
CONSPIRACY THEORY:

Lessons for Leaders from Two Centuries Of School Reform

If school leaders are to bring about successful reform, they must thwart the forces that have conspired against it since the 19th century. Mr. Nehring identifies six “conspirators” — destructive tendencies so deeply embedded in our culture that they often operate unnoticed — and offers practical suggestions for rooting them out.

BY JAMES H. NEHRING

GENERALLY, I am not an alarmist, but my research into the history of American school reform has led me to believe that there is something of a conspiracy against thoughtful schooling that is deeply embedded in our culture. I have come to believe also that by understanding the sources of this conspiracy, we might marshal the resources necessary to create and sustain thoughtful schools.

During my years as an educator, I have been fortunate to work in a leadership role in the start-up of three small public high schools. These experiences have given me a front-row seat in the theater of school reform. I have also spoken with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of like-minded school reformers about our related efforts, and what strikes me is how similar the challenges are across demographics and across geographic locales. And so, I have been led to ask, What is the source, the common source, of all these challenges?

In recent years I have gone after this question in a focused way through research that blends history and contemporary experience. Driven by a hunch that these common challenges to thoughtful school practice are culturally embedded, I have attempted to connect the dots between the problems faced by school reformers today and the problems faced by school reformers fifty, a hundred, and even two hundred years ago. If the same problems that we face today surface across the historical record, then it's reasonable to conclude that they are somehow embedded in the culture. In exploring carefully selected cases of school reformers from the 19th and 20th centuries and comparing their experiences with contemporary efforts, I have come across several themes. From these themes and from the experiences of school reformers across generations, I have developed some practical strategies for school leaders as we face these cultural conspirators in our own schools and districts.

Before moving on to the conspirators themselves, of which there are six, let me explain why I use the term “conspirator.” Okay, it's catchy, I admit. But beyond that, these culturally embedded tendencies, like conspirators, are hidden in plain sight. You will probably not be surprised by them when you see what they are. You will surely recognize most, if not all, of them. And yet, despite their visibility, we tend to look right past them

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without recognizing their destructive impact on our schools.

A second reason that the term applies is that, like conspirators everywhere, these tendencies work together — in this case, to tear good schools apart. Their combined impact is much greater than their individual effect.

A third and final reason is that, once we're aware of the identity of the conspirators, we will probably conclude, as all good conspiracy theorists do, "They're everywhere! They're everywhere!" Kidding aside, it is important to understand that these tendencies, because they are culturally rooted, can surface anywhere in our school practice. To the extent that we are products of our own culture, they reside in our own hearts and minds. Whenever we are inclined to point out these tendencies in others with whom we work, we would do well to ask where we find these same traits in ourselves.

On to the conspirators. I have identified six that appear in both historical and contemporary records. As you learn about each one, consider the places in your own school setting where you see it at work. After identifying all six conspirators, we will examine the experiences of two representative school reformers from an earlier generation and consider some practical lessons for school leaders today.

SIX CONSPIRATORS AGAINST THOUGHTFUL SCHOOL PRACTICE

1. *The tendency to view schools as factories.* This theme rises most clearly from both historical and contemporary records. The tendency finds its origin in 19th-century school committee men — and they were mostly men — who looked at the red brick buildings in town that produced guns and boots and then looked at the red brick building in town that "produced" children and concluded that the enterprise in all three buildings was essentially the same.

Here's an example. I teach at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. In the mid-19th century, Lowell was the national center, perhaps the international center, of the textile industry. Lowell's leaders ran the city's schools as they ran their mills. The School Committee Report of 1852 pro-

claims that "the division of labor holds good in schools as in mechanical industry."¹ School reports from that era, whether in Lowell or just about anywhere else in industrializing America, use the same language. The new means of production provided a new language for school organization, and it caught on rapidly.

Though it may not be surprising that schools of the Industrial Age reflected industrial practices, what is alarming is that, even in our own times — even in a postindustrial society — this same thinking is still at work. A *Wall Street Journal* lead from our own era makes the point: "Dismayed by the faulty products being turned out by Chicago's troubled public schools, some 60 of the city's giant corporations have taken over the production line themselves."² This language is delivered somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but the reason we find it funny is that we recognize it as the way people continue to speak and think about schools. So conspirator number one is what I will call The Manufacturing Metaphor. The danger posed by this conspirator is that the intellectual and social development of children is vastly more complex than the production of goods, and to the extent that we think of schools in this way, we diminish conditions for learning.

