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## **Learning to Trust Our Teachers**

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### **Introduction**

We have a friend who is a secondary teacher from China and she asked us a hard question. After a couple of years of taking courses about American education, where she read much of the current research and critical analysis of schools in the U.S., and after spending time observing in American schools and listening to Americans talk about their schools and teachers, Hongmei Peng asked one day, “Why do you Americans not trust your teachers?” How insightful for her to notice, and how intriguing it is to hear that we are obvious in our mistrust, and that people in other parts of the world may not feel the same way about their teachers. She further asked: “Why are you willing to send your children to be with teachers you do not trust?” Good question!

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The case can be made that in America we used to trust our teachers and respect them, as able to share knowledge of their subject material and maintain control over their environment. Yet, we trusted them in a way that we will find in this essay is problematic for democratic theory. We viewed teachers as having authority and stood in awe of their abilities to handle a tough but very important job, the educating of our young. The role trusted teachers participated in historically could be compared to acting like shepherds, taking care of their flock, the students. Teachers were viewed as adult authorities, some more benevolent, some more authoritarian, but all deserving of respect and deferential treatment by their students.<sup>1</sup>

However, it can be argued that America's trust of their teachers as shepherds has been eroding for some time and that this can be seen through the tracing of educational policies developed by various U.S. presidents. Some argue that distrust of U.S. teachers began with the launching of Sputnik by the Russians during the Cold War, and the concern that American students were behind their international peers in science and math skills. This distrust continued to build during the Johnson and Nixon years, with the closing of black schools (whose teachers were judged to be incompetent, even though there is much evidence to the contrary). Most agree that at least beginning with Ronald Reagan's presidency, social concern for the need to compete economically at an international level and the worry that America's students were falling behind Japanese students, for example, triggered a distrust in U.S. teachers that they were not doing their jobs as well as the country needed. This distrust continued to build with George Bush Sr.'s *Goals for the Year 2000*, which were written by Bill Clinton, as chair of the Governors Association before he became the next U.S. president, and with George W. Bush Jr. and his "No Child Left Behind" policy (NCLB), to today, with Barack Obama's appointment of Arne Duncan, as head of the department of education and their "Race to the Top" policy.

Unfortunately, there is plenty of educational research of teachers in the past fifty years to show that America's mistrust of teachers is not without warrant. Educational researchers have collected data on teachers in terms of their discriminatory practices against African American, Latino, and Native American students, immigrant students in general where English is not their first language, and children whose parents are poor and/or lacking in schooling themselves. In the 1950's-60's researchers turned their spotlight on the issue of racial discrimination, in the 1960's-70's social class and gender

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<sup>1</sup> Michael W. Apple, "Teaching and 'Women's Work': A Comparative Historical and Ideological Analysis," *Teachers College Record*, 86 (1985): 445-473; W. Elsbree, *The American Teacher: Evolution of a Profession in a Democracy* (New York: American Book, 1939); D. C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Don Warren (Ed.), *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

became more of a focus, and in the 1970's attention to the lack of education for children with special needs such as physical disabilities drew researchers' attentions too. In the 1980's new sociology work uncovered more evidence of inequality and further criticized teachers. In the 1990's the reports and criticism continued in such forms as Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*, and in the 2000's Kozol's *Shame of the Nation*.<sup>2</sup>

One can argue that critique of teachers from scholars who are politically aligned on the left (influenced by Marx, Gramsci, Freire for example) has been made in an effort to achieve equality through better public education. This same critique of teachers has been used by scholars who are politically aligned on the right (influenced by classical liberalism and *laissez-faire* capitalism for example) in an effort to improve public education, and has resulted in encouraging the privatization of schools through proposals for more competition and choice in schools, in the forms of charter schools and vouchers for private school attendance. Both efforts have led to a push for more accountability with teachers and have resulted in a de-professionalization of teachers as the teachers are not being allowed to hold themselves accountable to their own standards as other professions do. Where we sought to professionalize teachers in the 1970-80's and recognize they should be able to judge themselves in terms of their qualifications and their ethical behavior, we are now de-professionalizing them through our imposed, top-down accountability system (NCLB, Race to the Top) that demonstrates our lack of trust.

There are international models we can turn to for evidence that teachers can be trusted and treated as professionals (Finland and Japan for example), but it's important that Americans examine our lack of trust for teachers in the U.S. We want to argue that positioning teachers, principals, and superintendents in shepherd roles, or even the national president in a similar role, is contrary to democracy as an ideal. Democracy must be built on relationships of equality. We need to model democracy in our schools so that our children/students can grow up to become good democratic citizens having had much opportunity to practice the needed skills for active participation as citizens. It is through teachers trusting that students want to learn that students are emancipated and obliged to use their own intelligence, rather than stultified by their teachers. It is through administrators, legislators, and citizens trusting that teachers want to be the best teachers they can be, and are capable of being intelligent, ethical professionals, that teachers are emancipated too. Modeling democracy in our schools means learning to trust our teachers and our students. For this essay our attention will be on teachers.

Jacques Rancière is a current French political philosopher who is contributing

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<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Crown, 1991). Jonathan Kozol, *Shame of the Nation* (New York: Crown, 2005).

much to democratic theoretical discussions. In this essay we plan to begin with a description of Rancière's definition of democracy and his explanation of the Euro-western world's long-standing hatred of democracy. His example of the stages of development French education policy has gone through in the past thirty years are very similar to what the U.S. has experienced and will make for an easy comparison. We will describe his stage one and two theory and then demonstrate how the current case is being made for democracy's failure in the U.S., using as our example research on public schools that think tanks are using to make the case for a need to assess students with high stakes tests that hold teachers accountable for what they are (not) teaching American students. Rancière makes the case that we must start from the point of view of equality, asserting equality, assuming equality as a given in order to have the hope of achieving democracies someday, treating democracy as an ideal, always-in-the-making. "By contrast, anyone who starts out from distrust, who assumes inequality and proposes to reduce it, can only succeed in setting up a hierarchy of inequalities, a hierarchy of priorities, a hierarchy of intelligences – and will reproduce inequality ad infinitum."<sup>3</sup> We want to argue, in agreement with Rancière, that if we want to have a public education system that supports a democracy we need to trust our teachers and view them as equally intelligent and capable (equal to administrators, researchers, and policy makers), for democracy and education both depend on relationships of equality.

