and Direct Instruction by speakers, presenting on behalf of the U.S. government.” Even more conspicuously missing was a discussion of the ties between George W. Bush and Mc-Graw Hill’s CEO, who serves on the Education Task Force of the Business Roundtable. So clear is the government’s preference for specific commercial products that even the Association of American Publishers has sent a letter to the Secretary of Education indicating concern that some programs were receiving explicit preference (V. Strauss, 2002).

The process by which federal preferences become state policy and deposit money in particular pockets has also been made clear in Florida, where the president’s brother serves as governor, one of the first of three states to successfully apply for Reading First funds:

This happened a few months after Gov. Jeb Bush, the president’s brother, announced an unprecedented agreement with several major publishers to provide as much as 100 hours of free training to Florida’s teachers. The offer is available to those districts that purchase the publishers’ products; Florida districts have \$100 million to spend this year on “research-based” instructional materials. (V. Strauss, 2002)

Of the five publishers who signed on to this deal, two were McGraw-Hill companies (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill and SRA/McGraw-Hill). Another state that has fallen into line with companies having ties to the Bush administration is New York, where state officials informed school officials that if they wanted Reading First money, they needed to use an online program being developed by a Texas-based company, Voyager Expanded Learning. Interestingly, Voyager’s senior vice president Jim Nelson had earlier been appointed by then-governor George W. Bush as head of the Texas Education Agency and as head of the Texas State Board for Educator Certification. Later, Nelson was chair of a group called Education Leaders Council, a

Washington, D.C. based reform group that supported the NCLB initiative (V. Strauss, 2002).

So clear is the government's intent to promote certain products, in fact, that educators who have inquired into requirements for successful applications for Reading First money report that "With 'Reading First' a McCarthyist blacklist has emerged" and that the government-sanctioned materials are being endorsed as desired because so many school personnel "feel compelled to comply because educational funding is scarce" (Coles, 2003). Clearly the Reading First initiative is accomplishing its own goals of promoting specific materials, generally being produced by corporations with close ties to the high level politicians.

This brief analysis of reading curriculum illustrates the connections publishing companies have with policy makers and resulting lucrative adoption of classroom materials. Such processes, we contend, are worse than opportunistic; they are also anti-democratic, if one of the goals is to control curriculum in order to "stupidify" students (Macedo, 1993), which seems a reasonable reading to many educators. That is, in addition to providing profits for well-connected titans, the process ensures "cultural reproduction using institutional mechanism to undermine independent thought"; controlling curriculum is the first step towards subordinating theory and knowledge "to the imperatives of efficiency and technical mastery," one that reduces history "to a minor footnote" since it prioritizes "empirical" scientifically-based research (Giroux, 1983, p. 87). As a result, a society is created that supports educational structures which deaden students' critical abilities, in order to tame lower elements of the social order while concurrently promoting the self-preservation of the most powerful elements (Freire cited in Macedo, 1993). This process supports the current conservative agenda to impose restrictive curriculum and learning processes favoring a select few who successfully assimilate to the standardized demands, and ensures that when inevitably large numbers of children are left behind, it will not be the curriculum that is considered at fault, but teachers—an increasingly convenient scapegoat and another group targeted for domestication.

### **Curricular Control as Control of Teachers and Teaching**

The imposition of scripted materials and curricular control not only stupidifies children, but it stupidifies teachers as well. Well-educated, thinking professionals

who understand the need to tailor classroom instruction to the particular children in the room cannot abide the level of control being imposed nor the pain of watching children who could be learning being forced into dullness and failure. One author has a daughter who, after a single year in a prestigious teaching fellowship program (which President Bush has publicly promoted but nevertheless failed to fund as promised), is leaving inner city teaching (where she loves the students) because she is tired of being “micromanaged and treated like a child myself.” It’s all well and good to recruit graduates of our strongest academic institutions—but current conditions are designed to repulse teachers with formidable intellectual credentials. Academic literature is increasingly replete with anecdotes of teaching conditions and teacher despair, couched in remarks like the following:

