

Breaking the Mold:

The Private Sector's Accelerating Role in Public Education

Some business leaders say that fixing our nation's schools is the hardest, meanest, bloodiest thing they've ever tried to do.

The good news is that after years of exceptional effort – and as much frustration – the private sector is charging ahead, helping clear the way for reform. And various strategies for shaking up the educational system are meeting with some success.

Between the Fourth of July and Labor Day this past summer I drove across our country – some 8,800 miles – through 38 states, visiting with Americans whose lives can help us make sense of the world in which we find ourselves. I stayed in their homes, ate supper with them, and stayed up late talking. The question I most frequently asked: “Looking ahead 20 years, do you think your children will have as many opportunities in America as you have had?”

In Boston, during a conversation with Dr. David Birch, a former M.I.T. professor who tracks the rise and fall of American companies, I thought back to 1981. That was the year when he taught me the single most important lesson I learned as Governor of Tennessee: that 10% of Americans lose their job over the course of a year. In Tennessee, that meant about 220,000 people. Even recruiting Nissan and Saturn to Tennessee would never replace all the jobs we were losing every year.

TURNING HEADLIGHTS ON BRIGHT

We came to see that instead of importing jobs, we had to create a climate in which new jobs would grow. So we set out to improve the entrepreneurial climate – cutting through red tape, keeping the tax rate low, and creating a Business Roundtable to encourage a pro-jobs atmosphere.

But as we quickly discovered, all of that was second to education. We had to provide a steady stream of well-educated workers who could meet the new demands of the Information Age.

I recall visiting the headlight-assembly team at the new Saturn auto plant in Spring Hill. The team knew

it was up against stiff competition from Japanese and German automakers. To produce a defect-free headlight, workers had to write and speak English well, have a good grasp of mathematics and spatial relations, and understand the need for teamwork. Not an easy prescription to fill. These were skills no auto workers had ever been required to bring to a job.

So we launched a crusade to improve our schools. We made sure every Tennessee student was computer literate by the ninth grade, paid teachers more for teaching well, created summer programs for gifted students, and upgraded the quality of our higher education,

partly by adding 87 endowed chairs of “excellence” at our universities.

Hardly any of this would have happened without support from the private sector. For many companies it meant shifting from a hands-off to a hands-on role in education.

Business leaders formed Tennesseans for Better Schools and raised \$500,000 to help push a 10-point Better Schools program through the legislature. Corporate executives served on higher education boards and matched state dollars to help fund those 87 chairs. Companies adopted schools, gave awards, and formed partnerships with communities. Our Business Roundtable made education its No.1 priority.

Tennessee's story is worth the telling because it shows how school reform, like all politics, is local. No one knows how to improve schools better than the community itself.

A NEW AGENDA FOR ACTION

Governors in every state were getting the same message. All of us were becoming convinced that in the midst of a world of enormous change, American education seemed to be trudging along in the same old rut.

At that time, I was chairman of the National Governors' Association. We decided to change the education agenda by doing something governors had never done before: devote an entire year working together on a single subject – education. Our strategy to get things off dead center was to ask these questions:

1. Why not pay teachers more for teaching well?
2. What can be done to attract, train, and reward excellent school leaders?
3. Why don't we let parents choose the school their children attend?



Lamar Alexander

4. Aren't there ways to help poor children succeed in school?
5. Why are expensive buildings closed half the year when children are behind in their studies?
6. Why shouldn't schools use the newest technologies for learning?
7. How much are college students really learning?

A HORSE TRADE TO GET RESULTS

In 1986 the governors answered those questions in a report called "Time for Results." It proposed that we do some old-fashioned horse trading: we'll regulate less if school districts will produce better results. How? The report laid out a set of radical reforms such as school choice, all-day and all-year schooling, and performance pay for teachers and school leaders.

A few years later President Bush and all fifty governors met in Charlottesville to establish ambitious National Education Goals for the year 2000. The goals refocused the nation's attention on the need for setting high academic standards, especially in math and science. They also reminded the nation that a child's education starts early – at home.

In 1991 came the America 2000 strategy designed to move the country, community by community, toward those goals. High academic standards, improved student testing, reduced federal regulation of teachers, break-the-mold schools, more school choices for parents – these were the building blocks for better schools.

Inviting the private sector to join in was perhaps the biggest step of all. An enormous number of organizations and executives, from Wal-Mart to the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, rallied to the cause. Former Xerox CEO David Kearns took the lead in helping launch the New American Schools Development Corporation. The corporate leaders who made up the board raised \$100 million to help communities create break-the-mold schools.

This was the first time in anyone's memory that non-educators were setting – and advancing – such an education agenda with leadership and dollars.

STUCK IN THE SAME OLD RUT

Yet improvements came painfully slow. Most of the news stories told how we had established goals most children could not achieve. Even the combined efforts of governors, top executives, and community leaders could not overcome the resistance of entrenched interests. For the most part the education system was stuck in the same old rut.

Today, about 10 years since the governors' call to action, transforming America's education system is even more important. Of the 100 million workers in the private sector, some 10% still lose their jobs each year. Those jobs must be replaced. The approach we took back in Tennessee – focus on the job spigot instead of the job drain – is still potent. To put it another way, it's the key to our future standard of living.

Almost every business person I met this summer on my cross-country drive knows this. Better schools mean better jobs.

In Detroit I talked with Bronce Henderson, the chief executive of a company that makes robotic systems for assembling automobiles. It's a company my friend Professor Birch likes to call a "gazelle" – one of the 270,000 or so rapidly growing firms with at least 50 employees that create almost all of America's new jobs.

"I can't find enough trained workers," Bronce told me. "Working capital, faster approval of environmental regulations, no tax increases – they're all critical factors in keeping my company growing, but nothing is more important than education," adding, "If we're not careful, we're going to wind up with the top two-thirds of America doing very well and the bottom third stuck for lack of a good education and the good jobs you get with it."

'FIND THE GOOD AND PRAISE IT'

Bronce's comment reminded me of the first night of my drive when I stopped in Henning, Tennessee, the hometown of my late friend Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*. I drove by his grandparent's home, and on the gravestone by the porch, where we buried him two years ago, were the six words by which he lived his life, "Find the Good and Praise It."

In that spirit, we should praise the good things communities are doing with their schools. It is a matter of starting all over again – creating a whole new educational framework that fits today's children and tomorrow's world. The challenge may seem awesome – some might say impossible. But I believe it can be done.

Within this huge country there are some 15,000 school districts filled with parents, teachers, and local business leaders working hard to help children learn.

In this *Business Week* special education section we'll describe 10 of the most effective strategies that communities – in close partnership with the private sector – are using to break the mold and create the best schools in the world for all of our children.

About 10 years since the governors' call to action, transforming America's education system is even more important today.

Putting Reform on a Faster Track

STARTING EARLY

1 Today, in communities across the country, there's a new focus on the importance of taking care of children before they go to school – even before they're born.

Cocaine Kids. In Detroit's Hutzel Hospital, one-third of the 8,000 babies born each year have already been exposed to cocaine through their mothers. When I visited the hospital, clinical nurse Julie Sullens told me, "Some of these children cry all night. They're inconsolable."

This is like planting land mines on our most populated beaches. Some of these babies will never fit into families, into classrooms, into our society. We and they will pay a horrible price.

In a far less extreme situation, Dallas-based Texas Instruments saw the problems facing many pre-school children in its own city. In 1990, along with Head Start of Greater Dallas and other public and private agencies, it created the Margaret Cone Head Start Center. This pre-school program for disadvantaged four-year-olds provides extended day and year-round care – as well as education, health, nutrition, and social services – for children and their parents. Texas Instruments doesn't leave the kids in limbo. Cone children go on to attend kindergarten through third grade at Frazier elementary, a TI School Partner In Education.