## Democracy

In the *Hatred of Democracy*, Rancière helps us understand that *democracy* is based on a fundamental belief in equality, not a reign of excess or individual satisfaction, as it has been framed since the days of ancient Greece by Plato or Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> Much of the *Hatred of Democracy* is devoted to showing Plato's and Aristotle's continued influence on what we think of as 'democracy' and the problems their influence has caused for democracy. Contrary to the idea that democracy is a form of life of individuals dedicated to their private pleasure, Rancière argues democracy is a process of struggle against this privatization. He sees democracy as the process of enlarging the public sphere. For Rancière, democracy does not strictly designate either a form of society or a form of government, "it is specifically this ungovernable on which every government must ultimately find out it is based" (p. 49). The power of the people is always beneath and beyond particular forms of political government.

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, Liz Heron (Trans.) (London & NY: Verso, 1995), 52.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, Steve Corcoran (Trans.) (London & NY: Verso, 2006). Page numbers for quotes will appear directly in the text.

Rancière describes that the heart of the problem and fear of democracy is that “democracy is the whim of the god of chance” (p. 41). Democracy is a ‘law of chance’ that undermines titles of birth (first born, highborn, parents over their children, old over the young), master over slave, and titles due to nature (strongest over the weakest, those who know over those who are ignorant). Democracy is based on the type of title considered most just, the one who has “the favor of heaven and fortune,” “the choice of the god of chance” (p. 40). With democracy comes politics, hand-in-hand, for “politics is the foundation of a power to govern in the absence of foundation” (p. 49). This is where politics begin; this is the scandal for those who fear democracy, to bow before the law of chance. Politics begin when the power of birth is undermined, and that is what democracy stands for, an equality that cannot be undermined due to one’s family position, one’s race, class, or gender for example. “This is what the democratic process implies: the action of subjects who, by working the interval between identities, reconfigure the distributions of the public and the private, the universal and the particular” (p. 61-62). For Rancière, the democratic process is a process of inventing forms of subjectification and cases of verification that counteract the perpetual privatization of public life.

Rancière originally published *Hatred of Democracy* in 2005, during past President G. W. Bush’s second term in office, with the U.S. involved in the Iraq War, which Bush said he committed the U.S. to in an effort to stir up democracy in the Middle East. Rancière uses Bush’s Iraq war policy as an example of the potential that is there for leaders to take a “shepherd” role when they do not trust the stirring of passions and disorder that democracies create and consequently they make compromises with democracy. As a social and political form of life, Rancière argues that many leaders view democracy as the reign of excess. When we do not trust the idea of everyone being free and equal, and all differences being respected, we seek to find ways to maintain order through our constitutions (such as the U.S.’s constitution where the framers set up a republican government with an electoral college choosing the president, instead of the majority votes of its citizens) and our military (such as the U.S. bringing freedom to the Iraqis by using the U.S. military to topple the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein). From the perspective of distrust of leaders, a good government is a pastoral government, similar to Plato’s *Republic* and the guardians.

Rancière shows us that a hatred of democracy is not new by tracing the distrust and what he calls a “hatred of democracy” back to Plato, where “democracy” was originally used in Ancient Greece “as an insult by those who saw in the unnameable government of the multitude the ruin of any legitimate order” (p. 2). He argues that what we have today is a new form of hatred of democracy, an equation of democracy that collapses the political, the sociological, and the economical into one plane. Rancière worries that when we reduce democracy to a form of society, and define this form of

society as the reign of the egalitarian individual, we create this equation: mass individualistic society = democracy = the pursuit of limitless growth. This equation is supported by the logic of the capitalist economy. Some have placed the latest antidemocratic discourse as beginning in the 1980's (for the U.S., when Ronald Reagan was president, for the U.K., when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister) when the classical liberal view of democratic citizens as 'egoistic individuals' was replaced by a more capitalist view of democratic citizens as 'greedy consumers.' However, Rancière shows how Marx described this process quite well 150 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*. "The thesis of the new hatred of democracy can be succinctly put: there is only one good democracy, the one that represses the catastrophe of democratic civilization" (p. 4).

We do not necessarily agree with Rancière on his position that the problem of democracy is that we have collapsed the political, social, and economic together. In fact, in other works of ours, we have argued that a key problem with democracy is that we don't understand how interconnected the political, social, and economic are.<sup>5</sup> However, we do share with Rancière his concern that there is a general distrust (his term is stronger, hatred) of democracy, and there is currently a troubling effort to shrink the public spaces that are so vital to the continuing development of democracy, one of those vital public spaces being public schools.

### **Stage 1: The Case for Failure – Cynicism**

In *Hatred of Democracy* Rancière lays out the stages describing how the new form of hatred of democracy developed in France from the 1980's to present. We can find the same stages in the U.S., following the same historical timeline. For Rancière, *Stage One* took place in the 1980's, starting with the pessimistic accounts of our social institutions. In terms of educational research, this decade marks a time of significant critique of our public school systems as being inept and discriminating against children and families who are poor, working class, have limited education levels, have minority status, and/or are girls. Critical theory scholars in the U.S. such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Michelle Fine and Lois Weiss critiqued America's public school systems for their inequality, as part of the new sociology of education, relying on work by

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<sup>5</sup> Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Scott Ellison, *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools: The Power of Pluralism* (NY: Teachers College Press, 2008). Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "In the Shadow of Hegel: Toward a Methodology Appropriate to the Sociological Consciousness of Philosophic Inquiry," *Education & Culture* 26, no. 1 (2010), 44-66.

sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu, and anthropologists such as John Ogbu.<sup>6</sup> Rancière demonstrates how sociologists win every round in terms of being able to show that the public schools have not fulfilled their egalitarian promises. However, he argues that their research causes democracy to lose every round, as a result, for the research turns us into cynics who no longer believe in the quality of the work of our teachers in our public schools. If we no longer feel that we can trust our teachers and our public schools, we lose a major public space needed for a democracy. We want to show how this has occurred in America through research on think tanks and their influence on educational policy.

