



AMERICAN Educator

A JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, RESEARCH, AND IDEAS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

SPARKING INTEREST,
REDUCING LEARNING?
PAGE 31

COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP
PAGE 37

TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING
PAGE 41

SAVING OUR DEMOCRACY

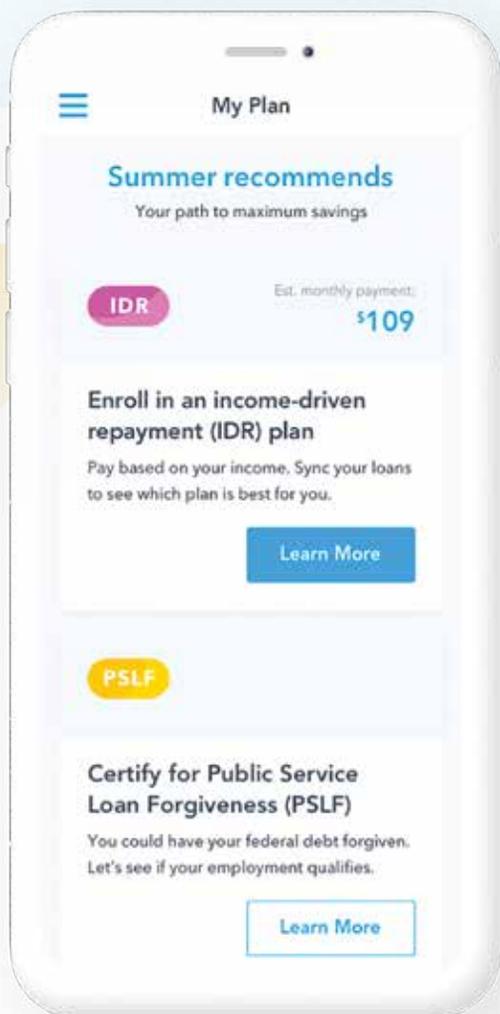




We're here to help you find your path out of student debt

We're simplifying the student-loan maze. Join us to easily enroll in savings and forgiveness programs—for free.

"The Summer team checked in and was so supportive, I was never embarrassed to ask them silly questions about my loan situation. Now I'm receiving forgiveness that will really help my family and I'm so excited." —Leslie, Education Minnesota



Summer makes it **easy to save**



Check your eligibility and compare options

We review over 120 savings programs to determine eligibility and provide a side-by-side comparison to help you choose the best plan.



Sign & submit—all online

We check your forms before submitting to reduce costly mistakes and maximize savings.



Ongoing personalized assistance

Our team of experts provide on-call service. Summer sticks with you, guiding you as your situation changes.

Start saving today: aft.org/benefits/summer



Trump Chooses Chaos We Choose Community

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

THE AFT HAS WEATHERED many storms—and many existential threats, natural and ideological. From the *Janus* Supreme Court decision to COVID-19, from demonizers of our work like Michelle Rhee and Betsy DeVos to divisive politicians like Wisconsin's Scott Walker and New York's Rudy Giuliani, we have fought back against those who would rather starve public services, eliminate unions, and polarize the people than help fulfill the promise of America.

The AFT is built for this. We don't back down. We care, fight, show up, and vote. Despite crisis after crisis, we have thrived because of your work and your activism. And even with everything that has been thrown at us, our union is *growing*.

But make no mistake: the threats before us today are unprecedented.

It is not just the three crises—the pandemic, the worsening economic inequality, and the long overdue reckoning with systemic racism; now we also face very real threats to our democracy and to the ability of every eligible American to safely and freely vote. These crises are all made worse by one person: Donald J. Trump.

I was in DC at the end of August for the anniversary of the March on

Washington—a march that was peaceful in 1963 and peaceful in 2020. President Trump was in Washington, too, using the White House as a prop the evening before the march as he sowed the seeds of division. Just like he used St. John's Church as a prop in June, after having peaceful protestors tear-gassed, so he could hold up a Bible for a photo op.

Let's be clear: we must all take a stand against violence—just as we must all take a stand against systemic racism. What's the key in moving from indifference to action and from ignorance to understanding? Teaching for racial equity and justice. This issue of *American Educator* features resources from AFT's Share My Lesson that focus on nonviolent activism, engaging students in conversations on race and racism, and the need for diverse books (see page 5). The issue also includes compelling articles on youth-led activism, particularly on college campuses (see page 21). Young people speaking out propelled the creation of African American Studies and Black student organizations in higher education. Our youth are leading us to a better America with a stronger democracy.

How does the president of the United States *not* say the names that are on so many of our lips—Jacob Blake, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor—yet call violent white supremacists in Charlottesville “very fine people”? Why has the president cheered on caravans of white supremacists in Portland and refused to condemn the killings of two protesters in Kenosha by a 17-year-old white teenager?

This is not the way any president should act.

Rather than calming a tense nation, he is courting violence. Savvy political scientists believe he is not merely energizing his base; he is cultivating



Trump is cultivating chaos to distract the nation from his inept handling of the pandemic.

chaos to distract the nation from his inept handling of the pandemic. At the beginning of September, when the United States had over 6 million cases and 185,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths, a comparison with other countries estimated that about 145,000 of those deaths would have been avoided if the US had an average—not good, *just average*—response to the pandemic. Instead, the US was far below average, with 4 percent of the world's population but 22 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

Think about what could have happened if Trump had decided to fight, not deny or downplay, the virus.



President Trump claims that he has created the best economy ever. Before the pandemic, 40 percent of Americans couldn't cover a \$400 emergency, yet the rich were getting far richer. By the end of August, 25 million Americans had lost work—and economic inequality in America was on par with the Gilded Age.

President Trump has obliterated nearly every norm of our democracy, including running roughshod over the laws intended to prevent him from using his office for political or personal gain.

It's no wonder that historians are sounding the alarm about the threat he poses to democracy. This threat is laid out in stark relief in this issue's cover article, "The Crisis of American Democracy," by Harvard professors Steven

We all want to be in-person with our students. But you can't pit learning against lives.



Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (see page 6). And it's examined by former US Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., in his article, "One Person, One Vote," which chronicles America's persistent struggle to ensure our most fundamental right (see page 14).

Where do we go from here? We have a choice between chaos or community, to paraphrase Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Trump wants chaos. In addition to trying to turn peaceful protests into violent confrontations, he fomented turmoil in the reopening of schools. While the AFT created guides for safely reopening (aft.org/reopening-school-buildings-safely), Trump made baseless claims that children are "practically immune" to COVID-19 and ignored the risks to educators, staff, and families. How much more evidence do we need to see that in this election, we must vote like our lives depend on it?

We choose community. I usually love back to school, when students and school staff, renewed from the summer break, return full of excitement. I love visiting schools and college campuses, talking with students, and admiring the amazing work our members do. In a very real way, I am mourning that. I know many of you are, too.

We all want to be in-person with our students. But you can't pit learning against lives—and yet that is what Trump and his acolytes have tried to do. That's why we have done what we do

best, marshalling our knowledge and expertise to fight for safe schools and colleges, on the streets, in the courts, and in coalition with parents and communities. In Florida, we sued the governor and education commissioner over their reckless demand that schools fully reopen despite the surge in infections. In Boston, Los Angeles, and many places in between, we negotiated key safety provisions and innovative distance- and blended-learning provisions. (And starting on page 31 of this issue, there are three articles to support remote and hybrid instruction.)

Whatever is needed to keep you, your students, and your loved ones safe, the AFT has your back.

Donald Trump isn't up to the task of handling this public health crisis. He's desperate to distract us from the fact that most Americans are decidedly *not* better off than they were four years ago.

Donald Trump's economic policies help millionaires and billionaires, not average people. While his corruption threatens our democratic form of government, his secretary of education tries to take funds away from youth in under-resourced communities, and his administration is trying to take health insurance away from millions of people *during a pandemic*. In the face of these failures, his hobbling of the US Postal Service is an attempt to hamper voting by mail and to sow doubt about the election in the event he loses.

But Trump's America is not America. We have an alternative.



CHRIS PIETSCH/THE REGISTER GUARD

From combating the pandemic to funding public schools, from addressing student debt and increasing economic opportunity to making sure healthcare is a right, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have a plan.

They will fund, not starve, public education. The Biden administration will triple Title I funding, fully fund IDEA, expand the number of community schools, and provide universal pre-K.



Biden and Harris have bold, comprehensive plans to

- address the climate crisis;
- protect and expand retirement security;
- make college affordable and help borrowers who are buried in student debt;
- give every American access to affordable health insurance;
- have a humane approach to immigration and affirm that Dreamers' homes are here;
- uphold the rights of every American—regardless of gender, race, or religion; and
- create true economic fairness and opportunity.

It's not just that they have these plans. It's that they understand we must contain the pandemic before we can

really reopen the economy as well as schools and colleges. Biden and Harris will make sure states, schools, colleges, hospitals, and other healthcare institutions have the resources they need.

That is what a caring, competent, effective administration would do. But none of this will happen if we don't elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Go to [AFTvotes.org](https://www.aftvotes.org) to find out how you can get involved. Make your own voting plan, and help your family and friends make their plans.

Amid all this chaos, you have been the calm. You have been the glue that has nurtured, supported, taught, fed, and cared for our communities.

Our nurses and health professionals who have faced down the pandemic with bravery, compassion, and expert care. Our public employees who have persisted on the frontlines, even though too many have not had the protections afforded other frontline workers. Our professors and teachers who have used ingenuity and expertise to keep students learning under such difficult and unprecedented

circumstances. Our food service personnel, paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers, school secretaries, school counselors, and other school staff who have leapt into action to help feed kids who otherwise would go hungry, who have reached out to students and even visited their homes, who have cleaned and prepared schools for a safe return, and who have done things no one else will ever know, because they had to get done. You are the light, so that in the darkest days, hope has never been extinguished.

That's who we are as a union. We care, we fight, we show up, and we vote. Thank you for all you do. And thank you for all you will do to make sure that on November 3, we elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, along with allies up and down the ballot who will help us move forward to create a better life and a better future for all Americans.



Biden will triple Title I funding, fully fund IDEA, expand the number of community schools, and provide universal pre-K.

As the civil rights leader Congressman John Lewis often said, let's "get into good trouble, necessary trouble." Let's keep doing that. Together. Because we know that, together, we can accomplish things that would be impossible on our own. □





Saving Our Democracy

In the face of the pandemic, the resulting economic crisis, and systemic racial injustice, science is being politicized, and students, educators, and communities are being put at risk. Our lives, livelihoods, and democracy are all at stake in this election.

6 The Crisis of American Democracy

BY STEVEN LEVITSKY AND DANIEL ZIBLATT

14 One Person, One Vote

America's Ongoing Struggle with Our Most Basic Right

BY ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.

18 Election Integrity During the Pandemic

19 Safeguarding Knowledge

For Our Democracy and Well-Being

BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

21 Youth-Led Protests Strengthen Our Democracy

BY THE EDITORS

24 Racial Breakthroughs

Born of Student Protest

BY SHAUN R. HARPER

27 Preparing for Racial Unrest on Campus

BY MAHAUGANEE SHAW BONDS AND SYDNEY FREEMAN, JR.

28 Daring to Speak, to Listen, and to Protest without Silencing

BY SUZANNE NOSSEL

31 Sparking Interest, Reducing Learning?

The Hidden Drawback of Fun Facts and Other Seductive Details

BY KRIPA SUNDAR

37 "Cognitive Apprenticeship" Revisited

Shining a Light on the Processes of Thinking to Understand Learning

BY PAUL A. KIRSCHNER AND CARL HENDRICK

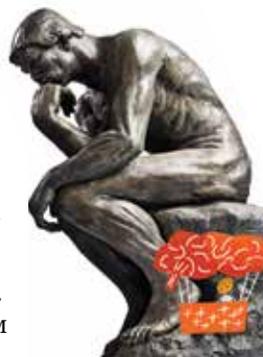
41 Ask the Cognitive Scientist

How Can Educators Teach Critical Thinking?

BY DANIEL T. WILLINGHAM

52 Reflections on How the Pandemic Is Reshaping Education

FROM THE ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE



OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

RANDI WEINGARTEN
President

FEDRICK INGRAM
Secretary-Treasurer

EVELYN DEJESUS
Executive Vice President

LISA HANSEL
Chief Publications Editor

JENNIFER DUBIN
Managing Editor

SHARONE CARMONA
Contributing Editor

LUKE STEELE
Editorial Coordinator

SEAN LISHANSKY
Copyeditor

SOPHIA GRABIEC
Copyediting Fellow

JENNIFER CHANG
Art Director

JENNIFER BERNEY
Graphic Designer

RACHEL ANDERSON
Production Assistant

AMERICAN EDUCATOR (ISSN 0148-432X, USPS 008-462) is published quarterly by the American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2079. Phone: 202-879-4400. aft.org

Letters to the editor may be sent to the address above or to ae@aft.org.

AMERICAN EDUCATOR cannot assume responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

Please allow a minimum of four weeks for copyright permission requests.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the viewpoints or policies of the AFT.

AMERICAN EDUCATOR is mailed quarterly to AFT members in preK-12 education and biannually to members in higher education and other educational roles, as a benefit of membership. Subscriptions represent \$2.50 of annual dues. Non-AFT members may subscribe by mailing \$10 per year by check or money order to the address below.

MEMBERS: To change your address or subscription, notify your local union treasurer or visit aft.org/members.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to American Educator, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2079.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

© 2020 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO



Cover illustration:
SONIA PULIDO

Teaching for Racial Equity and Justice



FICKRLORE SHAULL

As students nationwide have joined the fight for racial equity and justice, many educators are engaging students in discussing our nation's fraught history of systemic racism. Because this complex topic can feel overwhelming at times, we highlight several resources available through Share My Lesson.

Connecting the Present to the Past

To ground such conversations, PBS NewsHour Extra, a Share My Lesson partner, offers materials focused on the death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man killed by police in May. "Murder of George Floyd Sets Off Massive Protests" includes a news summary and video footage, edited for length, with a trigger warning for disturbing content. The lesson includes discussion questions on structural racism and police brutality, and also prompts students to consider the role of video in highlighting such oppression.

Another Share My Lesson partner, ADL, offers "Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement," which unpacks how the movement began. What started as #BlackLivesMatter in the wake of the 2013 death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager, grew into a full-fledged movement after the killing of two other unarmed Black men in 2014: Eric Garner and Michael Brown. By watching a video and reading about three Black Lives Matter activists—DeRay Mckesson, Johnetta Elzie, and Zellie Imani—students learn how social media has enabled the movement's work.

In a resource from Speak Truth to Power, a project of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights and also a Share My Lesson partner, students learn about nonviolent activism and one of its

biggest advocates, Congressman John Lewis, who died in July from cancer. The lesson, produced in partnership with New York State United Teachers, encourages sixth- through eighth-graders to reflect on Lewis's legacy after reading his remarks from the JFK Profile in Courage award ceremony in 2001.

To reach further back in time, educators can turn to "The 1619 Project" published last year by *The New York Times Magazine*. In March, Share My Lesson and the Pulitzer Center hosted a virtual conference on engaging students with the project, which reexamined this country's legacy of slavery. The conference, which is available on demand, presented journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones's lead essay for the project, a reading guide, and extension activities.

Starting When Students Are Young

Learning to celebrate differences should begin with anti-bias education designed for children. "Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism," a brief published by ADL, helps educators in supporting such conversations. From creating a respectful and safe classroom

environment to understanding diverse perspectives, the document is a solid primer on teaching this subject. Helpfully, it includes a link to a glossary related to bias, injustice, and bullying specifically for students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Exposing children to books with diverse characters can ensure that they see, understand, and appreciate racial and cultural differences. Be sure to check out an anti-racist reading list that Share My Lesson has created to spread the values of kindness, caring, and empathy. The list, which features especially engaging selections for young children—such as the picture book *Sulwe*, by Lupita Nyong'o, and *Hair Love*, by Matthew A. Cherry—will continue to be updated.

Explicitly teaching students the importance of reading diverse books is also a lesson in itself. In "Diverse Books Matter," created by ADL, third- through fifth-graders learn about Marley Dias, an African American girl who started the #1000BlackGirlBooks campaign in 2015 to highlight the lack of children's books with African American characters. The lesson then introduces students to the concept of diverse books as mirrors and windows. The metaphor refers to the need for children to see themselves in books and for books to show children worlds that differ from their own so they can navigate life experiences.

To see what other resources Share My Lesson offers on teaching for racial equity and justice, visit our entire collection of lesson plans, resources, and activities. If you have additional ideas or requests, please reach out to us at content@sharemylesson.com.

—THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM

Recommended Resources

Murder of George Floyd Sets Off Massive Protests
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml1>

Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to Movement
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml2>

John Lewis: Non-Violent Activism: Lesson Plan
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml3>

The 1619 Project: Activities for Student Engagement
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml4>

Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml5>

An Anti-Racist Reading List for Children and Adults
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml6>

Diverse Books Matter
<http://go.aft.org/ae320sml7>

The Crisis of American Democracy



BY STEVEN LEVITSKY AND DANIEL ZIBLATT

Nearly all living Americans grew up taking our democracy for granted. Until recently, most of us believed—and acted as if—our constitutional system was unbreakable, no matter how recklessly our politicians behaved.

No longer. Americans watch with growing unease as our political system threatens to go off the rails: costly government shutdowns, stolen Supreme Court seats, impeachments, mounting concerns about the fairness of elections, and, of course, the election of a presidential candidate who had condoned violence at rallies and threatened to lock up his rival, and who, as president, has begun to subvert the rule of law by defying congressional oversight and corrupting law enforcement agencies to protect his political allies and investigate his opponents.

*Steven Levitsky is David Rockefeller Professor of Latin American Studies and Professor of Government at Harvard University. He has authored several books, and his research interests include political parties, authoritarianism and democratization, and weak and informal institutions, with a focus on Latin America. Daniel Ziblatt is Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard University and was the 2019–2020 Karl W. Deutsch Visiting Professor at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB). He specializes in the study of Europe and the history of democracy. Levitsky and Ziblatt coauthored *How Democracies Die* in 2018.*

In a 2019 survey by Public Agenda, 39 percent of Americans said they believed our democracy is “in crisis,” while another 42 percent said it faces “serious challenges.” Only 15 percent said American democracy is “doing well.”¹

Democratic backsliding in the United States is no longer a matter of speculative concern. It has begun. Well-regarded global democracy indexes—such as Freedom House,² Varieties of Democracy,³ and the Economist Intelligence Unit⁴—all show an erosion of American democracy since 2016. According to Freedom House’s ranking, the United States is now less democratic than Chile, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Taiwan, and Uruguay—and in the same category as newer democracies like Croatia, Greece, Mongolia, and Panama.⁵

How Did We Get Here?

The problems started long before 2016 and go deeper than Donald Trump’s presidency. Electing a demagogue is always dangerous, but it does not condemn a country to democratic breakdown. Strong institutions can constrain corrupt or autocratic-minded leaders. That is precisely what the US Constitution was designed to do, and for most of our history, it has succeeded. America’s constitutional system has effectively checked many powerful and ambitious presidents, including demagogues (Andrew Jackson⁶) and criminals (Richard Nixon). For this reason, Americans have historically had a lot of faith in our Constitution. A 1999 survey

found that 85 percent of Americans believed it was the main reason why our democracy has been so successful.⁷

But constitutions *by themselves* aren't enough to protect democracy. Even the most brilliantly designed constitutions don't function automatically. Rather, they must be reinforced by strong, unwritten democratic norms.

Two basic norms are essential to democracy.* One is mutual toleration, or the norm of accepting the legitimacy of one's partisan rivals. This means that no matter how much we may disagree with—and even dislike—our opponents, we recognize that they are loyal citizens who love the country just as we do and who have an equal and legitimate right to govern. In other words, we do not treat our rivals as enemies.

The second norm is institutional forbearance. Forbearance means refraining from exercising one's legal right. It is an act of deliberate self-restraint—an underutilization of power that is legally available to us. Forbearance is essential to democracy. Consider what the US president is *constitutionally* able to do: The president can legally pardon whomever she wants, whenever she wants. Any president with a congressional majority can pack the US Supreme Court simply by pushing through a law that expands the Court's size and then filling the new vacancies with allies.