Pre-school Partnership. In Rochester, Kodak's 21st Century Learning Challenge created a partnership with the Edison Technical and Vocational High School. Out of this came a new, two-classroom Montessori Pre-school for more than 70 four-year-olds that was built with materials supplied by local businesses. Kodak underwrote and coordinated the project.

SET ACADEMIC STANDARDS HIGH

2 All children can reach high academic standards, but most American parents don't believe it.

"Students can learn mathematics if they have the *ganas*," says Jaime Escalante, a high school math teacher in California, using the Spanish word for desire. "This is the only thing we need from students – the desire



In Dallas the Margaret Cone Head Start Center, supported by Texas Instruments, provides extensive day care all year long for pre-school children.

COURTESY OF TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

to learn." And Escalante's amazing career as a teacher proves it. In the 12 years he's taught calculus at Garfield High School, 576 of his students have done well enough on the Advanced Placement test to receive college credits.

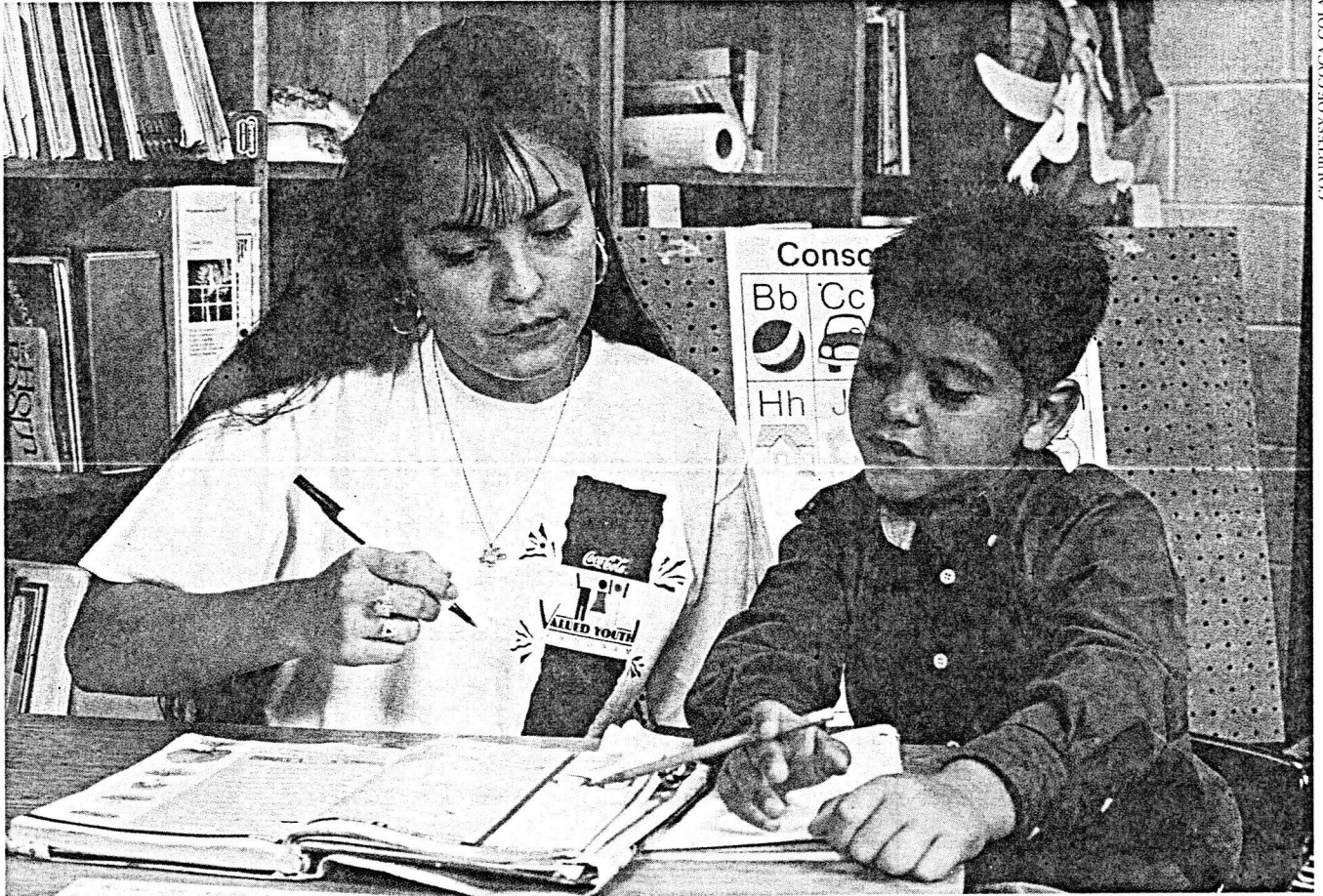
"Students should be able to think through problems more effectively," as Charlotte K. Frank, vice-president of McGraw-Hill School Publishing Company, puts it. "And more can learn to communicate better."

Yet some segments of the American population aren't fazed one bit by tough standards – among them, most Asian families. Their children often attain above-average scores because parents respect those standards and believe they're attainable. There's the Laotian girl, for example, who won a Chattanooga spelling bee only three years after she moved to this country – with no command of English.

Math is one subject where the nation has really raised standards without the imposition of any federal rules. The campaign to improve math instruction began back in the eighties when Iris Carl, a Houston math teacher and president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, led an effort to establish world-class standards for what all children should know and be able to accomplish.

Since the council published its standards in 1989, publishers have been revising their textbooks, states have been changing their math tests, and teachers have gone through retraining programs. The revision has upgraded math instruction in some 40% of the nation's classrooms, according to Carl.

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Yolanda Gamez (left) gives Eric Sanchez (right) a spelling lesson in preparation for an upcoming test. She is one of 25 Coca-Cola Valued Youth tutors from Kazen Middle School located in San Antonio, Texas, which was the first site for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

The improvements have come about none too soon. Says Martin Marietta, one of the country's largest defense contractors, sounding a note of alarm, "Over 50% of all high school students take no mathematics or science after tenth grade, according to one M.I.T. study, and only 1% of American high school students study calculus, compared to 12% of Japanese high school students."

Corporate Catalyst. If there are skeptics who doubt whether children can achieve higher standards, businesses nationwide are doing their best to change their minds. For instance:

■ NationsBank is giving \$2 million to the Southern Regional Educational Board – a consortium of 15 states from Maryland to Florida to Texas – to support the board's program to raise academic achievement.

■ About one hundred Citibank "faculty" trained at the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University are, in turn, training dozens of teachers in new methods aimed at raising children's achievement standards.

Role Models. Through its Valued Youth Program,

Coca-Cola is using tutoring and mentoring as a tool to teach elementary students who require special assistance.

"The concept is to help middle-school students in academic trouble because of family, police, or other factors," says a Coca Cola Company spokesperson. "We're looking at cases where teachers and parents have tried everything. We want to help them turn their lives around by helping them perform a service for younger children."

"One thing that seems to work," she goes on to say, "is making the kids responsible. The Coca-Cola program takes largely Hispanic students at risk of dropping out and makes them tutors to help others who are struggling – and close to failing. They become role models. But to do that, they have to clean up their act. They have to value themselves, as the program's name says."

The program, which works through school districts and community agencies, comes out of the belief that children can actively contribute to each other's education. In Brownsville, Texas – for example – the program matches up students like Juan, 14, and Maria, 13, with

three kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade kids who need help with reading and math. The teenagers receive weekly training and get paid for their tutoring.