2. *The tendency of community fears to drive school activity.* Fear has been an incitement to American schooling from earliest times. We see it in the very genesis of American public education with the Old Deluder Satan Act, which laid the foundation for a system of schools. Passed by the colonial legislators in Massachusetts in 1647 — barely one generation after the arrival of the Pilgrims — it is one of the oldest laws of Anglo North America. Here it is in slightly abridged form:

It being one chiefe project of that old deluder, Satan, to keepe men from the knowledge of the scriptures, as in former time. . . . It is therefore ordered . . . [that] after the Lord hath increased [the settlement] to the number of fifty howshoulders, [they] shall forthwith appoint one within their town, to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read.³

Fear continues to incite school activity today, whether it is fear of immigrants, fear of racial diversity, fear of whole-language instruction, fear of phonics, or fear of not getting

into a selective college. Even religiously rooted fears continue to bear down on schools. Consider this recent lead from the *New York Times*: “Televangelist Pat Robertson, speaking on his television show ‘The 700 Club,’ tells Dover, Pa., citizens that they have rejected God by voting their school board out of office for supporting teaching of intelligent design and warns them not to be surprised if disaster strikes their area.”⁴

While fear is an adaptive trait in the right circumstances, it is all wrong in others. If I am standing on the railroad tracks and I suddenly feel a deep vibration welling up from the ground beneath my feet, I impulsively jump to the side of the tracks and feel my heart pounding in my chest as a train whooshes past. Fear saves my life in that situation. But in other situations, situations that ought *not* to be governed by impulse — situations such as school governance, which ought to be driven by thoughtful deliberation — fear leads inevitably to decisions that are impulsive and reactive. So conspirator number two I dub The Fear Factor.

3. *The tendency to impose plans that look great from above and make little sense at ground level.* We are all familiar with Dilbert’s pointy-haired boss. He is so funny because he is simultaneously so sure of himself — and so wrong. His policies make great sense to him in the sublime isolation of his office, but at ground level they are nonsense.

The standardized testing mania that periodically seizes American society provides a handy illustration of this tendency. Viewed from the top, such tests appear to provide clarity and an unambiguous means by which to reward hard work and success and punish indolence and failure. From the ground level of school and classroom, however, we know that such emphasis on tests leads to a narrowing of the curriculum, disengaged students, and increased school dropout rates.⁵ One astute observer from the 1870s, an earlier test-crazed era, had this to say: “The school year has become one long period of diffusion and cram, the object of which is to successfully pass a stated series of examinations. This leads directly to superficiality. Smatter is the order of the day.”⁶ That comment could have been made yesterday! Indeed, it aptly describes the impact of some of the less constructive aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act, at least as it has been implemented over the past several years.

The danger of this way of thinking is that decisions made at the top that fail to take into consideration their effect at the point of impact are likely to have unintended consequences that are antithetical to an organization’s central mission. Thus we have conspirator number three, which I call The View from the Top.

4. *The tendency of the system to crush promising innovation.* In the 1930s a fascinating experiment was con-

ducted by the Progressive Education Association involving 30 high schools around the country. Known as the Eight-Year Study, it focused on the potential of local innovation to improve student achievement.⁷ The idea was to see what would happen if selected high schools were freed from trying to meet the usual college entrance requirements and allowed to develop their own, home-grown goals and programs. To make it possible, the Progressive Education Association secured agreements from leading colleges and universities to waive entrance requirements for the graduates of these 30 schools and accept alternative evidence of student achievement. An extensive cohort study of the students who attended these 30 schools, tracking them for eight years through their undergraduate education, showed that they achieved at higher levels both in academic performance and in civic involvement. A revolution in American secondary education was born . . . or so it seemed.

Eight years after the original study ended, another study was conducted that is less well known. Frederick Redefer, a doctoral student at Columbia University, chose for his dissertation topic an examination of the 30 schools to see how they were faring. What he found is almost as astonishing as it is predictable. By 1950, every single school had returned almost entirely to its former state. With the waging of World War II, followed by the ushering in of a culturally conservative era, the gains made by the 30 schools in the Eight-Year Study had been almost completely erased. Exhausted

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by continually working against the system, the teachers and administrators involved in these schools had either given up or moved on. The system had crushed the most promising innovation in high school reform of the first half of the 20th century.⁸

This danger exists everywhere in public education, and it engenders a related tendency on the part of school leaders to assess new programs not by their effectiveness but by the degree to which they fit within the existing system. The fourth conspirator is therefore named The Grand Interlock.