A recent book by Canadian journalist Naomi Klein entitled *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* points its readers toward an often overlooked political strategy articulated by Milton Friedman in the preface to his famous book *Capitalism and Freedom*, and it is this political strategy that provides us with a powerful hermeneutical tool for understanding the trajectory of the political right with regard to education policy over the past three decades.

There is enormous inertia – a tyranny of the status quo – in private and especially governmental arrangements. Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible become politically inevitable.<sup>7</sup>

What Friedman details here is a long-term political strategy in which the political right

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Giroux, *Ideology, Culture and the Process of School* (Barcombe, England: Falmer, 1981); Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1983); Henry Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Peter McLaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* (London & NY: Routledge, 1986); Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools* (New York: Longman, 1989); Michelle Fine, *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School* (NY: SUNY, 1991); Lois Weis (Ed.), *Class, Race, and Gender in American Education* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988); Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); John Ogbu, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross Cultural Perspective* (NY: Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2002), xiii-xiv.

constructs a foundation of knowledge and policies to lie in wait for an inevitable crisis to create opportunities for achieving its political goals. Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* is a foundational text of the modern conservative movement in the U.S. just as much as William Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*, and it has provided the right with a road map for overturning what conservatives have long seen as the legacy of FDR's social and economic policies.

Looking back at the recent history of American politics and education policy, Friedman's legacy is evident. Throughout the late 1960's and the 1970's, the right took this political strategy to heart and began constructing an elaborate web of think tanks and policy institutes funded by philanthropic foundations created by business groups and wealthy individuals that actively worked to create a flexible framework of political and education policy solutions in search of crises. The result has been the rise of an industry of knowledge production and political advocacy that seeks to exploit socio-political crises – actual, perceived and *manufactured* – to advance corporatist policies and to chip away at the edifice of the liberal welfare state.

The history of the think tank can be traced back to the early 20th century. Reflecting the progressive era's faith in expertise, these early think tanks were research institutions in the truest sense. Think tanks carved out a niche in the American political system between academic knowledge production and policy formation. Selling themselves as bridges between the academy and government, think tanks were to provide the “scientific knowledge” needed to make government more efficient and to formulate practical policy capable of achieving its intended purposes. These early institutions may have been funded by large endowments provided by the industrial philanthropists of the era, but their ability to gain access to both policy makers and continued sources of funding were closely linked to their perceived credibility and the neutrality of the research they produced.<sup>8</sup>

However, a shift in federal budgetary priorities during the 1960's and an increased assertiveness by philanthropic foundations on the research they funded fostered a shift of think tanks away from the government model that characterized their institutional models throughout the first half of the century toward a more politicized model where institutions developed identifiable ideologies and policy agendas.<sup>9</sup> The increasing assertiveness of the business community in the political sphere, the re-emergence of neo-liberal economic theory and shrinking government monies created the perfect environment for an

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39-40.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 44-49.

explosion of politicized research institutions whose audiences were no longer policy makers exclusively but the average voter. The corporations and individuals who provided huge sums of money to an ever increasing number of policy centers, research institutes, and advocacy groups did so with strings attached. Funding came with restrictions that were project specific, short term and examined issues that reflected the “interests” of the donor[s] with the intent of advancing a specific political agenda.<sup>10</sup> With an increase in targeted funding coming from corporate donors, think tanks adopted modern business practices to market their research to the larger public in order to achieve specific political goals that overwhelmingly reflect center-right and right political ideologies.<sup>11</sup> It was a shift in the modus operandi of the modern political think tank toward the *construction* and *advocacy* of government policies that serve explicitly corporate interests.

This new political constellation of think tanks, philanthropic foundations and business lobbies established the intellectual foundation for a rightward shift in American politics that achieved its first major political victory in the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980. This rightward shift [re]introduced into the national lexicon the concepts of an “education crisis” and a “teacher union monopoly.”<sup>12</sup> These concepts became the subject of countless policy briefs and books published by think tanks and their resident scholars, such as the Heritage Foundation<sup>13</sup> and the Hoover Institute<sup>14</sup>, and they provided the Reagan administration with a powerful message frame to undermine public confidence in public schools and teachers in order to push for a greater private sector role in public schooling.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after taking office, the Reagan administration created a blue ribbon panel

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<sup>10</sup> James G. McGann, *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Donald E. Adelson, “From Policy Research to Political Advocacy: The Changing Role of Think Tanks in American Politics”, *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 25, no 1 (1995): 93-126.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, these concepts were reminiscent of those employed during the post-Sputnik era of education reform.

<sup>13</sup> For example: Thomas Ascik, “Department of Education” (Heritage Foundation Policy Brief, April 23, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> For example: Milton Friedman and Rose D. Friedman, *Free to Choose* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980). Milton Friedman was a resident scholar at the Hoover Institute from 1976 until his death in 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Charles L Heatherly, Edwin J Feulner, and Heritage Foundation, *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1981).

of experts and business leaders called the National Commission on Excellence in Education to evaluate the state of public schooling and the challenges facing the institution. In April of 1983 the commission published an open letter entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*.<sup>16</sup> Advocating tougher academic standards, an emphasis on 'the New Basics' and increased teacher training and merit pay, *A Nation at Risk* adopted many of the concepts from earlier periods of education reform, such as the need for rigorous standards and the professionalization of teaching. However, what made *A Nation at Risk* unique is the manner in which the commission chose to frame public debate and make its case for reform. Published during the 1983 recession and coming on the heels of a decade of economic shocks, *Risk* successfully linked education reform to public concerns over the economy and generated a wave of reform proposals and education reports across the nation. "In literally every major report, school reform [was] considered to be the key corrective to America's failing economy, and a more productive U.S. worker [was] heralded as the 'missing link' in recouping our global domination and supremacy."<sup>17</sup>

Taking its cue from Friedman's strategy, the Reagan administration sought to utilize an economic crisis to advance policy proposals crafted in think tanks and, as in the case of Secretary of Education Bill Bennett, it often employed think tank scholars to carry out those policy initiatives.<sup>18</sup> However, the Reagan administration was not just simply capitalizing on an economic crisis in a passive sense but was also actively manufacturing a crisis, an education crisis.<sup>19</sup> Couched in alarmist language, *Risk* introduced into popular discourse the idea of an education crisis that worked to undermine public perceptions of both public schools and teachers, even going so far as to state that had another foreign power forced such a school system on the U.S. from without it would have constituted an "act of war."<sup>20</sup>

Framed in a narrative of economic competitiveness, the overarching education

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<sup>16</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, (April 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Christine M. Shea, Ernest Kahane, and Peter Sola, *The New Servants of Power: A Critique of the 1980's School Reform Movement*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Prior to his 1985 appointment in the Reagan administration, Bennett was a scholar at the Heritage Foundation and the Committee for the Free World.