“Before, you know, I could just go with the kids if something came up which hooked them. But now . . . I have to kind of rein them in. I know they get frustrated, and I sure do. I think, well, is this what I got into teaching for?”  
(Perrault, 2000)

No teacher goes into teaching to frustrate children, to limit their growth, to sacrifice “the teachable moment” to the almighty test imposed by distant politicians and corporate kingpins who have never attempted teaching themselves—and whose own children attend very different schools than the ones in which failing test scores are common and traumatic. The outcome is inevitable:

Teachers talked about feeling “defeated,” “powerless,” and “unsure if they were doing the right things” to help students succeed. . . . From the teachers’ perspective this has negatively affected their sense of professionalism, decreasing autonomy and reducing options for children, but they do not see ways in which they can fight the trends. (Perreault, 2000)

In being forced to succumb or to leave—and/or to lose their jobs or teaching licenses in states where such punishments for low student test scores are already in place—teachers are already significantly under corporate control. Their apparent choice is to get with it, with “it” being defined outside schools and usually by publishers, or to get out.

A concurrent development imposing additional limitations for teachers is the emerging redefinition of “professional development” as product implementation rather than an interactive experience to help teachers develop their own professional

skills. As noted above, Governor Jeb Bush issued a news release highlighting the fact that Florida teachers would be receiving up to 100 hours “reading curriculum training”—also referred to in the press release as “professional development” (Florida Governor’s Office, 2002). Two desirable goals are simultaneously addressed here: the purchase of expensive, scripted curricular materials is promoted as a bargain because the publishers offer “free” training as an incentive, and concurrently the corporation is welcomed as a legitimate provider of “professional development.”

That this turn of events, enabled largely by the NCLB focus on standards, is intentional is made clear in both legislative and corporate language. At a conference on school accountability, government representatives offered a presentation titled “Highly Qualified Teachers & Paraprofessionals,” which highlighted the NCLB’s provision of federal funds for professional development of teachers in a slide that boasted the legislation:

Achieves the goal of placing highly qualified teachers in the classroom by funding in-service professional development for teachers. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

Near the end of the presentation, another slide offered an apt summary of the official perspective on the kinds of efforts deemed useful in providing a “qualified teacher” for every classroom:

Remember . . . All activities and uses of funds must be grounded in scientifically based research and *must focus on improving student academic achievement*. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

Precisely the same language—“scientifically based research” and improved “student academic achievement”—permeate NCLB language regarding the reading curriculum and preferred materials. McGraw-Hill’s elementary publishing division, for example, describes its “products” as “scientifically research-based print and technology materials” (Macmillan McGraw-Hill, n.d.).

Predictably, similar “scientifically based research/research based” language is evident in corporate offers to provide “professional development,” like that Governor Jeb Bush found so laudable. McGraw-Hill, not surprisingly, has an entire division of its operations devoted to professional development:

McGraw-Hill Professional Development (MHPD) is dedicated to the delivery of professional development for teachers and administrators . . . through the IMPACT training model. IMPACT is research-based and covers all aspects of the learning process. (McGraw-Hill, n.d.)

And who are the professionals offering such professional development for teachers? In its list of instructor interviews, OnlineLearning.net (a major online provider) notes that one of its instructors with elementary school experience has more recently “worked as an author, editor, and project manager for technology and language arts products” while another (whose stated goal is “to make it easy on the teacher”) “works as a math consultant for a major educational publisher” (“Instructor,” n.d.). Generally, a small probe into any number of “professional development” opportunities, especially technological ones, often uncovers a connection to a major publisher seeking an opportunity to promote its products. Nor are publishers the only group of potential professional development providers waiting in the wings. “Scientifically based” and/or “research based” professional development for teachers is also available, for example, from Sylvan Education Solutions and American Speed Reading Corporation (both of whom are state approved providers in New Jersey).

