

# The 500-Pound Gorilla

Corporations are not shy about trying to make over the schools in their own image. Therefore, it's up to the rest of us to firmly tell them to mind their own businesses, Mr. Kohn maintains.

BY ALFIE KOHN

The best reason to give a child a good school . . . is so that child will have a happy childhood, and not so that it will help IBM in competing with Sony. . . . There is something ethically embarrassing about resting a national agenda on the basis of sheer greed.

— Jonathan Kozol

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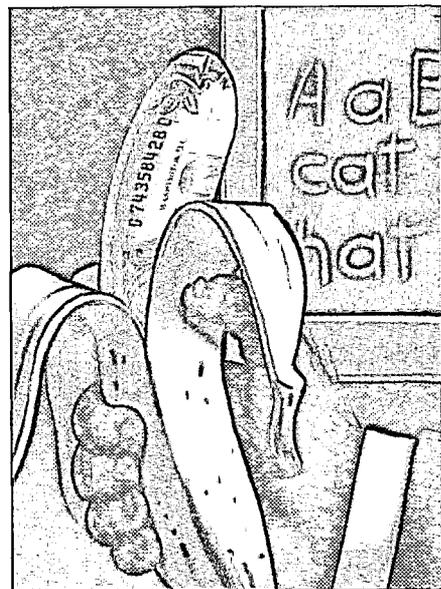
HESE DAYS I give a lot of speeches about the accountability fad that has been turning our schools into glorified test-prep centers. The question-and-answer sessions that follow these lectures can veer off in unexpected directions, but it is increasingly likely that someone will inquire about the darker forces behind this heavy-handed version of school reform. "Aren't giant corporations raking in profits from standardized testing?" a questioner will

demand. "Doesn't it stand to reason that these companies engineered the reliance on testing in the first place?"

Indeed, there are enough suspicious connections to keep conspiracy theorists awake through the night. For example, Standard & Poors, the financial rating service, has lately been offering to evaluate and publish the performance, based largely on test scores, of every school district in a given state — a bit of

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ALFIE KOHN is the author of eight books about education and human behavior. This article is adapted from his introduction to the newly revised edition of *Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business*, an anthology just published by Heinemann ([www.heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) — 800/793-2154) that he edited with Patrick Shannon. Kohn's six previous Kappan articles are available at [www.alfiekohn.org](http://www.alfiekohn.org). ©2002, Alfie Kohn.



number crunching that Michigan and Pennsylvania purchased for at least \$10 million each, and other states may soon follow. The explicit findings of these reports concern whether this district is doing better than that one. But the tacit message — the hidden curriculum, if you will — is that test scores are a useful and appropriate marker of school quality. Who would have an incentive to convince

public officials, journalists, and others have come to rely so heavily on these exams. Let's face it: for a variety of reasons, people with no financial stake in the matter have become boosters of standardized testing.<sup>3</sup>

More important, even if one could point to a neat cause-and-effect relationship here, the role that business plays in education is not limited to the realm of testing. Indeed, its influence is even deeper, more complicated, and ultimately more disturbing than anything that might be revealed in a game of connect the corporate dots. Schools — and, by extension, children — have been turned into sources of profit in several distinct ways. Yes, some corporations sell educational products, including tests, texts, and other curriculum materials. But many more corporations, peddling all sorts of products, have come

“We find public schools under attack, not just because they are deemed ineffective, but because they are public.” — David Labaree

people of that conclusion? Well, it turns out that Standard & Poors is owned by McGraw-Hill, one of the largest manufacturers of standardized tests.