Coca-Cola's program has had a dramatic impact on teen attitudes, providing a motivation that had been lacking. "The dropout rate among tutors is less than 2% compared to 12% for students not in the program," says Director Cuca Robledo Montecel. "The tutors believe they have a real contribution to make."

REWARDING GOOD TEACHERS

3 Tennessee's state-wide program to pay teachers more for teaching well is now 10 years old. More than 9,700 teachers participate in the peer review program.

Unfortunately, no other state rewards good teachers with better pay, despite the obvious motivational benefits. Some of the opposition comes from unions. But there's also plenty of foot-dragging at many colleges, which makes the completely illogical assertion that there's no way to tell a good teacher from a bad one.

So long as that absurd assumption holds, there will be no way to make teaching a truly professional career.

States and communities cannot afford to pay all teachers what the best teachers deserve – and they shouldn't. They should and would pay much more if there were a way to select outstanding teachers.

Evaluation Gridlock. The stumbling block in rewarding top teachers has always been the method of evaluation. It may be obvious that some teachers are better than others, but it's not easy to make the distinction fairly. And any system that rewards teachers inequitably produces the kind of working environment nobody wants.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, though moving at caterpillar-like speed, offers some real promise. Established in 1987 to help teaching become a true profession – with the increased pay and responsibilities associated with professionalism – it has established rigorous standards that states can use to determine what teachers in every field should know and be able to do. It has also set out to build a voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards.

Some two-dozen corporations, from American Express and BellSouth to IBM, The New York Times, and Union Carbide, have supported the board's work.

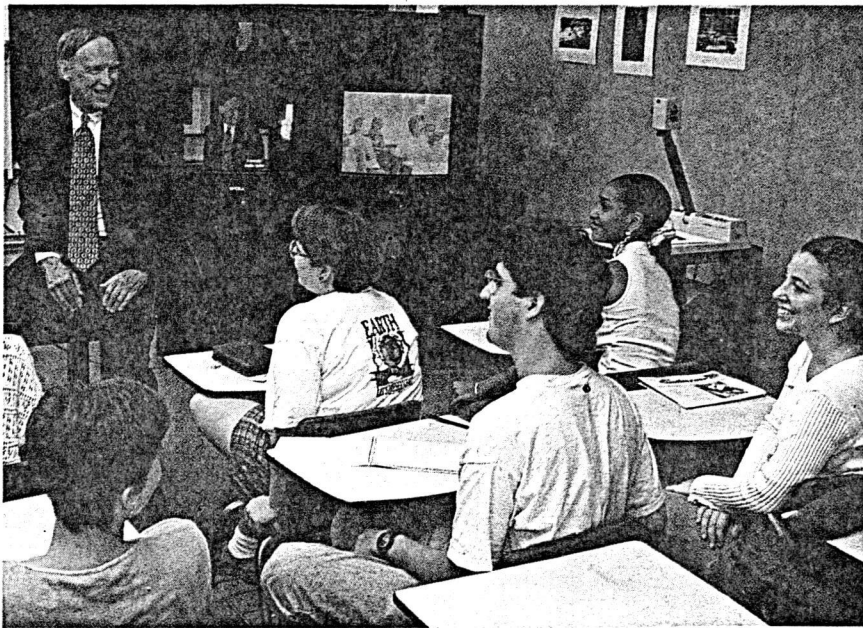
After completing tests involving some 539 teachers, the board will launch National Board Certification across the nation next year. Eventually, many school districts will pay more to board-certified teachers.

"A lot of teacher training is out of date with what we need today," says Pat Willis, president and executive director of the BellSouth Foundation, which concentrates on promoting education reform in the nine states where its parent supplies phone service. "They don't all get quality training. We've been a big player in new approaches to professional development for teachers – how they're prepared, what kind of annual and regular support they get, and how you expand their knowledge base."

Teacher Recognition. That's not all the private sector is doing to bring the teaching profession up to speed.

■ Upjohn, for instance, selects 12 Michigan teachers each year for its week-long ScienceGrasp program aimed at enhancing the hands-on teaching skills of elementary teachers.

■ The Encyclopedia Britannica sponsors the prestigious "teacher of the year" awards, one for every state and one for the whole country.



BellSouth Chairman John L. Clendenin visits an interactive learning classroom. BellSouth has been involved in educational efforts throughout the Southeast, including interactive distance-learning programs.

■ Some 8,500 teachers now belong to the Geography Alliances that the National Geographic Society has been creating in every state since 1985.

■ Martin Marietta sponsors the Academy for Teachers of Science and Mathematics, a four-week program held every summer on the campus of the University of Tennessee. And it's supporting similar academies in Florida, Maryland, and New Mexico. Through an innovative curriculum,

teachers "discover the true origins of science and math and the fun and excitement that hands-on activities can bring to the business of learning." The avowed aim: to pass along some of that excitement to students faced with decisions as to what educational courses they should take.

"Students make critical decisions early in their lives, even when they're in elementary school," says Mike Hopp, director of management and organization development at Martin Marietta. "Certainly in junior high a student has to decide whether to pursue – or not pursue – advanced algebra. If you miss it then, you don't ever get to be an engineer."

PUT COMPUTERS IN CLASSROOMS

4 One hundred years after the invention of the telephone, most teachers don't have easy access to one. In classroom after classroom, they look as though they're trying to compete in the Indy 500 with a Model T. As for desktop computers for the kids, the situation isn't much better.

But – thanks to the private sector – change is coming fast. In a showcase program in Portland, Maine, Blue Cross/Blue Shield sponsors a Center for Youth Apprenticeships, which is definitely getting somewhere.

"When children come here from their high school classroom," says Jean Mattimore, the center's executive director, "it's like going from one age into another.

There are really no manual-labor jobs here. Nothing they see in school looks like what they'll find to work with here."

Classroom Computers. Coast to coast, companies are putting computers and other high-tech equipment into classrooms.

■ In Houston there's a new K-8 school with one PC for every four students – the product of a partnership between the Houston Independent School District and one of the city's biggest companies, Compaq Computer. The school integrates core subject areas like math and science in a challenging academic program. Compaq provides not only computers but also video disks, CD-ROMs, on-line access to data bases, and technical support. The company even goes so far as to help recruit talented faculty from around the nation.

■ In two states IBM is upgrading teaching with computer technology. Its New York State Initiative is a pilot program to determine how a statewide educational network might work in all New York public schools. And in the South the IBM Mississippi 2000 project provides computer technology, educational software, and a fiber-optic audio and video system to link teachers and students in rural classrooms across the state.

■ This year Apple Computer's program called "Partners in Education Grants" will provide 11 K-12 schools and 11 teacher-training institutions with \$1.2 million worth



Photographs of Smithsonian treasures can be downloaded using the "gopher" feature of IBM's software product that provides K-12 with a link to Internet. Here a student studies an image of the "Spirit of St. Louis."

of equipment to help them prepare both students and teachers for the twenty-first century. Apple will also conduct an 11-day retreat at the Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County, just north of San Francisco, to help train those who've received the computers and peripheral equipment.

Many communities are using technology to go beyond what happens in school and increase communications between school and home. In Montgomery County, Maryland, several schools are using voice mailboxes for teachers so that parents can call to get their child's homework assignment. One of those schools received more than 750 calls the first week.

Many of the calls came from students who like the technology. It helps make school fun!