5. *The tendency of schools to say yes to all legitimate requests.* Perhaps because the mission of public schools is to “serve the public,” we have been too open to accommodating all interest groups, all the time. Consequently, as Ernest Boyer once pointed out, our schools “have accumulated purposes like barnacles on a weathered ship.”⁹ And the drag these appendages exert on the ship of schooling has become like the force of molasses.

Consider the layers of goals that surround most schools. There are the several Presidential initiatives of recent decades that come with a list of goals: *A Nation at Risk*, Goals 2000, No Child Left Behind. Add to these the proliferation of learning standards promulgated by the various National Councils (of Teachers of English, of Mathematics, and so on). Add to these the curriculum framework documents developed by state departments of education. Add to the growing total the testing regimen imposed by most states and backed by the federal government. Add to this already-huge muddle the ever-multiplying regulations governing special education, gender equity, children at risk, and so on. And finally, consider that most schools, despite this enormously complex de facto mission statement, attempt to articulate a mission statement of their own that is unique to their school community. So many barnacles!

But it is not only the forces that hover above the domain of principals and teachers that continually produce more and more goals; the forces that are within our power to address make their demands as well. Consider the plight of a principal who is faced with a parent petition to add French to the curriculum in a small school that offers only Spanish because it is committed to doing a few things well. Does she say yes to appease the petitioners (surely their request is reasonable)? Or does she pause to consider the

potential impact on existing programs and commitments and the central mission of the school?

The danger of our tendency to try to be all things to all people is that we end up doing nothing well. Conspirator number five is The Politics of Appeasement.

6. *The tendency to promote favored groups to the detriment of others.* I recently logged on to the website for the department of education in my home state of Massachusetts. The website lists the per-pupil spending figures for every town in the state. Here are two examples: Lincoln, which is predominantly white and prosperous, backs each child in its schools with \$13,314 of taxpayer money; Lawrence, which is predominantly Latino and of low socioeconomic status, backs each child in its schools with \$8,230 of taxpayer money.¹⁰ That’s a difference of more than \$5,000 or more than 60%. And Lincoln and Lawrence are not the highest- and lowest-spending districts in Massachusetts. They are simply representative of the trend statewide.

The historical record, too, is consistent on this point. For example, quarterly tuition at the elite Temple School of Boston stood at \$15 in 1837, while Boston city records show that per-pupil spending at any of the regular Boston schools (noted for their decrepit condition) during the same era amounted to just \$12.43 for the entire year.¹¹ The system tends to favor certain groups of children over others, and it has always been this way. The danger, of course, is that, to the extent that we advantage those groups that are already advantaged, we erode the foundations of democracy and civil society. Conspirator number six I call The Failure of Generosity and Justice.

A HOPEFUL TALE AND A CAUTIONARY TALE

With our six conspirators introduced, let’s move to a couple of representative tales of school reformers who faced issues strikingly similar to those we face today. Of the two tales to come, one is hopeful, the other cautionary. Both are from the 19th century and, though couched in the quaint and politely evasive language of the era, they speak in many ways directly to our own experience.

A hopeful tale. If ever there were a place where the Manufacturing Metaphor should have taken hold and defined the schools, it is Quincy, Massachusetts, in the last decades

of the 19th century. Quincy was dominated by enormous granite quarries, worked largely by recent immigrants from Southern Europe who hammered the rock free from its subterranean mass and loaded it onto trains for transport to the far reaches of New England. It was a place dominated by the notions of raw material, profit-driven production, systematized labor, and railroad efficiencies.