With such pressure to look good by boosting their test results, low-scoring districts may feel compelled to purchase heavily scripted curriculum programs designed to raise scores, programs such as Open Court or Reading Mastery (and others in the Direct Instruction series). Where do those programs come from? By an astonishing coincidence, both are owned by McGraw-Hill. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have some influential policy makers on your side when it's time to make choices about curriculum and assessment. In April 2000, Charlotte Frank joined New York's Board of Regents, the state's top policy-making panel for education. If you need to reach Ms. Frank, try her office at McGraw-Hill, where she is a vice president. And we needn't even explore the chummy relationship between Harold McGraw III (the company's chairman) and George W. Bush.<sup>1</sup> Nor will we investigate the strong statement of support for test-based accountability in a March 2001 *Business Week* cover story about education. Care to hazard a guess as to what company owns *Business Week*?

Stumble across enough suspicious relationships such as these, and your eyebrows may never come down. However, I don't want to oversimplify. The sizable profits made by the CTB division of McGraw-Hill, as well as by Harcourt Educational Measurement, Riverside Publishing, Educational Testing Service (ETS), and NCS Pearson<sup>2</sup> — the five companies that develop and/or score virtually all the standardized tests to which students and prospective teachers are subjected — cannot completely explain why pub-

lic officials, journalists, and others have come to rely so heavily on these exams. Let's face it: for a variety of reasons, people with no financial stake in the matter have become boosters of standardized testing.<sup>3</sup>

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Even more disturbing than having public schools sanction these advertisements and expose children to them<sup>6</sup> is the fact that corporate propaganda is sometimes passed off as part of the curriculum. Math problems plug a particular brand of sneakers or candy; chemical companies distribute slick curriculum packages to ensure that environmental science will be taught with their slant.<sup>7</sup> A few years ago, someone sent me a large, colorful brochure aimed at educators that touts several free lessons helpfully supplied by Procter & Gamble. One kit helps fifth-graders learn about personal hygiene by way of Old Spice aftershave and Secret deodorant, while another promises a seventh-grade lesson on the “ten steps to self-esteem,” complete with teacher's guide, video, and samples of Clearasil.

It's worth thinking about how corporate sponsorship is likely to affect what is included — and not included — in these lessons. How likely is it that the makers of Clearasil would emphasize that how you feel about yourself should not primarily be a function of how you look? Or consider a hypothetical unit on nutrition underwritten by Kraft General Foods (or by McDonald's or Coca-Cola). Would you expect to find any mention of the fact that the food you prepare yourself is likely to be more nutritious than processed products in boxes and jars and cans? Or that the best way to quench your thirst is actually to drink water? Or that a well-balanced diet requires little or no meat? Or that smoking causes cancer? (Kraft General Foods — and Nabisco, for that matter — are owned by a tobacco company.)

A few companies, then, make money by selling books and tests, while many more sell other things to children. The third, and most audacious, way that schooling can be milked for profit is by letting corporations take over the management of the schools themselves or even allowing them to own schools outright as they would a car dealership. Opportunities for such businesses have greatly expanded as a result of a movement simply to privatize education. This effort seems to gather strength as people friendly to its aims find themselves in positions of power, as the Supreme Court votes to allow public funds to pay for tuition at private — including religious — schools, and as proponents become more skilled at public relations (for example, jettisoning the unpopular word *vouchers* and justifying their agenda in terms of the ostensible benefits for low-income people of color).

By way of background, consider that the center of gravity for American education has shifted over the last few years from local schools and districts to state capitals. The commissioner or state superintendent of schools, the state board of education, and the legislature have usurped much of the power that communities have long enjoyed to set education policy. Indeed, even Washington, D.C., has gotten into the act, with new federal legislation requiring that every state test every student every year.

It's understandable, then, that frustrated students, parents, and teachers would be inclined to see government as the problem. Some conservative activists have even begun referring derisively to public schools as "government schools." But there are two problems with this equation. First, the current level of interference in curricular and assessment decisions by politicians is not logically entailed by the idea of public schooling; indeed, it is unprecedented. If your governor began telling your local library which books to order, that would not be an argument

against the idea of public libraries. Second, the actions taken by government officials have been offensive precisely to the extent that they have appropriated the slogans and mindset of private enterprise. The problem is that people in the public sector are uncritically adopting the world view of the private sector — and applying it to schools.