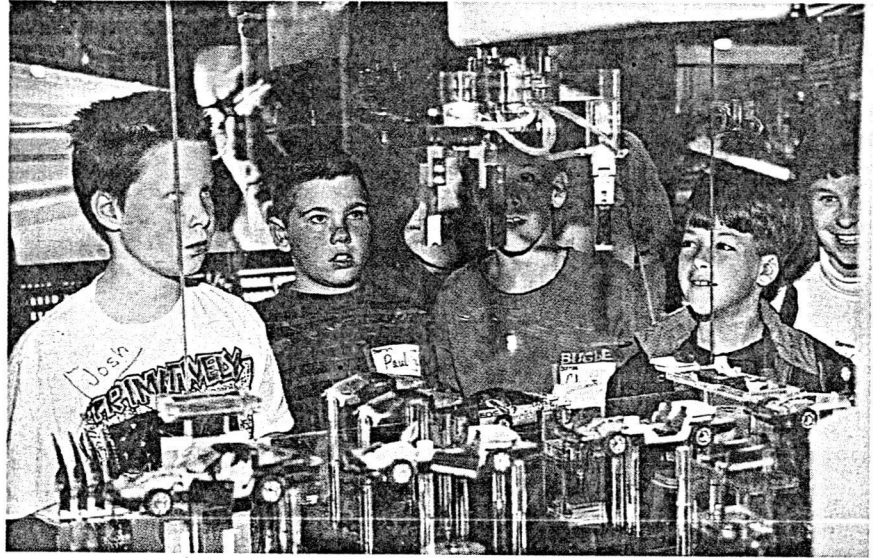
Technology is not just a new set of toys. It's a new way of thinking – a new way of living. Not feeling comfortable with today's technology can be a major obstacle to helping a child make the transition from school to a good job.

MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE

5 The streets around many schools are so dangerous that adults are fearful. It is shocking when a 12-year-old boy is under indictment for murder, but that was the case recently at a middle school I visited in East Los Angeles. Even in "nice" neighborhoods, school safety is a problem. In Rockdale County, Georgia – for instance – a shooting at Heritage High School led the community to institute a virtual ban on weapons.

All parents want good and safe schools for their children. Every school should have a zero-tolerance weapons policy. And every community should have alternative schools so that troublemakers can be sent to a tightly disciplined school rather than out on the streets.

The private sector is helping here, too. In Kansas City, Missouri – for example – the top executive of Marion Merrell Dow, a pharmaceutical company, set up the Kaufman Foundation to run Project Star, which teaches students how to resist the social pressures to smoke, drink, or take drugs.



At Informart in Dallas the EDS Information Technology Pavilion gives kids an inside look at how automation works in manufacturing plants.

KEEP SCHOOLS OPEN LONGER

6 Schools are supposed to fit the needs of families. Yet even though most women now work outside the home and many parents are single, nearly all schools still continue to operate from only 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and stay open only half the days of the year. It's a maddening situation. A school that's open for so short a time fits very few family schedules.

I have yet to be in a school that was not safer than the neighborhood surrounding it. In the Bronx, for example, I visited a school where students – mostly Colombian-Americans – were getting a good education. Yet the school hardly looked like a place for learning. It had fences topped by the kind of razor wire we use in prisons because of the bad neighborhood. At 3p.m. the bell would ring, the doors would open, and the school would close, emptying the children into the streets that offered little but trouble.

More Than Day Care. There is absolutely no excuse for any school to close so early and turn children out unattended. Nearly 10 years ago, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the school system asked Becci Bookner, a kindergarten teacher, to start a pilot program of academic activities that would appeal to families both before and after school. It began with 21 kids and now has 2,200 – half of Murfreesboro's student body. School buildings are in use 12 hours a day year-round.

It's not day care in disguise. "Children in our program have access to computer labs, foreign language classes,

Through an innovative curriculum, teachers "discover the true origins of science and math and the fun and excitement that hands-on activities can bring to the business of learning."

music lessons, sports – even homework classes,” says Bookner. “Parents can choose the hours their children use a school. Our program supports families and improves education.”

All of this is done at no extra cost to Murfreesboro’s taxpayers. Families pay up to \$26 a week – with special arrangements for those with financial problems. And now Chapter 1 federal dollars are also available for schools operating such programs.

“It is time to face the obvious,” states *Prisoners of Time*, a report recently published by the National Commission on Time and Learning. “In many communities, when children are not with their families, the next best place for them is the school.”

THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK BRIDGE

7 For many students, making the transition from school to a job is like stepping from the Industrial Age into the Information Age. It’s a wrenching change.

What they’ve learned at school doesn’t fit what they need to know at work. Much of it is designed to prepare students for college. That’s why so many juniors and seniors who aren’t going on to college are bored with what their high schools are offering them.

Several states have worked with their business communities to develop youth apprenticeship programs. Maine, for example, created a three-year program – covering the tenth and eleventh grades and the first year of a technical college – in which participants spend

about equal time learning and working. Supervising each apprentice is a representative from a local company or business.

During the three years, employers pay the apprentice an annual fee of up to \$5,000. If a business decides that a graduate’s performance falls short of the skills described on his or her technical-college certificate, the program will pay for the apprentice to return to school.

Hands-on Training. In 1992 Siemens, the German electrical and electronics-products company, set up three pilot apprenticeship programs in the U. S. They combined academic learning with paid hands-on training on the factory floor – all supervised by a “Meister.”

The programs have been so successful that Siemens is launching 11 more. Typically, applicants for the 20 yearly openings at the company’s Stromberg-Carlson installation in Lake Mary, Florida, must have completed high school courses in algebra and English composition. Once enrolled in the program, apprentices have to maintain a 3.0 grade point average in a curriculum that includes calculus and physics. Those who stay in the course get amply rewarded – with jobs that initially pay \$27,000 a year.

Upgrading Utica. “Our success as a high-tech company is directly tied to the ability of our schools to produce students of world-class talent,” says Larry Stone, public affairs manager at Martin Marietta’s Ocean, Radar & Sensor Systems facility in Utica, New York. “In recent years we’ve teamed with the Oneida County School and

Business Alliance to help students make a successful transition from school to work.”

In a three-pronged program, Martin Marietta tries to “broaden the life and work experiences of work-bound students to make them more employable.” Here’s how:

■ **Mentors.** The company helps put “at-risk” high school students on a new and better track by teaming them with Martin Marietta mentors.

■ **Summer Jobs.** Each year about two dozen students from Oneida high schools take part in a summer-jobs program, funded by Martin Marietta, that gives kids meaningful work assignments in disciplines matched to their career interests. The program, now beginning its fifth year, has produced many success stories.

■ **Teacher Training.** After developing a 20-hour course in communication and problem-solving that its own employees found quite useful, the company turned around and offered it to about a dozen

COURTESY OF GM



General Motors works closely with communities where it has plants and trains young people to handle jobs that require considerable skill.

school administrators. They liked it so much that some are now giving the course to their school staffs.

Smoother Transitions. There are many types of school-to-work transition programs, but few are as extensive as those backed by ITT's 48 Technical Institutes. The company's educational network offers college-level programs of study to approximately 20,000 students in twenty-four states.

Last January, for example, ITT Tech and the Hamilton high school Complex in Los Angeles began offering electronics engineering and computer-aided drafting programs that enable a student to complete an academic quarter of college-level work while still in high school.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

8 "It takes an entire village to educate a child" is an African proverb that has become a favorite motto of almost anyone who spends much time trying to reform education. The school's educational responsibilities really come third – after family and neighborhood – and too often today both are falling down on the job.