And, curricular materials, tests and professional development aren’t all that’s on sale: given NCLB’s interest in providing alternate routes into the classroom and recruiting teachers from outside the field of education, a full menu of teacher preparation options are already being offered, with technological “delivery” always a prominent option. While many academics are familiar with Sylvan tutoring services, few may be aware that Sylvan Education Solutions, mentioned above, offers a full menu of initial teacher preparation in addition to professional development opportunities:

As a part of Sylvan’s commitment to student achievement, we offer comprehensive, results-oriented programs that prepare teachers to provide students with the best opportunities for learning. Our teacher education solutions focus on helping school districts build teacher capacity through expert instruction and practical strategies. . . . Our solutions address the needs of teachers at every step in their career. (“Building Teacher Capacity,” n.d.)

Products are available starting with preparation for preliminary Praxis exams and continue through a line of professional development activities—tied to NCLB “supplemental services.” A special track and site exist for “Career Switchers” who

want to enter teaching from an alternative route and other careers—perhaps earning a master’s degree in the process:

The Sylvan Teachers Institute program is approved by the Virginia Department of Education, and provides the training and support required for state licensure. The program consists of 180 hours of coursework, including 20 hours of facilitated field-based service. Through our higher education partners, you may also have the option of earning credit hours towards a Master's degree in education. (Sylvan, “Career Switcher,” n.d.)

A tutoring company training teachers, pre-service through in-service? An alarming development to teacher educators, one would think. Is it an anomaly, or an imminent threat?

In fact, turning teacher education over to private enterprise is not simply a threat: it’s already a material reality.

A shortage of teachers and the growing demand of parents for choices in their children’s education are combining to spur the entry of the private sector into teacher training, which has largely been left to a state monopoly. Both for-profit and non-profit organizations are putting resources into teacher preparation.

The non-profit Core Knowledge Foundation is developing grade-by-grade syllabi to guide its teachers in important subject matter to teach at each grade. Edison Schools, Inc., the largest for-profit manager of public schools, is opening its own teachers’ colleges and expects to have campuses in 20 different cities within seven years. Sylvan Learning Systems, which made its reputation in tutorial services for lagging K-12 students, has recently acquired a 41 percent interest in Walden University, a pioneer in online education, and will use the accredited institution as a base for expanding its teacher-training services. The University of Phoenix also is a large online player in teacher training and recently was admitted to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

The explosion of private programs will likely have a profound impact on teacher training over time. As Dr. Allen Glenn, Dean Emeritus of the University of Washington’s College of Education, says, “When people have choices, competition and service become instrumental. Colleges of education are now just one choice among many for educators. Competition will only escalate.” (Holland, 2001)

While the Core Knowledge Foundation may be non-profit, it is hardly ideologically pure or divorced from commercial curricular materials. It is linked to an educational enterprise called Core Knowledge, whose conservative founder is E.D. Hirsch, famous for his promotion of a “Cultural Literacy” curriculum, now embedded not

only in Core Knowledge but in a series of *What Your \_\_\_\_ Grader Needs to Know* books, often found on shelves in such ubiquitous outlets as Sam's Club and WalMart. The phrase "Core Knowledge" is trademarked, and the foundation's site contains a link to its "Bookstore" and to "Other Vendors"; a wide variety of products, including classroom texts, lesson plans, handbooks and other resources for teachers are on display on the website, indicating the extent of Core Knowledge as a for-profit educational enterprise. As of May, 2003, the site reports 52 public schools as using the Core Knowledge curriculum.

In the same way that the language of choice for parents dominates NCLB language and leads ultimately to private interests and private profit, so too does the legislation's language around the preparation of teachers open the door to such for-profit teacher education. This is a trend not being forced upon education, but being introduced in concert by political and corporate interests. For example, funding to support the call for a qualified teacher in every classroom promotes "alternate" routes to certification. According to the U.S. Department of Education's NCLB web site:

Title II includes funding for other teacher quality-related grant programs. For example, this year the Transition to Teaching program will allocate nearly \$42 million to states, school districts and non-profit groups to help thousands of outstanding candidates enter teaching through alternate routes to traditional teacher preparation programs. Similarly, Troops to Teachers, which helps states and school districts streamline the entry of former military personnel into schools as teachers, will receive almost \$29 million in funding. ("Teacher Quality," n.d.)