Privatizing education is predicated on an almost child-like faith in competition: let self-interested people struggle against one another, and somehow all of them — even their children, presumably — will benefit. This belief, as quickly becomes evident from reading and listening to those who hold it, has the status of religious dogma rather than empirical hypothesis. It is closely related to a second ideological underpinning: a pronounced individualism in which there is no us, just you and her and him and me. To apply a marketplace mentality to education both assumes and exacerbates this perspective, with parents encouraged to focus only on what improves their own children's position. This is the very opposite of an invitation to work together to make schools more effective and inviting places for all our children. Perhaps it was the implications of this threat to the value of community that led the political philosopher Benjamin Barber to observe, "Privatization is not about limiting government; it is about terminating democracy."

Clearly, education is just one arena in which larger ideologies are being played out. These days, as education historian David Labaree has put it, "We find public schools under attack, not just because they are deemed ineffective, but because they are public."<sup>8</sup> Once the struggle over public institutions has been joined in the classroom, though, it isn't hard to understand the consequences of implementing voucher plans and other "school choice" proposals — including, to some extent, charter schools, which many see as a first step toward undermining public schooling altogether.

What happens to schools when they are plunged into the marketplace? To begin with, they must shift much of their time and resources to, well, marketing. (It is those who sell themselves skillfully, not necessarily those who are especially good at what they do, who tend to succeed in a competitive market.) Moreover, the pressure to make themselves look better presents a temptation to screen out less desirable students, those whose education takes more effort or expense. "The problem with public schools," remarked John Chubb, "is that they must take whoever walks in the door."<sup>9</sup> The philosophical core of the privatization movement for which Chubb speaks is neatly revealed in the use of the word *problem* in that sentence.

Deborah Meier writes memorably of the “dictatorship of the marketplace,” noting that “privatizing removes schools from democratic control.” She observes that private schools “cannot serve as general models; their value and advantages depend on their scarcity. . . . Schools dependent upon private clienteles — schools that can get rid of unwanted kids or troublemaker families . . . and toss aside the losers — not only can avoid the democratic arts of compromise and tolerance but also implicitly foster lessons about the power of money and prestige, a lesson already too well known by every adolescent in America.”<sup>10</sup> Meier’s indictment extends beyond voucher programs, suggesting the corrosive effect of any sort of interference in public education by business interests. The quest for private profits, in whatever form it takes, can only contaminate efforts to help all students become enthusiastic and expert learners.

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These three basic ways by which corporations can profit from education are all quite straightforward. Vivendi Universal, which owns Houghton Mifflin (at least for the moment), which in turn owns Riverside, makes money selling the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Nike makes money by advertising its shoes to young people who are required by law to be in the vicinity of its billboards. Edison, Inc., makes money (or will do so eventually, it assures its investors) by running whole schools.

But there are also more indirect ways to turn learning into a business. When corporations can influence the nature of curriculum and the philosophy of education, then they have succeeded in doing something more profound — and possibly more enduring — than merely improving their results on this quarter’s balance sheet. That can happen when businesses succeed in creating “school-to-work” programs, by which children are defined as future workers and shaped to the specifications of their employers. It can happen when the whole notion of education as a public good is systematically undermined — an ideological shift that paves the way for privatizing schools. It can happen when a business ethos takes over education, with an emphasis on quantifiable results, on standardized procedures to improve performance, on order and discipline and obedience to authority. Students expect to be controlled with rewards and punishments, to be set against their peers in competitions, to be rated and evaluated by those who have more power than they do. None of this is particularly effective at preparing children to be critical thinkers, lifelong intellectual explorers, active participants in a democratic society — or even, for that matter, good friends or lovers or parents. But the process is exceedingly effective at preparing them for their life as corporate employees.