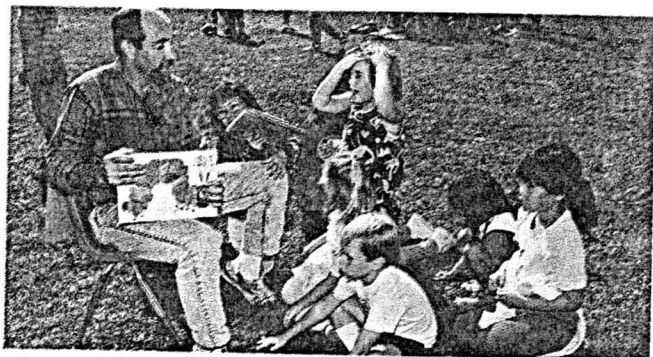
It was with this in mind that nearly 140 private-sector companies and organizations formed the America 2000 Coalition to support community efforts to reach our National Education Goals.

This fall the coalition is launching Goal Line, an on-line computer service that lets education reformers from all across the country talk to each other, share ideas, ask questions, and get help.

Breaking the Ice. Community-wide efforts usually start the way one did in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania when business leaders, unhappy with the quality of the area's schools, met with education leaders. "It was freezing cold outside, but it was even colder inside," says Ed Donley, then chairman of Air Products and Chemicals, recalling the chill at the first meetings.

Once the finger-pointing stopped, the two sides established Lehigh Valley 2000: A Business Education Partnership. It set common goals, developed strategies for achieving those goals, and found ways to measure progress. Everyone got involved – parents, teachers, political leaders, civic organizations, even the media.

In Omaha, John Gottschalk, publisher of the *Omaha World-*



It's story-telling time with Celso Frazao, a volunteer from Tandem, who participates in this interactive session.

Herald joined forces with the local chamber of commerce in a similar effort called Omaha 2000. From time to time the newspaper publishes a report card on the program's progress. All in all, the 2000 campaign has made a big breakthrough in expanding community involvement in the city's schools.

Working World. All of the Big Three automakers – General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler – are helping give educational reform a boost.

"Our involvement in education began about 10 years ago when we started thinking about the 21st century coming up," recalls Valerie Becker, who's in charge of Chrysler's national education program. "People were thinking, my goodness, the world is changing – but schools aren't changing with it. Technology is passing them by. There were children coming to school more technically adept at computers – and technology – than their teachers."

Now a leader in corporate commitment to better education, with programs ranging from "Reading Together" to a partnership in the annual PTA survey of parental involvement, Chrysler even has a "Build Your Dream"

contest at auto shows – "an artsy thing where you design your dream car," as Becker puts it.

One of the company's most ambitious programs is "World of Work," which encourages employees to share their expertise in a school of their choice in the dozens of cities where the automaker has plants and dealerships. "If you want to teach chess, math, or almost any other subject, you simply volunteer for one hour a week – and Chrysler gives you the time off," says Becker.



Kid Witness News, the hands-on video education program, is sponsored by Matsushita Electric Corporation of America.

Another Chrysler initiative: conducting seminars for employees interested in running for their local school boards.

Knowledgeable Workers. Through its "Pre-College Support Strategy," General Motors has developed a two-way channel of communications with the communities where it has plants. The No.1 automaker helps fund school programs, encourages GM volunteers to work in classrooms, supports performance measurement, and emphasizes improvements in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. In return, GM learns a lot about its customers and community needs.

Right now, the company's particular pride is its program called "GM Skilled Trades and Engineering: Explore the Possibilities." Middle-school students, especially young women, minorities, and their teachers, get a better idea of career opportunities and gain the skills to pursue them. Among the program's goals: equip students so they can solve application-based problems requiring "higher-order thinking skills."

So far, the program has been a winner with the more than two-thousand students in seven Michigan urban and rural districts who have participated in it. And the team developing the National Science Standards for American Education is drawing on materials used in "Explore the Possibilities."

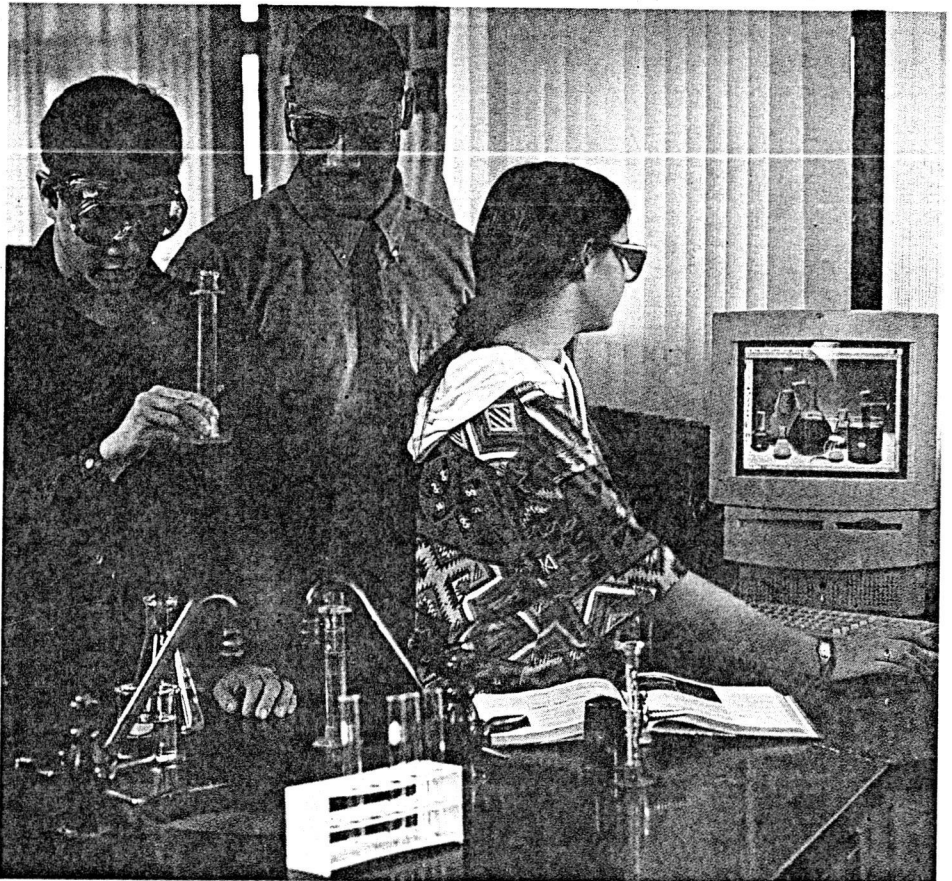
Productive Adults. In one corner of the U.S. - Maine - there's plenty of corporate action supporting educational reform.

UNUM, the nation's leading provider of disability insurance headquartered in Portland, Maine, is putting its shoulder behind the work of the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education, a grassroots community-based effort that brings together leading educators, public officials, and businesspeople. James F. Orr, III, UNUM's chairman and CEO, in fact has served as chair.

"We're involved because we need an educated work force to keep us competitive in the coming century," says Kevin Healey, director of UNUM's Corporate Public Involvement. "As America shifts from a manufacturing

to a service and information economy, innovative and knowledgeable workers will become increasingly important," adding, "They need to be able to process information, make informed decisions, and understand the effects of those decisions. Many workers, willing as they are, are having trouble doing this. They're not adequately prepared."

In line with this, the Maine Coalition recently recommended that public education should move toward a focus on results. "The whole idea," says



Through its 'Partners in Education Grants' program, Apple Computer supplies equipment that helps students get advanced training in computers and science.

Tracy Sherman, UNUM's manager of public relations, "is to teach kids what they need to know to be successful, productive adults."