The site also promotes alternate routes so that "experienced professionals can become teachers faster," a model that would certainly speed up profit for alternative certification programs like Sylvan's and make traditional academic programs look inefficient and undesirable to non-traditional candidates.

It might, perhaps, be reasonable to argue that such developments are nothing more than business responding to opportunities created by an administration particularly sympathetic to business interests. There is a great deal of evidence, however, that rather than simply responding to the current environment, the business sector has long promoted the standards-based legislation and testing that have not only generated enormous profit but that are making the classroom unattractive to candidates who received a serious education in an academic environment—concurrently ensuring

there will be a market for speedy commercial teacher education programs and a need for their “graduates.”

The “Investing in Teaching” report, which is discussed in more detail below, makes clear the corporate community’s stake in the move toward standards and ultimate privatization that has followed:

Change is never easy and rarely cost-free. The business community recognizes that the agenda we propose for teaching quality is significant and will take the better part of this decade to accomplish. As we’ve done for higher standards and improved accountability in schools, we’re ready to work tenaciously to implement this agenda for however long it takes. (2001, p. 5)

It took three administrations—two Bush and one Clinton—for the No Child Left Behind legislation to be implemented, and there’s no reason to think the business community will give up any more easily in the face of resistance to the future it has charted for teacher education. Business is not responding to current trends: it is helping generate them. It has reasons that reach even beyond the obvious pot of gold it is obviously now pursuing.

Of course, the profit motive in all of this is clear—there is much to be made in these enterprises. But the potential benefit to business extends beyond the money to be made on classroom materials, managing schools, and assuming control of teacher education. EMOs, of course, are not expected to turn a profit until labor costs can be significantly reduced—and well-trained, professional and *unionized* teachers currently stand directly in the way. If academically trained teachers and teacher unions could be eliminated, business would profit enormously—as would Republicans, who have long been hostile to the largest teachers’ union, the National Education Association (NEA), which has considerable political power that it wields traditionally on behalf of Democratic candidates. Should these goals be reached, teaching itself as a profession will be virtually eliminated.

### **Beyond Control: Elimination**

No matter how much the rhetoric of reform praises the role of the teacher and the need for good teachers, the profession is already being reduced to puppetry, with business putting words into teachers’ very mouths with their scripted programs. The

reality simply doesn't match the rhetoric, and given the trends toward privatizing teacher education that are already in evidence, the future may well be far more ominous than many would dream. The intent appears to be first, to redesign teacher education in order to promote private preparation and undermine academic preparation; then, to tie this effort to a need to fill classrooms (which intelligent professionals are currently fleeing in droves) with non-unionized, lower-salaried automatons delivering a standardized curriculum in standardized fashion. Recent reports on the future of teacher education issued by groups representing government and business interests, as well as much language in NCLB, offer substantive evidence of such intent.

The report making recommendations for teacher education mentioned above, "Investing in Teaching" (2001), has been sponsored by multiple business associations—The Business Roundtable, The National Alliance of Business, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Interestingly, if not surprisingly, the authoring group included several representatives of companies that provide education materials and training, including Voyager Expanded Learning (mentioned earlier as a Texas provider promoted by NCLB), Intel, Corporation for Educational Technology, Turner Learning (a division of CNN and Turner Broadcasting), and WinStar for Education. The report lists as its first recommendation creating "a new model of teacher preparation and professional development" along the following guidelines:

Schools of education should raise admissions requirements and work with arts and sciences faculties to offer high-quality preparation programs. New alternative certification programs should create opportunities for non-traditional candidates to enter the teaching profession. (Koppich, p. 4)

Since it's unlikely that education, arts and science faculties will obediently align their curriculum with standardized tests like Praxis in response to that advice from the business community, the apparent support for continuing teacher preparation in higher education is facetious—especially when higher education is being called upon to increase the rigor of its programs while alternate routes to certification are concurrently being promoted to speed up the entry of new teachers into the classroom.

