

“Shaking the Rattle”: Alternative Certification, De-Professionalization of Teaching, and the Danger of Submitting to the Neo-Liberal Vision of Schooling

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A “Trigger Warning”

That title is a mouthful, right? Its origins were shorter, pithier, and thus a bit misleading for the reader. This essay started as a more subtle critique of U.S. capitalism and how it crushes teachers as part of the social reproduction machine, and became, well, a lot less subtle after revisions and feedback from engaged and thoughtful reviewers. “Shaking the rattle,” as I will soon outline, is a great analogy from an important educator who was also a Socialist. This paper is ostensibly about the current trend of alternative certification and how it fits into the broader story of teaching’s decline as a profession, but, moreover, it is about how teaching, and thus teachers, are in an extraordinarily difficult spot as they attempt to embody the ideals of education uplifting mind and soul. Paradoxically, schools largely divide the winners from the losers in the U.S., all for the good of “the economy.” And so, I begin with something of a trigger warning: this article presents the plight of the teacher’s position in terms of economic disparities and social structuralism, with a healthy dash of socialism and anti-capitalism. In other words, I am about to get political.

The U.S. is a nation in crisis, on several fronts, to the point that even stating it is becoming cliché in 2020...and that is to say nothing of 2021. But for the purpose of this essay it needs to be said: in the U.S. the inherent problem facing the teaching profession is intricately tied with a push for an economic and social status quo. This status quo is perhaps reaching a breaking point and, like many aspects of U.S. society, education is caught in the turmoil. Teaching in the recent past has become an embattled profession, as made apparent by large-scale teacher protests across the country in 2018 as well as in current debates over school operations in light of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The U.S. public tends generally to give teachers and schools ample lip service, proclaiming the importance of educating the next generation and providing opportunity to vulnerable populations, all while typically underfunding schools and remaining apathetic toward

low teacher pay. However, teaching has always been a profession with a fraught status, one that began more as a temporary occupation instead of a profession. When teaching did become more professionalized by the end of the 19th century, large and small actions immediately went into effect to de-professionalize the field, culminating in present-day educational dilemmas. I argue here that alternative certification is the latest large-scale movement to deprofessionalize and delegitimize teachers as a highly skilled, specialized vocation. On the surface, alternative certification, or short-tracking the educational path a person must take to qualify for teaching licensure, exists because of teacher shortages across the U.S. In reality, alternative certification is another tool used for the neo-liberal restructuring of U.S. schooling, meant to provide a cheap, expendable, inexhaustible supply of labor to save educational costs so communities can comfortably continue to underfund public education.

George Counts' Socialist Educational Framework

In a series of three addresses given in 1932, later turned into the classic *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, beloved educator and open Socialist George Counts outlined his concerns over progressive education's flaws. Counts argues the progressive movement in school reform results from the U.S.' general faith in progress and public education, yet efforts in schools he characterizes as largely unfocused and lack what he calls a "theory of social welfare." For Counts, schools and teachers, even progressive ones, spend more time and energy on the methodology of instruction rather than its ends. Although the purpose of public education is to lift up the disenfranchised and provide opportunity for those not born into privileged circumstances, something vital in education has been lost. In perhaps the coldest observation ever made about U.S. education, Counts states:

...like a baby shaking a rattle, we seem utterly content with action, provided it is sufficiently vigorous and noisy. In the last analysis a very large part of American educational thought, inquiry, and experimentation is much ado about nothing.

This is one of Counts' most well-known lines, popular for being pithy and bitingly funny. His analogy works so well because it damningly elucidates the often-empty and meaningless activities often associated with U.S. public schooling, for right or wrong. But, I argue, a mere sentence away is his more-important observation from almost one hundred years ago:

...our consecration to motion is encouraged and supported in order to keep us out of mischief. At least we know that so long as we thus busy ourselves we shall not incur the serious displeasure of our social elders.