START FROM SCRATCH

9 You've heard a building contractor tell you, "It'll be cheaper and quicker to tear it down and start over than to remodel." You don't really believe it, but eventually, when you receive the bill, you do.

It's pretty much the same thing in school reform. "There are many more schools performing better than people believe," McGraw-Hill's Charlotte Frank says,

“but despite all reform efforts, there are still some that aren’t. And any that aren’t performing well, and have not been serving their communities for years and years and years – I’d say goodbye to the present design, because it’s unfair to kids.

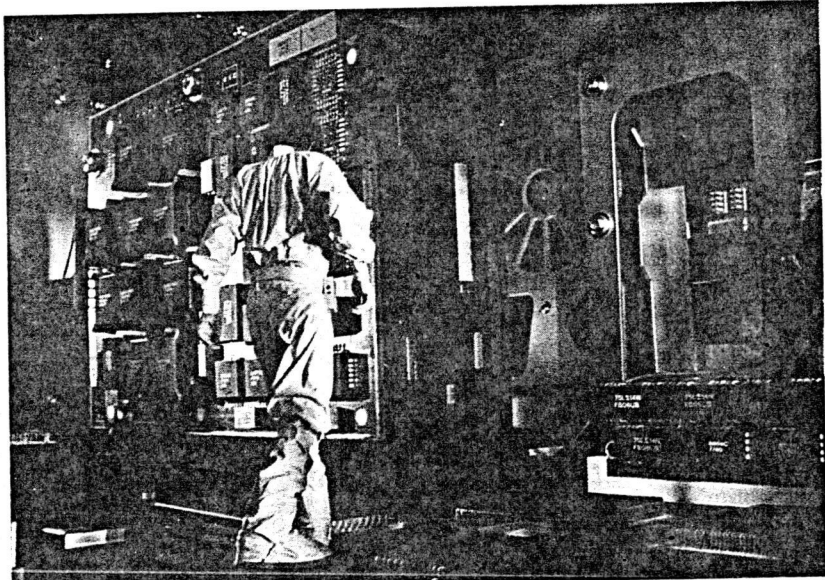
One of the pioneers of the “break the mold” approach is the Next Century School Program started by IBM Chairman and CEO Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. when he was head of RJR Nabisco. (He recently came out with an incisive book on reform, *Reinventing Education: Entrepreneurship in America’s Public Schools*.) The foundation committed \$30 million in grants to 43 schools across the country to help improve the academic performance of their students. The results include the Downtown School created near the parents’ place of work in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the New Stanley Elementary in Kansas City, Kansas, where students keep the same teachers much longer than they do in the average public school.

High-performance Schools. At the New American Schools Development Corporation, a private non-profit organization formed in 1991, the idea was to create break-the-mold schools. Start from scratch. Completely rethink our concept of schools. Design new, high-performance schools that would be the best in the world, uniquely American and unique to each community. From 686 proposals submitted from every part of the nation, nine design teams were chosen.

Today, those teams are working on blueprints for nearly 130 public schools in 19 states from Maine to California. Next year New American Schools will begin helping communities adapt the designs in a nationwide “scale-up.”

One of the design teams, called Co-NECT, will provide every student with a laptop computer. It can be used to do projects, explore databases and on-line libraries, and swap ideas and information with scientists, professors, and students.

Old and New. In a departure from traditional instruction, Hudson Institute is blending old and new in the educational structure of its Modern Red Schoolhouses in the Bronx, Indianapolis, and Beech Grove, Indiana. The school is requiring all students to master a core academic curriculum of math, science, English, history, and geography – a very classic approach. But classes mix together students of different ages, teacher/advisors stick with a class rather than change almost every year, and classrooms come equipped with computers and other modern technology.



COURTESY OF INTEL

Intel's 'The Journey Inside: A Learning Adventure in High Technology' blends education and entertainment to excite and inform youngsters about the science behind computer technology.

In yet another experiment, the Community Learning Centers of Minnesota are helping teachers and other education professionals create charter schools. Operating outside the current education system under an agreement with a local board, they have nearly total autonomy in decision-making in exchange for the promise to produce academic results.

PRIVATE MANAGERS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

10 One of the most volatile issues on the nation’s educational agenda is the private management of public schools. The concept seems to be catching on. In today’s world, when people are questioning what government bureaucracies can accomplish, inviting private companies to manage public schools and many of the district services makes a lot of sense. It’s hardly a radical solution. In fact, it’s right in line with the trend we see everywhere.

Take the case of Baltimore where a courageous superintendent, Walter Amprey, backed by his mayor and school board, hired Education Alternatives, Inc., to help manage 12 inner-city public schools. You could see results within the first 30 days. Schools that had been urine-stained were spic and span – a fast start in a long process of improvement.

Since then, Amprey and Education Alternatives, working hand in hand, have put two teachers and a telephone in every classroom and new computers in every school (four in each class and one computer lab), along with drawing up a personal education plan for every child. All of this, says Amprey, for no more money than the other public schools in Baltimore are spending. In another Baltimore experiment, Berlitz is teaching students foreign languages.

Other cities are opening the door to private management of their schools.

■ In Miami, Education Alternatives is running South Pointe elementary school.

■ Hartford is considering having the company manage all of its schools.

■ Minneapolis has hired Public Strategies Group to supervise its entire district.

■ Washington, D. C. is using Sylvan Learning, Inc. to help teach reading.

Undoubtedly the most publicized experiment in private management of schools is the Edison Project, launched by entrepreneur Christopher Whittle. It began its work of designing a new type of school almost as though it were a company creating a new product. It started from scratch by asking the question of schools that management-consultant Peter Drucker likes to put to businesses: "If you weren't already doing it, would you start?"

Out of this fresh thinking, Edison has developed an extraordinary blueprint for schools and is now working with dozens of school districts to make it a reality.

Strategies for the Coming Century

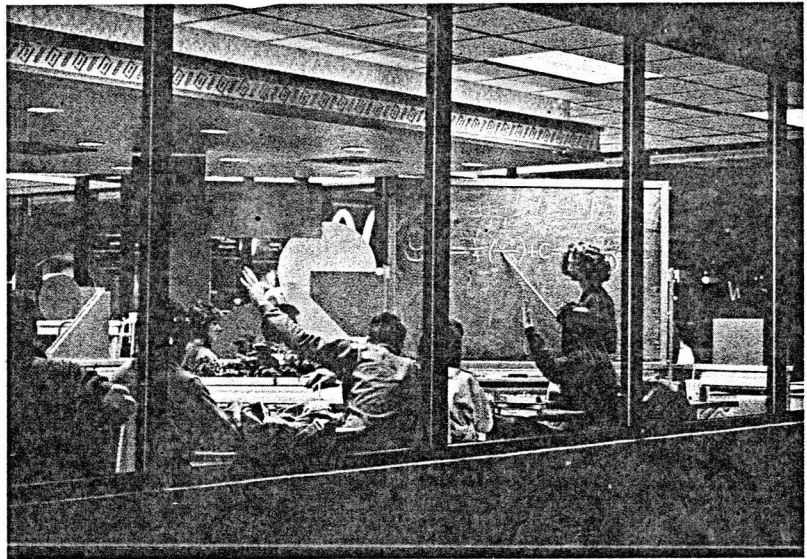
Hardly anyone would disagree that America's schools need to be transformed. They're simply out of touch with many of our needs. But beyond the 10 recommendations already described, what are the two most promising strategies that especially deserve support?

CHARTER SCHOOLS: A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Of all the proposals that have surfaced over the past ten years for actually changing schools, the charter school – or independent public school – is surely one of the best. Eleven states have now passed charter school laws. Many more are considering legislation.