Rather ingeniously, some practices simultaneously serve the interests of business in multiple ways. For example, selling products in classrooms may immediately increase a company’s market share, but it also contributes to a socialization process whereby children come to see themselves as consumers, as people whose lives will be improved by buying more things.

Standardized testing may be an even better illustration in that it manages to achieve several goals at one stroke:

☛ it brings in hundreds of millions of dollars a year to the handful of corporations that produce the tests, grade the tests, and supply materials to raise students’ scores on the tests;

☛ it screens and sorts students for the convenience of industry and higher education;

☛ it helps to foster acceptance of a corporate-style ideology, which comes to be seen as natural and even desirable, in which assessment is used less to support learning than to evaluate and compare people — and in which the education driven by that testing has a uniform, standardized feel to it; and

☛ when many students perform poorly on these tests (an outcome that can be ensured from the outset and then justified in the name of “raising the bar”), these results can be used to promote discontent with public education. “We are shocked — shocked! — to discover just how bad our schools are!” Again, this can create a more receptive climate for introducing vouchers, for-profit charter schools, and other private alternatives. (Anyone whose goal was to serve up our schools to the marketplace could hardly find a shrewder strategy than to insist on holding schools “accountable” by administering wave after wave of standardized tests.)

To the extent that colleges, too, are increasingly seen as ripe for a corporate makeover, testing younger students would make sense as part of a long-term strategy. In the words of one instructor:

The whole standards movement, after all, is about restricting learning to what is actually useful: the memorization of information, the streamlining of knowledge to what can be evaluated by a standardized test. By curtailing the excessive autonomy of K-12 teachers and requiring them to teach “to the tests,” we are preparing future college students for a brand of higher education designed and administered by the savviest segment of our society: for-profit corporations.<sup>11</sup>

There may be some sort of shadowy business conspiracy at work to turn schools into factories, but this seems

unlikely if only because no such conspiracy is necessary to produce the desired results. Most politicians have accepted uncritically the goals and methods outlined by the private sector. And, with the possible exception of attitudes toward vouchers, there are few differences between the two major parties. Marveling that "Democrats and Republicans are saying rather similar things about education," a front-page story in the *New York Times* explained, "One reason there seems to be such a consensus on education is that the economic rationale for schooling has triumphed."<sup>13</sup>

More ominous is the extent to which even educators have internalized a business approach. Many of us defend "partnerships" between schools and businesses, willingly

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"align" our teaching to uniform state standards, shrug off objections to advertising in the schools, and refer to learning as "work"<sup>14</sup> or to schooling itself as an "investment." The next time you leaf through one of the leading education periodicals or listen to a speech at a conference, try counting all the telltale signs of corporate ideology.

There's no need for executives in expensive suits to show up in schools if we're already doing their work for them.

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Some readers may dismiss as rhetorical excess any comparison of schools with factories. In fact, though, the analogy was first proposed by people who were quite explicit about wanting to make the former more similar to the latter. Back in 1916, Ellwood Cubberley wrote that "our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life."<sup>14</sup> In the 1950s, this way of thinking was still in favor. A *Fortune* magazine article titled "The Low Productivity of the Education Industry" informed readers that we should strive "to turn out students with the greatest possible efficiency . . . [and] minimize the input of man hours and capital. In this respect, the schools are no different from General Motors."<sup>15</sup>

The popularity of such parallels may wax and wane over

time, but were Cubberley to find himself magically transported to the early 21st century, he would almost certainly feel right at home. He would immediately notice that thousands of American schools, some of them dating back to his own era but still open for, um, business, literally resemble factories. Inside them, he would see, as Linda Darling-Hammond observed in 1997, that

the short segmented tasks stressing speed and neatness that predominate in most schools, the emphasis on rules from the important to the trivial, and the obsession with bells, schedules, and time clocks are all dug deep into the ethos of late-nineteenth-century America, when students were being prepared to work in factories on predetermined tasks that would not require them to figure out what to do.<sup>16</sup>

Cubberley would no doubt be impressed as well by the remarkable power that business continues to have in shaping education policy. Every few months, he would notice, another report on American schooling is released by a consortium of large corporations. These documents normally

receive wide and approving press attention, despite the fact that they all recycle the same set of buzz words. Rather like a party game in which players create sentences by randomly selecting an adjective from one list, then a noun from another, these dispatches from the business world seem to consist mostly of different combinations of terms like "world class," "competitive," and "measurable"; "standards," "results," and "accountability."