Or consider what Congress has the constitutional authority to do. Congress can shut down the government by refusing to fund it. The Senate can use its right to “advise and consent” to prevent the president from filling her cabinet or Supreme Court vacancies. And because there is little agreement on what constitutes “high crimes and misdemeanors,” the House can impeach the president on virtually any grounds it chooses.⁸

The point is that politicians may exploit the letter of the Constitution in ways that eviscerate its spirit: Court packing, partisan impeachment, government shutdowns, pardoning allies who commit crimes on the president's behalf, declaring national emergencies to circumvent Congress. All these actions follow the written letter of the law to subvert its spirit. Legal scholar Mark Tushnet calls such behavior “constitutional hardball.”⁹ If you examine any failing or failed democracy, you will find an abundance of constitutional hardball: examples include Spain and Germany in the 1930s, Chile in the 1970s, and contemporary Hungary, Venezuela, and Turkey.

Forbearance—politicians' shared commitment to exercise their institutional prerogatives with restraint—is what prevents democracies from descending into a destructive spiral of constitutional hardball.

Unwritten norms of mutual toleration and forbearance serve as the soft guardrails of democracy. They are what prevent healthy political competition from spiraling into the kind of partisan fight to the death that wrecked democracies in Europe in the 1930s and South America in the 1960s and 1970s.

America has not always had strong democratic guardrails. It didn't have them in the 1790s when institutional warfare between the Federalists and the Republicans nearly destroyed the Republic

before it could take root. It lost them in the run-up to the Civil War, and they remained weak through the late 19th century.

For most of the 20th century, however, America's guardrails were solid. Although the country experienced occasional assaults on democratic norms (e.g., McCarthyism in the 1950s), both parties broadly engaged in mutual tolerance and forbearance, which in turn allowed our system of checks and balances to work. During the first three quarters of the 20th century, there were no impeachments or successful instances of Court packing. Senators were judicious in their use of filibusters and their right to “advise and consent” on presidential appointments—most Supreme Court nominees were approved easily, even when the president's party didn't control the Senate. And outside of wartime, presidents largely refrained from acting unilaterally to circumvent Congress or the courts.

The United States is now less democratic than Chile, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Taiwan, and Uruguay.

For more than a century, then, America's system of checks and balances worked. Again, however, the system worked because it was reinforced by strong norms of mutual toleration and forbearance.

There is, however, an important tragedy at the heart of this story. The soft guardrails that undergirded America's 20th century democracy were built upon racial exclusion and operated in a political community that was overwhelmingly white and Christian. Efforts to create a multiracial democracy after the Civil War generated violent resistance, especially in the South. Southern Democrats viewed Reconstruction as an existential threat, and they used both constitutional hardball and outright violence to resist it. It was only after the Republicans abandoned Reconstruction—enabling the Democrats to establish Jim Crow in the South—that Democrats ceased to view their rivals as an existential threat and two parties began to peacefully coexist, allowing norms of mutual toleration and forbearance to emerge. In other words, it was only after racial equality was removed from the agenda, restricting America's political community to white people, that these norms took hold. The fact that our guardrails emerged in an era of *incomplete democracy* has important consequences for contemporary polarization—a point to which we will return.

In our 2018 book, *How Democracies Die*, we show how America's democratic norms have been unraveling over the last three decades. There were early signs in the 1990s, when Newt Gingrich encouraged his fellow Republicans to use words like *betray*, *anti-flag*, and *traitor* to describe Democrats. In doing so, Gingrich encouraged Republicans to overtly abandon mutual toleration. The Gingrich revolution also brought a rise in consti-

*For a more detailed discussion of these norms and other essential components of our argument, see our book *How Democracies Die*. To download a free teacher's guide, visit www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/562246/how-democracies-die-by-steven-levitsky-and-daniel-ziblatt/.

tutional hardball, including the first major government shut-down in 1995 and a presidential impeachment—the first in 130 years—in 1998.

The erosion of democratic norms accelerated during the Obama presidency. Republican leaders like Gingrich, Sarah Palin, Rudy Giuliani, Mike Huckabee, and Donald Trump told their followers that President Obama did not love America and that Obama and the Democrats weren't real Americans. Trump and others even questioned whether President Obama was an American citizen. Hillary Clinton received similar treatment: Trump and other Republican figures cast her as a criminal, making "lock her up" a chant at rallies. This was not happening on the political fringes: these were ideas put forth by the Republican nominee for president, and cheered—live, on national television—by the crowd at the Republican National Convention.

This was a worrisome development because when mutual toleration disappears, politicians begin to abandon forbearance. When we view our partisan rivals as enemies, or as an existential threat, we grow tempted to use *any means necessary* to stop them.

That is exactly what has happened over the last decade. Republicans in Congress treated the Obama administration as an existential threat that had to be defeated at almost any cost.

Constitutional hardball became the norm. There were more filibusters during President Obama's second term than in all the years between World War I and Ronald Reagan's second term *combined*. Congress twice shut down the government, and at one point, it pushed the country to the brink of default. President Obama responded with constitutional hardball of his own. When Congress refused to pass immigration reform or climate change legislation, he circumvented Congress and made policy via executive orders. These acts were technically legal, but they clearly violated the spirit of the Constitution.

Perhaps the most consequential act of constitutional hardball during the Obama years was the Senate's refusal to take up President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. Since 1866, every time a president had an opportunity to fill a Court vacancy before the election of his successor, he had been allowed to do so (though not always on the first try). The Senate's refusal to even consider an Obama nominee thus violated a 150-year-old norm.

The problem, then, is not only that Americans elected a demagogue in 2016. It is that we elected a demagogue at a time when the soft guardrails protecting our democracy were coming unmoored.

Why Is This Happening?

The driving force behind democratic norm erosion is polarization. Over the last 25 years, Republicans and Democrats have come to fear and loathe one another. In a 1960 survey, 4 percent of Democrats and 5 percent of Republicans said they would be displeased if their child married someone from the other party. Fifty years later, a survey found those numbers to be 33 percent and 49 percent, respectively.¹⁰ According to a 2016 Pew Survey, 49 percent of Republicans and 55 percent of Democrats said the other party makes them "afraid."¹¹ And a recent study by political scientists Danny Hayes and Liliana Mason shows that about 60 percent of both Democrats and Republicans said they believed the other party was a "serious threat to the United States."¹² We have not seen this kind of partisan hatred since the late 19th century.

Some polarization is normal—even healthy—for democracy. But extreme polarization can kill it. As recent research by political scientist Milan W. Svobik shows, when societies are highly polarized, we become more willing to tolerate undemocratic behavior by our own side.¹³ When politics is so polarized that we view a victory by our partisan rivals as something that is catastrophic or beyond the pale, we begin to justify using extraordinary means—such as violence, election fraud, and coups—to prevent it. Nearly all the most prominent democratic breakdowns across history (from Spain and Germany in the 1930s to Chile in the 1970s to Thailand, Turkey, and Venezuela in the early 2000s) have occurred amid extreme polarization. Partisan rivals came to view one another as such an existential threat that they chose to subvert democracy rather than accept victory by the other side.

The Sources of American Polarization

What we are experiencing today is not traditional liberal-conservative polarization. People do not fear and loathe one another over taxes or healthcare policy. Contemporary partisan divisions run deeper than that: they are about racial and cultural identity.¹⁴

Some polarization is normal—even healthy—for democracy. But extreme polarization can kill it.



Recall that the stability of modern American democracy rested, to a significant extent, on racial exclusion. Our democratic norms were erected by and for a political community that was overwhelmingly white and Christian—and which forcibly excluded millions of African Americans in the South.

American society has transformed dramatically over the last half-century. Due to large-scale immigration and steps toward racial equality, our country has grown both more diverse *and* more democratic. These changes have eroded both the size and the social status of America's erstwhile white Christian majority.

In the 1950s, white Christians constituted well over 90 percent of the American electorate. As recently as 1992, when Bill Clinton was elected president, 73 percent of American voters were white Christians. By the time Barack Obama was reelected in 2012, that percentage had fallen to 57 percent and research suggests that it will be below 50 percent by 2024.¹⁵ In effect, white Christians are losing their electoral majority.

They are also losing their dominant social status. Not long ago, white Christian men sat atop all our country's social, economic, political, and cultural hierarchies. They filled the presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the governors' mansions. They were the CEOs, the newscasters, and most of the leading celebrities and scientific authorities. And they were the face of both major political parties.

Those days are over. But losing one's dominant social status can be deeply threatening. Many white Christian men feel like the country they grew up in is being taken away from them. For many people, that feels like an existential threat.

This demographic transition has become politically explosive because America's racial and cultural differences now map almost perfectly onto the two major parties. This was not the case in the past. As recently as the late 1970s, white Christians were evenly divided as Democrats and Republicans.

Three major changes have occurred over the last half-century. First, the civil rights movement led to a massive migration of Southern white people from the Democrats to the Republicans, while African Americans—newly enfranchised in the South—became overwhelmingly Democratic. Second, the United States experienced a massive wave of immigration, and most of these immigrants ended up in the Democratic Party. And third, beginning with Ronald Reagan's presidency in the early 1980s, white evangelical Christians flocked to the Republicans.

As a result of these changes, America's two major parties now represent very different parts of American society. The Democrats represent a rainbow coalition that includes urban and educated white voters and people of color. Nearly half of Democratic voters are nonwhite. The Republicans, by contrast, remain overwhelmingly white and Christian.¹⁶

Americans have thus sorted themselves into parties that represent radically different communities, social identities, and visions of what America is and should be. The Republicans increasingly represent white Christian America, whereas the Democrats have come to represent everybody else. This is the divide that underlies our country's deep polarization.

What makes our polarization so dangerous, however, is its *asymmetry*. Whereas the Democratic base is diverse and expanding, the Republican Party represents a once-dominant majority

in *numerical and status decline*. Sensing this decline, many Republicans have grown fearful about the future. Slogans like “take our country back” and “make America great again” reflect this sense of peril. These fears, moreover, have fueled a troubling development that threatens our democracy: a growing Republican aversion to losing elections.

Lose the Election, Not the Democracy

Democracy requires that parties know how to lose. Politicians who lose elections must be willing to accept defeat, go home, and get ready to play again the next day. Without this norm of gracious losing, democracy is not sustainable.

Contemporary partisan divisions are about racial and cultural identity.

For parties to accept losing, however, two conditions must hold: first, they must feel secure that losing today will not bring ruinous consequences; second, they must believe they have a reasonable chance of winning again in the future. When party leaders fear they cannot win future elections, or that defeat poses an existential threat (to themselves or their constituents), the stakes rise. Their time horizons shorten. They throw tomorrow to the wind and seek to win at any cost today. In other words, desperation leads politicians to play dirty.

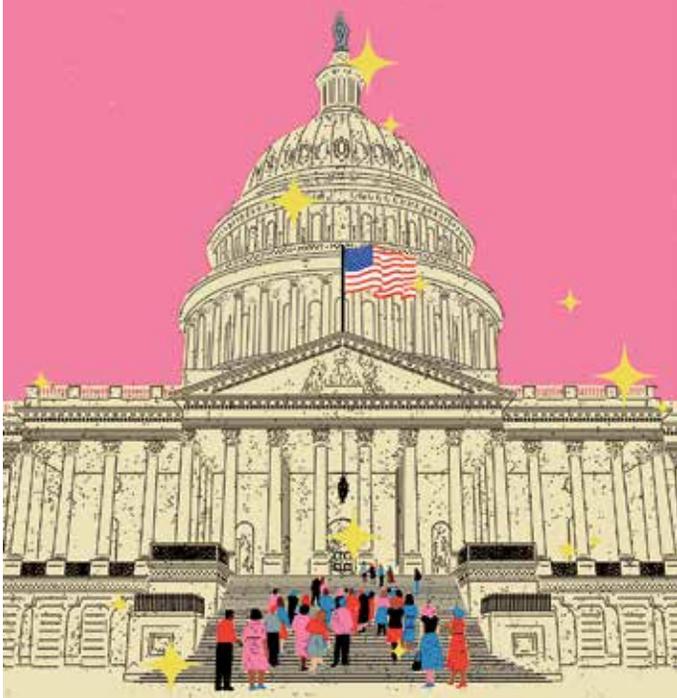
History offers numerous examples of how fear of losing leads parties to subvert democracy. In Europe before World War I, many traditional conservatives were haunted by the prospect of extending equal voting rights to the working class. In Germany, for example, conservatives viewed equal (male) suffrage as a menace not only to their own electoral prospects but also to the survival of the aristocratic order. (One German Conservative leader called full and equal suffrage among men an “attack on the laws of civilization.”) So German conservatives played dirty, engaging in rampant election manipulation and outright repression through World War I.

Closer to home, Southern Democrats reacted in a similar manner to the Reconstruction-era enfranchisement of African Americans, which was mandated by the Fifteenth Amendment. Since African Americans represented a majority or near-majority in most post-Confederate states, their enfranchisement imperiled Southern Democrats' political dominance—and potentially threatened the entire racial order. Viewing Black people's enfranchisement as an existential threat, Southern Democrats played dirty. Between 1885 and 1908, all 11 post-Confederate states passed laws establishing poll taxes, literacy tests, property and residency requirements, and other measures aimed at stripping African Americans of their voting rights—and locking in Democratic Party dominance.¹⁷ These measures, together with a monstrous campaign of anti-Black violence, did what they were intended to do: Black voter turnout in the South fell from

61 percent in 1880 to just 2 percent in 1912. Unwilling to lose, Southern Democrats stripped the right to vote from almost half the population, ushering in nearly a century of authoritarianism in the South.

The GOP is showing signs of a similar panic today. Republicans' electoral prospects are diminishing. They remain an overwhelmingly white Christian party in an increasingly diverse society. Moreover, younger voters are deserting them. In 2018, people aged 18 to 29 voted Democrat by a more than 2 to 1 margin, and those in their 30s voted nearly 60 percent Democrat.

The Republican Party has repeatedly abdicated in the face of Trump's violations of our constitutional order.



Demography is not destiny, but as California Republicans learned after adopting a hardline anti-immigrant stance in the 1990s,¹⁸ it can punish parties that resist societal change. The growing diversity of the American electorate has made it harder for the Republican Party to win national majorities. Indeed, the GOP has won the popular vote in *just one* presidential election in the last 30 years.

No party likes to lose, but for Republicans the problem is magnified by a growing perception among the base that defeat will have catastrophic consequences. As we noted above, many white Christian Republicans fear they are on the brink of losing

not just elections, but their country.

So like the old Southern Democrats, Republicans have begun to play dirty. Dimming electoral horizons and growing perceptions of an existential threat have encouraged a “win now at any cost” mentality. This mentality has been most manifest in recent efforts to tilt the electoral playing field. Since 2010, a dozen Republican-led states have adopted new laws making it more difficult to register or to vote.¹⁹ Republican state and local governments have closed polling places in predominantly African American neighborhoods, purged voter rolls, and created new obstacles to registration and voting. In Georgia, for example, a 2017 “exact match law” allowed authorities to throw out voter registration forms whose information did not “exactly match” existing records. During Georgia’s 2018 gubernatorial race, Brian Kemp, then Georgia’s secretary of state and now its governor, tried to use the law to invalidate tens of thousands of registration forms, most of which were from African Americans.²⁰ He also purged hundreds of thousands of voters from the rolls.²¹ Although these initiatives are less egregious than Jim Crow, the underlying logic is similar: parties representing fearful, declining majorities resort, in desperation, to dirty politics.

Where Is American Democracy Headed?

The Trump administration endangers American democracy like no other administration in modern American history. We see three potential threats: continued democratic backsliding, descent into dysfunction, and minority rule.

Continued Democratic Backsliding

Trump has attacked the media, trampled on congressional oversight, and sought foreign intervention into our elections. And like autocrats in Hungary, Russia, and Turkey, he has sought to deploy the machinery of government for personal, partisan, and even undemocratic ends. In the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear that the Trump administration is shockingly using the US Postal Service to make it harder to vote and to shape the results of the 2020 presidential election is only the latest instance of this phenomenon. Across the government, officials responsible for law enforcement, national intelligence, defense, election security, the census, public health, and even weather forecasting are under pressure to work for the president’s personal and political benefit—and, crucially, *against his critics and opponents*. Those who refuse—including inspectors general responsible for independently monitoring government agencies—are being pushed out and replaced with Trump loyalists.

This is how autocracies are built: leaders transform law enforcement, intelligence, and other institutions into partisan weapons, which they use to shield themselves from investigation and, in turn, to investigate and punish critics. When the referees work for the incumbent, the political playing field is inevitably tilted, subverting democratic competition. Indeed, Trump’s efforts to purge and corrupt government agencies closely mirrors those used by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to undermine his country’s democracy.

Democratic backsliding has been facilitated by the Republican Party, which has repeatedly abdicated in the face of President Trump’s violations of our constitutional order. When we

were writing *How Democracies Die* in 2017, we expected a faction of the GOP—especially in the US Senate—to break with President Trump, helping to block or deter his most egregious abuses. We were too optimistic. In a context of extreme polarization, Republicans who confronted the party’s radicalized base, such as Jeff Flake, saw their political careers derailed. Unwilling to risk their careers to defend democracy, House and Senate Republicans abdicated, undermining Congress’ constitutional role as a check on executive power and imperiling our system of separation of powers.

Nowhere was the erosion of our checks and balances made clearer than in the failure of the 2019–2020 impeachment process. Senate Republicans stated from the outset that they would acquit the president no matter what the evidence of wrongdoing. Polarization was so extreme that it was more important for the Republicans to beat the Democrats than to rein in a president who threatened democratic institutions. Impeachment, our most powerful constitutional check on executive abuse, was rendered toothless.

Although the threat of an autocratic turn is real, especially if Trump is reelected, important sources of democratic resilience remain. The United States differs from Hungary, Russia, Turkey, Venezuela, and other recent backsliding cases in important ways. For one, our institutions are stronger. The courts remain independent and powerful. Federalism remains robust. And within every agency that the White House has attempted to purge, gut, and politicize, committed professional civil servants have resisted vigorously. They may ultimately lose particular political battles, but their resistance slows democratic erosion.

Another difference is that whereas autocrats in Russia, Hungary, Turkey, and Venezuela steamrolled a weak opposition, America has a well-organized, well-financed, electorally viable opposition. That opposition includes not only the Democratic Party but also unions and a wide array of activist groups, new and old, that have organized opposition to the current administration’s policies since the day Trump took office.

The strength of America’s opposition was made manifest in the 2018 midterm elections, when Democrats won control of the House of Representatives, and it makes Trump’s defeat in November 2020 a real possibility. If Trump loses, the immediate threat of a slide into autocracy will diminish.

Descent into Dysfunction

Nevertheless, our democracy also faces a descent into dysfunction. America’s system of checks and balances, which often brings divided government, only works with a degree of mutual toleration and forbearance. When polarization erodes these norms and encourages constitutional hardball, divided government can easily descend into a kind of permanent institutional warfare—leaving the federal government unable to do the basic work of governance.

Indeed, although a return to divided government after 2018 brought welcome constraints on the Trump administration, it did not deliver anything resembling a well-functioning system of checks and balances. In the first year of divided government under President Trump, Americans witnessed the longest government shutdown in US history, a fabricated national emergency aimed at openly defying Congress, and an impeachment

process in which the White House flouted subpoenas and other mechanisms of congressional oversight.

America’s descent into democratic dysfunction prevents our governments from dealing with the most important problems facing our society—from immigration to climate change to healthcare. America’s botched, slow-moving response to the COVID-19 pandemic is only the latest and most lethal symptom of a political system that has been run aground by polarization.

Dysfunction doesn’t merely hinder government performance; it can also undermine public confidence in democracy. When governments consistently fail to respond to citizens’ most pressing problems, citizens lose faith in the system. There is good evidence that such an erosion of confidence is occurring in America today. According to a report by the Center for the Future of Democracy, the percentage of Americans who say they are dissatisfied with their democracy has more than doubled over the last two decades, from less than 25 percent in 2000 to 55 percent today.²²

America’s botched response to COVID-19 is the most lethal symptom of a political system run aground by polarization.

When societies lose confidence that their governments can resolve their problems, they grow vulnerable to demagogues or political outsiders who promise to “get things done” by other—usually autocratic—means.

Minority Rule

This final threat to our democracy is less visible, but it may be the most pernicious of all. Consider the following facts:

- The last two Republican presidents came to office despite having lost the popular vote—and it could easily happen again in 2020.
- The Democrats easily won the overall vote in the 2016 and 2018 Senate elections—and yet Republicans still control the Senate.
- In 2017, Neil Gorsuch became the first Supreme Court justice in history to be appointed by a president who lost the popular vote and then be confirmed by senators who represented less than half the country. A year later, Brett Kavanaugh ascended to the Court in exactly the same way, creating a conservative Court majority with decidedly minoritarian origins.
- In February 2020, the 52 senators who voted to acquit President Trump came from states that represented 18 million fewer Americans than the 48 senators who voted to convict.