Despite these conditions, something of a revolution occurred in Quincy beginning in 1875. Just four years after this revolution began, one commentator described the classrooms of the local schools this way:

In place of the . . . time honored machine-process, young women, full of life and nervous energy, found themselves surrounded at the blackboard with groups of little ones who were learning how to read almost without knowing it; — learning how to read, in a word, exactly as they had before learned how to speak, not by rule and rote and by piecemeal, but altogether and by practice.¹²

The story of the Quincy revolution begins with Charles Adams, who, in 1875, was serving as chairman of the local school committee. Adams, of the Presidential lineage, lived at the family estate in Quincy and represented the patrician elite of the community. Though he knew the industrial mindset well — he was at the time serving as Massachusetts Commissioner of Railroads — he made a crucial distinction between what was good for industrial production and what was good for the upbringing of children. A second factor in the Quincy revolution was Francis Parker, a New Hampshire school master and Civil War veteran. He had a reputation for using humor and appealing to student curiosity as favored methods in the classroom. Quite coincidentally, Parker, who was looking for work in 1875, answered an ad for a newly created superintendent position placed by Adams in a Boston newspaper. Thus was born an alliance that over the next five years transformed education in the Quincy schools.

Together, Adams and Parker set out a strategic agenda. First, the two school leaders emphatically and publicly dismissed the industrial mindset. Adams, speaking at a county-wide meeting of school leaders during this period said:

The last new theory, so curiously amplified in some of our larger cities, that vast numbers of children should be taught as trains on a railroad are run, on a time-table principle, — that they are here now, that they will be at such another point tomorrow, and at their terminus at such a date; — while a general superintendent sits in his central office and pricks off each step in the advance of the whole line on a chart before him . . . [has been] dismissed.¹³

In Adams and Parker's vision, the superintendent would focus on instructional practice in a way that only the most contemporary of reformers (such as Richard Elmore) have recently embraced. A visitor to Quincy commented:

What does he do? How does he do it? He actually superintends, — not by means of reports and blanks and orders from the office, but by being a living presence in every school-room; and, more than that, by being a living power in the thinking of his teachers by his philosophical training-work with them.¹⁴

The effect of this work stood in stark contrast to the mechanized process of most towns in the Boston orbit and ushered in an instructional revolution for the children of Quincy. In addition to their educational leadership, though, Adams and Parker were savvy politicians and tended prudently to public opinion. Records show that, during the five years of Parker's superintendency, per-pupil spending actually declined, even as general satisfaction with the schools rose.¹⁵ And though record-keeping in the 19th century was nothing like what it is today under the strictures of adequate yearly progress, attendance data show a dramatic jump of 18% just one year after Parker's arrival.¹⁶

A cautionary tale. In contrast to Quincy of the 1870s, circumstances in Boston in the 1830s were quite favorable for an educator who wished to launch a progressive revolution. The strict, religiously rooted culture of Calvinism was in decline, and the liberal Unitarians were on the rise. Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose father, Lyman Beecher, was

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one of the leading conservative Boston preachers of the day, wrote many years later:

When Dr. Beecher came to Boston, Calvinism or orthodoxy was the despised and persecuted form of faith. It was the dethroned royal family wandering like a permitted mendicant in the city where once it had held court, and Unitarianism reigned in its stead. All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarians. All the elite of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches. The judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of Church organization, so carefully ordained by the Pilgrim Fathers, had been nullified.¹⁷

Onto this progressive-friendly scene came Connecticut educator Bronson Alcott (father of Louisa May Alcott). Alcott had found success as a liberal school reformer in his home state but had grown weary of Connecticut’s conservative culture. Boston, he decided, was the place for him and his progressive ideas.

Quickly establishing his credentials upon his arrival in Boston, Alcott secured space in the Masonic Temple on Tremont Street and grandly named his new school the Temple School. The school enjoyed a promising beginning, with learning based on observation, discussion, and reflective journaling. Alcott was a gentle schoolman, who, like Parker, favored encouragement over harsh correction. An observer describes Alcott’s approach to his students’ early writing efforts this way:

As they exhibited their strange copies, [he] betrayed no misgivings as to the want of resemblance; nor did Mr. Alcott rudely point it out. He took the writing for what it was meant to be; knowing that practice would at once mend the eye and hand, but that criticism would check the desirable courage and self-confidence.¹⁸

Because Alcott relied on his students’ curiosity, his students became comfortable asking questions. One day, a student asked that timeless stumper of young parents: Mr. Alcott, where do babies come from? Thanks to the dutiful records of Alcott’s assistant, Elizabeth Peabody (who later became an important advocate in the kindergarten movement),

we have the exact, verbatim answer he offered, rendered in the quaint language of the age:

A mother suffers when she has a child. When she is going to have a child she gives up her body to God, and He works upon it in a mysterious way and, with her aid, brings forth the child’s Spirit in a little Body of its own; and when it has come she is blissful.¹⁹