What does "charter" really mean? It means starting from scratch. Design your own school to fit your children's needs. Unleash the wisdom and creativity of parents, teachers, school leaders, and the business community. Free them from rules and regulations and let them have at it.

Charter schools are the opposite of the one-size-fits-all approach. The idea is that as long as a school is



McDonald's franchisees have established education programs to help kids and their parents.

safe, the children are learning. And if the parents choose the schools, they will support them. Monitor them. But keep hands off.

In a sense, charter schools are a public-school version of private independent schools. These "independent public schools" have the autonomy that may well be – according to almost every public school principal and teacher – the greatest advantage of private independent schools.

In the effort to create charter schools, business leaders nationwide can help by applying lessons they've learned while restructuring their own companies.

In any case, the charter movement clearly has a grip on Americans dissatisfied with the traditional order of education, as these examples show:

■ Minnesota. In 1992 it passed the nation's first charter-school law. It now has seven schools operating, four approved and ready to open, and nine others permitted under the law. Perhaps the most innovative is Metro Deaf, which serves hearing-impaired students and their families.

■ California. The state that's so often on the leading edge of national trends has given charter numbers – the first step in the recognition process – to over sixty of the hundred allowed under its law. By yearend, almost all should be open and operating.

■ Massachusetts. In the nation's early days Massachusetts helped create the common school, and now it's doing it again – with charter schools. It has approved 15 of its legal limit of 25 charters, with five serving at-risk and disadvantaged youth. Three are schools to be managed by the Edison Project. And among the state's approved charters is a boarding

For many students, making the transition from school to a job is like stepping from the Industrial Age into the Information Age. It's a wrenching change.

school for homeless children headed by a retired admiral. ■ Michigan. Picking up on the charter concept, Michigan has opened the way for state universities and school districts to create "public school academies." University Middle School operated by Wayne State University is beginning its second year. And seven other public school academies are opening this fall – among them, the Saginaw Chippewa Academy in Mt. Pleasant and the pre-school Educational Child Care Center in Lansing.

The charter-type school that's making the most headlines in Michigan is the Noah Webster Academy, headquartered in a log cabin in a small rural district between Lansing and Grand Rapids. It's a computerized home-study network, which some 1,500 children in the state want to join (through their parents). Equipped with a PC and modem, you choose your curriculum from the academy's menu, and Noah Webster supplies the software and follow-up support.

Whatever the charter experiments turn out to be – from fairly conventional to radical – the common denominator is the goal of creating new schools from the ground up.

SCHOOL CHOICE: A GI BILL FOR KIDS

Another most promising strategy for improving children's education is to give all families, especially poor ones, more choices of schools – public, private or religious.

It's incomprehensible that so many Americans are unwilling to give children the surest path to success in America – the opportunity to attend the school that their families believe best suits their needs.

Yet school choice is perhaps the most controversial issue in education today. The unions and most public school leaders are dead set against it. While some who favor expanded choice are convinced that competition will make schools better, opponents are afraid it will destroy public schools.

Both sides are missing the point. Diane Ravitch got it right when she recently said, "Nobody's children should be compelled to attend a bad public school."

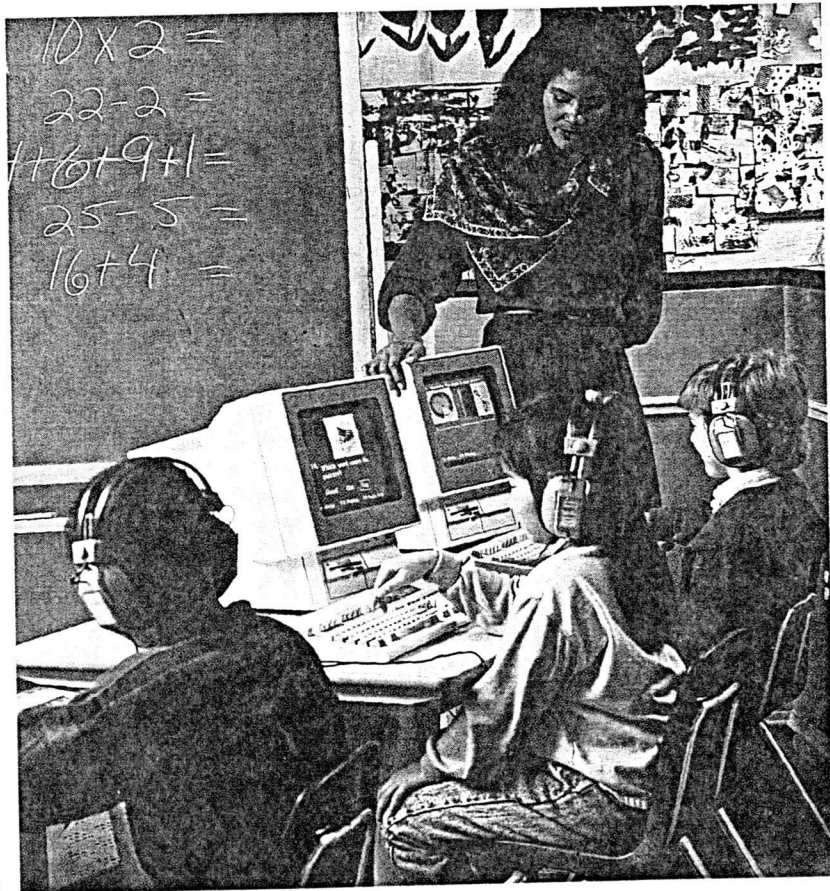
It's a matter of fairness. If parents don't have the money to move to a better neighborhood or put their children in a private school, must their children stay in a public school that's not right for them? Instead, create an opportunity for that child to move from the back to the front of the line.

This is hardly an earth-shattering new idea in America. After World War II, tens of thousands of returning veterans were given federal funds to attend the college of their choice. Critics said the sky would fall, but the GI Bill expanded educational opportunities and created the best higher education system in the world. What the GI Bill did for veterans in higher education, a GI Bill for Kids would do for poor children in our elementary and high schools.

'WASHINGTON KNOWS BEST'

One of the dangers to keep an eye on today is the federal government's continuing effort to control education. Despite the strong belief on the part of most educators and companies that the best way to improve the education of K-12 children is to find local solutions, there are still some who feel that "Washington knows best." As one bumper sticker you see around the country puts it, "I love my country, but I fear my government."

True, the federal government accounts for only about six percent of the monies spent nationwide on education. And there is a strong tradition of local control in American education. But people are afraid



Wired-in kids learn by interacting with a teacher and with computers supplied by Tandy.

that Washington "experts" will impose on public schools their views about everything from safe sex to world history.

This is not just the ranting of some fringe group. Turn on C-SPAN, and you'll see people talking who actually believe that Washington does know best when it comes to improving our schools. In fact, Congress recently passed a bill – Goals 2000 – that turns the national reform movement into a federal program. It creates a sort of federal school board that will undermine local control. It also encourages mushy, so-called "outcomes-based" education instead of focusing on whether children are learning the academic basics.