America has a well-organized opposition that includes not only the Democratic Party but also unions.



These instances offer a glimpse into life under partisan minority rule. Our constitution and electoral geography have, unintentionally, conspired to favor the Republican Party. This may permit what Princeton sociologist Paul Starr calls the entrenchment in power of an electoral minority²³—primarily voters in rural, conservative, and largely white areas.

To be sure, minority rule has a deep history in America. Our Founders created a constitutional system that was biased toward small (or low population) states. But over time, that early small state bias evolved into a massive overrepresentation of rural states, affecting three important counter-majoritarian institutions: the Electoral College is slightly biased toward sparsely populated states; the US Senate is heavily biased toward sparsely populated states; and because the Senate must approve Supreme Court nominations, the Supreme Court is also somewhat biased toward sparsely populated states. Population trends—the gradual depopulation of rural areas—are exacerbating the problem. In 20 years, 70 percent of the US population will be living in 16 states, which means that 30 percent of the country will control 68 percent of the Senate.²⁴

For most of American history, the rural bias inherent in the political system had little *partisan* effect, because the major parties had urban and rural wings. In other words, the system

always favored Vermont over New York, but it did not favor any particular *party*. In recent years, however, US parties have divided along urban-rural lines. Today, Democratic voters are concentrated in the big metropolitan centers, whereas Republicans are increasingly based in sparsely populated territories. That gives the GOP a systematic and growing advantage in the Electoral College, the Senate, and the Supreme Court.

Partisan minority rule is bad enough, but it has an even more dangerous corollary. Republicans, pushed by a fearful white Christian base into a “win now at any cost” mentality, may use their advantage in counter-majoritarian institutions to entrench themselves in power without winning electoral majorities—indeed, in the face of *enduring opposition majorities*. The Electoral College permitted Donald Trump’s election (and may permit his reelection), while the Senate enabled his egregious abuse of power. Likewise, Republican efforts to tilt the electoral playing field via gerrymandering, purging of voter rolls, and new obstacles to registration and voting have been largely upheld by the Supreme Court.

In sum, no matter what the outcome of the presidential election, Americans could be headed for a period of partisan minority rule, in which governments elected by a minority of Americans seek to tilt the playing field under the protection of the Senate and the Supreme Court.

How Can We Preserve American Democracy?

The November 2020 election is critical. Trump’s reelection would accelerate the destructive trends we have seen over the past four years: the erosion of democratic norms, the abandonment of established democratic practice, a sustained assault on the rule of law, and further entrenchment of partisan minority rule. If the Trump presidency were to extend until 2024, we fear American democracy would become unrecognizable.

Thus far, two built-in checks in our political system have failed to protect us against the rise of a demagogue. First, as we argued in *How Democracies Die*, Republican leaders abdicated their democratic gatekeeping responsibilities by allowing a would-be authoritarian to win their presidential nomination and then working to get him elected. Second, as noted above, our system of checks and balances has failed to prevent presidential abuse; in a context of extreme polarization, even the institution of impeachment was ineffective.

The failure of party gatekeeping and congressional oversight leaves us with one final institutional check: the November 2020 elections.

That is why the fairness of the 2020 election is of central concern. Prominent techniques in the autocrat’s playbook are out of President Trump’s reach: he cannot cancel the election, bar his rival from running, or steal it via outright fraud. However, he may be able to manipulate the election in a more subtle way.

The current public health crisis may allow the administration to deploy an unusual strategy of electoral manipulation that we term *malign neglect*. Consider this: the COVID-19 pandemic will in all likelihood persist into the election season. Wherever the virus exists, the risks of in-person voting will lead many Americans to forgo voting altogether. Many polling station volunteers, who are typically older Americans, also will understandably choose to stay home, which could force a dramatic reduction in

the number of polling stations. As we saw in Wisconsin in April 2020, the result will be long lines, which will deter voters who lack the time, have difficulty standing for hours, or fear contagion. If conditions are severe enough, we could experience a steep fall in turnout, which could dramatically skew the results. And if the obstacles to voting are greatest in the cities, as was the case in Wisconsin, it could skew the results—without any actual fraud—in Trump’s favor.

To protect voters’ health and the fairness of the election, a vote-by-mail option should be available to all Americans who need it. Unfortunately, the White House has publicly opposed efforts to expand vote-by-mail options, and in many states, the Republican Party challenged such initiatives in court.²⁵

We often assume that one must break or change the rules to subvert democracy. But this isn’t always true. When changing conditions make it impossible to practice democracy as we did in the past, like when a pandemic makes in-person voting dangerous, *failing* to act—failing to update our rules and procedures—can itself subvert democracy. Malign neglect is an insidious form of constitutional hardball. It is hardly illegal to *not* act or to *not* pass legislation. Maintaining our traditional voting system—one that has worked in the past—doesn’t seem very authoritarian. Indeed, it may even at first glance seem prudent. Moreover, a chaotic, low-turnout election would violate no laws. Strictly speaking, it would be constitutional. But to do nothing at a time when a pandemic threatens citizens’ ability to vote, potentially affecting the outcome of a presidential election, would be an act of malign neglect—and potentially the biggest subversion of American democracy since Jim Crow.

Combating the Root Cause of Asymmetric Polarization

Democracy requires the existence of at least *two* democratically minded political parties. Thus, American democracy will only be secure when both major parties are committed to the democratic rules of the game. For that to happen, the Republican Party must change. It must transform itself into a more diverse party, capable of attracting younger, urban, and nonwhite voters. A Republican Party that can thrive in a multiracial America will be less fearful of the future. Without the “win now at any cost” mentality of a party facing inexorable decline, Republicans will be more likely to embrace democratic norms.

Such changes are less far-fetched than they may appear; indeed, the Republican National Committee recommended them as recently as 2013. But the Republican transformation will not happen automatically. Parties only change course when their strategies fail. In democratic politics, success and failure are measured at the ballot box. And nothing compels change like electoral defeat.

But there is a hitch: countermajoritarian institutions like the Electoral College, the Senate, and the federal judiciary allow the GOP to hold onto considerable power without winning national popular majorities. These institutions may therefore weaken Republicans’ incentive to adapt.

The only way out of this impasse is to double down on democracy, defending the right of all citizens to vote. Since the 1960s, Americans have taken important steps toward the creation of something few societies have

achieved: a truly multiracial democracy. Barack Obama’s presidency—barely a generation after the end of Jim Crow—was an unmistakable sign of our democratic progress. Those democratic achievements are worth defending. But they are now imperiled. It is a tragic paradox that our country’s belated steps toward full democracy triggered the radical reaction that now threatens it.

Americans who are concerned about the threats facing our democracy must not only participate in the 2020 election but also commit themselves to protect our most basic democratic institutions, including voting and civil rights. The stakes are high. We have much to lose. □

The only way out of this impasse is to double down on democracy, defending the right of all citizens to vote.

Endnotes

1. D. Schleifer and A. Diep, *Strengthening Democracy: What Do Americans Think?* The 2019 Yankelevich Democracy Monitor Report (Public Agenda, August 2019): https://www.publicagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Strengthening_Democracy_WhatDoAmericansThinkFINAL.pdf, 2.
2. N. Buyn, et al., *Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2020): https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/FIW_2020_REPORT_BOOKLET_Final.pdf.
3. A. Luhrmann et al., *Autocratization Surge—Resistance Grows: Democracy Report 2020* (Lindenberg: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), 2020): https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/f0/5d/f05d46d8-626f-4b20-8e4e-53d4b134bfcb/democracy_report_2020_low.pdf.
4. *Democracy Index 2020* (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020): <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.
5. “Countries and Territories: Global Freedom Scores,” *Freedom House*, June 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.
6. E. Posner, *The Demagogue’s Playbook: The Battle for American Democracy From the Founders to Trump*, (New York: St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2020).
7. R. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 121-122.
8. US Const. art. II, § 2, cl. 2.
9. M. Tushnet, “Constitutional Hardball,” *Georgetown University Law Center* (2004): <https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1557&context=facpub>.
10. E. Klein and A. Chang, “‘Political Identity Is Fair Game for Hatred’: How Republicans and Democrats Discriminate,” *Vox*, December 7, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2015/12/7/9790764/partisan-discrimination>.
11. *Partisanship and Political Animosity in 2016* (Pew Research Center, June 22, 2016): <https://www.people-press.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/06/06-22-16-Partisanship-and-animosity-release.pdf>, 1.
12. N. Kalmoe and L. Mason, “Lethal Mass Partisanship: Prevalence, Correlates, & Electoral Contingencies,” (Paper prepared for NCAPSA American Politics Meeting, Washington, DC, January 2019): https://www.dannyhayes.org/uploads/6/9/8/5/69858539/kalmoe_mason_ncapsa_2019_-_lethal_partisanship_-_final_lmedit.pdf, 19.
13. M. Svobik, “Polarization versus Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 3 (2019): 20-32, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/polarization-versus-democracy/>.
14. L. Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); A. Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2018); and E. Klein, *Why We’re Polarized* (Simon & Schuster, 2020).
15. R. Jones, *The End of White Christian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 106.
16. *In Changing U.S. Electorate, Race and Education Remain Stark Dividing Lines* (Pew Research Center, June 2020): https://www.people-press.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/06/PP_2020.06.02_Party-ID_FINAL.pdf.

(Continued on page 50)

One Person, One Vote

America's Ongoing Struggle with Our Most Basic Right



BY ERIC H. HOLDER, JR.

Over the past decade, the students of North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University (N.C. A&T) in Greensboro, North Carolina, the largest historically Black public university in the country, were forced into the spotlight of a national fight over voting rights that has been profoundly reshaping our democracy. During the 2018 midterm elections, students on campus, the vast majority of whom are African American, were split into two separate congressional districts. Depending on which dorm you lived in, you either voted in the 6th Congressional District or the 13th Congressional District.

To make the situation even more confusing, for the three prior congressional elections in 2012, 2014, and 2016, students on campus voted in the state's 12th Congressional District. What changed? Federal courts found that North Carolina's congressional map, which was drawn during the redistricting process in 2011, illegally diluted the voting power of people of color by a process known as *cracking* or *packing* voters. Put another way, the

Eric H. Holder, Jr., serves as chair of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (democraticredistricting.com). He served in the Obama Administration as the 82nd Attorney General of the United States from February 2009 to April 2015, the third longest serving attorney general in US history and the first African American to hold that office.

state legislature used gerrymandering (the practice of drawing electoral lines to benefit one party) to create congressional districts that unfairly diminished the voting power of people of color in the state. When the leadership in the state legislature was forced to redraw the map, they replaced their illegal *racial* gerrymander with a *partisan* gerrymander. The resulting map drew a line directly through the center of the N.C. A&T campus. The students went from being represented by Alma Adams, a Democratic member of the Congressional Black Caucus, to two Republicans. In short, students who had been packed by racial gerrymandering were cracked by partisan gerrymandering.

We don't need to guess at the intent of those in the state legislature who were in charge of drawing the maps—one of them announced¹ that he was drawing a map that gave Republicans 10 seats and Democrats 3 seats in the congressional delegation only because it was not mathematically possible to draw 11 seats for his Republican Party. While this was a particularly brazen instance of voter suppression because the culprit was willing to admit the misdeed, the truth is that it's part of a much larger project that has taken place over the past decade that has undermined voting rights in America.

New Forms of Voter Suppression

The sad truth is that the poll tax and Jim Crow-era laws may be relics of bygone periods, but they have been replaced by new

forms of discrimination and voter disenfranchisement that are very real and pervasive problems across America.

As is so often the case in American history, progressive steps forward are often met by resistance and backlash. In this case, the election of Barack Obama by a young, diverse coalition of supporters was followed by a new movement of voter suppression. Instead of actively trying to court this rising electorate, too many Republicans set about undermining the principle of “one person, one vote” so they could minimize the voting power of those who disagree with their views.

This work has been done using a number of tools, but the most prominent remain partisan and racial gerrymandering and stringent voter ID laws that overwhelmingly impact people of color and people who are poor. Voter suppression has allowed politicians to hold onto power despite often being out of step with voters on issues such as gun safety, climate change, reproductive rights, and funding for public schools and higher education.

There have been three defining moments in these efforts, each of which I explore below:

- the redistricting that occurred in 2011,
- the United States Supreme Court’s disastrous *Shelby County* decision that enabled voter restrictions (which, under my direction, the United States Department of Justice opposed) in 2013, and
- the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Rucho v. Common Cause* that declared federal courts would play no role in policing partisan gerrymandering in 2019.

A New Tool

During the 2010 elections, Republicans launched what they called Project RedMAP,² which was short for the Redistricting Majority Project. They knew that following the Census in 2010, states would have to go through the once-a-decade redistricting process to redraw the maps for state legislatures and the United States House of Representatives. They executed a plan to spend \$30 million on state legislative races so that Republicans would control the process in a number of key swing states.

Although gerrymandering has been around since the earliest days of America, what happened in 2011 was without precedent. Throughout most of our history, gerrymandering entailed incumbent politicians protecting themselves. In 2011, politicians used sophisticated mapping technology and an extreme desire for power to draw maps that were some of the most anti-democratic in history. Sam Wang and Brian Remlinger from the Princeton Gerrymandering Project write in a 2017 report³ that, “thanks to technology and political polarization, the effects of partisan gerrymandering since 2012 have been more pronounced than at any point in the previous 50 years.”

The effects of this gerrymandering were both immediate and enduring. In 2012, Democrats won 1.4 million more votes than Republicans in races for the US House of Representatives,⁴ but Republicans won a 33-seat majority in the chamber. There have been similar results at the state legislative level. In Wisconsin, for example, Republicans won 48.6 percent of the two-party vote statewide in 2012, but they “won” 60 of the 99 seats⁵ in the state Assembly.

The gerrymandered maps have been incredibly durable over the past decade. It took an historic “blue wave” during the midterms of 2018 for Democrats to finally win back a majority in the US House

of Representatives and win control of a number of state legislative chambers. Yet, a study conducted by the Associated Press⁶ found that Republican gerrymandering likely prevented Democrats from winning an additional 16 seats in the House and flipping control of an additional seven state legislative chambers.

Gerrymandering fundamentally undermines democracy because it effectively predetermines which party will have control before a ballot is ever cast. The consequences last well beyond Election Day: gerrymandering is one of the driving forces of polarization in America. When politicians represent districts that have been drawn to favor their own party, they become more concerned with a primary challenge than an opponent from the opposite party in the general election. By creating an incentive for politicians to cater to the extremes of their base and their special-interest donors, they no longer feel compelled to do what is in the best interest of the vast majority of the people. They can ignore the wishes and interests of most of their constituents and face no electoral consequence.

The Center for American Progress has conducted a study of states where gerrymandering has meant that the Republican Party has won fewer votes but retains control of the states’ legislatures. Despite having popular support, the legislatures in many of these states have refused to expand Medicaid,⁷ take reasonable actions that would reduce gun violence,⁸ or invest in early childhood care and education.⁹ To use one example, in 2019 Governor Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan proposed a budget with an \$84 million

Gerrymandering and voter ID laws overwhelmingly impact people of color and people who are poor.



increase in funding for the state’s preschool programs, but the gerrymandered legislature cut that down to a paltry \$5 million increase.¹⁰ Gerrymandering truly has life or death consequences for the American people and the future of our children.

A Supremely Bad Decision

If the gerrymandering that occurred in 2011 were the only attack on voting rights over the past decade, it would have been bad enough. Unfortunately, in 2013 the US Supreme Court, in a 5–4 decision, opened the floodgates for a renewed attack on who can cast a ballot in America.

Since 1965, Section 5 of the landmark Voting Rights Act had required what were called “covered jurisdictions” to preclear any changes to voting practices in their states with the US Department of Justice. Most, but not all, of the counties and states covered under Section 5 were former states of the Confederacy. The common denominator among them was that they all had Jim Crow voting provisions that targeted African Americans. For decades, the Voting Rights Act was renewed with bipartisan support in the US Congress, including in 2006 when it passed the Senate unanimously and was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

In 2013, the US Supreme Court decided *Shelby County*, a case that was originally brought in Alabama. In one fell swoop, the

conservative majority on the Court ended decades of precedent and eliminated the preclearance process. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in her prescient dissent, “throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”

Starting immediately after the decision, 19 states—including 9 that previously had been covered jurisdictions under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act—attempted to enact or successfully enacted voting restrictions like unnecessary photo ID laws. States have done so under the guise of “electoral integrity” and unsubstantiated claims of widespread voter fraud that are simply not backed up by any facts. A landmark report on voter fraud conducted by the Brennan Center found that an individual is more likely to “be struck by lightning”¹¹ than to cast a fraudulent in-person ballot. Yet over the past decade, 27 states have sought to enact some form of photo ID or voter suppression law.

It’s not a coincidence that the most gerrymandered state legislatures passed some of the most restrictive voter ID laws. In North Carolina, a federal judge found that a voter ID law targeted African Americans with “almost surgical precision.”¹² In Texas, a voter ID law allows people to vote using a state-issued concealed carry permit, but not a state-issued University of Texas student ID. In Wisconsin—a state Hillary Clinton lost by 23,000 votes in 2016—a voter ID law prevented up to 45,000 people¹³ from voting in 2016. In the spring of 2018, the US Supreme Court allowed the Republican secretary of state in Ohio to continue purging voters from the rolls, a practice that will likely become¹⁴ more widespread if Republicans continue to hold power at the state level.

The gubernatorial election of 2018 in Georgia between then Secretary of State Brian Kemp and former Georgia House Minority Leader Stacey Abrams provides even more examples of modern day, textbook voter suppression.¹⁵ The fact that Brian Kemp failed to recuse himself from his role as secretary of state during the campaign meant that he was essentially the referee in a game he

was also playing—and he had no scruples about using this to his own advantage. As secretary of state, he purged 1.4 million voters from the rolls. In the run up to the election, his office stalled the voter registration of more than 50,000 people,¹⁶ 80 percent of whom are people of color. Then on Election Day, voters in predominantly minority communities were forced to wait in lines for hours while voting machines sat in government warehouses unused. Kemp ended up beating Abrams by a mere 55,000 votes out of nearly 4 million cast, ending her bid to be the first African American woman elected governor in the history of the country.

A Misplacement of Power

In 2019, the US Supreme Court struck one more blow to voting rights by refusing to rein in partisan gerrymandering. During the Court’s term, they heard oral arguments in two separate but related cases. The first case involved the partisan gerrymandering of the North Carolina congressional delegation—this is the same map that split the N.C. A&T campus in half and gave Republicans a 10–3 seat advantage in

Gerrymandering is one of the driving forces of polarization in America.



what is essentially a 50–50 state.¹⁷ The second case involved a Democratic gerrymander of a single congressional district in Maryland. Taken together, the justices had the opportunity to say that no matter which party is at fault, and both were, partisan gerrymandering violates the Constitution.

Instead, in another 5–4 decision, the conservative justices determined in *Rucho v. Common Cause* that federal courts have no role in preventing partisan gerrymandering. In effect, the Court found that partisan gerrymandering created a real harm, but that it should be left up to the states to determine how to remedy the problem. To point out the unprecedented nature of this ruling, Justice Elena Kagan wrote in her powerful dissent¹⁸ that “for the first time ever, this Court refuses to remedy a constitutional violation because it thinks the task beyond judicial capabilities.” She went on to write that the partisan gerrymanders in Maryland and North Carolina “debased and dishonored our democracy, turning upside-down the core American idea that all governmental power derives from the people.”

Restoring Fairness

Despite the various barriers and attempts to block the American people from having the ability to elect candidates of their choice, all hope is not lost. There are a number of avenues we can pursue to fight gerrymandering in the lead-up to the redistricting process that will take place in 2021. The organization I lead, the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC), will continue to use every tool at our disposal—reform efforts, litigation, state and local election victories, and citizen advocacy—to restore fairness to our democracy.

Over the past few years, there has been a groundswell of support for anti-gerrymandering measures at the state level. In 2018 alone, citizens in Colorado, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Utah supported ballot measures that would either create citizen-led independent redistricting commissions to draw the lines or significantly reform the process to make it less partisan.¹⁹ As we have seen in states like Arizona and California that have citizen-led commissions in place, this is the best way to draw new lines because it removes power from self-interested politicians and gives it back to the people, where it belongs.