<sup>19</sup> Relation to Sputnik and "Educational Defense" See: David B. Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*.

policy goal of the Reagan administration was its pursuit of a policy of de-centralization first articulated by Milton Friedman and advocated by a plurality of conservative think tanks: school vouchers, tax credits and competition.<sup>21</sup> The idea behind the school voucher movement was to essentially privatize public education by encouraging states to create an educational marketplace in which public schools would compete against private schools [for- and non-profits] for students and resources by linking funding to individual students. The assumption of these school voucher proposals was that the inherent superiority of the private sector over the bureaucratic public sector would mean that any such competition would result in the elimination [or at least significant reduction] of publicly operated schools. However, pushing through such an ambitious reform policy required that the Reagan administration and the political right mount a public relations campaign to convince a plurality of American voters that public schooling is a failed institution.

I'd like to talk with you today about a subject of paramount concern to every American family -- the education of our children. You may have heard the disturbing report this week by the National Commission on Excellence in Education that I created shortly after taking office. Their study reveals that our education system, once the finest in the world, is in a sorry state of disrepair. We're a people who believe that each generation will stand upon the shoulders of the one before it, the accomplishments of each ever greater than the last. ... Yet today, we're told in a tough report card on our commitment that the educational skills of today's students will not match those of their parents. About 13 percent of our 17-year-olds are functional illiterates and, among minority youth, the rate is closer to 40 percent. More than two-thirds of our high schoolers can't write a decent essay. Our grade is a stark and uncompromising ``U" for unsatisfactory. We must act now and with energy if we're to avoid failing an entire generation.<sup>22</sup>

A common refrain of Reagan administration officials and think tank experts alike was

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<sup>21</sup> For example: Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Catholic Educational Association," <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/40783b.htm>; Clint Bolick, "Solving the Education Crisis: Market Alternatives and Parental Choice," in *Beyond the Status Quo: Policy Proposals for America*, ed. David Boaz and Edward H. Crane (Cato Institute, 1985), 312; Eileen Marie Gardner, "The Education Crisis: Washington Shares the Blame" (Heritage Foundation Policy Brief, May 11, 1984).

<sup>22</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Education," <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/43083b.htm>

that American public schools were failing and that this failure constituted a threat to the American way of life, an expression that often refers to a perceived threat to the continuance of U.S. political and economic dominance on the world stage. Importantly, one of the chief villains that emerged from these political narratives were public school teachers.

It was during the 1980's that the specter of teachers' unions emerged as an educational establishment obstructing academic excellence, rewarding mediocrity, and protecting ineffective teachers. Indeed, teachers were the subject of a great deal of criticism from the political right throughout the 1980's often portrayed as being academically weak and ill-prepared to teach challenging subject matter, especially in areas deemed important for global economic competition such as math and science.

Many of those entering teaching today do so because they either cannot or will not succeed in more demanding careers. This, in turn, depresses the quality of teacher colleges and education departments.... Teacher colleges and education departments stress education and methods courses rather than those with substantive discipline content. In the case of science, such emphasis could produce science teachers who may know something about teaching methods but who could know little about science. ... The present process of acquiring a teaching certificate effectively removes education from consideration by many--probably most-of the brightest and the best.<sup>23</sup>

From a purely political perspective, targeting teachers as being a root cause for the “education crisis” makes perfect sense. One of the most politically powerful institutions in the nation involved in public education policy is the National Education Association (NEA). Representing millions of public school teachers, the NEA constituted a major roadblock to policies designed to undermine the public role in education and was a natural target for a political bloc already antagonistic to organized labor. Further, one of the key elements of political message framing is the construction of a unified object of critique with which to compare and contrast the pressing educational needs of the protagonist nation against the antagonistic interests of the status quo.<sup>24</sup> Thus, 'teachers' and 'teachers unions' became one of the primary antagonists of a larger political narrative of education crisis and reform.

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<sup>23</sup> Eileen Gardner, “Closing the Math and Science Gap” (Heritage Foundation Policy Brief, May 6, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> James Carville & Paul Begala, *Buck Up, Suck Up... and Come Back When You Foul Up* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002), 108-109.

In the end, the 82'-83' recession and the manufactured education crisis accompanying it proved to be an insufficient crisis to spark the kind of sweeping reforms envisioned by the political right. However, looking at the long-term trajectory of national education policy since then, the Reagan years made a solid contribution to the general erosion of trust in public education and public school teachers. It was during the 1980's that the political right cemented the idea of an educational crisis related to global economic competition into American political discourse, and it established the narrative of inadequate teachers represented by bureaucratic unions as being one of the greatest barriers to achieving the kind of quality education system the nation needs to be "competitive." This public distrust of teachers fostered by the political right has since become one of the central tenets of modern educational policy.