This sentence does not get quoted nearly as often, but herein is where the real issue with U.S. public education lies. The "us" in Counts' quotation

represents teachers, the "social elders" are the elites—the social managers, the "man," or whatever label tends to denote those in power who have a vested interest in the social status quo and economic well-being of those in power or those associated with power. For Counts, the danger of staying busy while lacking utterly a focus on the common good is that schools and teachers either actively or inadvertently maintain the status quo. Counts, brandishing the now-dreaded label of Socialism, was deeply concerned that education served, by design, as part of the social reproduction machine. Such a public education shifts markedly away from the goal of uplifting children, becoming instead a support for powerful business interests and the oppressive wealth of relatively few. Counts was right, as has been theorized and evidenced by myriad scholars.

While U.S. public schooling inarguably has made strides in improving educational opportunity for many children between 1932 and 2020, in a Countian sense progress based on the promise of public education remains far from complete. The U.S. public generally agrees that our current educational system faces multiple, severe challenges, including overcrowding, underfunding, and the starkly inequitable distribution of resources, hence unequal educational opportunity. Some of these issues are so large as to be out of immediate or individual control, requiring herculean effort and resources at state and national levels, and demanding a restructuring of school funding formulas and governance. For teachers, teacher educators, and administrators the scope of change required becomes all-too-easy to set aside: to throw up one's hands and declare that no individual can make a difference or possibly do enough. Many of us in education want radically to improve the system, often working at classroom, school, and even district levels. At the same time, in some ways, we as educators and as school advocates can either purposefully or inadvertently harm our own cherished system.

The Problem

A growing problem in U.S. education—on top of dramatic health, economic, racial, and class disparity—is arguably of our own making: likely created with good intentions, but which exacerbates the already-feeble rattle-shaking taking place. The problem is alternative certification: a program, approach, even mindset, that brings in more people to teach in classrooms, particularly in areas of high need, but which ultimately delegitimizes the teaching profession.

Dramatic proliferation of U.S. alternative certification programs means school districts, state boards, and even universities are moving away from the university-based, traditional model for preparing teachers, and widespreadly implementing programs with potentially disastrous consequences for teacher quality and professionalism. In such a model, interested adults with a bachelor's degree are encouraged to take part in

a short combination of online courses, on-site training, and test-taking to prepare to be licensed in a given state or district. Teacher preparation programs and educational researchers tend to oppose alternative certification, while school administrators and state legislators tend to favor it. At present, the fight over alternative certification is practically over, with the university-based teacher education programs occupying the losing side.

However, this concern over gatekeeping, protecting the profession, and providing quality teachers is as old as teaching and teacher training. In the U.S., there has been a tension between educating teachers and filling classrooms from the time of normal schools to today. In an effort to address teacher shortages and to prepare “highly qualified” teachers, at least in the post-NCLB sense of the term, legislators and schools alike vigorously embrace alternative teacher education programs and pathways that, I argue, undermine the profession itself. To push Counts’ analogy further, not only are we shaking the rattle, we are perhaps even hitting ourselves with it.

How Did We Get Here? The Early Days

In the U.S., teaching had a fraught occupational status before it was even truly a profession. Initially, teaching was a temporary position for young, educated men before attending a university for loftier occupational pursuits; eventually teaching became an occupation for young, educated women before leaving the profession to get married and start a family. Teacher pay was low, teachers boarded with families, sometimes at the school itself, and did not stay in the job for particularly long. This reasoning has long been taught as the beginnings of U.S. formal education, sometimes giving the impression that these were simpler times; they were not. Teaching became more professionalized as part of the Common School Movement and the work of reformers to standardize curricula and classroom practices. A large piece of this movement came from the need to train teachers for the work, and thus the rise of the normal schools and teaching colleges. This change meant teachers-to-be attended a regimented training program, gaining credentials and practical experience. The teaching profession, then, in the mid- to late-19th century, was born. But the growth of schools and introduction of formalized teacher preparation programs did not alone professionalize teaching. Teachers accomplished this for themselves by forming major associations—and those controversial, love-to-be-hated institutions, unions.

Both prominent U.S. teacher unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), have roots in groups started in the mid- to late-1800s, and the story of their growth and evolution over time is fascinating and instructive. While the AFT traditionally fought and acted more like a union and the NEA focused primarily on education’s administrative side, both institutions argued for

and evidenced teaching as a profession, on a par with other well-known, extensively trained professionals: doctors and lawyers. The unions' efforts increased the status of U.S. teachers but, as unions came under attack in the more recent past, so did teaching.