On the litigation front, although the US Supreme Court has said that federal courts will not police partisan gerrymandering, there are still two options for bringing cases. The first is racial gerrymandering claims brought in federal courts that prevent states from cracking and packing minority voters in a way that violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. In 2019, while the US Supreme Court failed to take action on partisan gerrymandering, a majority did uphold the redrawing of 11 state legislative districts in Virginia that were unfairly drawn based on race in a case brought by an affiliate of the NDRC.

The other remedial option is to bring partisan gerrymandering claims in state courts under state constitutions, which often have stronger voting rights protections than the federal Constitution. In 2019 an affiliate of the NDRC successfully brought partisan gerrymandering claims in North Carolina based on the state constitution that ultimately forced the redrawing of the state legislative and congressional maps. This case finally remedied the disenfranchisement of the students of N.C. A&T.

Politically, it is incumbent upon all of us to focus on, and care more about, the state and local politicians we elect. Although the

We need to stand up for our rights and use the most powerful tool we have as citizens: the vote.



positions may not be as glamorous as a US senator or the president, the people we elect to serve us at the local level often have a greater impact on our day-to-day lives. Not only do these people often have control over the redistricting process, they also control funding for education, healthcare, and so many of our other pressing needs. We should all endeavor to pay more attention to these important local offices and the people we elect to fill them.

At this moment when our political system is being tested in so many ways, the American people cannot take our democracy for granted. The silver lining is that since January 2017, there has been an awakening amongst our fellow citizens, a new activism that has been led by ordinary Americans realizing the power that we all have as citizens. I have been inspired by, among others, the actions of concerned women, activist teachers, LGBTQ Americans, those in systemically distressed communities of color, and students devastated by gun violence who have marched and organized to demand fairness, opportunity, and justice. But in too many places, regardless of political affiliation, age, or race, people feel that our system of government is breaking down. For too many, our democracy is not working. As a result, the issues that are of greatest concern—our education system, income inequality and stagnant wages, racial injustice, climate change, immigration, and personal freedoms—are not meaningfully addressed.



Despite the many challenges we face as a nation, this is not a time for despair. Our history has shown that we should never underestimate what is possible when Americans come together to shape the fate of our nation. I am optimistic, despite the efforts of one party abetted by a misguided US Supreme Court, that the will of the American people—and not the special interests—will triumph. We need to stand up for our values and our rights, and to use consistently the most powerful tool we all have as citizens: the vote. Together, we—the people—can bring about a new era of change and progress and stay true to our founding ideals.

America is both exceptional and a work in progress. We can and must commit ourselves to constructing a nation that stays true to the ideals that have always defined us. This is our ultimate challenge and enduring responsibility as 21st century American patriots. □

Endnotes

1. D. Graham, "North Carolina's Landmark Ruling Against Partisan Gerrymanders," *The Atlantic*, January 9, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/01/north-carolina-partisan-gerrymander/550139/>.

2. The Redistricting Majority Project, *2012 RedMAP Summary Report*, January 2013, <http://www.redistrictingmajorityproject.com/?p=646>.

(Continued on page 50)

Election Integrity During the Pandemic

In addition to the mounting obstacles put in place by politicians to prevent people from casting a ballot, we must now confront the COVID-19 pandemic. In early April, as public health experts were urgently ordering people to stay at home and avoid large gatherings, the state of Wisconsin moved forward with an election that put in jeopardy the health of its residents.²⁰ By refusing to move the election or provide adequate alternative voting options as they dealt with the pandemic, Republican politicians used their gerrymandered majorities in the Wisconsin legislature to force an impossible choice on the people they are supposed to represent: forgo your civic responsibility and stay healthy or cast a ballot and endanger yourself and your community.

The pandemic has impacted every state in the country, and people of every age, race, and background have contracted the virus (though the risks of illness and death have not been equitably borne²¹). Given that the virus is likely to put people's health at risk until a vaccine is widely available,²² the country must focus on expanding and safeguarding options for voting from home. In 2020 and beyond, every eligible American should be able to safely cast a ballot in a way that does not put themselves, their families, and their communities at risk.

Throughout the spring and summer, many—but not all—governors, state legis-

lators, and election administration officials took steps to

- Expand no-excuse absentee and vote-at-home measures in a way that ensures that there are not unnecessary burdens on people who want to cast a ballot.
- Make it easier to register to vote, including online options and same-day voter registration to minimize in-person contact.
- Prepare for safe and healthy polling places, including extended early voting and curbside voting, so that poll workers and those who want to cast a ballot in person have ample opportunities to do so while protecting themselves.
- Increase voter education so that people know all of the new options available to them to cast a ballot.
- Develop plans to count absentee ballots as quickly as possible and to share information with the public to prepare voters to have to wait longer than normal for election results to be determined.²³

In other states, we have been forced to file lawsuits to expand access to the ballot and ensure that people are able to vote safely during the pandemic. We've also been forced into a battle over protecting the Postal Service—a cherished institution—from unnecessary cuts that could hamper people's ability to vote by mail this fall.

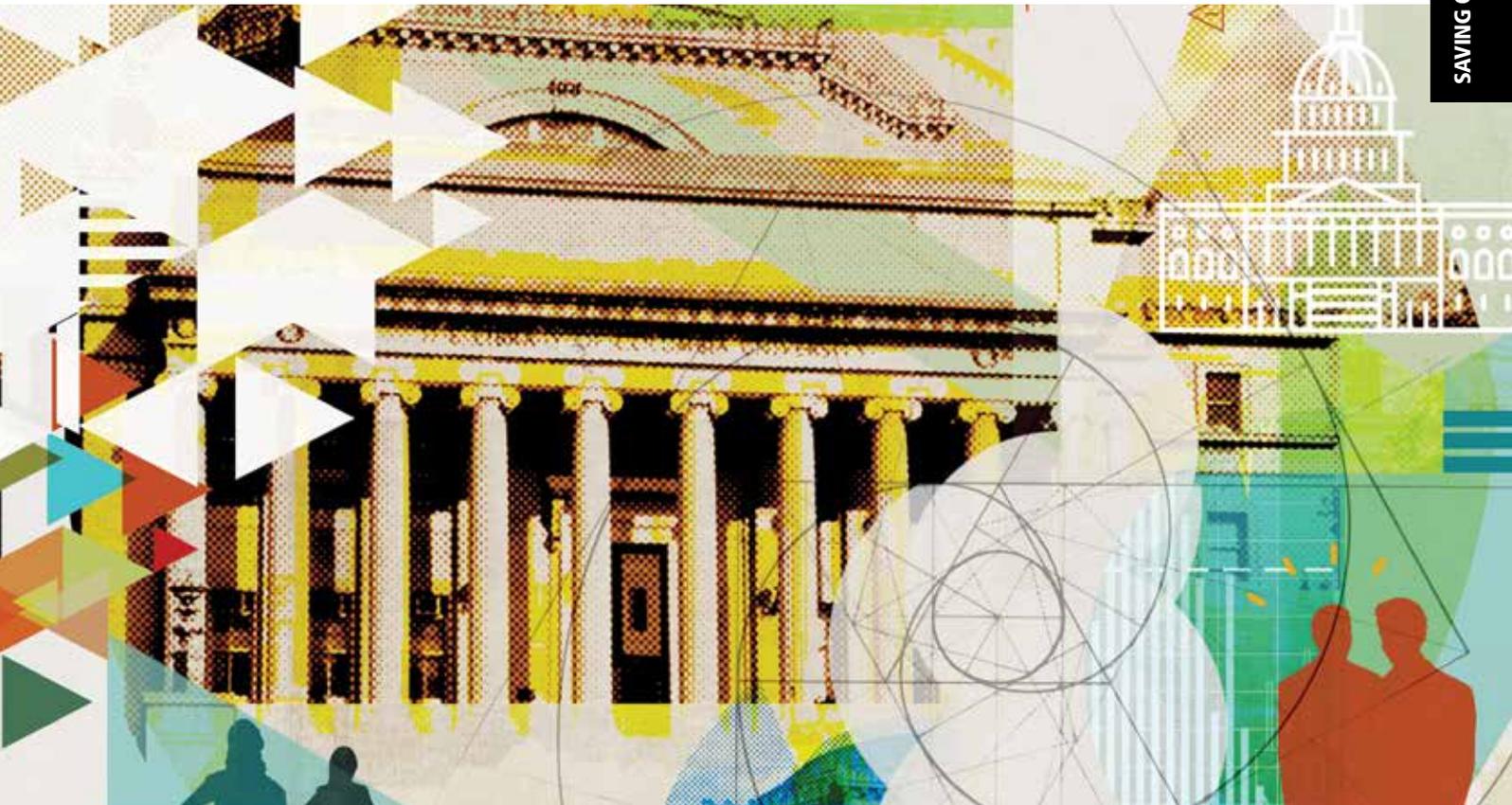
Because states differed greatly in their voting procedures prior to the pandemic, and they have not uniformly changed their procedures in recent months, one concern for the upcoming election is the people's faith in the integrity of the process and the legitimacy of the results. Those who make unfounded claims on the legitimacy of our election results are severely damaging trust in our democratic system. My hope is that there will be concerted educational efforts from nonpartisan groups, the media, and concerned Americans on how people can vote in their states that combat cynical attempts to depress voter turnout and that bolster trust in the system.

Importantly, claims that common alternatives to in-person voting significantly increase fraud are, put simply, baseless.²⁴ Voting at home is already used in a substantial way—without any meaningful indication of fraud²⁵—in Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Utah, and other states. Carefully conducted studies²⁶ of states that have expanded voting by mail show that the method is secure and reliable. It also increases voter turnout relatively evenly, without creating an advantage for Democrats or Republicans. Even if the rise in alternative forms of voting increase turnout for one party, the results would better reflect the will of the people. Our ultimate goal should be for each and every eligible person to vote.

—E. H. H.

Safeguarding Knowledge

For Our Democracy and Well-Being



BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

"Knowledge," as Francis Bacon observed in 1597 at the dawn of the modern era, "is power." Without knowledge no nation can govern its economy, manage its environment, sustain its public health, produce goods or services, understand its own history, or enable its citizens to understand the circumstances in which they live.

Knowledge is produced by the hard work of disciplined, well-trained investigators. Industry and government must hire doctors, chemists, lawyers, architects, teachers, journalists, economists, and engineers. Colleges and universities are the only institutions qualified to provide this expert training. It is therefore most unfortunate that at this moment of intense global

instability, there is an ongoing movement to attack the disciplines and institutions that produce and transmit the knowledge that sustains American democracy.

No state can organize effective government policy except on the basis of informed, dispassionate investigation. What kind of government policy can we make when the Department of Agriculture refuses to release studies into the effects of climate change on rice production, allergenic grasses, and cattle feeding, merely because such studies contradict the fantasy that climate change is not occurring?¹ Or when the Department of Justice suppresses its own data collection on white supremacist domestic terrorism?

Nearly a year ago, when the American Association of University Professors was preparing "In Defense of Knowledge and Higher Education," the statement from which this article is excerpted, we couldn't know that a global pandemic was imminent. But we did know that epidemiologists and other experts in universities and government were developing and applying the science we need to cope. Sadly, the Trump administration's refusal to heed the early warnings of its own experts and its history of science denialism are resulting in unnecessary deaths. If we are to learn anything from the COVID-19 crisis it should be that a renewed and strengthened defense of expert knowledge, and of the freedom of inquiry and thought essential to the devel-

The American Association of University Professors is a nonprofit organization of higher education faculty and other academic professionals. This article is adapted with permission from "In Defense of Knowledge and Higher Education," a statement prepared by the Association's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and adopted by the AAUP's Council in November 2019. The full statement is available at www.aaup.org/report/defense-knowledge-and-higher-education.

opment and dissemination of that knowledge, are more essential than ever for promoting the common good. Slogans and superstition are no match for the growing complexity and interconnectedness of today's world.

Relying on Expertise

Expert knowledge is a process of constant exploration, revision, and adjudication. Expert knowledge, and the procedures by which it is produced, are subject to endless reexamination and reevaluation. It is this process of self-questioning that justifies society's reliance on expert knowledge. Such knowledge may in the end prove accurate or inaccurate, but it is the best we can do at any given time. That is why we are largely justified in relying on it.

It is up to those who value knowledge to take a stand in the face of those who would assault it.

Expert knowledge is not produced in a “marketplace of ideas” in which all opinions are equally valid. The dialogue that produces expert knowledge occurs among those who are qualified by virtue of their training, education, and disciplinary practice. The debate is open and fierce, but mere opinion has no place at the table.

As more groups gain access to higher education, they bring new demands for the expansion of expert knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is enriched by these new challenges. American intellectual history began to look different when it finally included Frederick Douglass and Fred Korematsu. It continues to look different now that it includes Pauli Murray and Sandra Cisneros.

Academic freedom, the lifeblood of American higher education, protects the independence of faculty members in their pursuit of expert knowledge and in their transmission of this knowledge to students. A line of attack on higher education has proceeded under the seemingly impeccable banner of freedom of speech. There has been an explicit political campaign attacking universities as enemies of freedom of speech. Since all are equally entitled to freedom of speech, scholarly standards and criteria are attacked as mere intimidation and unjustifiable censorship.

Academic freedom rests on a paradox. There must be freedom of inquiry, but that freedom must always be subject to peer judgment and evaluation.

Colleges and universities are disciplinary, not political, institutions. They exist to serve the common good in the production and distribution of expert knowledge, as well as in the pedagogical inculcation of a mature independence of mind. Research and teaching are sites of critical thinking.

Colleges and universities deserve public support to the extent that American society requires expert knowledge. Expert knowledge has fueled American progress. It has checked ideological fantasies and partisan distortions. It has provided a common ground on which those with competing political visions can come together constructively to address common problems. Without expert knowledge, we lose our ability to know the past, to shape the future, and to acknowledge the differences and similarities we share as human beings.

The mission of colleges and universities is to produce and to disseminate this knowledge, which is not a mere commodity to be defined and purchased at the whim of consumers. Higher education serves the common good, not the interests of a few.

In 1915 the founders of the AAUP asserted “not the absolute freedom of utterance of the individual scholar, but the absolute freedom of thought, of inquiry, of discussion and of teaching, of the academic profession.”² They pledged, as do we, to safeguard freedom of inquiry and of teaching against both covert and overt attacks and to guarantee the long-established practices and principles that define the production of knowledge.

It is up to those who value knowledge to take a stand in the face of those who would assault it, to convey to a broad public the dangers that await us—as individuals and as a society—should that pledge be abandoned. □

Endnotes

1. H. Evich, “Agriculture Department Buries Studies Showing Dangers of Climate Change,” *Político*, June 23, 2019.
2. *1915 Declaration of Principles in Policy Documents and Reports* (Washington, DC: American Association of University Professors), 8-9, 11.



Youth-Led Protests Strengthen Our Democracy



As the articles by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt and by Eric H. Holder, Jr., show, our democracy has been in decline for many years. To conclude this package on saving our democracy on a hopeful note, we turn to our youth. Their activism—especially for the Black Lives Matter movement—is inspiring; it should be supported, not squelched.

Free speech is the cornerstone of a high-functioning democracy. But all too often, speech that challenges those in power is ignored. When voices are not heard, they must become louder. And when they unify in mass protests, those voices strengthen our democracy. We are proud of the young people who are crying out to create a better, more just America that rejects its anti-Blackness and shares its opportunities. And we are proud of the educators who have helped those youth develop their understanding of social justice.

In support of young activists and the educators engaged with them, we offer excerpts from two new books: *Campus Uprisings: How Student Activists and Collegiate Leaders Resist Racism and Create Hope*, edited by Ty-Ron M. O. Douglas, Kmt G. Shockley, and Ivory A. Toldson, and *Dare to Speak: Defending Free Speech for All*, by Suzanne Nossel. Each offers thoughtful perspectives on how young people and their educational communities can preserve free speech while building a better society through protest. Both books are written with higher education in mind, and both have ideas that can be adapted to elementary and secondary schools, as well.

While both excerpts offer examples of students addressing racism, *Campus Uprisings* does so in a forthright manner that may be difficult for some readers. Describing racist incidents in which the N-word is used, these Black authors choose to use the word in full. The question of how to handle such language is a difficult one: we respect the authors' choice to convey the full horror of the racist act, and we are also concerned about how it may affect our Black readers. After consulting with colleagues, we concluded that in this case, confronting the harsh reality of racism is part of the way forward. Please help us reflect on our practices by sharing your thoughts on this specific question, or on our broader efforts to reckon with racial injustice, by emailing us at ae@aft.org.

We are also committed to listening to students. We begin this salute to protest by highlighting findings from a recent poll of college students on free speech. If your students' views on exercising their right to free speech are not being equitably voiced and heard, consider using this poll to begin a dialogue—or possibly create your own survey—and find out more about your students and the changes they aspire to make.

Helping Students Find Their Voices

Free speech is essential to our democracy, and learning communities—especially college campuses and classrooms—are key spaces for participants to explore difficult topics, to be exposed

to new ideas and perspectives, and to learn to function with others in a society. Many educators cherish the ideal of truly free speech and relish opportunities to help students engage with complex issues like present-day school segregation, mass incarceration, and the treatment of refugees and immigrants—but educators also grapple with the difficulties, particularly the risk that students' remarks will be harmful to their classmates.

Only 60 percent of Black students agreed that “the First Amendment protects people like me.”

Even in educational settings that aim to be inclusive, students may be discouraged from speaking up because of barriers like institutional racism and the implicit biases it fosters. For example, the tendency for educators (and other adults) to perceive Black children and teens as older, less innocent, and more disruptive than their white peers (beginning as early as preschool) leads to higher rates of suspension and expulsion, fewer mentorship and leadership opportunities, and other obstacles to preparing for college.¹ Such messages are reinforced when, as we have seen repeatedly in the anti-police brutality protests following the murder of George Floyd, government responses to largely peaceful demonstrations have been mixed and have included violent, unconstitutional attempts to suppress that lawful speech.

When students who perceive that they have been silenced do make it to college, how might they feel about “appropriate” ways to make their perspectives heard? What if some students believe that safely disrupting (not merely silently protesting) a speech by a known white supremacist, for instance, is the only way they can be heard? In such situations, we hope the book excerpts that follow will foster a meaningful debate among faculty, administrators, activist students, and the broader educational community. It might at first seem necessary to punish students who disrupt events, but more productive options may emerge through dialogue.

In setting the stage for such conversations, faculty and administrators may want to consider the potential for causing real harm in asking members of marginalized social groups, such as the children of Central American immigrants or students who identify as LGBTQ, to engage intellectually with peers who believe they are inferior, sinful, or otherwise not worthy of equal rights and opportunities.² These are tensions that educators often feel acutely as they strive to make their learning spaces welcoming to everyone while also providing opportunities for meaningful learning.

Hearing Our Students' Words, Silences, and Actions

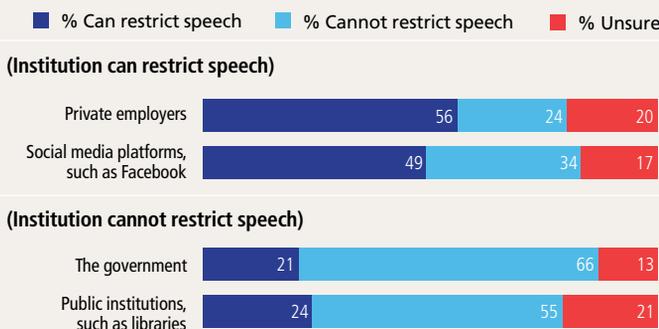
A recent Gallup/Knight Foundation survey of more than 3,000 full-time college students offers some insights into the ways students perceive freedom of speech to operate on campus—and emphasizes some of the challenges involved. (Download the report for free at <https://kng.ht/31xRy1Y>.)

While 96 percent of students said that freedom of expression was very or extremely important (a dominant majority that persists across racial and gender demographics), many students had an incomplete understanding of what kinds of speech are actually protected and where (see Figure 1).³

FIGURE 1

Student Understanding of Institutions' Ability to Restrict Speech

As you may know, the First Amendment protects citizens from actions institutions might take to restrict their free speech. Based on what you know or have read, please indicate whether each of the following institutions can or cannot restrict speech protected by the First Amendment, or if you are unsure.