What is quaint to our ears was nothing less than *scandalous* in 1836 — even in liberal Boston. Unfortunately for the Temple School and the cause of liberal education, Mr. Alcott lacked the political savvy of Adams and Parker. While the Quincy leaders tended carefully to public opinion, he was clueless. Excited about progress in his new school, Mr. Alcott published two books filled with Peabody’s descriptions.²⁰ Among the passages cited stood Mr. Alcott’s explanation, just as I’ve given it above. Boston’s leading citizens flew into a panic over their favorite new schoolman. From toast of the town, Mr. Alcott quickly descended to public outcast. In the pulpits and the editorial pages, he was universally vilified. A letter to the editor in the *Boston Courier* reads as follows:

It were a venial error in Mr. Alcott had he simply published the crude remarks of his pupils, but he has gone further. He seemed to delight in his own person in deflecting their attention to the more improper subjects, and when they appear with intuitive perception to shrink from contact with them, he has forced their minds to grapple with them. . . . Mr. Alcott should hide his head in shame.²¹

This letter was signed “A. Parent.” Alcott essentially ignored the growing public protest against his practices, and his enrollments quickly declined. His journal suggests that there was even the threat of a mob attack on his home one evening in April of 1837. Fortunately, the mob did not materialize. However, within months, Bronson Alcott was forced by lack of pupils to close his once-promising new school.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

What do we make of these tales, now well more than a

century old? In the case of Quincy, passionate advocacy for an alternative to the Manufacturing Metaphor played a role in improving the quality of education for children attending its schools. In the case of the Temple School, a failure to deal with the Fear Factor and address community fears led directly to the demise of an otherwise promising and thoughtful school. Beyond their appeal as tales, however, what implications for school reformers today can we derive from these historical episodes? What lessons do they offer about combating the cultural tendencies that continue to work against thoughtful school practice?

PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS TODAY

Below, I offer contemporary school leaders some useful questions to ask as they combat each of the six conspirators described above, along with some suggested strategies for cultivating thoughtful school practice.

1. *The Manufacturing Metaphor.* For the tendency to view schools as factories, I suggest we ask, Where in my practice do the language and thinking of product assembly appear? What different language and different thinking might replace it?

Before there were factories, there were schools. And before the language of manufacturing was employed, there was a language used to describe schools. The record shows that preindustrial language tended to be agrarian. Learning was “cultivated.” Children were “nurtured” and “shepherded.” The teacher “tilled the soil” and “tended the flock.” A return to such language is not a bad idea. The agrarian references rightly show that the role of the teacher is to create conditions to promote growth without falsely suggesting, as does the Manufacturing Metaphor, that a teacher can forcibly install learning in a child. Whether one uses agrarian language or something else, it is not a trivial matter that the language and understandings of learning are rooted in sound child development theory.

2. *The Fear Factor.* For the tendency of community fears to drive school activity, I suggest we get in the habit of asking, Where in my practice am I allowing myself to respond reactively to fear? What might a more deliberative and reasoned response look like? In cultivating thoughtful schools, it is crucial that decisions be driven by a principled school mission and that advocacy for the school’s mission be employed to anticipate and respond to fear and its impulse-generating behaviors.

3. *The View from the Top.* To combat the tendency to impose plans that look great from above but make little sense

on the ground, I suggest that we get in the habit of asking, Do the policy decisions under my jurisdiction take into account their full effect at their point of impact? Although there is often little we can do about the policy decisions made above our level (though I believe we can do more than is commonly assumed), we can and should be cognizant of those decisions that affect the portion of the system over which we have some control. By considering the point of impact of our decisions and by including people who will be asked to implement the decisions both in policy generation and in policy assessment, we will create condi-

tions that tend to generate outcomes aligned with our mission.

4. *The Grand Interlock*. For the tendency of the system to crush promising innovation, I suggest we begin asking ourselves, Are there places in my educational practice where I am allowing fit to trump effectiveness? Whenever we sense that we are diminishing a promising innovation because it is difficult to square with existing structures and practices, we need to explore ways in which we might craft a workable connection between the innovation and the system. Better still, we might use the value of the innovation to advocate for systemic changes that will support it and others like it.