No matter how a teacher enters the classroom, once there the same kind of "accountability" required of students is required of teachers—again playing the

numbers game, “good teachers” will be those whose students’ “achievement” on standardized tests is deemed adequate:

compensation must be based on performance, providing added benefit to those who improve their knowledge and skills and increase their impact on student learning. (Koppich, p. 5)

The circle—or perhaps the trap—is thus laid: Learning is to be measured by standardized tests—based on curricular materials designed by the same companies who make the tests. Good teachers will be those who most faithfully implement curricular materials so that students are well-trained to take the tests. The standardized curriculum and tests form the center of this new educational universe, and all classroom actors and activities must revolve around them.

A similar report has been issued by The Teaching Commission, whose membership includes former First Lady and mother of the current president Barbara Bush (whose credentials for designing teacher education seem opaque) as well as, again, several representatives of giant corporations like IBM, Boeing, and 3M, and several former governors. The president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the much smaller teachers union that competes with the much larger NEA and has a more conservative bent, is also included, along with five other educators. Given that educators account for only 6 of 20 members—the other 14 coming from business and government—it’s intriguing to ponder what might lie behind this sentence in the executive summary:

Our members have unanimously signed off on the report, recognizing that individual members would give greater or lesser emphasis to particular recommendations or prefer one method over another for achieving our desired outcomes. (Teaching Commission, 2004, p. 5)

Whatever individuals may or may not have preferred, the report as a whole certainly has significant change in mind.

This report, “Teaching At Risk: A Call to Action,” is even more blatant about redesigning teacher education to bring it in line with the privatization that’s already being accomplished through the standards movement. The very first sentence of the report makes no bones about its intention to completely overhaul the teaching profession:

Established and chaired by Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., the former Chairman of IBM, The Teaching Commission seeks to raise student performance by transforming the way in which America's public school teachers are recruited and retained. (Teaching Commission, p. 5)

Given its leadership and sponsorship, it is hardly surprising that it promotes the same transformation of teaching preparation that the "Investing in Teaching" report promises business will pursue "for however long it takes."

Of course, the suggested changes would support the standards movement—and the move of publishers toward providing "professional development," defined as training teachers in the use of curricular products so that kids score higher on tests keyed to the curricular products (that is, so "achievement" is improved). And, of course, alternate routes toward certification must be streamlined, and pay moved away from union collective bargaining agreements and toward "accountability" arrangements:

In exchange for accepting performance-based accountability, teachers would receive greatly improved training and support—including mentoring for new teachers and ongoing and targeted professional development for everyone—to help them meet these demanding new standards. . . . States must raise licensing standards substantially while also streamlining the certification process so that talented individuals who choose to teach later in life are encouraged to enter the profession. (Teaching Commission, p. 11)

The language about professional development echoes the language of NCLB and is the same language that permeates discussions of curriculum, especially in reading—so of course it must be scientifically-based, or research based, and focused on raising students' standardized test scores.

While federal funds are being restricted to efforts that claim to meet this description, principals assume accountability for making sure (in their role as masters and mistresses of the school) that no other kind of "development" goes on:

Principals should also be held responsible for ensuring . . . that all teachers benefit from scientifically-based professional development opportunities that focus squarely on assessing and improving instructional practices and thereby raising student achievement. (Teaching Commission, 2004, p. 47)

Far less subtle than the "Investing in Teaching" report, this one details what it calls "barriers to meaningful improvement efforts" including;

- Low, lockstep pay
- Education schools out of touch with current school needs
- Outmoded and inflexible work rules and district regulations—[so that we need to make] student learning, rather than teacher protection . . . the number one priority. (Teaching Commission, p. 5)

While it is widely acknowledged that low pay is a disincentive for teachers, calls for higher pay in such proposals are always tied to accountability measures that undermine collective bargaining and other union benefits. The “lockstep pay” and “inflexible work rules” are clear signs of antipathy toward unions and collective bargaining agreements—without which teachers would be earning still less than they already are.