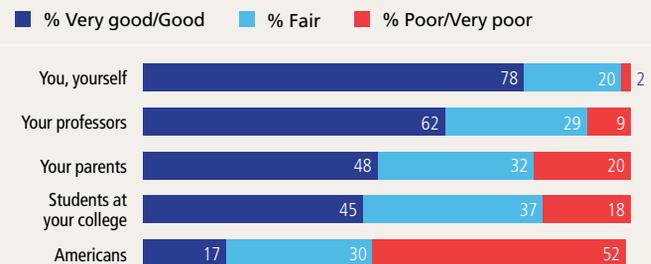


Note: “No answer” percentages not shown.

FIGURE 2

Student Ratings of Willingness to Consider Different Viewpoints

Generally speaking, how would you rate the job each of the following do at seeking out and listening to viewpoints differing from their own — very good, good, fair, poor, or very poor?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

Figures republished with permission of Gallup, Inc., from *The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report: College Students' Views of Free Expression* (2020); permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Students are broadly aware that the exercise of freedom of speech occurs within larger social contexts. Among all students surveyed, 91 percent believed that it was very or extremely important that society be inclusive and welcoming to diverse groups of people. But students also recognized that practicing free speech and valuing diversity and inclusion might sometimes conflict. Although 24 to 29 percent of men, women, Democrats, independents, Republicans, and white students perceived such conflicts as frequent, 40 percent of Black students saw such conflicts as frequent.

These results show that there are many opportunities to engage students as they too grapple with what the legal and ethical limits of free expression—and their rights and responsibilities—might be.

Notably, most students (62 percent) felt their professors were willing to consider other points of view, a sign that many faculty are doing a good job of listening and making sure students feel heard. Students saw themselves as doing an even better job, but they had a much lower opinion of their peers and of Americans in general (see Figure 2).⁴ These gaps suggest that students are not communicating with each other as clearly as they think!

Digging into the implications of free speech sheds some more light on these disparities. Over and over, the poll data show that female students and students of color feel less safe on campus than their peers. Only 60 percent of Black students agreed that “the First Amendment protects people like me” (compared with 94 percent of white students). And 38 percent of all students reported feeling uncomfortable because of speech related to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation—even if those comments weren’t directed at them—including 41 percent of female students, 41 percent of Black students, and 44 percent of Asian students. Significantly, one in eight students reported feeling unsafe because of speech, with female students twice as likely to feel unsafe as male students and Black and Asian students much more likely than white students (see Figure 3).⁵

Among all students, there was broader consensus on what kinds of speech schools should restrict. While 88 percent of all students believed colleges should be able to bar the use of racial slurs and half favor restricting clothing with the Confederate flag, only 11 percent believed colleges should be able to prevent students from hanging posters endorsing political candidates in their dorm windows (see Figure 4).⁶

This is the heart of the issue, and it brings with it an invitation for educators to reflect: How can we help students understand the value of freedom of expression while also helping them to exercise that freedom responsibly and respectfully? How can we balance our desire to help all students to feel safe expressing themselves in our classrooms with our responsibility to make sure all students feel safe, period?

These are challenges those who work in education spaces need to think through, particularly before enacting policies, deciding punishments, or planning class discussions on difficult topics. And students should be involved in those conversations and decisions. As the survey results show, while students may have a lot to learn about free speech, they also have a lot to share.

—EDITORS

(Endnotes on page 50)

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Students Who Have Felt Unsafe Because of Something Said

Have you ever, personally, felt unsafe on campus because of something someone said in reference to things such as your race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, whether or not it was directed at you?

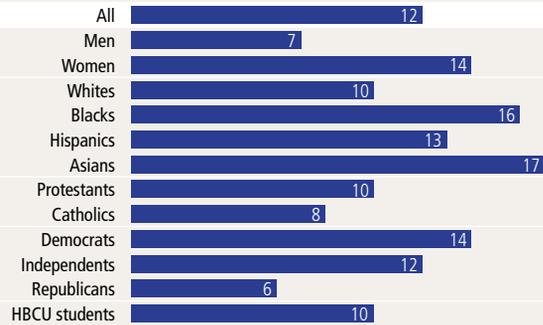
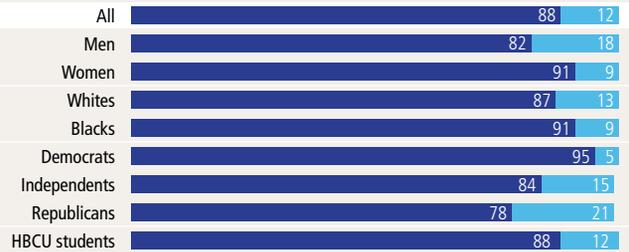


FIGURE 4

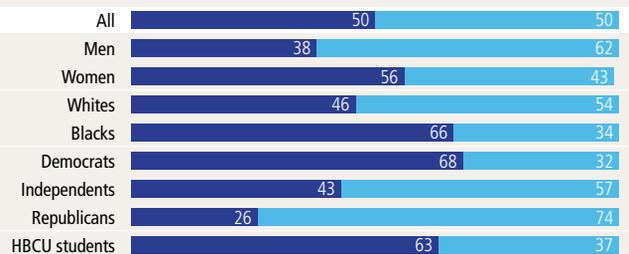
Student Support for College Restrictions on Specific Types of Speech, by Subgroup

■ % Yes, colleges should be able to restrict
 ■ % No, colleges should not be able to restrict

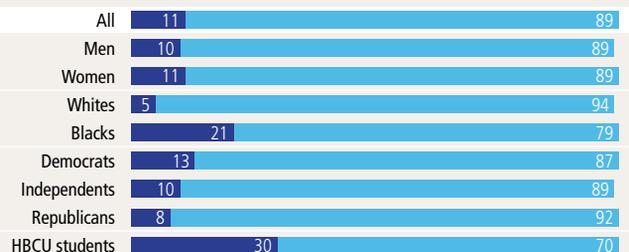
Using an offensive racial slur to refer to people of color



Wearing clothing that displays the Confederate flag



Displaying a poster expressing support for a presidential candidate in a dorm room window



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may total 100% +/- 1%.

Racial Breakthroughs

Born of Student Protest

Introducing *Campus Uprisings*

This book was written in an era of activism critically necessitated by nearly four years of a Trump presidency: an era punctuated by the NAACP declaring in unprecedented fashion a state advisory warning Black people against visiting Missouri, the horrific but not surprising scenes in Charlottesville, Virginia, leaving no question about the presence and persistence of white supremacy on college campuses and in communities across this republic, and the Chronicle of Higher Education publishing this striking headline: “White Supremacists Are Targeting College Campuses Like Never Before.” The book’s publication came only weeks before four officers in Minnesota were fired for choking a Black man to death after he revealed to them that he was claustrophobic, and the National Football League finally apologized for its own racism after Colin Kaepernick was intentionally excluded from their rosters for kneeling to oppose police brutality.

In recent years, several racist incidents on college campuses have received national and local media attention. For example, racist language and symbols appeared at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, including a note on the door of a student’s on-campus apartment that read “filthy nigger.” At Drake University, a swastika was carved into a campus elevator and the word “nigger” was written on the whiteboard outside a Black student’s dorm room door. These happenings and others are adding to the negative climate on campuses around the country. In that sense, the uprisings we have witnessed on campuses and in the streets are not simply appearing from nowhere. There are historical and present-day contexts that have created the conditions for them. This text reveals these contexts and the current climate; it also shares the real voices of people who are leading the movement to stand up to racial injustice on college campuses. This book is a go-to resource for educators, parents, and leaders to access the expertise of scholars, practitioners, students, and administrators related to campus uprisings.

—**TY-RON M. O. DOUGLAS**, associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri;

KMT G. SHOCKLEY, associate professor at Howard University in the School of Education; and

IVORY A. TOLDSON, president and CEO of Quality Education for Minorities Network and professor of Counseling Psychology at Howard University

ed to the struggle long, of the indoctrination of the
were from down south,
a white reign of terror,
rinders and lynchings of be led from
refers, they know how at the R.O.

locked by hopelessness,
see no end to the white
some contented with it. school system to brain
pool, not knowing the fighting for communis
y parents and their R.O.T.C. out of our sit
on away from home.

SOLUTIONS: ECO
between black students
generation gap that the
This is because both
that things aren't all
involvement on the part

The problems
there because of
community. Right
by persons who
education out in it
goes to those schoo

taxes for your schools
wasted because you are
for. Your parents are
age, racism

The things
in this
and air
will t

in
the joy
our education
solved.

Regions
cently edu

The econo
determined by th

These are
Decentraliz
the proble
ols. This is a
eration involv
rgan Bell, etc.
students enterin
school. Solut

Be it see
ol t

re man
g people
ed with
activities, w
That is
re black

at a cred
ht it to U
children are
ge will be
looked on
e white m
control will

BLACK

WE DEMAND
AN END
TO BIAS
NOW!

LIVES

MATTER

NONVIOLENT
WE SHALL
OVERCOME
COURAGE
COMMITTEE



This adapted selection is reprinted by permission of the Publisher. From Ty-Ron M. O. Douglas, et al., eds., *Campus Uprisings: How Student Activists and Collegiate Leaders Resist Racism and Create Hope*, New York: Teachers College Press. Copyright © 2020 by Teachers College, Columbia University. All rights reserved.

BY SHAUN R. HARPER

begin with the presentation of four facts. First, higher education institutions in the United States were not built for people of color. Instead, profits from slavery, as well as the actual labor of enslaved African people, were used to build many of our nation's early colleges and universities. Second, when Black collegians were afforded access to what Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodriguez and Aireale J. Rodgers call "white-serving institutions" (WSIs), their entry was almost always met with opposition, violence, and isolation. The majority of campuses that the first Black students entered prior to 1970 had no Black faculty, no Black history, no Black culture, no Black anything. The third fact is that WSIs have excluded students of color far longer than they have included them in any meaningful or measurable way. Some institutions are more than 300 years old—for 200 or more of those years, they only admitted and graduated students who were white. Fourth, the most significant racial breakthroughs in the history of American higher education were born of student protests.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other activist groups led a wave of campus uprisings in the 1960s that began to disrupt the exclusive, often violent, nature of WSIs. The Black Student Union and a coalition of other student groups known as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) orchestrated sit-ins and other demonstrations at San Francisco State University; the outcome was the birth of Black Studies on that campus and gradually elsewhere across the country. Chicx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Black students stood in solidarity as they demanded that the curriculum at the University of California–Berkeley include their cultural histories and lives. Culture centers that still stand at WSIs were on lists of demands that student activists presented to their campus leaders three to four decades prior. Also, throughout the 1960s, students on the campuses of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were protesting racism and social injustice in the larger society.

I am not so sure that WSIs and the rest of higher education realize how indebted we all are to student activists and their supporters. There would be significantly fewer students, faculty, and administrators of color had protesters not demanded it. On some campuses, there would still be none. There would be no ethnic studies or ethnic culture centers. And the mainstream curriculum would likely include only Eurocentric and white American cultural perspectives. These suppositions of mine are informed largely by contemporary realities. Although previous generations of courageous student agitators have fought for these advances, they still remain obviously unimportant to the overwhelming majority of trustees, administrators, and faculty members at many WSIs.

Truth is, boards of trustees are about 75 percent white at public institutions and 87 percent white at private ones.¹ Eighty-

three percent of college and university presidents are white.² This number is even higher when chief executives from HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions, and community colleges (which enroll a disproportionately high share of students of color in US higher education) are excluded. Seventy-five percent of full-time faculty members are white.³ Again, this number is higher at WSIs. On some campuses, African American Studies majors, minors, and programs were recently elevated to academic departments, mostly as a result of campus uprisings during the 2015–2016 academic school year. This is commendable. But the reality on lots of other campuses is that ethnic studies remain on the periphery, with a pathetically small number of full-time faculty and too few institutional resources. Moreover, ethnic culture centers and multicultural centers are located in raggedy buildings on the outskirts of campus, in dark basements of old buildings, and in tiny office suites that are incapable of accommodating more than a dozen students of color at one time. These are among the shortcomings of WSIs that activists are protesting in the modern era.

Campus leaders routinely fail to realize how uprisings help actualize rhetoric concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In addition to structural and systemic reminders of their unimportance, contemporary college students of color are also resisting commonplace encounters with racism and racial stress on their campuses. Researchers in the centers I founded at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Southern California have conducted face-to-face interviews with more than 10,000 undergraduates in every geographic region of the United States. Participants in our campus racial climate studies, many of whom are students of color, recalled for us numerous examples of horrifying racial violence at WSIs. For instance, on all but one campus where we have done this research, at least one Black student had been called a "nigger" by a white peer, professor, or faculty member. At other institutions, students of color had been racially profiled by campus police officers. White people called the police on tuition-paying Black collegians because they presumed them to be criminal outsiders who had come to inflict violence on campus.

In 2019, many students of color continue to be the only persons from their racial and ethnic groups in most classes they take at WSIs. Too many of them have told us that their classmates and instructors make racially offensive remarks in class without consequence; they expect the lone student of color to speak on behalf of all people of color in class discussions; and they are surprised when the one Latinx woman writes well or thought-



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUCY NALAND
PHOTOS: COURTESY WALTER P. REUTHER LIBRARY/FLIP SCHULKE - BLACK STAR, COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE, NAGIO JAN BROWN, GETTY IMAGES

Shaun R. Harper is Provost Professor of Management and Organization, Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership, and University of Southern California Race and Equity Center executive director. An author and researcher, he studies racial, gender, and LGBTQ issues in corporations, law firms, Hollywood production companies, K–12 schools, and universities.



fully contributes. Furthermore, they assume the one Latinx man is an undocumented American and the Black woman was only admitted because of affirmative action—hence, they do not deserve to be there. Black men are commonly presumed to be student-athletes and are treated in accordance with the “dumb jock” stereotype. Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American, and multiracial students experience extreme invisibility and erasure;

few campuses take the time to understand what their needs, issues, experiences, and expectations are.

At this point, I have several hundred examples of racial problems and occurrences that compel college students of color and their supporters to demand institutional change. These examples are from my research, studies that other scholars have published over the past 60 years, and other sources. During the 2016, 2017, and 2018 academic school years, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published nearly 400 news stories about racial incidents on campuses across the country. Few of those situations and tragedies surprised me, as they are fully consistent with what I have been hearing for years in my interviews with students of color about their experiential realities at WSIs.

Because of their extraordinary contributions to racial progress in American higher education, I deeply respect and admire college student activists. But unfortunately, most campus administrators fear them. They want uprisings to quickly deflate and campuses to return to normal.

What they do not realize is that “normal” is racist, exclusionary, offensive, and sometimes violent. It is not as clear to them as it is to me that students of color and their supporters are resisting everyday racism while putting their bodies and academic lives on the line to improve WSIs for themselves and future generations. Campus leaders also routinely fail to realize how uprisings help actualize the rhetoric concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion espoused in presidential speeches, in admissions brochures, on university websites, and elsewhere. That is, activists help hold administrators and faculty members at WSIs accountable for becoming what they claim to be. These campus leaders rarely choose to acknowledge what I and several others know is true: WSIs will continually uphold white supremacy if frustrated students of color and others discontinue their activist efforts. For this reason, I will forever be a huge appreciator and proponent of campus uprisings. I am grateful to Professors Douglas, Shockley, and Toldson, as well as their brilliant cast of authors, for producing this timely book on the topic. I have an even greater appreciation for the members of SNCC, TWLF, and other activist groups, as well as those who have advanced the Black Power, Black Lives Matter, and ‘me too’ movements at colleges and universities across the country. Uprisings they led made campuses better, more diverse, more inclusive, more responsive, and more accountable. □



To learn more, watch the *Campus Uprisings* trailer at <https://bit.ly/2ZEX4xs>.



The architects of *Campus Uprisings: How Student Activists and Collegiate Leaders Resist Racism and Create Hope* are to be applauded for their vision. Editors Douglas, Shockley, and Toldson assembled scholars who have committed research agendas focused on improving the experiences for Black people on college campuses. The chapters creatively and directly address new and long-term challenges, such as discrimination in hiring and admissions policies, the digital nature of student activism, the contemporary role of HBCUs, racist monuments and buildings, Trump-fueled campus climates, campus protests, and sexual assault.

Institutions of higher education should receive this book as a call to action: a call to think carefully about how to include the values and interests of those who were once barred from attending but are now active members. In doing so, a serious examination of the rules by which it is decided who gets to be members, and whether these members will have equal status with existing members, is warranted. In what ways does existing organizational culture ignore or recognize the existence of new members and their differences? What does the climate study say about the experiences and treatment of all members? Lastly, would an analysis of the workforce show that all members have equal access to senior leadership roles, or are opportunities reserved for members with specific characteristics? The thought-provoking chapters in this book lay the groundwork for both institutions and leaders who want to answer the call to action.

—JERLANDO F. L. JACKSON, Vilas Distinguished Professor of Higher Education and director of Wisconsin’s Equity and Inclusion Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin–Madison

Endnotes

1. *Citizen Trustee Survey: Selected Results and Analysis* (Washington, DC: Association of Community College Trustees, October, 2018) https://www.acct.org/files/Publications/2018/Citizen%20Trustee/Citizen_Trustee_Final.pdf; P. Fain, “Diversity Remains Fleeting on Colleges’ Governing Boards, Survey Finds,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 29, 2010, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Diversity-Remains-Fleeting-on/125566>.
2. *Minority Presidents Profile: American College President Study* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy, 2017) <https://www.aceacps.org/minority-presidents/>.
3. B. Hussar et al., *Condition of Education 2020* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) 150-153, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_csc.pdf.

Preparing for Racial Unrest on Campus

BY MAHAUGANEE SHAW BONDS AND SYDNEY FREEMAN, JR.

Campus racial unrest is not a new phenomenon in US higher education. There are innumerable historical and contemporary examples, with many of the former stemming from the landmark struggles to admit and enroll Black students in predominantly white institutions. In modern times, there have been several major flashpoints related to racial unrest on US campuses, spanning institutional sizes, types, and sectors.¹ A recent study of racially biased campus events analyzed 205 news-generating incidents on US campuses from 2005 to 2010.² The six most common forms of racial bias across the events studied were graffiti or vandalism, the production and display of physical media with racially motivated messages, noose hangings, racially themed parties, verbal remarks, and assault or fighting.



In times of racial unrest, campus administrators often express surprise at the idea of racialized events on their campus. Presidential statements following racial incidents often highlight the misalignment of the sentiments expressed by the perpetrators of the incident and the values and norms of the campus community.³ Analyses of these statements⁴ reveal that language denouncing racism or linking racist behavior and sentiments to the systemic and historical roots of racism is not included. Some presidential statements following racial incidents do not even make mention of the incidents to which they are a response.⁵

Mahauganee Shaw Bonds is an experienced higher education professional, having served as both a student affairs administrator and graduate faculty member. Sydney Freeman, Jr., is an associate professor of Adult, Organizational Learning and Leadership at the University of Idaho. His research investigates the challenges facing higher education administration programs, specifically higher education as a field of study and the university presidency.

Inherent in these presidential statements is a belief that by establishing community norms—often through guiding philosophies such as an institutional mission or a code of conduct—incidents that are antithetical to the established norms should be effectively prevented. Establishing community norms of inclusivity and espousing an institutional value on diversity is but one step toward mitigating discriminatory events on campus; it is not a stand-alone preventative measure. Mitigating racial incidents on campus requires the same level of anticipation, monitoring, and attention, as does enrollment management, course registration, fundraising, or any other operational procedure.

Proactive crisis management begins with identifying signal detection mechanisms as related to identity. One such signal would include any data collected on campus climate. Campus climate data often reveal areas where (1) the campus community falls short of established norms and expectations of conduct and engagement with people holding historically marginalized identities; and (2) the campus environment is experienced as unwelcoming, marginalizing, or alienating.

Racial unrest on campus can be the result of either an active threat to the campus community or the news of a past racist incident or event. Recovery and healing for a campus community can be quite an unwieldy process. The emotional bleeding triggered by a racial incident may appear stabilized by the crisis response, but it often leaves an open wound that runs the risk of being reactivated by the smallest puncture in the campus racial dynamics. Although there is no set checklist, we offer suggestions for some potential steps along the pathway forward after a campus has been touched by racial unrest (and we offer a detailed discussion of these strategies in chapter 7 of *Campus Uprisings*).

- Provide space and resources for the campus to process and heal.
- Establish or intensify a focus on the campus climate.
- Take lessons from higher education history and institutional peers.
- Develop a sophisticated response plan for racial incidents (including proactively accounting for the resources, and completing any training, required to respond appropriately).