5. *The Politics of Appeasement*. For the tendency of school leadership to say yes to all legitimate requests, I suggest that we ask ourselves, When adding something new, how will it affect existing activities and influence the school's central mission? I suggest, too, that we make the likely ripple effect of new additions part of the public discussion about them so that all stakeholders will be encouraged to weigh the relative costs associated with adding more. At the same time, all stakeholders will have to struggle with the challenge of protecting a school's mission and vision in the face of something that seems too wonderful when considered in isolation.

6. *The Failure of Generosity and Justice*. For the tendency to promote favored groups to the detriment of others, I suggest we start asking ourselves, Who gains from this decision? Who loses? Would I accept this loss for my own child? The equitable (though not necessarily equal) allocation of resources ought to be a fundamental screen for all decisions involving the deployment of goods and services. I have found that personalizing the question by asking whether a loss would be acceptable for my own child helps me quickly perform a gut check on the fairness of the decision. Perhaps, under some circumstances, I would accept a loss for my own child because I see the benefit that altering the distribution of a particular resource can bring to the larger group or to children currently underserved by the existing allocation of resources. However, my own predilection to protect my child will quickly sniff out decisions that are patently unfair.

I believe that by understanding the historically rooted tendencies in our culture that work against thoughtful schooling, we will be better able to ask helpful questions and to develop useful strategies that will cultivate other tendencies that will promote inquiry and reflection as the dominant traits in our schools. I believe further that our culture is not inherently cruel and that "the better angels of our nature" are in-

deed real. Our work as school leaders is to remind ourselves, our colleagues, and our communities of those qualities and to cultivate them in our school practice. When we do so, we will be acting not in self-interest but in the interest of enhancing the quality of learning for all our students.

1. "Lowell School Committee Report of 1852," cited in Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 167-68.

2. "Faulty Products," *Wall Street Journal*, 9 February 1990, cited in Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* (New York: Crown, 2005), p. 95. Kozol's Chapter 4, "Preparing Minds for Markets," is a particularly good treatment of the ways in which industrial thinking continues to dominate school practice.

3. Cited in John D. Pulliam and James J. Van Patten, *History of Education in America*, 7th ed. (New Jersey: Merrill, 1991), p. 51.

4. "Town Is Warned of God's Wrath," *New York Times*, 11 November 2005, available at www.nytimes.com. Search archives for Pat Robertson and specific date.

5. See Deborah Meier and George Wood, eds., *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act Is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

6. Charles F. Adams, "The New Education in the Public Schools of Quincy, Mass.," in Sol Cohen, ed., *Education in the United States: A Documentary History*, Vol. 3 (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 1813.

7. Wilford M. Aiken, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study with Conclusions and Recommendations* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942).

8. Frederick L. Redefer, "The Eight Year Study — Eight Years Later: A Study of Experimentation in the Thirty Schools" (Doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1952), p. 70.

9. Ernest L. Boyer, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 57.

10. These figures represent total per-pupil expenditures for fiscal-year 2004. They are available at www.doe.mass.edu.

11. "Report of the Primary School Committee on Improvements, Boston, 1833," cited in Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 85. The comparison here, though ostensibly between "public" and "private" institutions, nonetheless underscores the vast difference in the kinds of education available to children of wealth and children of lesser means in the early 19th century.

12. Adams, in Cohen, p. 1812.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 1811.

14. Anna Brackett, untitled article, *New England Journal of Education*, vol. 11, 12 February 1880.

15. *Annual Report of the Town of Quincy, Massachusetts*, 1881, p. 200.

16. *Annual Report of the Town of Quincy, Massachusetts*, 1874, p. 11; and *Annual Report of the Town of Quincy, Massachusetts*, 1876, p. 14.

17. Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, 2 vols. (New York, 1871), vol. 2, p. 110.

18. A. Bronson Alcott, *Record of Mr. Alcott's School Exemplifying the Principles and Methods of Moral Culture*, 3rd ed. rev. (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 14. The actual author is Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, who refers to herself in the preface to the original 1836 edition as "recorder."

19. Bronson Alcott, *Conversations with Children on the Gospels* (Boston: J. Munroe and Company, 1836), cited in Odell Shepard, *Pedlar's Progress: The Life of Bronson Alcott* (1937; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 97.

20. The two books referred to are *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, and *Record of Mr. Alcott's School Exemplifying the Principles and Methods of Moral Culture*. Both books relied heavily on the careful notes taken by Alcott's classroom assistant, Elizabeth Peabody.

21. Cited in Shepard, p. 193.

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