Indeed, the charter schools so heavily promoted by NCLB that are increasingly being run by EMOs add fuel to this anti-union fire. The Center for Education Reform, cited above as a commercial site that avidly promotes charter schools, lists on its pages for parents “Ten Questions to Ask the NEA” before its 2001 convention. Among them were these, perhaps the most openly hostile to unions on principle:

- 4.) There has been dramatic growth in non-union alternative education associations. Today more than 250,000 teachers belong to such an association. Is this development healthy and how do you square their growth with your own membership?
  - 5.) Teachers recognize that education degrees are often a barrier to attracting quality teachers into the classroom. Is your organization prepared to use its political muscle to make certification requirements more flexible so that qualified professionals can obtain alternative certification and join your ranks?
- (Center, 2004)

Again, it is worth wondering how many parents who believe the Center for Education Reform to be a strong children’s advocate notice the *.com* designation that indicates an underlying profit motive to the site. Readers who fail to make the connection between the commercial aspect of the site and the anti-union material may not appreciate that the interests of business rather than children may be the source of this hostility.

Of course, business’ antipathy to any union is self-evident. However low teachers’ salaries may be, despite unionization, they represent a significant operating cost and stand in the way of EMOs making profits. When an EMO fails to turn a profit, the

cause is often said to be that “labor costs” are unreasonable and the organization’s hands are tied by unions. Any move toward eliminating a union is a boon to business; praising the increasing similarly concerted efforts to promote technology (which are highly relevant but beyond the scope of this paper), Buchen notes:

Almost all of the new educational products and services now being marketed bear the stamp of technology. Such technology replaces teachers altogether or reduces their number, thus solving several critical weaknesses in traditional education. For instance, replacing teachers reduces the high cost of an excessively labor-intensive instructional process while still serving the same number of students. Then, too, it eliminates tenure, which unfortunately locks in instructors who do not have the training or knowledge to keep up with changing fields and new approaches. (1999)

Having praised the apparently imminent demise of teachers as professionals, and tenure along with them, the writer goes on to praise other commercial products—like standardized tests, for “further diminishing the role of the teacher,” and like Sylvan’s online tutoring program, in which “teachers function as cheerleaders.”

It is all too clear that hostility to unions—and most particularly to the NEA—is rampant not only in business but in the current administration (as it has been in other Republican administrations). Only in an environment where aggressive hostility is a taken-for-granted mindset could a Secretary of Education possibly refer publicly to the NEA as a “terrorist organization,” further alienating its 2.7 million professional members. Such conservative antipathy to both public education and unions has been evident for some time. In an article titled “Why the Right Hates Public Education,” Miner offers a list of reasons for the privatization push, including these:

- Conservatives are devoted to the free market and believe that private is inherently superior to public.
- Shrinking public education furthers the Republican Party goal of drastically reducing the public sector.
- Privatization undermines teacher unions, a key base of support for the Democratic party.
- Privatization rhetoric can be used to woo African American and Latino voters to the Republican Party. (2002)

It is important to note here that it is the rhetoric of choice and accountability, and not the reality, that is being used to attract the support of exactly those groups whose children are most likely to suffer under current reforms. Government and business

have been working hand in hand because what is good for big business is good for the politicians who depend on them for campaign contributions—especially Republicans. Little wonder, then, that both groups should work together to privatize education and, by redefining teaching and teacher preparation, to lower labor costs and weaken, if not entirely eliminate, professional teachers and their unions.