## **Stage 2: Appropriation**

The critiques of the public schools that were so strongly developed during the 1980's from the left as well as the right, helped to develop a "syllogism of suspicion," as Rancière describes this development in *Hatred of Democracy*. Added to the critiques of our social institutions were a push for mass consumption and a growth of consumer narcissism, both aimed to put individual satisfaction and collective rule in perfect harmony. In America, we can see this in how the 1980's decade was labeled "the ME decade." 'Democratic individualism' meant burying an earlier critique of consumer society that had developed during the 1960's and instead creating a favorable identification of democracy with consumerism, which developed during Reagan's term as president in the U.S. According to Rancière this is how democracy was reduced to a state of society instead of a political state, with the equation looking like this: the 'consuming individual' = 'salaried worker' = 'democratic man (*sic*).' This logic explains how it was possible that by the time George W. Bush was president of the U.S. in the 2000's, he could advise Americans to go shopping, as their patriotic duty, in response to 9/11 and the terrorist attack made by al Qaeda on U.S. soil. The ultimate logic of the argument is that democracy is a fraudulent regime that presumes luxury is a possibility for the poor. This consumerism focus makes 'democratic man' (*sic*) a person abused by the forms of society whereby division is at once perpetuated and disguised.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rancière ignores the topic of gender completely and imposes a male perspective as if it is universal in the works cited here. It could be that part of the problem is due to translating his work from French to English, but language alone does not take care of our discomfort. He neglects to address gender in his examples, and there is no evidence of feminist influence on his thinking, when there is evidence that he seeks to address race and class as basic social categories of importance to democratic theory. Since feminist theory is used to help us move forward in the final section, it's important that Rancière's

If Stage One is where the case for failure is made, turning us into cynics who no longer believe in the quality of the work of our teachers in our public schools, *Stage Two* turns democracy, defined as a state of society, into an anthropological catastrophe – a self-destructive humanity. This stage took place in the U.S. (and in France, according to Rancière) with the quarrel over education and the case made by scholars on the right and the left describing our public schools as places of educational underachievement (Bourdieu’s sociological thesis and Ogbu’s anthropological thesis). The debate seemed to be about the means of achieving equality – and forms of inequality, and what public authorities could and should do to remedy social inequality. The root of evil that was eventually identified was ‘democratic individualism.’ The denouncement of ‘democratic individualism’ works to bring together two theses: the classic thesis of property owners (the poor always want more), and the thesis of refined elites (there are too many individuals claiming the privileges of individuality). “(I)ndividuality is a good thing for the elites; it becomes a disaster for civilization if everybody has access to it” (p. 28). The issue used to be about transmitting the universality of knowledge and its egalitarian power. Today, as a result of Stage One’s success at achieving cynicism, and Stage Two’s convergence and colonization success, we are back to perceiving good government as pastoral government, a view, contrary to democracy, that goes back to Plato’s *Republic* and the guardians. How has this stage played out for teachers in America’s public schools?

The 1990's were a period of convergence in education policy in which both political parties adopted similar policy approaches albeit from different directions. The election in 1992 of 'New Democrat' Bill Clinton hailed a shift in the American political left that would quickly become manifest in the administration's education policy. 'New Democrats' were decidedly more business friendly than the more liberal base (e.g. McGovern, Kennedy) that dominated the party during the 1970's and 80's. Influenced by the business community's continuing concerns over educational attainment and economic competitiveness, concerns grounded in the alarmist ideas of the 1980's, the Clinton administration shifted the focus of education policy away from issues explicitly related to equity, such as inadequate funding for impoverished schools, toward a focus on innovation.<sup>26</sup> A new consensus began to emerge on the left that public schools were under-performing and that this failure was not simply an issue of resource allocation but was, instead, systemic. At the same time, growing frustration over the continued neglect of urban and impoverished schools among many civil rights groups and activists led to

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androcentrism be exposed in the text.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot and Patrick McGuinn, “The New Politics of Education: Analyzing the Federal Education Policy Landscape in the Post-NCLB Era,” *Educational Policy* 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2009), 23.

the development of grassroots support for policies traditionally associated with the political right, such as school choice and vouchers.<sup>27</sup> The result of these shifts within the political left became manifest in the Clinton administration's *Goals 2000* which increased pressure on states to raise standards, develop assessments, construct rigorous accountability regimes and increase school choice options for parents, such as the voucher programs that began in Milwaukee and Washington D.C.

At first glance, the Republican take-over of Congress in 1994 would appear to have been a major setback for a Democratic administration attempting to increase the role of the federal government in what the Republican party platform had consistently framed as being a task best left to individual states, not to mention the Republican's continued advocacy for the privatization of the institutional mandate of public schooling. Indeed, the new Republican majority initially set about the dismantling of the federal role in education policy, for example elimination of the Department of Education, only to be met with public distrust and political failure. The outcome of this development was profound.

As a result, congressional Republicans accommodated themselves to the continued existence of federal education programs but set out to reform them in line with conservative principles. This shift was enormously important because it created an opening for Republican policy entrepreneurs inside and outside of government to advance an alternative policy agenda in education for the first time.<sup>28</sup>

The political right's response to public support for federal involvement in education policy was a practical “if you can't beat them, join them” approach that led not to the abandonment of its long-term political goals but to a re-branding of policy from 1996 forward that shifted its strategy for achieving those political goals.

The political right shifted its strategy away from policies designed to de-centralize the provision of public schooling to individual states to a decidedly top-down approach that constructed a rigid federal structure that would make the ultimate privatization of the institutional mandate of public schooling a *fait accompli*. George W. Bush's signature education policy *No Child Left Behind* passed into law in 2002 with broad bi-partisan support, including noted liberals such as Ted Kennedy, and it appropriated much of the legislative agenda of the New Democratic approach of the Clinton era. However, the underlying policy goals remained little changed from the Reagan era. NCLB constructed a policy framework of increasingly impossible academic goals and accountability

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 24.

regimes coupled with loosely regulated charter school programs that institutionalized crisis and privatization. It institutionalized Friedman's method of utilizing crises [actual, perceived or *manufactured*] to advance a decidedly corporatist approach to education policy.