A few examples from the past decade might set Cubberley's head to nodding. The Committee for Economic Development, consisting of executives from about 250 large companies, demands that school curricula be linked more closely to employers' skill requirements; it calls for "performance-driven education," incentives, and a traditional "core disciplinary knowledge" version of instruction. Ditto for the Business Roundtable, which describes schooling as "competing in the education Olympics." Besides endorsing narrow and very specific academic standards, punishment for schools that fall behind, and more testing, it approvingly cites the example of taking time in high school to familiarize students with personnel evaluations. The National Association of Manufacturers, meanwhile, insists on more testing as well as "a national system of skills standards designed by industry." And the Business Task Force on Student Standards says that "workplace

performance requirements of industry and commerce must be integrated into subject-matter standards and learning environments."<sup>17</sup>

To scan these recommendations is to realize two things. First, most have been adopted as policy. To an extraordinary degree, business' wish becomes education's command. Second, they traffic in the realm not only of methods and metaphors, but of purposes and goals. The question is not just whether we will compare schools to factories or even whether we will prescribe practices that will make schools more like factories. The question is what vision of schooling — and even of children — lies behind such suggestions. While a proper discussion of the purpose of education lies outside the scope of this essay,<sup>18</sup> it is immediately evident that seeing schools as a means for bolstering our economic system (and the interests of the major players in that system) is very different from seeing education as a means for strengthening democracy, for promoting social justice, or simply for fostering the well-being and development of the students themselves.<sup>19</sup>

In the final analysis, the problem with letting business interests shape our country's agenda for education isn't just the executives' lack of knowledge about the nuances of pedagogy. The problem is with their ultimate objectives. Corporations in our economic system exist to provide a financial return to the people who own them: they are in business to make a profit. As individuals, those who work in (or even run) these companies might have other goals, too, when they turn their attention to public policy or education or anything else. But business *qua* business is concerned principally about its own bottom line. Thus, when business thinks about schools, its agenda is driven by what will maximize its profitability, not necessarily by what is in the best interest of students. Any overlap between those two goals would be purely accidental — and, in practice, turns out to be minimal. What maximizes corporate profits often does not benefit children and vice versa. Qualities such as a love of learning for its own sake, a penchant for asking challenging questions, or a commitment to democratic participation in decision making would be seen as nice but irrelevant — or perhaps even as impediments to the efficient realization of corporate goals.

Some people in the business world object to this characterization, of course. They insist that modern corporations have goals similar to those of educators, that business today needs employees who are critical thinkers and problem solvers skilled at teamwork, and so forth. But if this were really true, we would see cutting-edge companies taking the lead in demanding a constructivist approach to instruction, in which students' questions drive the cur-

riculum — as well as a rich, whole-language model for teaching literacy. They would ask why we haven't thrown out the worksheets and the textbooks, the isolated skills and rote memorization. They would demand greater emphasis on cooperative learning and complain loudly about the practices that undermine collaboration (and ultimately quality) — such practices as awards assemblies and spelling bees and honor rolls, or norm-referenced tests. They would insist on heterogeneous, inclusive classrooms in place of programs that segregate and stratify and stigmatize. They would stop talking about "school choice" (meaning programs that treat education as a commodity for sale) and start talking about the importance of giving *students* more choice about what happens in their classrooms. They would publish reports on the importance of turning schools into caring communities in which mutual problem solving replaces an emphasis on following directions.