### **The Sum Is Greater Than Its Parts**

The picture that emerges when the above trends are put together is beyond alarming. Government officials are currently overtly hostile to unions and unwaveringly pro-business, with strong ties to and close relationships with prominent publishers and other for-profit education enterprises. Recent government-sponsored “reforms” have produced windfall profits for multiple members of the business sector, including record profits for McGraw-Hill and an entirely new division at Princeton Review to deal with NCLB testing requirements (“Homerroom,” n.d.). Meanwhile, tests are being implemented with little consideration for second language learners, for children of low socioeconomic status who are known to enter schools less prepared than their middle-class counterparts, or for other contextual elements. Teachers are concurrently being bludgeoned into using standardized, scripted curricular materials and prohibited from applying their own professional intelligence to adapt instruction to learner needs.

Thus, teachers and students, most especially in poor areas, are being set up for failure, and their enforced failure continues to provide an excuse for those who favor privatization for reasons that have little to do with kids and everything to do with profit, especially for firms that are already publicly traded. Intelligent, professional teachers will not continue to tolerate mindless micromanagement and a forced role in a process sure to result in failure for so many children; they will continue leaving the profession, exacerbating the predicted shortage. This shortage in turn will continue to be used as an excuse to intensify the promotion of “alternate” routes to certification—including commercial ventures. And, of course, it is likely that more and more instruction will be delivered via technology, which business representatives are already publicly anticipating replacing teachers or reducing their role to that of “cheerleader.” Indeed, the National Education Technology Plan released in January, 2005, moves clearly in this direction (Hinchey and Clark, 2005). Once the teaching

force and profession are decimated, no need for the NEA, already being opposed by groups like the Center for Education Reform urging parents to be wary of any unionized labor force.

This is an entirely win-win scenario for both government and business. Government is allowed to appear to be interested in the welfare of children while simultaneously failing to do anything substantive about funding inequities or the achievement gap; those responsible for these trends will, no doubt, continue to be happily subsidized by those businesses whose interests they promote so well; and, for Republicans, the demise of the NEA and the support of African American and Latino voters conned into believing “choice” is in the best interest of their children will help promote the party. Business, of course, also wins at every step: from testing, curricular materials, technology products, “professional development,” “teacher training,” for-profit schools and management companies, and the demise of union influence and wages.

### **Implications**

The picture above gives rise to a number of concerns that educators, and all stakeholders, need to consider carefully. There is an urgent need to plan an active response equally carefully, and to find ways to extend and support district and union resistance already underway in Utah, Connecticut, Texas, Michigan and Vermont (Dillon, 2005). Without concerted opposition from those who believe public education to be essential to a democracy, the road to privatization will be smooth and the journey there short.

The strongest champions of the welfare of *all* children have always included their teachers and the unions that represent them. While unions must attend to economic issues, they also provide invaluable support to teachers who stand up for children’s rights when vengeful administrators seek revenge against them (Daley et al., 2001). The combination of tenure and union support have, in the past, allowed teachers some voice in the day to day life of children and schools (though many have used it far less than they might). The demise of the profession and union together would silence these tenacious opponents for good, eliminating a powerful child advocacy group. It would also, of course, lower wages for huge numbers of workers who no longer would need be considered “professional” and who would undergo not education, but training in the use of various scripted materials.

Anyone involved in this struggle must take pains to reclaim terms that have been perverted to unjust ends. For example, contemporary policy makers have insisted that the concept of democracy is one of their major concerns—but that concern has been manifested in superficial rhetoric, not in substantive reality. For example, former Under Secretary of Education Marshall S. Smith asserted that the United States needs to “internally” maintain a strong democracy in a complex and diverse society and that its success is dependent on the thoughtful engagement of all citizens (1995). Such rhetoric has supported moves toward privatization from the beginning and it permeates NCLB. However, the reality of the legislation is that its emphasis on standardization and accountability, as well as its failure to create a space for the development of individual voice and character, embodies an omnipotent, oppressive stance antithetical to any definition of democracy most educators would embrace.