Perhaps, what is most notable about NCLB is the shift in narrative it represents. As in the 1980's, a powerful force driving education policy at the turn of the new century was and continues to be the ever expanding number of think tanks and policy-centers now actively lobbying policy-makers, publishing popular books and op-eds, and participating on expert panels for television news shows. The expanding scope of philanthropic organizations funding think tank-based research projects and charter school programs has had a significant impact on shaping policy debates and popular discourse over schools, and they are now able to exert significant influence on policy formation across the political spectrum, Democratic and Republican.<sup>29</sup> The convergence in education policy that emerged in the 1990's created the political space for a new articulation of power to be constructed around the familiar themes of educational crisis and economic competitiveness dating back to a *Nation at Risk* and the colonization by business interests, philanthropic organizations and the political right of one new theme traditionally associated with the political left: equity.<sup>30</sup> Convergence opened the door for colonization, and the antagonists written into this new political narrative were familiar ones.

The NCLB era has been marked by the political narrative of an educational crisis linked to larger discourses of economic competition and now equity. Think tank scholars have published numerous books whose central theses are built around the assumption of failing public schools; and a general consensus on policy has emerged among institutions associated with the political left, such as the Brookings Institution and the Center for American Progress, and the political right, such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institute. Most often framed by international comparisons, this narrative of an on-going educational crisis is being constructed as an economic issue that disproportionately affects minority and low-income communities.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, one of the

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<sup>29</sup> Janelle Scott, "The Politics of Venture Philanthropy in Charter School Policy and Advocacy," *Educational Policy* 23, no. 1 (2009): 106-136; Christopher Lubienski, Peter Weitzel, and Sarah Theule Lubienski, "Is There a "Consensus" on School Choice and Achievement?: Advocacy Research and the Emerging Political Economy of Knowledge Production," *Educational Policy* 23, no. 1 (2009): 161-193.

<sup>30</sup> For example: Frederick M. Hess, *Revolution at the Margins*, January 1, 2002, <http://www.aei.org/book/466>

<sup>31</sup> For example: David T. Kearns and James Harvey, *A Legacy of Learning* (Brookings Institution Press, 2000); Kevin R. Kosar, *Failing Grades: The Federal Politics Of Education Standards* (Lynne Rienner

chief antagonists that has emerged from this political narrative is again public school teachers and teachers unions. Teachers are consistently portrayed as being under-qualified,<sup>32</sup> under-prepared<sup>33</sup> and aligned with institutions that have strong incentives to act as a barrier to needed reforms. The most common articulation of this narrative goes as follows:

Teachers unions are in the business of protecting member jobs, and they would like to ensure that all of their members are deemed highly-qualified - and remain employed. The education schools stay in business by certifying teachers, so they oppose policies by which teachers could become certified without graduating from an ed school, and they oppose rigorous tests that large numbers of their graduates might fail.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, this political narrative of institutional failure, ill-prepared teachers, resistant unions and entrenched colleges of education shaped public debate over NCLB and has become cemented in contemporary education discourse.

The Obama administration's "Race to the Top" initiative is but the latest incarnation of Friedman's political method of using crises as a tool for policy reform, and it employs the same tried and true political narrative. Elected in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression (2008), the Obama administration has adopted and sought to extend the policies of NCLB by wringing concessions out of states suffering severe budget crises to further open the door to private actors in public schooling, construct standardized curricula and assessments, and implement rigorous accountability measures to hold teachers and administrators accountable for results in exchange for billions of dollars in funds appropriated by the economic stimulus package passed by Congress in spring of 2009. And, again, these policies are wrapped in the

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Publishers, 2005); Herbert J. Walberg and Joseph Lee Bast, *Education and Capitalism* (Hoover Press, 2003); Frederick M. Hess, *Common Sense School Reform*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); National Center on Education and the Economy, *Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce* (Jossey-Bass, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Frederick M. Hess, *With the Best of Intentions: How Philanthropy Is Reshaping K-12 Education* (Harvard Educational Pub Group, 2005), 158.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick M. Hess, *A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom?: Appraising Old Answers and New Ideas* (AEI Press, 2004), 140.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

political narrative of economic competition,<sup>35</sup> educational inequity<sup>36</sup> and ill-prepared teachers.<sup>37</sup> As we write this essay, our local paper's news is a push by our state governor to approve sweeping educational changes in a special session he's calling to occur in one week's time that will seek to legally allow the state to link performance evaluations and tenure decisions for teachers and principals to student testing results. The governor is surprised that the state's main teachers' union is opposed to some of the proposals. These legislative changes are necessary for the state to have a chance to qualify for a share of the \$4 billion in federal "Race to the Top" money Obama's administration has set aside. The teachers are not opposed to annual assessments, but they are opposed to having 50% of their annual evaluation be based on "a snap-shot test score of one day."<sup>38</sup> Refusing to cooperate positions the teachers as if they don't want to be evaluated (they're afraid they will be found lacking) and they don't care that the state is in a financial crisis and the schools will suffer if they don't qualify for the federal funding. Taken from this perspective, we can see that the erosion of trust in public schools and teachers hasn't simply been cultivated; it has been institutionalized.

The nihilist interpretation of the argument of suspicion, which in America is best represented by conservative Republican views, is countered by a positive political interpretation based on 'reduction of inequalities,' which in the U.S. is best represented by the U.S. Congress's passing of "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation for the public schools. Enough time has passed in the U.S. since the passing of NCLB and enough research has been accomplished now to support Rancière's claim in *Hatred of Democracy* that "supposed efforts to make inequality explicit have rigidified it" (p. 54). The nihilist vision of school as a form of reproduction of inequality and the progressive vision of schools as an instrument for reducing inequalities concur in their effects and in their principles: "both start with inequality and end up with inequality" (p. 54). That certainly has been the case with NCLB, where we started with the assumption that all students were not receiving the same high quality education and the very students we claimed we were seeking to help by holding their teachers more accountable, through

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<sup>35</sup> "U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan issues statement on release of the U.S. Students' Rankings on International Assessments of Student Achievement," Press Releases, August 18, 2009, <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/08/08182009.html>

<sup>36</sup> "Secretary Arne Duncan Speaks at the National Science Teachers Association Conference," Speeches and Testimony, March 20, 2009, <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2009/03/03202009.html>

<sup>37</sup> "U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan Says Colleges of Education Must Improve for Reforms to Succeed," Press Releases, October 22, 2009, <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/10/10222009a.html>