Likely no coincidence, the NEA's first president was a woman, Ella Flagg Young, who had been a student of John Dewey's, himself an advocate for teacher unions and teacher professionalism. In describing how teachers' work led to social good, John Dewey warns the failure of U.S. public education would come from "the excessive control of legislation and administration exercised by the small and powerful class that is economically privileged." For Dewey, teaching itself was in danger because "position, promotion, [and] security of the tenure of teachers has depended largely upon conformity with the desires and plans of this class." In the U.S. "this class" refers to the dominant social class tied to industry through wealth.

Dewey was right to be concerned, as industry wealth's influence in schools only increases and, as a result, administrators and teachers tended to part ways philosophically. Commencing largely in the early-20th century, school administrators began embracing so-called business models and efficiency reforms in order to move ever-larger numbers of students through school systems. This shift made debate on best teaching practice and the school's ability to provide quality educational experiences common parlance and frequent target of criticism. The tension between business models, embraced by many educational administrators, and pedagogical progressives, the focus of many teachers and their unions, served as accelerant to the deprofessionalization of teaching.

For pedagogical progressives, formal schooling was a place for future citizens to learn a variety of skills, mindsets, and values that would lead to a productive and healthy life. For example, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education's 1918 "Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education," situate "vocation" as an educational end, but only one of seven. At the same time and shortly thereafter, administrators and educators also turned to Frederick Winslow Taylor's factory-focused efficiency models for schools. Efficiency won out as Taylorism was particularly useful in the inequitable realm of tracking into and preparing students for future industrial labor roles, with districts employing race- and class-biased IQ tests as "scientific," objective sorting mechanism.

In explaining why administrative progressives beat their pedagogical counterparts, David Labaree argues business and political leaders found the idea of eliminating waste, efficient organization, and teaching for future labor incredibly appealing. These commerce-centric ideals became a whole new set of Seven Cardinal Principles, completely focused on the economic impact (and corresponding social status quo) of formal education. This mentality strongly persists today in biased college- and career-readiness

standards, and in too-focused concern over the cost of schools, teachers, materials, per-pupil spending, and the like. The U.S. has embraced a reproductive, capitalist, now neo-liberal, model for public education, focused upon getting the greatest economic outcome from the smallest cost outlay—or from the cheapest resources. Professionalized teachers are expensive, and the U.S. has always relied on cheap labor for any major infrastructural endeavor, particularly those perceived as “free” and public. Those on the bandwagon touting how alternative-certification brings teachers into the classroom quickly and efficiently undermine pedagogically innovative teaching because alternative certification disrupts the training, practice, and, honestly, time, it takes to become a good teacher: all for the sake of keeping the economic machine humming.

How Did We Get Here? The Latter Days

This section’s subtitle could have read “the rise of neo-liberalism,” as neo-liberalism is the focus of industry interests, its advocates call for a “hand’s-off” approach to interaction between government and industry, and its very invocation sends many into near-religious awe of capitalism. Neo-liberalism, though, has driven U.S. society to its current state, as has it driven the state of U.S. schools. During and especially after World War II, the U.S. zeitgeist ran hostile to any idea or practice that smacked of communism; among the U.S.’ white population the appetite for daring schools to build a new social order waned to no more than an occasional pang. Instead, particularly given the rise of neo-conservatism and its educational reforms beginning in the 1980s, the dominant social order dared far more openly to begin to dismantle public education. Charter schools, vouchers, and increased privatization were major elements of this campaign, but part of the movement’s foundation was the purposeful deprofessionalization of teachers.

Then, in 1983, the National Commission of Excellent Education’s infamous report, *A Nation at Risk*, added a metaphorical tanker of fuel to the then-relatively small fire of anti-teacher sentiment. Claiming teachers were ill-prepared, teacher preparation programs lacked quality, teaching was underpaid and understaffed, the report became foundational to the perception of the teaching profession. *A Nation at Risk* paved the way to neo-liberal, modern reform movements and the eventual passage of 2001’s No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a punitive, unfunded, federal mandate. Naturally, top-down educational reform gave neither schools nor states resources or funds to pay teachers more, yet its legislated high-stakes accountability measures broke the backs of state budgets nationwide and fattened corporate test-makers.