Mitigating racial incidents requires the same level of anticipation and attention as enrollment or fundraising.

Higher education presidents need to ensure proactive monitoring of their campus racial climates and develop their confidence and competence both to eliminate campus policies, environments, and cultures that may incubate racial tensions and to swiftly and authentically respond to racialized incidents. Presidents and their cabinets should routinely conduct tabletop drills in which they use recent events from other institutions to talk through their own response concerns and process. Taking steps to establish systems with the flexibility to respond to unique incidents and prepare themselves to lead in the midst of crisis will help college and university presidents keep their institutions on a forward path.

(Endnotes on page 50)



Daring to Speak, to Listen, and to Protest without Silencing



BY SUZANNE NOSSEL

History is full of ideas that were at some point considered heretical or deviant. The struggles for religious liberty, women's rights, reproductive freedom, civil rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, and many other forms of progress were thwarted by restrictions on voicing what were once seen as dangerous ideas. For decades, laws prevented the dissemination of information about birth control; in 1929, reproductive freedom pioneer Margaret Sanger was arrested after giving a speech advocating women's rights. Not until 1977 did the Supreme Court extend full legal protection to the ideas Sanger was advancing, ruling that the First Amendment prohibited bans on advertising for contraception. Free speech protections have been essential to ensuring that champions of once-revolutionary ideas could make their case.

Suzanne Nossel is the chief executive officer of PEN America, the leading human rights and free expression organization. Previously, she served as the chief operating officer of Human Rights Watch and as executive director of Amnesty International USA; she also held high-level positions in the Obama and Clinton administrations. This article is an excerpt from DARE TO SPEAK Defending Free Speech for All. Copyright © 2020 by Suzanne Nossel. Used with permission by Dey Street Books. All rights reserved.

When you bring up “free speech” to Americans, there’s a good chance that, in their response, they’ll use the words “First Amendment.” It’s almost a reflex. Yet many free speech conflicts lie outside the purview of constitutional law. The First Amendment reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Courts have held that it applies not just to “Congress” but also to the executive branch and—through a doctrine known as “incorporation”—state and local governments and institutions.

The First Amendment is framed to ensure a “negative right,” the right to be free *from* government interference. But free speech also entails an affirmative right to speak out, a liberty that cannot be fully guaranteed in law and must be enabled by society through education and opportunity. When we consider why we value free speech—its truth-finding, democratic, and creative functions—it also becomes clear that the freedom to speak, narrowly construed, isn’t enough to guarantee these benefits. If harassment deters individuals from taking part in public debate; if disinformation drowns out truth; and if thinkers dismiss the possibility of reaching audiences of different views, free expression cedes its value. Free speech includes the right to persuade, to galvanize, to seek out truth alongside others, to reach new understandings, and to

shape communities and societies. But these benefits can be enjoyed only in a climate that protects open discourse.

Speaking Out on Campus

In 2017, white supremacist Richard Spencer made plans to visit the University of Florida. Under the First Amendment, the university, a public institution, couldn't deny him the right to rent a hall and advertise an event. However, when Spencer claimed that university president Kent Fuchs "stood behind" him, Fuchs tweeted, "I don't stand behind racist Richard Spencer. I stand with those who reject and condemn Spencer's vile and despicable message." Fuchs urged students to avoid the speech and even the protests to deny Spencer the spotlight he sought. Fuchs used the hashtags #TogetherUF and #GatorsNotHaters to share videos and positive messages about race relations. Thanks in part to the university's firm posture, Spencer spoke before a half-full auditorium, mostly without incident. Fuchs's handling of the incident won praise as a model for how universities can uphold their First Amendment obligations while deploring bigotry.¹

The case of Harvard Law School professor Ronald Sullivan, Jr., had a different result. For 10 years, Sullivan and his wife served as deans of Winthrop House, a Harvard undergraduate residential college. When Sullivan joined the defense team for the notorious movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, who was accused of sexual harassment and assault, some Winthrop students protested. They claimed that Sullivan's decision to represent Weinstein rendered him unfit to provide mentorship and counsel to students, especially those affected by sexual harassment. Sullivan defended himself, pointing to his work prosecuting sexual assault and also his history of taking on controversial clients, including death row inmates, on the principle that our legal system demands that all defendants have legal representation.² Representing Weinstein implied no more indifference to the crime of sexual assault than representing accused killers showed an unconcern about murder. There was no indication that Sullivan had ever been soft on harassment cases on campus. But after protests, sit-ins, accusatory graffiti, and even a lawsuit, Harvard undertook a "climate review" of Winthrop House and, purportedly on the basis of its findings, dropped Sullivan and his wife as deans.

Though Harvard claimed that its decision was prompted by other problems at Winthrop, the timing made plain that it had capitulated to the vocal students.³ But in this case, Sullivan had not breached any duty of care. He wasn't accused of sexism, of downplaying sexual harassment, or of letting his representation of Weinstein affect his role as dean. As a law professor, he was entitled to take on controversial cases. The reason to have faculty deans for residential colleges is to expose students to the work they do. Fifty-two members of the Harvard Law faculty signed a letter to support him. While student concerns were heartfelt, Harvard should have facilitated dialogue to probe their discomfort, enable Sullivan to explain himself, and resolve the impasse without a de facto punishment for Sullivan's professional decision. A reasonable duty of care cannot dictate that institutional leaders avoid any whiff of controversy. If it does, the result will be leadership by lowest common denominator, whereby only those willing to subordinate their opinions, or who have no strong views in the first place, are qualified to serve.

Universities have a special obligation to speak up for faculty, administrators, and students. Entire systems for the protection of academic freedom, including tenure, exist to safeguard the academy from intellectual conformity. Universities should be places where novel, provocative, and even revolutionary ideas can be incubated and where students encounter views that challenge, confound, and even anger them.

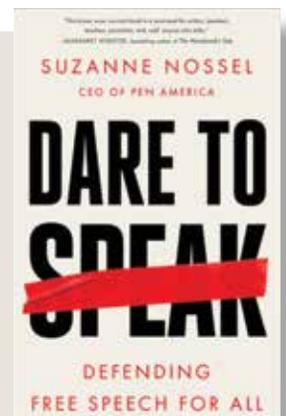
Free speech protections have been essential to ensuring that champions of once-revolutionary ideas could make their case.

Protesting without Silencing

Abraham Lincoln is often quoted having said, "It is a sin to be silent when it is your duty to protest." When objectionable speech is public, there can be a justifiable inclination—even a duty—to meet it with an equally public protest. Bold, resounding protests can rally attention and force the speaker to reckon with potent critiques. Mass mobilizations, including the Women's March, airport protests against the Muslim travel ban, the March for Our Lives to protest gun violence, students' climate strikes, and vigils for immigrants' rights, have been catalysts for activism and policy change. The right to peaceful protest is protected by the First Amendment, and governments are rightfully constrained in how they can control demonstrations.

Though the right to protest is sacrosanct, some forms of protest can themselves inhibit free speech. When protests are so vociferous that the intended speaker cannot be heard, the outcome is a defeat for free speech. If protesters were to imagine a speech they agreed with being shouted down, it becomes easy to understand

This article is an excerpt of my new book, *Dare to Speak: Defending Free Speech for All*. The state of discourse in America today raises a troubling question of whether the principle of free speech can survive intact in our diverse, digitized, and divided culture. Talking about free speech is hard because, inevitably, the speech that gives rise to such conversations is unpopular, offensive, dangerous, or otherwise contestable. When free speech issues arise, it may be easier to follow the crowd, nod along with outraged friends, or change the subject. I am hoping this book makes it easier to resist that temptation and instead enter into dialogue about why free speech matters and how it can be protected without running roughshod over other values.



the problem. Censorious protests can feel triumphant to their participants, but they interfere with the speech rights of the targeted speaker and of listeners who wish to hear the message. By shouting down speech, protesters put their opinions ahead of all others. They assign the power to decide who gets to speak to those with the greatest numbers or loudest voices, traducing norms designed to give everyone a chance to be heard.

Universities can uphold their First Amendment obligations while deploring bigotry.

The University of Chicago law professor Harry Kalven, Jr., and others have dubbed this phenomenon the “heckler’s veto.”⁴ Journalist Nat Hentoff wrote in the *Village Voice* in 2006 that “First Amendment law is clear that everyone has the right to picket a speaker, and to go inside the hall and heckle him or her—but not to drown out the speaker, let alone rush the stage and stop the speech before it starts.” The heckler’s veto can also operate when protests become so boisterous and disorderly that a sponsor or authority feels impelled to shut speech down to avert mayhem.

Protests can be effective without impinging upon free speech rights. In February 2019, more than 100 students at the University of Pennsylvania protested the visit of conservative activist Heather Mac Donald. In a silent protest outside, students held signs with slogans such as “Diversity = 21st century. Join us!” and “Beauty

Tip: don’t be a white supremacist.” Inside the lecture hall, students wore black to show unity and posed tough questions to her after her remarks.⁵ At the University of Notre Dame in 2017, students walked out of their own commencement ceremony to protest a speech by Vice President Mike Pence. The demonstration was a captivating rebuke but did not interfere with Pence’s remarks.⁶ Protests need not be entirely polite. Some measure of interruption may be acceptable. But protesters must stop short of preventing their antagonists from being heard.

The case in favor of free speech goes above and beyond the rationale for filtering government encroachments on expression. It also involves affirmative steps to make sure all individuals and groups have the means and opportunity to be heard. If free speech matters, we need to ask not only whether the government is respecting it, but whether individuals feel able to exercise it in daily life. The nature of the societal advantages of free speech help explain why it is not enough to define free speech simply as the right to be shielded from government interference. To unleash both the individual and the collective benefits of free speech requires the creation of an enabling environment for a broad array of speech and a public discourse open to all. □

Endnotes

1. J. Bauer-Wolf, “Lessons from Spencer’s Florida Speech,” *Inside Higher Ed*, October 23, 2017.
2. I. Chotiner, “A Harvard Law School Professor Defends His Decision to Represent Harvey Weinstein,” *New Yorker*, March 7, 2019.
3. S. S. Avi-Yonah, “‘With Us or Against Us’: Current, Former Winthrop Affiliates Say Faculty Deans Created a Toxic Environment Stretching Back Years,” *The Harvard Crimson*, May 10, 2019.
4. P. Schmidt, “Heckler’s Veto,” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University.
5. O. Cheng, “More than 100 Students Protest Heather Mac Donald for Discriminatory Speech at Event,” *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, February 8, 2019.
6. L. Stack, “Notre Dame Students Walk Out of Mike Pence Commencement Address,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2017.

Ways to Protest without Silencing

- Walking out
- Turning your back
- Signs and banners
- Protesting loudly and boisterously outside the hall
- Silent gestures
- Posing tough questions
- Intermittent heckles
- Satirical costumes or images

Why to Protest without Silencing

- Protests that drown out a speaker deny not only that individual’s expressive rights but also those of would-be listeners.
- Censorious protests obviate dialogue and a search for common ground.
- Protests can be highly effective and condemnatory without veering into censoriousness.
- Though calls for speech to be punished are themselves protected speech, they lead to censorious consequences.
- What is considered speech beyond the pale is often in the eye of the beholder; to sanction silencing views you dispute is to open the door to silence views you support.

Why We Defend Free Speech in the First Place

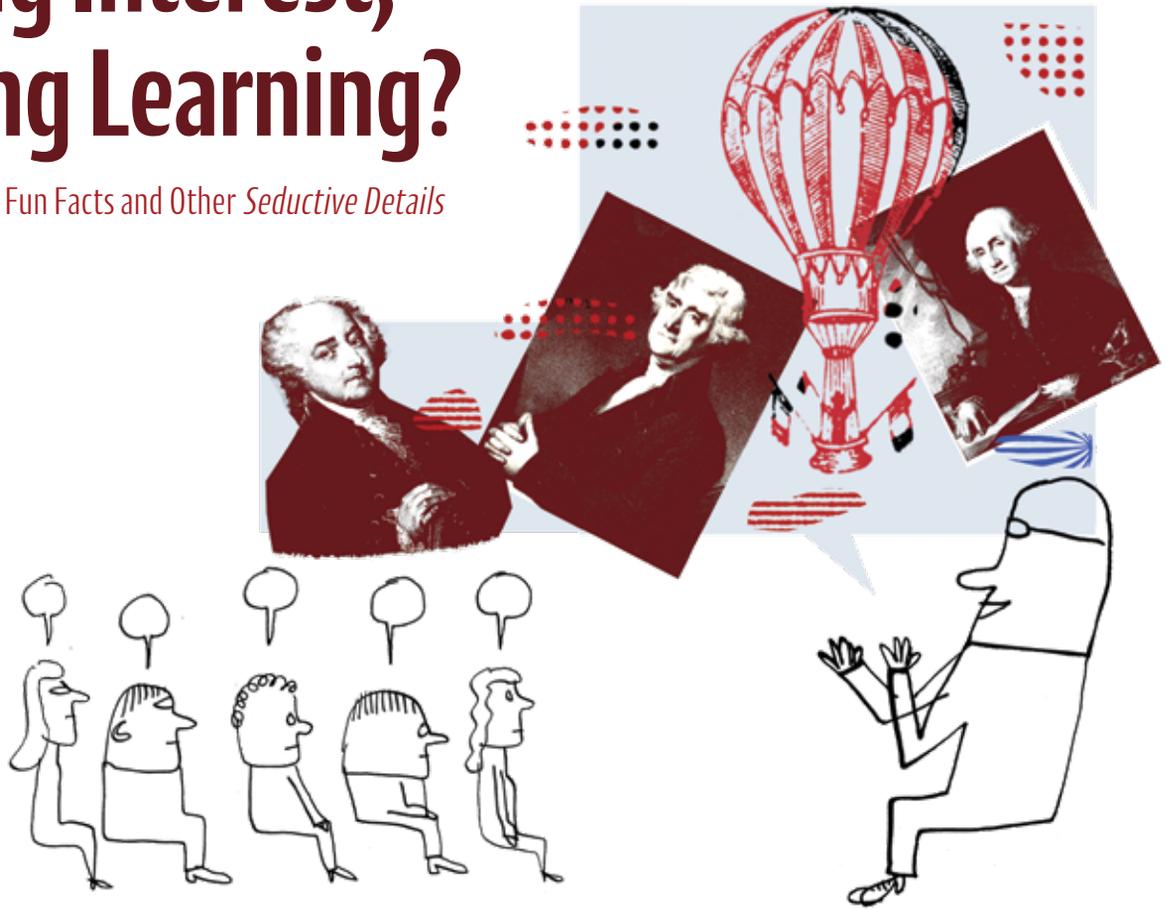
- Free speech enables society to uncover truth.
- Free speech promotes tolerance and lessens violence.
- Free speech is essential to individual autonomy, identity, and self-actualization.
- Protections for free speech foster economic prosperity, scientific progress, and creative achievement.
- Safeguards for free speech have been essential to virtually every form of social progress attained by democracies.

—S. N.



Sparking Interest, Reducing Learning?

The Hidden Drawback of Fun Facts and Other *Seductive Details*



As this article explains, seductive details are interesting bits of information—including text, videos, animations, or photos—that capture students’ interest but ultimately decrease learning. This research is especially important throughout this pandemic, as schools are struggling through an extended period of trying to reopen safely while knowing that a rise in COVID-19 cases could cause a return to distance learning at any moment. Since the spring, teachers have been going to great lengths—online, by phone, and with paper packets—to engage their students and ensure learning continues. As teachers plan lessons and select, revise, or create materials for their students, considering the potential impact of seductive details is critical. Many teachers are likely tempted to sprinkle even more fun moments into their lessons and materials than usual as they try to bond with students and hold their attention. But in doing so, will they be decreasing learning? This research indicates that there are real drawbacks to using seductive details—particularly for students who are already behind—but it also offers some guidance on how to use such details without significantly reducing learning.

—EDITORS

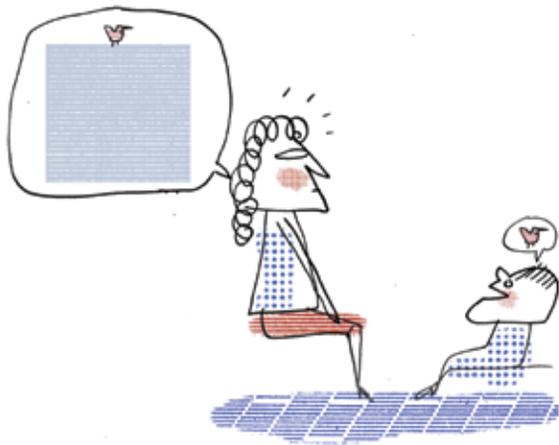
Kripa Sundar (NarayanKripa Sundararajan), who earned a doctorate at Washington State University, is an independent consultant, researcher, and parent working to spread the love of learning grounded in the science of learning. She recently launched Learning Incognito (learningincognito.com), a resource hub for parents, and published a book for young children, *How Can I Learn?* (kripasundar.com/howcanilearn). Visit her website, kripasundar.com, to learn more.

BY KRIPA SUNDAR

“It was the year 1815. Mount Tambora, an active volcano in Indonesia, erupted—and it was no ordinary eruption. Not at all. In fact, it is reported that the ash and gas from the eruption obscured the sun and affected climate resulting in starvation and disease. But how did it happen?” says Mrs. Smith as she starts the geology lesson. Today’s lesson is not actually about the results of eruptions; what students are supposed to learn is what conditions cause volcanoes to erupt. Mrs. Smith had thought of using Pompeii as an example, but wanted something new and interesting about volcanoes to get her class of 32 fourth-graders to pay attention. After all, students cannot learn new information without paying attention and they pay attention when they are interested, right?

Right. But, as with almost everything related to instruction, it is not that simple. Researchers have found that if interesting information is irrelevant to the lesson’s learning objectives, it is likely to hurt students’ learning. In Mrs. Smith’s classroom, students are more likely to remember the devastation from the dramatic eruption rather than the underlying geology concepts.

Researchers call these attention-grabbing, irrelevant pieces of information *seductive details*. They can be words, illustrations, photographs, animations, narrations, videos, or sounds. Studying the effects of seductive details is a growing area of research—but it is far enough along to merit teachers’ interest: we have over 20 years



and dozens of high-quality studies to draw from. As I explain in this article, there is strong evidence that when instructional materials include seductive details, students' learning likely suffers. I begin with a brief introduction to our learning process, then proceed to highlight how seductive details hurt learning and to what extent. Next, I suggest three tips to reduce their detrimental impact on learning and conclude with concrete examples.

Let's start at the beginning, shall we?

How Do We Learn?

Learning is a complex process with attention, interest, motivation, sleep, general health, learning materials, and community each influencing learning outcomes. At the very core though, learning is a simple three step process: encoding, storage, and retrieval.

Encoding is the step in which we receive information. Individuals' attention, materials, learning environment, and more can impact what and how much they take in. As is the case with so much in life, what goes in determines the quality of what comes out. There is much research investigating how to design learning materials to smooth the path and support students' encoding. Although a detailed review of these principles is beyond the scope of this article, one central idea sets the foundation for effective design: we learn better when we are presented information in *both* visual (e.g., images or charts) and auditory (e.g., listening to an explanation or reading a text*) forms than in just visual *or* auditory form. This is especially true when the visual and auditory information are complimentary instead of redundant.† In sum, we can set learning off to a good start with one tip: distribute content across visual and verbal forms.

Once students have received information, they have to process and store it. When learners don't store new knowledge, they have not learned. Early in the study of how memory works, researchers conceived of our brains as massive libraries from which no book (or piece of information) was ever lost. In the last couple of decades, this understanding has undergone a massive shift with more rigorous studies and technological advancements in neuroscience. What we now know is that our brains store information in networks (or webs), called *schemas*, that connect relevant pieces of information. (I am

using "information" very broadly to include everything from academic content to emotional experiences; a student's new information could be a chemistry fact or their home-run hit when playing ball.) This concept of a dynamic network structure is, in my opinion, perhaps the most revolutionary idea to come out of the learning sciences. Why? Because a network structure suggests two key points:

- First, new information connects to previously known information (a.k.a. prior knowledge). This suggests that when students do not have much related knowledge to start with, it is important to provide a foundation, such as a meaningful experience or an informative lecture, for their learning (i.e., to start creating their storage network on this new topic).
- Second, students are more likely to remember information that is connected to many other concepts and experiences, new or old. This could work in our favor when learners engage in content in multiple ways, connect concepts across content or subject areas, or even connect lived experience with technical concepts (for example, understanding how they manipulated force to hit that home run).