<sup>38</sup> Eric Schelzig, "Bredesen Pushes School Reform," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, Jan. 5, 2010.

testing the students and judging teachers' abilities based on their students test scores, are losing ground after initially looking like they were improving. The students have lost a curriculum designed to meet their interests and needs, as their teachers are forced to teach to the tests since that is how they are being evaluated, and they have lost the dedicated teachers who had the most experience working with them, as their schools have been reconstituted when they failed the bench marks set up by NCLB. In the place of seasoned teachers who were critical of the NCLB policy, with reconstitution young, inexperienced teachers who are "moldable" are hired to take their senior colleagues' places. Many students whose needs were being met before NCLB have found themselves removed from the schools altogether; special education and non-native English speaking students drop out rates have risen significantly since NCLB went into effect for example, with those higher drop out rates benefitting the school test scores by removing their potential low scores and thereby raising more schools' scores into the range of passing.<sup>39</sup>

### Trusting Our Teachers

Rancière has spent his life work meditating on equality and its connection to democracy. He has learned that we must start from the point of view of equality, asserting equality, and assuming equality as a given in order to arrive at democracy, after proving that if we start with assumptions of distrust and inequality, we can only continue to reproduce inequality. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière makes the case for treating students as having equal intelligence, and trusting that students want to learn.<sup>40</sup> It is through teachers trusting that students want to learn, are able to be attentive, and are willing to put in the effort to learn (they have the will), that students are emancipated and obliged to use their own intelligence, rather than being stultified by their teachers. Rancière uses the fact that we all learn a native language, we all have the intelligence and

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, "Standards, Accountability, and School Reform," *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 6 (2004): 1047-1085; Michelle Fine, Reva Jaffe-Walter, Pedro Pedraza, Valerie Futch, and Brett Stoudt, "Swimming: On Oxygen, Resistance, and Possibility for Immigrant Youth Under Siege," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2007): 76-96; Kris Sloan, "High-Stakes Accountability, Minority Youth, and Ethnography: Assessing the Multiple Effects," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2007): 24-41; Linda Valli and Marilyn Chambliss, "Creating Classroom Cultures: One Teacher, Two Lessons, and a High-Stakes Test," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2007): 57-75; Linda Valli and Daria Buese, "The changing roles of teachers in an era of high-stakes accountability," *AER J* 44, no. 3 (2007): 519-558.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Kristin Ross (Trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). Page numbers for quotes will appear directly in the text.

will to learn how to communicate with others, to support his argument of equality of intelligence. He recognizes that intelligence cannot be isolated and measured and that we can never say: all intelligence is equal. “But our problem isn’t proving that all intelligence is equal. It’s seeing what can be done under that supposition. And for this, it’s enough for us that the opinion is possible – that is, that no opposing truth be proved” (p. 46). For Rancière, intelligence and equality are synonymous terms, just as reason and will are synonymous terms. Reason begins when equality is recognized. And, only an equal understands an equal. “Equality is not given, nor is it claimed: it is practiced, it is *verified*.” (p. 137, emphasis in original).

At the heart of Rancière’s idea of emancipation is the notion of equality of intelligences, as the common prerequisite of both intelligibility and community. Just as no knowledge is imparted without teachers and students speaking together as equals, no democracy is established without multitudes of egalitarian relations. Our schools are places where students can experience this equality and learn how to be good democratic citizens, if we can learn to trust our students. However, creating a place where students experience equality is dependent on having a place where teachers experience equality as well, which means learning to trust our teachers, a topic Rancière does not address but we are seeking to do so here. Rancière’s significant contribution to democratic theory and educational theory is helping us understand that both democracy and education depend on relationships of equality.

Democracies are dependent on citizens who are able to make informed decisions because they are educated and view themselves as knowers.<sup>41</sup> Teachers who are able to share their authority with their students, or as Rancière would describe, relate to their students as equals, and begin to view their students as teachers too, they will find that by sharing authority they empower their students, help them develop courage, teach them to be persistent and resilient, encourage their desire to learn, feed their curiosity and keep their love of learning alive. Sharing their authority and treating their students as equals will also encourage their students to learn from their mistakes, develop the ability to be self-reflective, and help them recognize their own limitations (what they do not know).

Sharing authority also means that communities, even nations, need to trust their teachers as well, and recognize them as authorities, giving them the respect societies give to those who are viewed as knowledgeable and have valued skills that enable them to share with others what they know. In Japan teachers enjoy a great deal of respect and are recognized as authorities in their subject areas, as well as valued for their skills in

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<sup>41</sup> Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools*. These paragraphs are rewritten from chapter 5 and 7.

working with students. The Japanese society trusts their teachers to do a good job and expects their children to work hard for their teachers. The Japanese society in general values the work teachers do and recognizes their work as an important contribution to the society's well-being. This respect and trust of teachers is expressed in all Asian cultures influenced by Confucianism, which explains our Chinese friend's perspective we shared in the Introduction. Confucianism stresses moral perfection and the important role education plays in helping us achieve moral perfection. A teacher at the elementary level is just as respected as a professor in higher education, and is given the same honorary title of *sensei* in Japan.<sup>42</sup>

In the U.S., we say we value our public school teachers, but there are many things we do that undermines their authority, treats them as inferior, and shows a lack of trust. We demonstrate lack of respect for them as scholars as well as in terms of their skills in working with their students. The most obvious examples are the ways administrators in our public schools treat teachers: making teachers clock in and clock out of their work days, interrupting their teaching time with announcements and unscheduled tasks they need them to do (monitor the halls, proctor exams, escort their class to an assembly meeting), holding teacher meetings where administrators do all the talking and use it as an opportunity to make announcements, without asking for teachers' input and suggestions and without giving them a chance to discuss their concerns. Continually in the U.S. teachers are given the message that they are not trusted as authorities in their subjects, as skilled in working with their students, or at understanding the needs that must be considered in running a school. They are told what to teach, when to teach it, how to teach, and how to assess their students' knowledge to be sure they learned what was taught. They are treated as part-time employees (9 month contracts) who work less than 40 hour weeks, with salaries that reflect these beliefs, not giving teachers credit for all the preparation work they do for their classes, as well as all the grading, and all the continual learning they do to stay current in their fields of study.