NCLB introduced requirements that schools hire “highly qualified” teachers, defining the term as a teacher with “a bachelor’s degree, full state-certification or licensure, and proof they know each subject they teach.”

While allegedly imagined as a mechanism to ensure teacher quality for students regardless of the school they attend, the term "highly qualified" was quickly watered down when small, particularly rural, districts began to balk. By 2004, in order to deal with an overwhelming number of U.S. school districts that were not going to meet NCLB's legislated 100% "highly qualified" teachers by 2005, the U.S. D.O.E. declared "new flexibility" in its standards. Among a host of changes, rural districts were given more time to get their teachers highly qualified in all subjects and states were allowed to re-define what constitutes a "highly qualified" science teacher. For many states, what constituted "highly qualified" was modified to enact critical change: the requirement shifted from a mandate for a teacher to be educated to a teacher needing merely to be licensed and to pass a content-area exam. This twist to the term broke the traditional teacher-education pipeline, ushering in a plethora of alternative-certification pathways that deprofessionalized teaching. Unsurprisingly, this qualification shift coincided with growing, fierce U.S. anti-labor union sentiment.

Teacher compensation was one of the major motivations for fighting teacher unions, as low labor costs are a maxim of a neo-liberal/pro-capitalist approach to public education. Low teacher pay exacerbates and exemplifies the problem of deprofessionalization. In a recent study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute, researchers analyzed data on the "wage penalty" public school teachers experienced between 1979 and 2018. When compared to workers with comparable college degrees, teachers collectively earned seven percent less than their counterparts in 1979. In 2018, teachers earned 20% less. Teachers in every state experience teacher-wage penalty, with Arizona, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Colorado demonstrating the widest gaps.

These data give ample reason to understand why so many teachers across the country, but particularly in Arizona, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Colorado, staged a famous walkout in 2018. With strikes in West Virginia (first to strike in 2018) and Kentucky, 2018 had the most work-stoppages since 1986. Pay decreases combined with larger class sizes and deteriorating work conditions were major factors in teachers' strikes. Conditions arose from either decades of decreasing education funding or not keeping up with inflation as states across the country lowered corporate and income taxes. Teachers, in the eyes of myriad legislators and governors, were semi-skilled labor, not professionals.

The New Teacher

De-professionalization of teaching results from economic and political pressures, as reflected in low teacher pay, neo-liberal school reform, and government funding inequities. Schools, particularly in urban and rural areas, and in certain disciplines like science, mathematics, and special education, have difficulty recruiting teachers. While recruitment is a serious issue in

U.S. public schools, so is retention. Teaching continues to be, for many, a temporary position, with almost half of new teachers leaving teaching within five years, an unsustainable formula. Richard Ingersoll clarifies the problem, particularly in the case of math and science teachers:

Almost every president since Eisenhower has given a speech on the math/science teacher shortage...what we have...is a retention problem. We lose far too many math/science teachers.

The collective answer to the problem of losing teachers, who, in the U.S., are 80–85% white, middle-class females, and needing more people to fill vacancies has been to make it faster and simpler to become a teacher rather than address the underlying concerns that cause the teaching force to leave teaching. Alternative certification is the neo-liberal answer to this persistent retention problem, but it is a short-sighted and ultimately destructive one. Apart from philosophical concerns about fast-tracking would-be teachers, or the repeated studies that question whether alternative certification produces sub-par teachers, there is one very straightforward problem with alternative-certification programs. They are more likely to leave teaching than their traditionally trained counterparts—25% more likely, according to Desiree Carver and Linda Darling-Hammond. For decades educational researchers have warned states to tread very carefully with creating pathways to teaching that fall outside of university-based schools of education. These warnings are not considered by legislative or administrative advocates of alternative certification, though, since alternative certification satisfies the neo-liberal attitude toward free public education.