Retrieval—the act of remembering what you have learned—is the final step of the core process of learning. Retrieving a piece of information energizes, strengthens, and alters the associated network of connections. This is why recalling knowledge—discussing key events in history, solving a math problem, or incorporating academic vocabulary in writing—is essential to ward off forgetting. Dormant networks slowly deteriorate, but active networks do not. Retrieval is also essential for updating networks. When students recall prior knowledge while thinking about new, related information, their brains add connections to their networks (denoting changed understanding or learning). This means that as students learn more about something, they remember the information differently.

For example, when students first start learning about the American Revolution in elementary and middle school, they likely acquire some basic knowledge of key figures and ideas, like George Washington and independence. In high school and college, their network on the revolution does not merely expand, it changes. Older students' factual and conceptual knowledge becomes more nuanced and detailed, tying to related networks on other wars, other people committed to democracy, challenges to our principles, and more.

In short, as students learn and remember more, their networks change. Some information units may collapse to form a single idea (e.g., key persons) and new information may add to an existing network or connect to another related, previously learned network of information. Thus, as students are equipped with more knowledge, they are more likely to perceive large amounts of related information as one coherent chunk or concept (as opposed to an overwhelming number of details). For designing instruction, a critical part of this process is having students express their understanding; this helps them (and their teachers) identify what they have learned and determine what information got lost along the way.

That's it. The three-stage process of encoding, storage, and retrieval forms the core of learning. When I am developing content for teaching or presenting to a large audience, I find that understanding how seductive details impact the learning process helps me predict if and how the examples, anecdotes, and fun facts I use in my materials (in-person or remotely) might affect learning outcomes.

*Reading is sometimes mistakenly thought of as visual information processing, but the visual work of recognizing letters is just a tiny fraction of the effort involved. The information processing involved in reading is mainly auditory as you listen to the voice in your head (which is essentially your own private read aloud).

†Please do not confuse this idea with the myth of learning styles, which suggests that teaching to students' visual, auditory, or other preferences increases their learning (it doesn't). For more on learning styles, see "Does Tailoring Instruction to 'Learning Styles' Help Students Learn?" in the Summer 2018 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2018/willingham.

How Seductive Details Do Their Damage

Researchers have four hypotheses as to why seductive details tend to decrease learning performance. The jury is still out on which of these is the leading reason; they probably are not mutually exclusive. While research into these underlying mechanisms is ongoing, I find it helpful to use all four hypotheses to identify potential seductive details in my materials.

1. **Distraction hypothesis:** Learners' attention is drawn away from the essential content by details that are interesting but not relevant to the learning objective.
 - **Key idea:** When students are distracted, the wrong information is encoded in the network.
 - **Example:** If I tell students that Martin Luther King, Jr., was initially named Michael King or that he narrowly escaped an assassination a decade before his death, will that distract them from focusing on King's beliefs and values?
2. **Diversion hypothesis:** Learners' attention is drawn away by details that remind them of or connect to irrelevant prior knowledge.
 - **Key idea:** When students are diverted, they retrieve a different network of information (schema) than intended.
 - **Example:** Will this *Friends* pivot GIF (<https://bit.ly/2M2QL0x>) trigger a conversation about the TV show instead of focusing on the mechanical concept?
3. **Disruption hypothesis:** Learners get confused by the irrelevant details and thus cannot form a coherent mental model of the essential content.
 - **Key idea:** When students are disrupted, they have received an input that they are unable to place sensibly within a relevant network of known information. This could be because they don't know enough about the main topic and are wondering how to fit in the seductive detail (which they do not recognize as irrelevant).
 - **Example:** When I paused during my explanation of the water cycle to explain how rainbows appear, did I prevent students from forming a coherent picture of the cycle in their minds?
4. **Memory overload hypothesis:** Learners' attention is spread too thin across an overwhelming number of details, which limits their available mental ability to process learning content.
 - **Key idea:** When students are overloaded, the irrelevant details take memory space that could otherwise be taken by important details. The more relevant prior knowledge students have, the more likely they are to already know some of the new content being presented and, therefore, the less likely they are to be overloaded.
 - **Example:** I am creating a timeline for my unit on World War II; should I include the information I want all students to remember, all of the people and events we will be reading about, or something in between?

Well, we've checked off our list and it looks like most of our material is solid. But without all those seductive details, it does feel... boring.

As educators, we strive to design materials for our classes that will work well for students who are behind their peers, average learners, and those who seem to be a bit ahead of the curve. How can we use some fun details while mitigating their detrimental effects? Research does not provide a concrete answer yet; we do

have leads, though. Much research on seductive details has attempted to identify the conditions in which the effects of seductive details fluctuated. But first, let's get the big picture.

How Much Do Seductive Details Impact Learning?

Earlier this year, I published a meta-analysis on the seductive details effect that included studies from the past 20 years. I'd read and quantitatively summarized 68 comparisons of students' learning when they learned with materials that either included or excluded seductive details. In a typical study investigating seductive details, learners completed a pretest or survey capturing how much they know about the topic. Next, learners proceeded to learn with presented material that either had seductive details or didn't. Finally, they responded to a learning test (e.g., took a post-test) immediately after learning that assessed how much they retained and how well they could apply it. The findings from the meta-analysis suggest that those who learned with seductive details were less likely to remember and apply what they learned. Most of these studies were conducted in psychology lab settings with instructional time of about 6 to 10 minutes (though a few were longer).

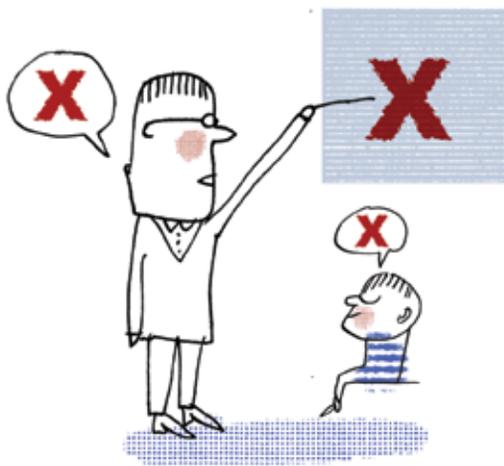
If interesting information is irrelevant to the lesson's learning objectives, it is likely to hurt students' learning.

Let's rip the Band-Aid off: *How much do seductive details hurt learning?* The meta-analysis found an average effect of -0.33, with a range from -0.48 to -0.18. Let's put this difference in terms of hypothetical test scores. Say you taught a unit without seductive details, gave a test, and the average score was 85, with most students scoring between 75 and 95. Now say you taught that unit to another class and included seductive details. The average score would likely drop to 81.7 (though it may range from 80.2 to 83.2).*

*Here is a quick look at these calculations. With an average score of 85 and a standard deviation of 10 (which is what I mean in saying that most students score between 75 and 95), we can use the average effect size of seductive details (-0.33) as follows: $85 + (10 \times -0.33) = 81.7$ points. The range is calculated in the same way: $85 + (10 \times -0.48) = 80.2$ points and $85 + (10 \times -0.18) = 83.2$ points.

Given that remote learning continues to play a significant role in instruction in light of the coronavirus pandemic, now more than ever educators need resources to maximize student learning with screens. To support teachers in selecting and effectively using digital media tools, be sure to read "The Power of 'Screen Time': Harnessing It to Promote Language and Literacy Learning in Early Childhood and Elementary School" by Rebecca D. Silverman and Kristin Keane. The article will run in the Winter 2020–2021 issue of *American Educator*, and we are making it available now at aft.org/ae/fall2020/Silverman_Keane.

—EDITORS



The class average dropping to B- may not seem particularly important, but for students who are just barely passing those few points could make an enormous difference.

When we bring together our understanding of the learning process and the different hypotheses for why seductive details hurt learning, the role of prior knowledge takes a front seat. Seductive details could impact the encoding step or the storage step, both of which affect the extent to which one can meaningfully learn and apply information. Hence, it should come as no surprise that the seductive details effect seems to be more pronounced in learners with low prior knowledge about the topic. In fact, the negative impact for students without prior knowledge is double the effect for those with it (-0.52 vs. -0.24). Seductive details had a more detrimental impact when learning was assessed with open-ended questions than with multiple-choice questions. Scoring lower on open-ended questions was an expected result: responding to open-ended questions requires learners to recall learned information without any support, but multiple-choice questions often cue learners.

Given that seductive details potentially impact every step of our learning process, as a researcher, I strongly recommend excluding them from learning materials. As an educator, I know that a laugh can break the tension in class or build rapport with students. That is why I have pulled together my top three tips for using seductive details in our lessons, if we absolutely must.

Top Three Tips for Using Seductive Details Cautiously

With 68 high-quality studies included in my meta-analysis, we can be fairly confident that seductive details do cause the small-but-meaningful detriment to learning described above. Some research studies have dug deeper, specifically investigating how the design of a seductive detail could impact student learning. For example, does an image that provokes a positive feeling influence learning differently than one that has a negative connotation? Not really, it turns out. However, once we start isolating the effects on the basis of different types of details—like where the distracting detail is placed (in the middle or at the end of a text), when a detail is shared (at the beginning or middle of a lecture), or what format it is in (a photo on a printed page or a cartoon character popping up in a video)—we have fewer studies to draw on. So, as I share my top three tips based on key findings on how different features of seductive details impact learning, keep in mind that current research can say that all

these features reduce learning—only the estimates vary regarding to what extent learning is reduced.

Tip 1: Avoid Static Details

Static seductive details—like an image in a book—were more detrimental than dynamic seductive details—such as a brief aside during an explanation or a GIF. Consider your slides in which you have sprinkled on some fun. Let's say you have a GIF on a slide. The GIF is likely going to garner attention but may also signal to learners that the content of the GIF does not need to be learned. Similarly, if you have animated a slide such that a comic pops up and quickly disappears as your learners start working on the key content, they are less likely to devote much attention or other cognitive resources to processing the detail. The fact that the GIF or comic is visible only momentarily is important. Dynamic seductive details provide a brief spark—not an ongoing distraction—reducing their negative impact on learning.

On the other hand, consider the fun fact in a box in their textbook. The static seductive detail, highlighted in this case, may be interpreted as important and relevant by learners and therefore disrupt their understanding of the key idea. I've heard learners forcing themselves to connect an irrelevant image on a slide to the content and criticizing the instructor for not drawing out the (non-existent) connection explicitly. Even if the extra detail may appear too silly to be mistaken for being important, remember that prior knowledge can alter that perception (and the students with the least prior knowledge are the least likely to be able to tell what is important). Plus, it still takes time and attention away from the important information. Either way, the static nature matters: the detail remains on the page, confusing students or diverting them.

If you must add some extra spark to your instructional material, ask yourself one question: How can I make this content fun? For example, if I'm teaching about the storage step of learning, I may look for an animation that shows how the brain's networks activate together. If I am not able to reframe my content to be fun and I know it is a topic I'll revisit again anyway, I follow a "blink and you'll miss it" rule by only including seductive details that students could easily ignore. Now, this works if I am presenting the information face to face. What about a remote scenario in which every student learns independently? For students without computers or internet access, I would develop paper packets. Since this is a static medium that could amplify the impact of any seductive details and reduce learning, I would focus on creating clean, easy-to-follow materials with no seductive details. For students with online access, I might include dynamic seductive details in digital materials if I feel they are absolutely necessary to draw students in. With paper or digital materials, I would also leverage other instructional strategies to support the learning process. For example, I could present the content visually and verbally (to help with processing), break down content into small, coherent chunks and tie each chunk to prior knowledge (to help with storage), and ask recall questions (to help with retrieval and self-assessment).

Tip 2: Use One Channel to Present Seductive Details

As described earlier, our brains process information through visual and auditory memory channels; by presenting information in both channels, we can maximize learners' capacity to receive and process new information and learn better. But what happens if the

information being processed is not relevant to the learning goal? Uh-oh. Worse, what if we present irrelevant information in both channels? Double-whammy. In the meta-analysis, I found that presenting seductive details in text and image formats had a large negative impact.

Because there were over two dozen studies that examined images, we can take a closer look at the visual channel. In instances where only images were used as seductive details, the largest effect was found when photos were used (as opposed to drawings or graphics). This could be because photos are of real things and the reality of the photo may imply importance or relevance, which is very likely in humanities and social sciences materials. From a practical perspective, this brings into question the use of irrelevant stock photos in learning presentations.

Tip 3: Have Fun Early On

Although seductive details are harmful when placed anywhere—at the beginning, interspersed, or at the end—they seem especially harmful at the end. At the beginning of a lesson (or video or text), seductive details could divert learners' attention. At the end, such details may disrupt learners' understanding and construction of a coherent mental model. Seductive details at the end could also be detrimental due to the *recency effect*, which is a well-established finding in memory research. Simply put, we are more likely to recall information from the end of a presentation than from the beginning. Also, remember that in most of the studies I reviewed, there were 10 minutes or less in instructional time. Truthfully, I am not as worried (though I am still a little worried!) about briefly presenting a seductive detail at the beginning of class to spark learners' interest because I can redirect their attention to key content in the middle and at the end. In contrast, when I prepare my classes or presentations (which can last anywhere from 25 minutes to 3 hours), I strictly avoid including seductive details at the end.

Designing Learning Materials

Okay, that is quite a bit on designing material to minimize the negative impact of seductive details. So, stepping back a bit, how do we design materials that leverage the encoding, storage, and retrieval at the core of the learning process?

1. Keep it simple: present essential information clutter free.
2. Double down on capacity: leverage visual and auditory formats to boost information processing and storage by using relevant text, images, video, and audio to communicate.
3. Keep it together: present relevant information together in time and space.
4. Build in breathers: break your ideas down into coherent, small units and pause to assess (and address) students' understanding before charging on with more information.
5. Know your audience: assess learners' prior knowledge on the specific topic and prepare to provide critical background information.

Concrete Examples

Example A shows what a beneficial handout or slide on Avogadro's Law might look like. The key concept—the formula—is highlighted, only relevant information is presented, and all of the essential information is presented together.

Example A. Design is clean and content focused

Avogadro's Law
Volume and Moles Relationship for Gases
(at constant pressure and temperature)

$$\frac{V_1}{n_1} = \frac{V_2}{n_2}$$

Given, $P = \frac{F}{A}$

- Increasing moles of gas particles increases the total force of the collisions.
- Increasing volume keeps pressure constant.

Now consider contrasting example B. The picture of Avogadro is unnecessary and does not add to understanding. However, it does give students the opportunity to be distracted by the image.

Example B. Design with a seductive detail

Avogadro's Law
Volume and Moles Relationship for Gases
(at constant pressure and temperature)

$$\frac{V_1}{n_1} = \frac{V_2}{n_2}$$

Given, $P = \frac{F}{A}$

- Increasing moles of gas particles increases the total force of the collisions.
- Increasing volume keeps pressure constant.



The average student is likely able to have a bit of fun with Avogadro's picture in example B and then ignore it. Now, consider example C: it delivers the double whammy with visual (image) and auditory (fun fact) seductive details. The clutter also makes it hard to focus on what is relevant. To top it off, a student with no prior knowledge of this concept or chemistry in general may think that the full name of the person is something that they are expected to know. If you haven't guessed already, this is an example of how not to make your slides.

Example C. Design likely to reduce learning

Avogadro's Law
Volume and Moles Relationship for Gases
(at constant pressure and temperature)

$$\frac{V_1}{n_1} = \frac{V_2}{n_2}$$

Given, $P = \frac{F}{A}$

- Increasing moles of gas particles increases the total force of the collisions.
- Increasing volume keeps pressure constant.

Amedeo Avogadro's full name was Lorenzo Romano Amedeo Carlo Avogadro, conte di Quaregna e Cerreto.



Overall, seductive details have a negative impact on learning and should be avoided when possible. The effect could be considered small to medium, depending on the stakes attached to students' learning performance. One important thing to keep in mind is that the seductive details effect itself has not been investigated for a delayed impact: whether learners will remember more or less a week or a month later is an unanswered question. Nevertheless, research investigating seductive details continues to expand, including looking at ways to mitigate negative

learning effects and to consider possible positive emotional impacts. Perhaps in another 5 to 10 years, we will know differently. Until then, it is best to avoid using seductive details. If you realize that you've included seductive details in a lesson, consider revisiting the content using more powerful learning strategies such as retrieval practice, note-taking, and elaboration.* □

*For more on retrieval strategies, see "Interleaving in Math" in the Spring 2020 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2020/agarwal_agostinelli.

References and Further Reading

Summative Research Reviews on Seductive Details:

- Sundararajan, N. and Adesope, O. (2020). Keep it coherent: A meta-analysis of the seductive details effect. *Educational Psychology Review*. Full text available for free at <https://bit.ly/2U74V4Z>
- Rey, G. D. (2012). A review of research and a meta-analysis of the seductive detail effect. *Educational Research Review*, 7, 216-237. <https://bit.ly/32EHlwa>

Individual Research Papers on Seductive Details:

- Harp, S. F. and Maslich, A. A. (2005). The consequences of including seductive details during lecture. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32, 100–103. <https://bit.ly/3jl44sD>
- Harp, S. F. and Mayer, R. E. (1998). How seductive details do their damage: A theory of cognitive interest in science learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 50, 414-434. <https://bit.ly/32D0dkQ>
- Wiley, J. (2019). Picture this! Effects of photographs, diagrams, animations, and sketching on learning and beliefs about learning from a geoscience text. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 33, 9–19. <https://bit.ly/2Zlo40k>

Resources for Teachers on the Learning Process

- *Understanding How We Learn: a Visual Guide*, by Yana Weinstein and Megan Sumeracki, with illustrations by Oliver Caviglioli, informs our understanding of the learning process and teaching and learning strategies based on evidence instead of relying on intuition (see <https://bit.ly/2Y23Dtc> for details). This group of classroom-focused researchers also offers free resources at www.learningscientists.org. These include blog posts and podcast episodes on such topics as effective strategies for distance learning and how

exercise improves students' mental health, videos on study strategies (such as spaced practice and retrieval practice), and downloadable materials on strategies for effective learning.

- An engaging read that examines 28 key works on teaching and learning is *How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice* by Paul A. Kirschner and Carl Hendrick (<https://bit.ly/2XW8lZv>). The book, an excerpt of which is featured on page 37 of this issue, explains the significance of each seminal work and how teachers can apply specific research findings to the classroom. Chapters focus on information processing, attribution theory, dual coding, and feedback, among other topics.
- *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*, by Susan A. Ambrose, Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha C. Lovett, and Marie K. Norman, applies the science of learning to teaching at the college level. But the authors make clear their book also applies to K–12 teachers and anyone interested in how to improve instruction. The principles highlighted include the importance of students' prior knowledge, how students organize their knowledge, how students learn and apply what they know, students' motivation, the development of mastery, practice and feedback, the classroom climate, and self-directed learning. Download this book for free at <https://bit.ly/2CxnUQF>.
- Deans for Impact, a nonprofit working with college deans and other leaders from teacher preparation programs, has published an accessible summary of how students learn. "The Science of Learning," available for free at <https://bit.ly/3fJHnMA>, provides brief answers to six relevant questions for all educators: How do students understand new ideas? How do students learn and retain new information? How do students solve problems? How does learning transfer to new situations in or outside of the classroom? What motivates students to learn? What are common misconceptions about how students think and learn?

Resources for Teachers on Designing Material

- How can visual and verbal materials be most effective for student learning? *Dual Coding for Teachers* by Oliver Caviglioli, answers this question (<https://bit.ly/3gTpXOe>). The book profiles more than 35 professionals in education and psychology and showcases their diagrams, infographics, illustrations, and graphic organizers to inspire readers to create their own. A former teacher in the United Kingdom, Caviglioli blogs at www.olicav.com, where he offers free resources on how to effectively use visuals in instruction. To watch one of his in-depth presentations on graphic organizers for free, go to <https://researched.org.uk/sessions/oliver-caviglioli-dual-coding-to-organise-ideas>; Caviglioli explains the pitfalls of using the wrong visual and offers practical solutions to avoid doing so. The video was created for researchED, which is devoted to bridging the gap between research and practice and offers several free professional development resources for teachers.
- What types of graphics help students learn best? How should animations be used in instruction? Where should words appear on a screen to maximize learning? These questions and more are answered in *e-Learning and the Science of Instruction: Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning* by Ruth Colvin Clark and Richard E. Mayer (<https://bit.ly/3gMQHQC>).
- A comprehensive volume on how people learn from text and images on screens is *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* (<https://bit.ly/304Fm8H>). Edited by Richard E. Mayer, the book is a collection of articles from top researchers in multimedia learning, which encompasses e-courses, interactive lessons, online instructional presentations, simulation games, and virtual reality.