We are all guilty, legislatures, community members, parents, students, and fellow teachers, of undermining teachers' authority and treating them as inferior in America. In order for teachers to share authority in their classrooms with their students they need to first have authority to share. We need to offer them the respect they deserve for the important work they do, the degree of difficulty involved, and the significant level of knowledge needed to successfully teach. We are arguing that democratic theory depends on a concept of shared authority, equality as Rancière describes this, which encourages the use of power in generative ways as well as protects us from the abuse of power in

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<sup>42</sup> H. W. Stevenson, and J. W. Stigler, *The Learning Gap: Why our schools are Failing and What We Can Learn from Japanese and Chinese Education* (NY: Summit Books, 1992).

harmful, oppressive ways. A recommendation of shared authority in school settings assumes that the teachers have authority to share with their students. Their authority comes from their claims of knowledge, they must have something they know and the student is the one who wants/needs to know. Students gain in their authority as they become knowers as well, and are able to share what they know with others who wants/needs to know too.

Classical liberalism (the roots of U.S.'s democracy) is based on a distrust of others, a feeling that they cannot be counted on, that they might harm us, that they will not do their jobs unless we check on them and monitor them, and even threaten them if we need to, to make them work. It is based on inequality. We cannot build a democracy on individualism or egocentrism, we are in agreement with Rancière on this point, for such a foundation positions the individual in contrast to others, and sets up a binary logic where we find ourselves having to choose either one or the other. Distrust of others is not a good foundation upon which to grow a democracy. We must begin with valuing others and treating them with respect and dignity. We begin by practicing equality. Fortunately we can look around us and see examples of societies that do trust their teachers to pass on what the society has determined is vital information for their young to have, and do offer their teachers a great deal of respect for their abilities to teach the future members of their society. In societies where teachers enjoy authority, as knowers, they can be places where authority is shared with their students, and their students are inspired and empowered as a result to become active participants in their society and help it thrive.

Darling-Hammond identifies investment in teacher knowledge and skill-sets as being critical to increasing student learning and considers it a prime target for reform efforts.<sup>43</sup> Investments in the recruitment, hiring, and support of highly-qualified teachers help to build stable communities of teachers and make significant contributions to student achievement. Reforms that set high standards for teacher qualifications are certainly necessary, however it is just as important to provide financial and professional incentives for attracting and keeping qualified candidates. Darling-Hammond places particular emphasis on providing structural supports for continued teacher learning and professional development as a key area for targeted investment.

[S]chools and districts need to provide systematic supports for ongoing teacher learning in the form of time for shared teacher planning, opportunities for assessing teaching and learning, more exposure to technical expertise and resources, and opportunities for networking with

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<sup>43</sup> Darling-Hammond, "Standards, Accountability, and School Reform," 1078-1079.

other colleagues.<sup>44</sup>

Investments in continuous teacher learning and capacity building requires structural supports that are now largely absent in the United States, however there is ample evidence suggesting that on-going, school-based, collaborative professional development projects make significant contributions to student achievement<sup>45</sup> and teacher learning.<sup>46</sup>

Re-structuring school schedules and resources to provide more opportunities for shared planning among teachers and building the professional capacity of school staff has been demonstrated to have positive impacts on teacher efficacy and is a common facet of public schooling in nations with successful education systems, such as Japan and Finland. “[W]hereas teachers in many other countries have as much as 15 to 20 hours per week for joint planning and learning, U.S. teachers have only 3 to 5 hours weekly for class preparation, usually spent alone.”<sup>47</sup> In short, community-building policies designed to foster professional relationships among teachers’ present clear avenues for would-be reformers to proceed.

Indeed, much of the recent praise afforded to the educational achievements of Finland are largely attributed to the significant investments the nation made during the 1990's to professionalize teaching and utilize those investments to drive educational innovation at the school- and classroom-levels.<sup>48</sup> As a national policy, Finland embraced the idea of research-based teaching and teacher training is university-based and geared toward producing teachers “who have the capacity to use research and research-derived competencies in their on-going teaching and decision-making.”<sup>49</sup> Once teachers enter the classroom, they work in small classroom settings situated within schools that provide ample space for professional development, information sharing, and collaboration among

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1079.

<sup>45</sup> Carla C. Johnson, Jane Butler Kahle, and Jamison D. Fargo, “A Study of the Effect of Sustained, Whole-school Professional Development on Student Achievement in Science,” *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 44, no. 6 (2007): 775-786.

<sup>46</sup> Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan E. Talbert, *Building School-based Teacher Learning Communities: Professional Strategies to Improve Student Achievement* (Teachers College Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Darling-Hammond, “Standards, Accountability, and School Reform,” 1080.

<sup>48</sup> Author. “Hard-Wired for Innovation? Comparing Two Policy Approaches Toward Innovative Schooling,” *International Education* 39, no. 1 (2009), 30-48.

<sup>49</sup> Ian Westbury et al., “Teacher Education for Research-based Practice in Expanded Roles: Finland's experience,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 49, (2005), 477.

teachers.<sup>50</sup>

The lesson that emerges here is that instead of institutionalizing a distrust of teachers policy-makers should be making significant investments in the professional development of the teaching profession and, perhaps most importantly, policy-makers should seek to foster a “culture of trust” that affords teachers the high degree of autonomy commonly associated with being a “professional.”<sup>51</sup> In the near term, this means that policy-makers must recognize that there is a great deal of institutional knowledge already present in the education system as it is presently constituted. Thus, it would seem wise that policy-makers create a space for teachers to contribute to the formulation of education policy at the national level and to empower teachers to become change agents and innovators at the local level. In the long term, this analysis indicates that a wise course for policy-makers to follow would be to increase the institutional capacity of public schooling by making significant investments in university-based teacher education programs that emphasize content knowledge, pedagogical expertise and the skilled use of practice-based research in the classroom.

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<sup>50</sup> Pasi Sahlberg, “Education policies for raising student learning: the Finnish approach,” *Journal of Education Policy* 22, (2007): 147-171.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.