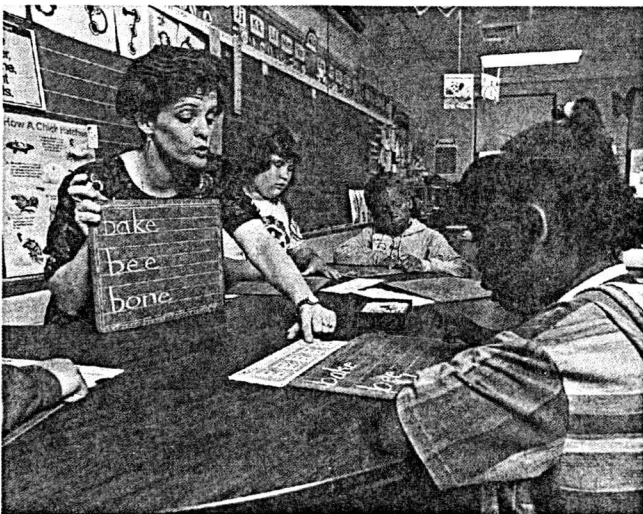
Nothing could be worse for our schools than to increase centralization and rule-making – just when the rest of the world is rejecting that approach.

Communities and parents can do a better job than Washington deciding what is best for their children's future.

THE PATH TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM

In the immediate years ahead, the independent public school or charter school movement is sure to take off. Why?

- It already commands bipartisan support.
- It tackles the whole problem of improving education at once, school by school, instead of wearing everyone out with piecemeal arguments.
- It sidesteps the debate about whether public dollars may find their way into "private" schools.



Students at School #49 in Indianapolis, Indiana, one of 94 EDS school partnerships in six countries, work on writing skills with the help of Kim DiaBiaggio, EDS volunteer and partnership coordinator.

Soon, most everyone will see the inevitable logic of letting taxpayer money follow children to the schools that their parents believe will best fit their needs.

■ The "independent" orientation gives talented, committed educators an opportunity to work together and design new schools from scratch.

All in all, the concept has broad appeal. It can spur community support – and therefore win taxpayer backing – for school improvement.

The Logic of Choice. Ten years from now, people will be trying to remember just why anyone was opposed to school choice. It should be obvious now why we must allow families, especially the poorest ones, to choose the best schools for their children – unless we want to create a society with a third permanently stuck on the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

But the logic of school choice will become even clearer once charter schools flourish. Let's say Detroit creates a high school for eleventh and twelfth grade students who don't want to go on to college. No one will force students to attend such a school. But those who find the option just what they want and need will make it their choice. By the same token, schools that immerse students in Spanish or English, stay open until 6 p. m., emphasize math, or operate at a corporate headquarters all have an appeal for individual families.

Soon, most everyone will see the inevitable logic of letting taxpayer money follow children to the schools that their parents believe will best fit their needs.

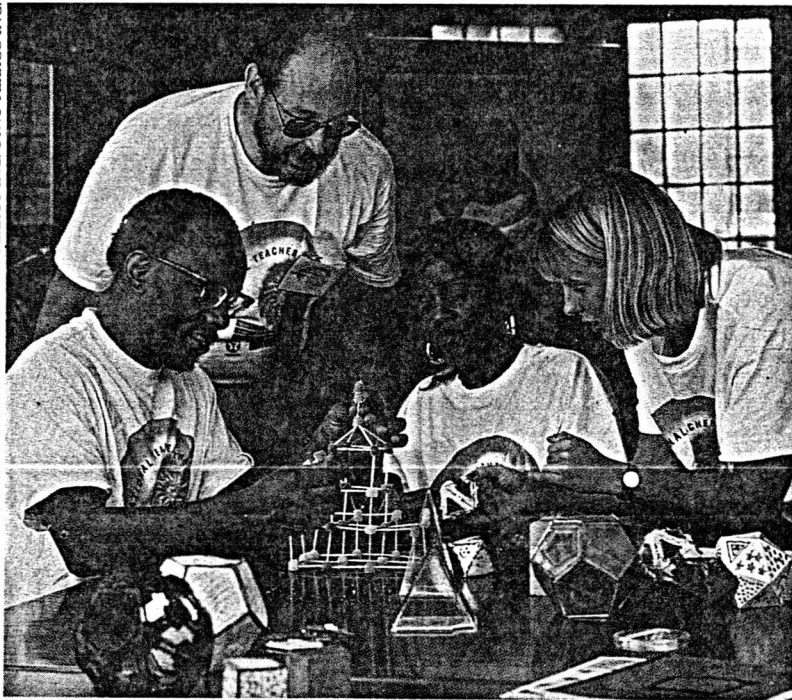
Flexibility is the keystone. In the future you can count on seeing schools like those in Murfreesboro open virtually all the time, with parents choosing the hours that fit their family's needs and paying the extra costs (assuming they're reasonable) for the extra time. School districts that simply offer year-round classes will find it easier to attract parents' participation and financial support than those that require year-round attendance.

The Value of Home Schooling. The one school that is already open twenty-four hours a day is the American home.

With parents becoming more concerned about what's happening in schools, it's understandable that there would be a surge in home schooling. And it's not as worrisome a prospect as some people think.

More and more parents are turning their homes into schools because they believe the public schools to which their children are assigned are unsafe, unclean, or second-rate, or promote value systems they don't like.

What is likely to happen is that home schooling will



Texaco's two-day Teacher Training Institute Seminars provide teachers with the training and materials to intergrate technology into classroom instruction.

evolve into a kind of sensible catalyst for more parent involvement in children's education.

In the end, most parents will want their children to have the advantages of attending a school outside their home. They don't want to carry the whole burden of instruction through home schooling.

As we create new schools, improve existing schools, and give parents more choices, education may swing full circle back to the way things were: the parent as the child's primary teacher – with schools providing supplemental information to enhance a child's overall education.

The School Board as Overseer. In this fast-forward picture of education's future, the nation's 15,000 school boards will find themselves performing a job that's different from – and more interesting than – the role they have now. Like overseers, they'll set policy and nurture the development of schools that really meet the needs of families and children in their communities.

Instead of creating and managing schools and then assigning each child to one of them, boards will step back and open the door to the best proposals for helping children learn. It will be the community that creates the classroom. The school board's job will be to make sure that children are learning what they should – in a safe and clean environment. As long as parents choose among those schools, government money should follow the child into the classroom.

A Revolution in Public Education.

No doubt, there's a consensus developing that will revolutionize what we call "public education."

The need to redefine education in the public sector comes from America's new awareness that events that seem to be remote – the capitalist uprising in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the emergence of strong economies along the Pacific Rim, and other changes reported round-the-clock on television – have an impact right in our backyard. They have forced our country to restructure its economy, decentralize corporations, and adapt our production processes to new, rapidly evolving technologies.

For our society's work force it has been a wrenching series of changes. Today, thoughtful educators and businesspeople alike are asking: If our corporations have gone through a transformation, setting new goals and developing new tools, why shouldn't our schools as well?

Many American parents recognize that most of our schools are still designed the way they were two or three generations ago when you attended classes three months a year until fourth grade and then went to work in the fields. It's not quite that bad these days – but almost.

It's not surprising that with our schools in a time warp and the nation in need of a greatly upgraded work force, the private sector is thickly involved in trying to transform our schools. How can you build better products, against stiffening foreign competition, without well-educated workers?

Now, a dozen years after the U. S. Department of Education sized up America's educational performance and concluded, "The nation is at risk," companies can look at a mixed scorecard of successes and failures. Their stake in education however is already large. And corporate interest is certain to accelerate.

What's so compelling in the nineties is the need for action rather than talk – that's the credo for today and tomorrow. It's clear that companies, like ordinary citizens with kids in school, believe that time is running out in the exasperatingly slow drive to make American education better. ■

Lamar Alexander has been Governor of Tennessee, President of the University of Tennessee, and U. S. Secretary of Education. He is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute where he directs the Project on The Promise of American Life. He lives in Nashville where he is counsel to the Baker, Donelson law firm.

Paul Burnham Finney, who writes about education and business, assisted in the preparation of this report.