In 1984, 275 alternative teaching certificates were issued in the U.S., mostly for math and science teachers. By 2009 and 2010, there were 59,000 alternative certificates and 136 different paths to certification spread out over nearly 600 programs. Half a million teachers have been placed in classrooms through alternative routes since 1984. In some states, alternative certification programs produce between 30 and 50% of new teachers. What began as an emergency measure seen as a temporary fix to recruitment and retention issues in math and science classes, alternative certification has become common practice. Most recently, alternative certification programs seem most immune to low teacher-preparation enrollment; alt-cert programs increased enrollment by 40% between 2010 and 2018, while traditional teacher-ed programs have declined by 28%. What makes the changing numbers so alarming is that the most recent data hints alternative certification magnifies the problem of teacher retention rather than solves it. Schools struggle to retain teachers in the face of low professional status, high stress, and lower pay; fewer students want to become teachers, so schools turn to alternative certification, which produces teachers who teach for a similar or shorter time than their traditionally trained counterparts. As the vicious cycle continues, high turnover rates prove the neo-liberal point that teachers are not professionals.

Requirements are generally lower for those seeking license through alt-cert programs, with the assumption or requirement that interested persons have a degree in the subject area in which they will teach. Many programs last a year or two, often coordinated with teaching in a school, as it is common for students to take classes in the evenings or online while, simultaneously, they begin teaching during the day. Kansas has taken this step further by allowing a select number of school districts to enact their own certification programs independent of universities as an extension of "grow-your-own" programs and to deal with hard-to-staff school districts, many of which are rural. But some major metropolitan areas, for example the massive Charlotte–Mecklenburg North Carolina district, now take a similar tack.

Those of us in university-based teacher-education programs are made complicit in the alt-cert movement because we either ignore it, or we focus on effects upon future teachers without tackling the larger ramifications on teaching as a profession. My institution has two major alternative-certification pathways for would-be teachers, and so do plenty of other universities. I have worked with individuals in alternative-certification programs who have a real desire to be quality teachers; I know and work with excellent teachers who went through alternative certification. For these and other reasons, this issue is not simple, but even if I have some positive experiences with participants in alternative certification, on the whole the idea is problematic for the status of U.S. teaching.

SARS-CoV-2 and Teaching

As of this writing, a national debate over whether students should attend school in person or adjust schooling to smaller classes and more at-home activities in light of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic reveals how many see school as a child-care service so parents can work so they may contribute to the economy as workers and consumers. On July 21st, 2020 U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell confirmed the neo-liberal view of schooling by arguing for why in-person schooling needed to resume during the pandemic:

This country wants its kids back in the classroom this fall learning, exploring, making friends. Their educations depend on it. In some cases, their safety depends on it, and so do the livelihoods of American parents.

For many in the U.S., particularly political conservatives, the resumption of school is not about children's education or their emotional and social well-being. It is about having a reliable supply of cheap and free childcare for workers so workers may continue to labor for the benefit of the chief concern of this country—corporations' and businesses' profits and the happiness of their shareholders.

As U.S. public schooling is state-based, the fights over when to start school, how long a school day should last, and even whether students should

be taught in person tends to occur locally. In summer 2020, Governor Laura Kelly of Kansas was engaged in fighting against opposing members in the state legislature over whether she had authority to close schools until after Labor Day. When I presented this paper she was losing her battle—the state board of education tied a vote to delay schools opening, which meant individual districts made their own decisions as to when and how to open schools despite district personnel having no training in public health and despite no federal public-health pandemic advice or policy. While schools in New York and California planned to start fall 2020 school years late with little pushback (except for in Orange County), states with Republican governors and/or legislatures kept pushing for completely open schools.

One of *Chalkbeat's* editors, Sarah Darville, elucidated this point in an op-ed essay published in *The New York Times*:

But teachers did not sign up to prop up the economy by providing child care while putting their health and the health of their families at risk. And romantic portrayals of teaching as a calling obscure the reality that, vocation or not, teachers are also workers who have received few assurances about job safety. School districts are still working out who will be able to work from home, what protective equipment they can provide, how students will be grouped and how infections will be handled.