The sad truth, of course, is that, when business leaders do address these issues, their approach tends to be precisely the opposite: they write off innovative, progressive education reforms as mere fads that distract us from raising test scores. This is evident not only from those reports sampled above (from the Business Roundtable and similar groups) but also from the consistent slant of articles about education that appear in business-oriented periodicals.

Moreover, while there may be more talk in boardrooms these days about teamwork, it is usually situated in the context of competitiveness: that is, working together so we can defeat another group of people working together. Business groups commonly characterize students as competitors — as people who do, or will, or should spend their lives trying to beat other people. Other nations are likewise depicted as rivals, such that to make our schools "world class" means not that we should cooperate with other countries and learn, but that we should compete against them and win.

While "social skills" are often listed as desirable attributes, business publications never seem to mention such qualities as generosity or compassion. While it is common to talk about the need for future employees who can think critically, there is reason to doubt that corporate executives want people with the critical skills to ask why they (the executives) just received multimillion-dollar packages of stock options even as several thousand employees were thrown out of work. Corporations may, as we have seen, encourage high school English teachers to assign students the task of writing a sample personnel evaluation, but they seem less keen on inviting students to critically analyze whether such evaluations make sense or who gets to evaluate whom. In short, what business wants from its work-

ers — and, by extension, from our schools — in the 21st century may not be so different from what it wanted in the 20th and even in the 19th centuries.

Moreover, what business wants, it usually gets. It doesn't take a degree in political science to figure out why politicians (and sometimes even educators) so often capitulate to business. For that matter, it isn't much of a mystery why a 500-pound gorilla is invited to sleep anywhere it wishes. But that doesn't make the practice any less dangerous.

Indeed, we might even go so far as to identify as one of the most crucial tasks in a democratic society the act of limiting the power that corporations have in determining what happens in our schools. Not long ago, as historian Joel Spring pointed out, you would have been branded a radical (or worse) for suggesting that our education system is geared to meeting the needs of business. Today, corporations not only acknowledge that fact but complain loudly when they think schools aren't adequately meeting their needs. They are not shy about trying to make over the schools in their own image. It's up to the rest of us, therefore, to firmly tell them to mind their own businesses.

1. See Stephen Metcalf, "Reading Between the Lines," *The Nation*, 28 January 2002, pp. 18-22. This article is reprinted in Alfie Kohn and Patrick Shannon, eds., *Education, Inc.: Turning Learning into a Business*, rev. ed. (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2002).

2. Notice that the phenomenon by which a company makes money by testing students, then turns around and sells materials designed to prepare students for those tests, is not limited to McGraw-Hill. Many of the major textbook publishers are represented in this list of test manufacturers.

3. For other explanations of the fascination with standardized testing, see Alfie Kohn, *The Case Against Standardized Testing* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000), esp. pp. 2-4; Robert L. Linn, "Assessments and Accountability," *Educational Researcher*, March 2000, esp. p. 4; and Gary Natriello and Aaron M. Pallas, "The Development and Impact of High-Stakes Testing," in Gary Orfield and Mindy L. Kornhaber, eds., *Raising Standards or Raising Barriers?* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2001), esp. pp. 20-21.

4. See Alex Molnar, "Looking for Funds in All the Wrong Places," *Principal*, November 2000, pp. 18-21. Thanks to Patrick Shannon for calling to my attention this article and the one mentioned in the next note. As of early 2002, between 300 and 400 school districts had signed exclusive beverage contracts — more than double the number in mid-1999 — according to the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education.

5. Bradley S. Greenberg and Jeffrey E. Brand, "Channel One: But What About the Advertising?," *Educational Leadership*, December 1993/January 1994, pp. 56-58.

6. For more examples of — and ideas for responding to — this phenomenon, contact the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education ([www.commercialfree.org](http://www.commercialfree.org)) or Commercial Alert ([www.commercialalert.org](http://www.commercialalert.org)). See also Alex Molnar, *Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of America's Schools* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996), or contact his Commercialism in Education Research Unit ([www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ceur.htm](http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/ceur.htm)).