Rather than democracy, the current situation only serves to strengthen hegemony—the power of one group to control the lives and thinking of others, or to paraphrase Gramsci, the power of one class to disguise its own interests as the best interests of other classes (as in the insistence that’s what good for business is good for everyone), thereby not only imposing domination but also transforming beliefs, values, cultural traditions, and social practices to perpetuate the existing social order (Mouffe, 1979). Historically, the mission of public schools was widely accepted to be precisely such maintenance of the status quo; the role of public schooling has long been to perpetuate the values of “being American,” and in doing so to homogenize students into a capitalistic system and culture.

This system acknowledges and rewards individual achievement based on competition and the proficient use of the dominant language (English) while, at the same time, devaluing underachievers (e.g., who must work harder) and speakers of languages other than English (e.g., who must learn English). Such ideological hegemony is further perpetuated through the construction of standardized assessments since they typically occur in English (Apple, 1995). And, when school administrators examine incidents of academic failure, student violence/conflict, and low parental involvement, such deviance is systematically attributed to the failure of the individual due to educational, ethnic, racial, or language differences. Such struggles, Walsh (1991) contends, exist due to contradictions inherent in the system which perpetuates racial and ethnic stereotypes; it is a system that places English and minority languages in

opposition and ultimately fosters “types of personal development compatible with the relationship of dominance and subordination in the economic sphere” (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 11).

Of course, this is precisely the definition of schools and schooling that a growing number of critical educators have been actively opposing and working to replace with much more culturally responsive curricula and practices. As Darder suggests, a democratic environment can exist only “where the lived cultures of bicultural students are critically integrated into the pedagogical process” (1991, p. 47). Rather than having to succumb to externally imposed limitations and routines, democracy involves “having access to the technological and cultural resources and to be informed, make decisions and to exercise control over the material and ideological forces that govern people’s lives” (Giroux, 1993, pg. 12). In this definition Giroux implies that in an ideal democracy individuals would have the resources and opportunities to become informed and thus be able to participate in the decision making processes that are linked to both ideological and material realities, assuming control of their own lives and experiences.

The standards version of education that reduces literacy to work pages and isolated skill sequences needs to be examined and critiqued within the framework of a democratic ideal that promotes the goals of “access” and “being informed.” Walsh addresses these crucial issues, noting that “language may permit one to participate in communicative expression, but knowing a language does not ensure full or equal participation in society” (1991, pg. 32). Such participation comes with individual voice, which embodies the collective memories, experiences, subjectivities, and meanings that accrue in the social world. In contrast, because current curriculum standards reify English as the dominant (status) language and the standard English of the privileged as the dominant voice, in our “democracy” standard English thus represents the power of the dominant class and carries with it the “meanings, values and references embedded in linguistic forms and practices” (Walsh, 1991, p. 44).

To move towards democratic schooling and work against cultural hegemony—and to insist on a place for the caring, professional and dedicated teachers envisioned by such educational leaders as Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, Nel Noddings, Jonathan Kozol, Alfie Kohn, Lisa Delpit, Gloria Ladson-Billings and an army of others—educators at

every level and in every sphere must come to understand education as the inherently political activity Freire, Giroux, Shor and others have clearly shown it to be. It is urgent that *all* educators—pre-service and professorial as well as administrative and in-service—begin to reflect upon their roles and positions within the dominant culture and become conscious of their own cultural and political locations. In doing so, they must learn to listen to disenfranchised others—not representatives of those who govern in various spheres—and to insist on opening a space for their voices in a democratic sphere.

Sadly, because educators have not already been sufficiently energetic in explaining to teacher education and graduate education students, parents and interested others that there is no such thing as apolitical education, and because too many academics have too long distanced themselves from the overtly political realm of education, the future of teaching is now one with the future of public education—and along with them, the future and hope of the most disenfranchised students we serve. If this error isn't corrected now—if educators at all levels don't begin to understand that if they fail to live explicitly committed political professional lives inside and outside of their classrooms, there soon will be no need, or opportunity, to discuss the pedagogies so many now prefer to focus on in their largely isolated classrooms.

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