Throughout fall 2020 and rolling into 2021, those in the U.S. vociferously debate, along party lines, the role of schooling. For neo-liberals, school is both daycare and feeding station, a repository for children and an opportunity for adults to work and thus contribute to the profits of corporations. For classical liberals, which in this case tends to include many teachers and school professionals, school is a place to learn and prepare for life and citizenry. As a nation, we continuously repeat that safety is the most important issue for children, but just look at how U.S. children have been endangered during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Since robust business growth is actually most important, many schools have remained open as usual; teachers have been invited by districts and harassed on social media either to deal, die, or quit. To date, many already have died or quit. Few to none are “dealing” well.

The Point

Before I make my closing argument and plea to you, dear reader who stuck with me throughout this article, I offer two ways to think about our current predicament. The first, I borrow from Richard Ingersoll:

...the way to upgrade the quality of teaching and teachers is to upgrade the quality of the teaching job. Well-paid, well-respected occupations that offer good working conditions rarely have difficulties with recruitment or retention. If they do, they do not resort to lowering standards as a coping mechanism.

The second, from the sage words of Nancy Flanagan:

The policy goal here is de-professionalizing teaching, establishing it once and for all as a short-term, entry-level technical job designed to attract a revolving door of "community-minded" candidates, who will work diligently for cheap, then get out because they can't support a family or buy a home on a teacher's salary. **Emphasis on the word cheap. This is about profit and control, not improving education.**

Insofar as the status of teachers and what the profession will look like going forward, the U.S. risks coming full-circle. Teaching began in this country as temporary, low-wage and low-to-medium-skilled labor. As our school system evolved and technologies emerged, so did teaching as a profession; teaching gained some status through training, gatekeeping, and collective action/bargaining. But efforts to relegate teaching to low-to-medium-skilled labor continue, mostly due to an effort to keep educational costs down for states and communities, motivated by lower taxes. And now universities are feeling the pressure to adopt and expand alternative certification because it increases enrollment (which universities need) and makes state and district leaders happy to have hard-to-fill positions filled, at least temporarily. The U.S. is in an interesting but difficult place right now, which is an enormous understatement, but I mean this in the educational sense. The question I have been asking myself and, by extension now ask you, is the same one Counts posed in 1932. What do we do about this? Because alternative certification is a wildly popular, neo-liberal-supported program, yet alt-cert contributes to, if not cements, the deprofessionalization of teaching. Do we oppose and then risk upsetting our social elders of the white, dominant social class, or do we soldier on with what we have? Do we continue to shake the rattle, and simply hope vigorous and noisy action gets us somewhere?

When considering what can be done about a societal injustice, the unfortunate reality is that collective action is almost always people's go-to answer: unsatisfying since collective action is slow, incremental, and is not necessarily effective over the long term. However, if you, dear reader, demand that I as problem-presenter offer constructive solutions, then here is my meager answer. Vote. Get yourself registered to vote, vote in every election, and vote against neo-liberal politicians (they exist in both major political parties, by the way, even if they tend to dominate one over the other). Run for school board, run for a city or county council seat in your community. Encourage and financially support like-minded friends, colleagues, graduate students, and acquaintances to do the same. And when you and your friends/acquaintances have access to power, use that power to support a more communitarian and less capitalistic, individualistic view of society, particularly of the education and the teaching profession.

Perhaps mine is not a particularly novel answer, but the hard truth is this: if we want to improve education, in this case teaching as professionalized, that is done outside of education, falling squarely within the realm of politics. If this is an uncomfortable thought, then I redirect you to my trigger warning at the beginning of this article. At the very least, consider this: stop using the beginning of the excellent quotation from George Counts, and focus on the latter portion. Do not worry about the rattle, aim at disrupting our social elders—and I pledge to do the same.

An Acknowledgment

The editors of JoPHE made this paper much stronger than its original form. In particular, Stacy Otto made changes that drastically improved the focus and gave better direction to my anger in this essay. Paraphrasing Aaron Sorkin, I brought the blood, but she made it flow. Thank you, Stacy.