7. "Your child's science teachers may be summering with Weyerhaeuser or the hunting lobby. They may be teaching about our food supply with a lesson plan developed and donated by Monsanto. And the video on

how oil is formed? An Exxon production. Andrew Hagelshaw, director of the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education in Oakland, said such programs are an attempt to establish brand loyalty. He said the logging companies and oil industry have figured out what fast-food restaurants have long known: 'If you just start educating people at young ages around these facts, then they accept it as truth, and that means customers for life.'" See Chris Moran, "Education or Indoctrination?," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 13 May 2002.

8. David F. Labaree, *How to Succeed in School Without Really Learning: The Credentials Race in American Education* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 51.

9. Chubb is quoted in Bernie Froese-Germain, "What We Know About School Choice," *Education Canada*, Fall 1998, p. 22.

10. Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), pp. 79, 8, 104, 7.

11. Nick Bromell, "Summa Cum Avaritia," *Harper's Magazine*, February 2002, p. 76.

12. Ethan Bronner, "Better Schools Is Battle Cry for Fall Elections," *New York Times*, 20 September 1998, p. A-32.

13. On this point, see Alfie Kohn, "Students Don't 'Work' — They Learn," *Education Week*, 3 September 1997, pp. 60, 43; and Hermine H. Marshall, "Beyond the Workplace Metaphor: The Classroom as a Learning Setting," *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 29, 1990, pp. 94-101.

14. Ellwood Cubberley, *Public School Administration* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. 338.

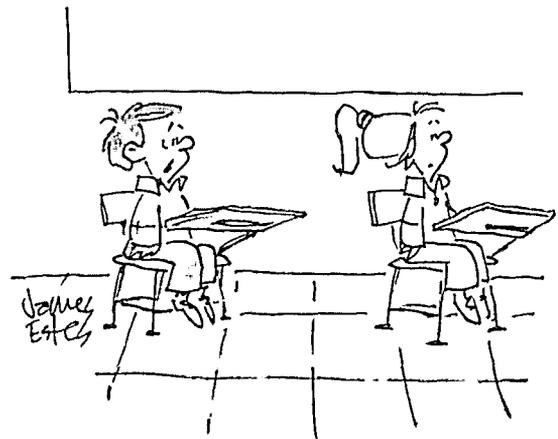
15. The *Fortune* article is quoted in Daniel Tanner, "Manufacturing Problems and Selling Solutions: How to Succeed in the Education Business Without Really Educating," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 2000, p. 198.

16. Linda Darling-Hammond, *The Right to Learn* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), p. 40.

17. Jeff Archer, "New School Role Seen Critical to Respond to Modern Economy," *Education Week*, 8 May 1996, pp. 1, 8; Catherine S. Mangel, "Study Says Schools Must Stress Academics," *New York Times*, 23 September 1994, p. A-22; *A Business Leader's Guide to Setting Academic Standards* (Washington, D.C.: Business Roundtable, 1996); Mary Ann Zehr, "Manufacturers Endorse National Tests, Vouchers," *Education Week*, 14 January 1998, p. 14; and Business Task Force on Student Standards, *The Challenge of Change: Standards to Make Education Work for All Our Children* (Washington, D.C.: National Alliance of Business, 1995).

18. Many writers, of course, have grappled with education's ultimate goals. I attempt to sort through some of the underlying issues in *The Schools Our Children Deserve* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pp. 115-20.

19. See, for example, an analysis of the powerful Business Roundtable, whose "main objective is not quality education but the preservation of the competitiveness of corporate America in the global economy," in Bess Altwerger and Steven L. Strauss, "The Business Behind Testing," *Language Arts*, January 2002, pp. 256-62. The quotation appears on page 258. BK



"Eye before E except after see . . . I don't get it."

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