Endnotes

- ¹ Of course, I am having a good amount of fun with the term “trigger warning,” as I am warning people who are uncomfortable with critiques of U.S. capitalism, who tend also not to like the idea of the trigger warning. I do this gleefully and glibly, without intending to make light of the actual concept and valuable utility of a trigger warning.
- ² For a much more thorough explanation of the professionalization and deprofessionalization of U.S. teachers, see Diana D’Amico Pawlewicz’s book that just came out in August 2020. Diana D’Amico Pawlewicz, *Blaming Teachers: Professionalization Policies and the Failure of Reform in American History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020).
- ³ Neo-liberalism exists in the U.S. as the economic and governmental philosophy of limited state and federal government, limited oversight of private business, and the emphasis of individual freedoms over communal actions. For an excellent and unconventional breakdown of neo-liberalism, particularly as applies to the SARS-CoV-2 U.S., see Carolos Maza, *Coronavirus and America’s Death Cult*, April 5, 2020, <https://youtu.be/vG37wwhbS88>
- ⁴ George Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

- 5 Ibid., 5.
- 6 Ibid., 4.
- 7 Popular culture has long tied teaching with being a low-status profession, often for "those who cannot do." For an excellent explanation of the belief that teaching, and, by extension, pedagogy itself is a waste of time, see David Labaree's *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 A reviewer of this manuscript brought up the fascinating connections between Counts' mischief and staying busy and the Christian popular notion of "idle hands" being the "devil's playground." Counts was most likely tapping into the idea of staying busy to save one's soul, but again, as a Socialist who was particularly concerned with the U.S.' growing addiction to Capitalism, the "staying busy" is more akin to Marx's argument that people are kept busy and distracted from social equality, often via religion. Hence the quotation about religion being the opiate of the people. For an excellent exploration of the idea of "opium of the people" in 1843 versus today, see Rosie Blau's "What Is the Opium of the People?" *The Economist*, January 5, 2015, <https://www.economist.com/1843/2015/01/05/what-is-the-opium-of-the-people>
- 10 This, of course, was a concern of John Dewey's as well, as will be elaborated upon later in the article.
- 11 For example, see Thurston Domina, Andrew Penner, and Emily Penner, "Categorical Inequality: Schools as Sorting Machines," *Annual Review of Sociology* 43, (2017): 311–330, doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053354
- 12 See Karl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1983); John Rury, *Education and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling*, 6th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020); Joel Spring, *American Education*, 18th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).
- 13 Karen Leroux, "National Education Association," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 955. For example, Ella Flagg Young was the first president of the NEA, a woman. She was also a student of John Dewey's and applied Deweyan philosophy to her teaching and leadership.
- 14 John Dewey, "The Teacher and the Public," speech given at Columbia University, January 16, 1935.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban*

Education (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958* (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1986); Robert L. Church and Michael W. Sedlak, *Education in the United States* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1976); Rury, *Education and Social Change*.

- ¹⁷ Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education: A Report on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1918). Again, with unions, it is instructive that the NEA was the organization that commissioned this study and report.
- ¹⁸ David Labaree, “Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance,” *Pedagogica Historica* 41, nos. 1 & 2 (2005): 275–288, 284–285.
- ¹⁹ Another reference to our dear George Counts.
- ²⁰ U.S. Department of Education, *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*, National Commission on Excellence in Education, Washington, DC: The Commission: [Supt. Of Docs., U.S. G.P.O. distributor], 1983.
- ²¹ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107–110, § 101, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- ²² Dear reader, you may argue that this point is a stretch, as *A Nation at Risk* and NCLB both call for increased funding in certain areas of education, with the former even calling for higher teacher pay. As the bulk of educational funding comes at the state level, these calls for additional monies for schools were largely decorative.
- ²³ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.
- ²⁴ Women have it worse, earning 17.8% less in 1979, and 31.5% less in 2018. Sylvia Allegretto and Lawrence Mishel, *The Teacher Pay Penalty Has Hit a New High*, Economic Policy Institute, September 5, 2018, <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-gap-2018/#:~:text=The%20total%20teacher%20compensation%20penalty,points%20from%201994%20to%202017>
- ²⁵ Ibid.
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- ²⁹ Richard M. Ingersoll, quoted in *Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers* [webinar], July 17, 2014, <https://all4ed.org/webinar-event/jul-17-2014/>
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- ³¹ Julian Vasquez Heilig, Heather A. Cole, and Marilyn A. Springel, “Alternative Certification and Teach for America: The Search for High Quality Teachers,” *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy* 20, no. 3 (2011): 388–412, 389; H. Richard Milner, IV, *Policy Reforms and De-Professionalization of Teaching* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Boulder National Education Policy Center, February 2013).
- ³² Richard M. Ingersoll, “The Problem of Underqualified Teachers in American Secondary Schools,” *Educational Researcher* 28, no. 2 (1999): 26–37, 34.
- ³³ Partelow, “What to Make of Declining Enrollment,” 4.
- ³⁴ This matches the neo-liberal attitude that pedagogy does not matter; knowing content is enough to be able to teach.
- ³⁵ Kansas Department of Education, Restricted Teaching License Alternative Pathway, see <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Teacher-Licensure-and-Accreditation/Postsecondary/Educator-Preparation/Restricted-Teaching-License-Alternative-Pathway>
- ³⁶ North Carolina officials recently ended what they called a “lateral pathway” which supported people who were changing careers to become teachers. Why? Because the data showed that those teachers weren’t staying in the profession. This older model required a would-be teacher to undergo a three-year plan before becoming a fully-licensed educator. The new program, called a “residency path” provides a limited license after taking courses for only a year. See Molly Osborne, “Developing a Teacher Pipeline: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ New Teacher Residency,” *EdNC*, March 21, 2019, <https://www.ednc.org/developing-a-teacher-pipeline-charlotte-mecklenburg-schools-new-teacher-residency/>; Ann Doss Helms, “CMS Needs Nearly 500 Teachers. How a New Program Is Helping Find Some of Them,” *The Charlotte Observer*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article215287110.html>; Liz Bell, “Lawmakers Seek More Options for Teacher Career Pathway,” *WRAL Raleigh News*, May 24, 2017, <https://www.wral.com/lawmakers-seek-more-options-for-teacher-career-pathway/16720825/>
- ³⁷ U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, quoted in Ramsey Touchberry, “GOP

Stimulus Plan Proposes \$105 Billion for Reopening Schools Amid Pandemic,” *Newsweek*, July 21, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/gop-stimulus-plan-proposes-105-billion-reopening-schools-amid-pandemic-1519427>

Political dialogue has been particularly pointed in reference to schools, as former President Trump and his administration, including U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, ardently have argued for public schools to stay open, with the promise to parents they will be able to return to work, while teacher unions and school administrators have largely argued for stronger remediations to ensure students’ and educators’ safety.

- ³⁸ Even wearing masks in schools has become a political hot-button issue in Kansas, let alone when to open schools. Nathan Shorman and Sarah Ritter, “Gov. Laura Kelly Orders Kansas K–12 Students to Wear a Mask When Schools Reopen,” *The Kansas City Star*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article244356992.html#:~:text=All%20Kansas%20K%2D12%20public,have%20to%20wear%20a%20mask.&text=Laura%20Kelly%20on%20Monday%20released,districts%20take%20certain%20safety%20precautions>
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- ⁴⁰ Eliza Shapiro, “N.Y.C. Schools, Nation’s Largest District, Will Not Fully Reopen in Fall,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/nyregion/nyc-schools-reopening-plan.html>; Collin Binkley, “In Shift, Trump Says Some Schools May Need to Delay Opening,” *Associated Press*, July 23, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/health-lifestyle-virus-outbreak-politics-donald-trump-16bdd4841b5dcd2c6d1ff4a79fd61cf>
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- ⁴² Ingersoll, “The Problem of Underqualified Teachers,” 35.
- ⁴³ Nancy Flanagan, “The Many Ways We Are De-Professionalizing Teaching,” *Education Week* [blog], July 20, 2017, emphasis added, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-the-many-ways-we-are-de-professionalizing-teaching/2017/07>

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