—K. S.

“Cognitive Apprenticeship” Revisited

Shining a Light on the Processes of Thinking to Understand Learning



For educators seeking research findings written in a clear and engaging manner to enhance their instruction, *How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice* is an invaluable resource. The book by Paul A. Kirschner and Carl Hendrick examines 28 significant works published over the past six decades on effective teaching and learning. Each chapter is devoted to a specific article, with not only a discussion of the original article but also what the research means for education and teaching in general, how teachers can use the work in their own specific teaching, take-aways for the classroom, and suggested readings and videos with handy QR-codes to access them. The topics run the gamut from information processing to attribution theory to dual coding to feedback.

One such work is “Cognitive Apprenticeship: Making Thinking Visible,” an article first published in *American Educator* in 1991 and available for free at aft.org/ae/winter1991/collins_brown_holum. Written by Allan Collins, John Seely Brown, and Ann Holum, the work explains how the traditional apprenticeship model, which enabled an apprentice to actually “see the processes of work,” offers insights for formal schooling. Among them is the need for educators to make their thinking transparent so that students gain subject matter knowledge, practice their skills with teacher support, and eventually learn on their own.

Here, we excerpt chapter 24 of *How Learning Happens*. Aptly titled “Making Things Visible,” the chapter summarizes key points from “Cognitive Apprenticeship” and what educators can continue to learn from it.

—EDITORS

BY PAUL A. KIRSCHNER AND CARL HENDRICK

Beginning in the late Middle Ages and up through the beginning of the twentieth century, it was perfectly normal for children to get an education or be trained in a profession by being apprenticed to masters in their workplace. This was part of what is known as the guild system where experienced and confirmed experts in a field or craft (i.e., master craftsmen) hired new employees who began as apprentices and received their education or training in exchange for food, lodging, and, of course, work.

The apprentice began by observing the master craftsman at work—for example a weaver, blacksmith, or printer—and learned to look and practice under her or his (almost always his) tutelage. The training was mostly about practical actions; the usefulness of what had to be learned was clear, and there were clearly defined end products such as a cloth or tapestry, a knife, or a book. Also, the learning environment was social.

Paul A. Kirschner is an emeritus professor of educational psychology at the Open University of the Netherlands, a visiting professor of education at the University of Oulu in Finland, and a guest professor at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences in Belgium. Carl Hendrick is the head of learning and research at Wellington College in the United Kingdom, where he teaches English. This article is adapted from their book *How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice* (Routledge, 2020). Adapted and reprinted with permission of the publisher.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GWENDA KACZOR

Four aspects of traditional apprenticeship—modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching—are applicable to cognitive apprenticeship.



Today, most children learn in schools with the teacher replacing the master craftsman, though some schools and professions still make use of at least part of the apprenticeship approach (such as vocational high schools or even medical colleges). Also, most learning materials and assignments are now more abstract and independent of the context in which they'll ultimately be used. As a result, unless the teacher uses modeling, for example, as an educational approach, students may not have a good idea of how to carry out their assignments as they can no longer copy how an expert works and thinks.

In their article, Allan Collins, John Seely Brown, and Ann Holum make a case for a form of instruction that resembles the former master-apprenticeship relationship. They call this method of instruction *cognitive apprenticeship* and describe it as follows:¹

While there are many differences between schooling and apprenticeship methods, we will focus on one. In apprenticeship, students can see the processes of work: They watch a parent sow, plant, and harvest crops and help as they are able; they assist a tradesman as he crafts a cabinet; they piece together garments under the supervision of a more experienced tailor. Apprenticeship involves learning a physical, tangible activity. But in schooling, the “practice” of problem solving, reading comprehension, and writing is not at all obvious—it is not necessarily observable to the

student. In apprenticeship, the processes of the activity are visible. In schooling, the processes of thinking are often invisible to both the students and the teacher. Cognitive apprenticeship is a model of instruction that works to make thinking visible.

For learners to learn something, it's necessary for the teacher to make the reasoning and strategies needed to perform a task explicit. Otherwise, many students may learn to solve these specific assignments, but do so as a trick they learn by heart. As a result, they won't get a grip on the required thinking processes and they'll have difficulty deploying what they have learned, with respect to both content and strategies, in different contexts. The key to overcoming this is what Collins and his colleagues call *making thinking visible*.

But how do you make thinking visible? First, the authors say, we need to know what learners need in order to do a task and how we can transfer it. Cognitive strategies are central to the integration of skills and knowledge and certainly to abstract knowledge areas such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. These strategies are, in their view, best communicated through contemporary apprenticeship education: learners should see from an expert (teacher or more advanced fellow student) and hear how they solve the task, which strategies the expert uses, and why. The student can then practice under supervision.

The Apprenticeship Experience

The authors write that in “traditional apprenticeship, the expert shows the apprentice how to do a task, watches as the apprentice practices portions of the task, and then turns over more and more responsibility until the apprentice is proficient enough to accomplish the task independently.”² The authors see four critical aspects of traditional apprenticeship—modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching—which are also applicable to cognitive apprenticeship. In *modeling* an expert demonstrates the different parts of the to-be-learned behavior. In cognitive apprenticeship, this is accompanied by experts explicitly explaining what they are thinking and why they are doing certain things while carrying out a task (i.e. thinking aloud). *Scaffolding* is the support and guidance the teacher provides while the students are carrying out the behavior. As the students proceed, the support and guidance are slowly removed—*faded*—as the students become able to carry out the task themselves. This increases the independence and responsibility of the students. Finally, *coaching* is the “thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience”;³ the expert diagnoses encountered problems, provides feedback, and generally oversees the learning.

The interplay of all four of these aspects aids students in developing self-monitoring and correction skills as well as in integrating the conceptual knowledge and skills needed to look critically at their own progress and learn further. In all of this, observation is critical. By seeing experts carrying out authentic whole tasks, students build conceptual models of the task: they see the entire task before getting started and follow the progress of all of its constituent parts through to its completion. As a result, they don't endlessly practice isolated skills without seeing the bigger picture.

Since teaching and learning take place mostly in schools (unlike apprenticeships in the real world with real tasks), the model of traditional apprenticeship needs to be translated to cognitive apprenticeship for three reasons. First, in traditional apprenticeship the process of carrying out a learning task is usually easily observable. In cognitive apprenticeship, however, we need to deliberately make the thinking involved in carrying out more abstract school tasks visible. “By bringing these tacit processes into the open, students can observe, enact, and practice them with help from the teacher and from other students.”⁴

Second, while in traditional apprenticeship tasks come up in the same way as they do in the real world, in the school, teachers are working with a curriculum that is “divorced from what students and most adults do in their lives. In cognitive apprenticeship, then, the challenge is to situate the abstract tasks of the school curriculum in contexts that make sense to students.”⁵

Finally, in traditional apprenticeship, the skills that need to be learned are specific to the tasks themselves. A carpenter learns to make a table leg, but doesn’t need to learn to make a buttonhole or a bookbinding. This isn’t the case in school, where students need to be able to transfer what they learn to other tasks and areas. In cognitive apprenticeship, teachers need to “present a range of tasks, varying from systematic to diverse, and to encourage students to reflect on and articulate the elements that are common across tasks.”⁶ To this end, Collins, Brown, and Holum note that for cognitive apprenticeship, teachers need to:⁷

- identify the processes of the task and make them visible to students;
- situate abstract tasks in authentic contexts, so that students understand the relevance of the work; and
- vary the diversity of situations and articulate the common aspects so that students can transfer what they learn.

A social environment (i.e., the class) is an important aspect of cognitive apprenticeship. The class offers students continuous access to examples of others at varying degrees of expertise so they can model their behavior against those others and seek advice. This way, they learn that more answers are often possible. After all, all experts will perform the task in their own ways. Moreover, they see their peers at different levels of expertise, which “encourages them to view learning as an incrementally staged process, while providing them with concrete benchmarks for their own progress.”⁸

In addition to offering expansive examples of cognitive apprenticeship in teaching reading, writing, and mathematics, Collins, Brown, and Holum present a framework for designing cognitive apprenticeship learning environments. This framework (shown in the table on page 40) consists of four dimensions: content, method, sequence, and sociology.

The *content* should give learners a solid grounding in facts, concepts, and procedures. Having this grounding, they can learn to apply heuristics (or rules of thumb) making use of acquired control (i.e., metacognitive) strategies. Finally, students need to acquire learning strategies with which new concepts, facts, and procedures can be learned. Cognitive apprenticeship teaching *methods* “should be designed to give students the opportunity

We need to deliberately make the thinking involved in carrying out more abstract school tasks visible.

Tips for Using Cognitive Apprenticeship in Your Teaching

It’s important that you make your own thinking steps visible to your students and that you go from lots of guidance and support to minimal or even no guidance and support. Important rules of thumb for this are

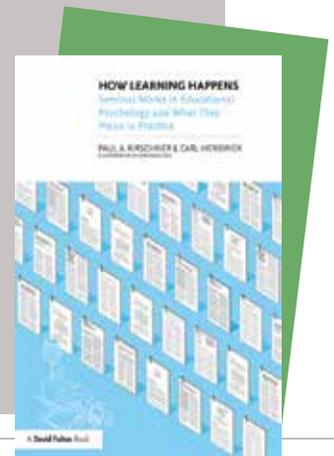
- List important thinking processes and procedures and make them transparent, for example, by systematically thinking aloud when something happens.
- Show that a task is useful by placing it in an authentic context, for example, by linking it to the everyday environment of the students and being clear on when they should apply this task.
- Apply the task in different contexts so that students discover what the underlying core is, for example, by showing that a certain strategy can be used in multiple situations.

First perform an entire task, supervise it, and then let the students do more and more themselves so that the students oversee the entire task and can safely try it themselves.

How Learning Happens: Seminal Works in Educational Psychology and What They Mean in Practice by Paul A. Kirschner and Carl Hendrick is published by Routledge, which is offering a 20 percent discount off the purchase of the book. To order, visit www.bit.ly/HLH-AE, and use discount code HLH20. In addition to this cognitive apprenticeship article, it features two more from *American Educator*, both of which are online for free:

- “Putting Students on the Path to Learning: The Case for Fully Guided Instruction,” by Richard E. Clark, Paul A. Kirschner, and John Sweller (www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Clark.pdf).
- “Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know,” by Barak Rosenshine (www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Rosenshine.pdf).

—EDITORS





to observe, engage in, and invent or discover expert strategies in context.”⁹ The *sequencing* should structure learning but preserve the meaningfulness of what the learner is doing.

Finally, cognitive apprenticeship takes place in a *social* environment, situated in meaningful tasks, working with others. These methods come into their own in a class in which students work together with a teacher and with each other. By repeatedly articulating what they see, their thinking processes become visible, not only for themselves, but also for the teacher. In this way, the teacher knows what students can do and where they still need guidance.

The authors also note that this model can be a useful tool at certain moments in the classroom, but it certainly does not suit all forms of instruction and learning. Reading a book or watching a documentary can also be very useful ways of learning, especially when it comes to learning factual knowledge. □

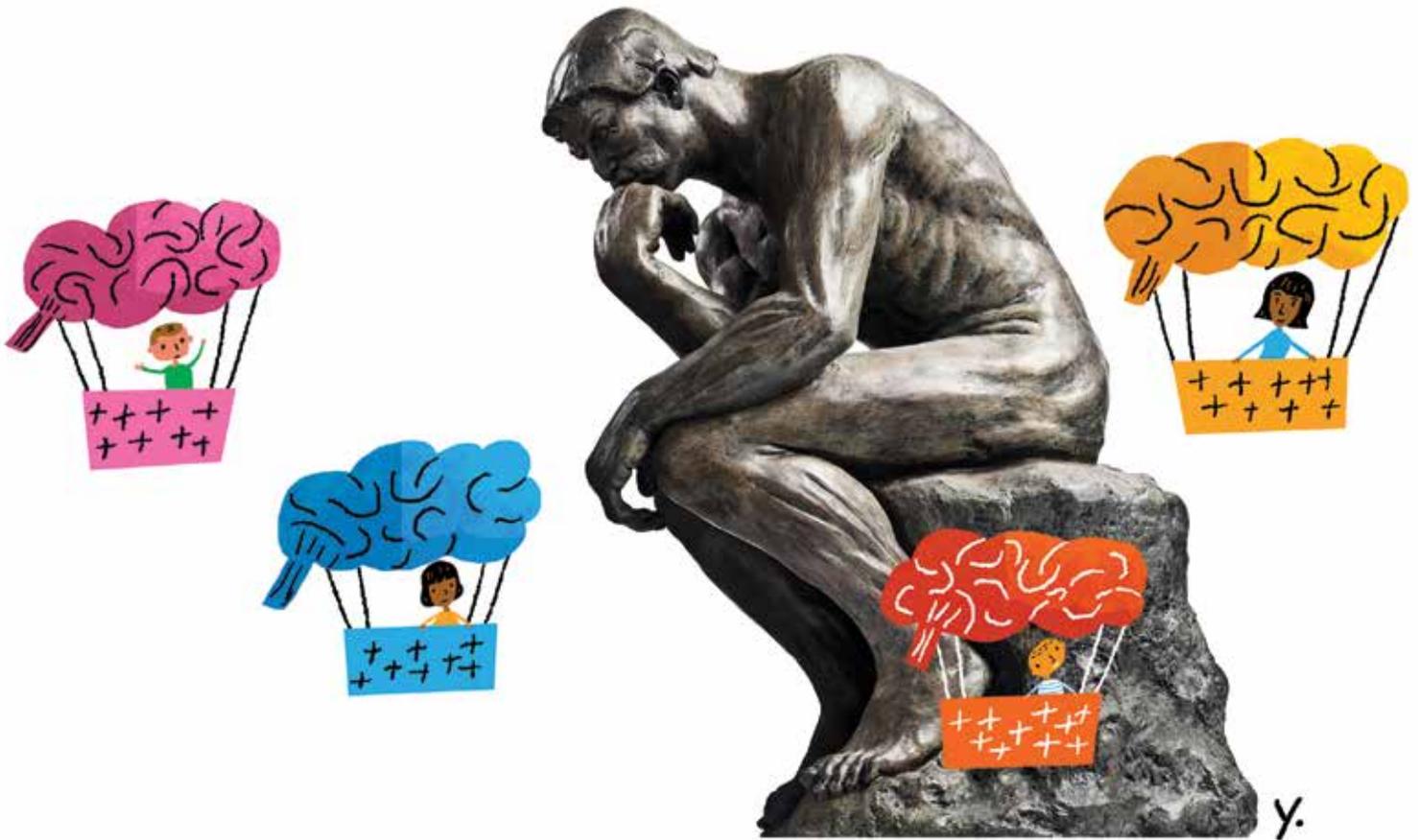
(Endnotes on page 50)

Principles for Designing Cognitive Apprenticeship Environments

Content	Types of knowledge required for expertise	
	Domain knowledge	Subject matter specific concepts, facts, and procedures
	Heuristic strategies	Generally applicable techniques for accomplishing tasks
	Control strategies	General approaches for directing one’s solution process
	Learning strategies	Knowledge about how to learn new concepts, facts, and procedures
Method	Ways to promote the development of expertise	
	Modeling	Teacher performs a task so students can observe
	Coaching	Teacher observes and facilitates while students perform a task
	Scaffolding	Teacher provides supports to help the student perform a task
	Articulation	Teacher encourages students to verbalize their knowledge and thinking
	Reflection	Teacher enables students to compare their performance with others
	Exploration	Teacher invites students to pose and solve their own problems
Sequencing	Keys to ordering learning activities	
	Global before local skills	Focus on conceptualizing the whole task before executing the parts
	Increasing complexity	Meaningful tasks gradually increasing in difficulty
	Increasing diversity	Practice in a variety of situations to emphasize broad application
Sociology	Social characteristics of learning environments	
	Situated learning	Students learn in the context of working on realistic tasks
	Community of practice	Communication about different ways to accomplish meaningful tasks
	Intrinsic motivation	Students set personal goals to seek skills and solutions
	Cooperation	Students work together to accomplish their goals

SOURCE: “TABLE 24.1 PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP ENVIRONMENTS” (COLLINS ET AL., 1991, 43).

How Can Educators Teach Critical Thinking?



How does the mind work—and especially how does it learn? Teachers’ instructional decisions are based on a mix of theories learned in teacher education, trial and error, craft knowledge, and gut instinct. Such knowledge often serves us well, but is there anything sturdier to rely on?

Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field of researchers from psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, philosophy, computer science, and anthropology who seek to understand the mind. In this regular American Educator column, we consider findings from this field that are strong and clear enough to merit classroom application.

*Daniel T. Willingham is a professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *When Can You Trust the Experts? How to Tell Good Science from Bad in Education* and *Why Don’t Students Like School?* His most recent book is *The Reading Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Understanding How the Mind Reads*. This article is adapted with permission from his report for the government of New South Wales, “*How to Teach Critical Thinking*.” Copyright 2019 by Willingham. Readers can pose questions to “Ask the Cognitive Scientist” by sending an email to ae@aft.org. Future columns will try to address readers’ questions.*

BY DANIEL T. WILLINGHAM

Individuals vary in their views of what students should be taught, but there is little disagreement on the importance of critical thinking skills. In free societies, the ability to think critically is viewed as a cornerstone of individual civic engagement and economic success.

Despite this consensus, it’s not always clear what’s meant by “critical thinking.” I will offer a commonsensical view.¹ You are thinking critically if (1) your thinking is novel—that is, you aren’t simply drawing a conclusion from a memory of a previous situation; (2) your thinking is self-directed—that is, you are not merely executing instructions given by someone else; and (3) your thinking is effective—that is, you respect certain conventions that make thinking more likely to yield useful conclusions. These would be conventions like “consider both sides of an issue,” “offer evidence for claims made,” and “don’t let emotion interfere with reason.” This third characteristic will be our main concern, and as we’ll see, what constitutes effective thinking varies from domain to domain.

Critical Thinking Can Be Taught

Planning how to teach students to think critically should perhaps be our second task. Our first should be to ask whether evidence shows that explicitly teaching critical thinking brings any benefit.

There are many examples of critical thinking skills that are open to instruction.² For example, in one experiment, researchers taught college students principles for evaluating evidence in psychology studies—principles like the difference between correlational research and true experiments, and the difference between anecdote and formal research.³ These principles were incorporated into regular instruction in a psychology class, and their application was practiced in that context. Compared to a control group that learned principles of memory, students who learned the critical thinking principles performed better on a test that required evaluation of psychology evidence.

But perhaps we should not find this result terribly surprising. You tell students, “This is a good strategy for this type of problem,” and you have them practice that strategy, so later they use that strategy when they encounter the problem.

When we think of critical thinking, we think of something *bigger* than its domain of training. When I teach students how to evaluate the argument in a set of newspaper editorials, I’m hoping that they will learn to evaluate arguments generally, not just the ones they read. The research literature on successful transfer of learning* to new problems is less encouraging.

Teaching Critical Thinking for General Transfer

It’s a perennial idea—teach something that requires critical thinking, and such thinking will become habitual. In the 19th century, educators suggested that Latin and geometry demanded logical thinking, which would prompt students to think logically in other contexts.⁴ The idea was challenged by psychologist Edward Thorndike, who compared scores from standardized tests that high school students took in autumn and spring as a function of the coursework they had taken during the year. If Latin, for example, makes you smart, students who take it should score better in the spring. They didn’t.⁵

In the 1960s, computer programming replaced Latin as the discipline that would lead to logical thinking.⁶ Studies through the 1980s showed mixed results,⁷ but a recent meta-analysis offered some apparently encouraging results about the general trainability of computational thinking.⁸ The researchers reported that learning to program a computer yielded modest positive transfer to measures of creative thinking, mathematics, meta-cognition, spatial skills, and reasoning. It’s sensible to think that this transfer was a consequence of conceptual overlap between programming and these skills, as no benefit was observed in measures of literacy.

*For more on the research behind transfer of learning, see “If You Learn A, Will You Be Better Able to Learn B?” in the Spring 2020 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2020/debruyckere_kirschner_hulshof.

Hopeful adults have tried still other activities as potential all-purpose enhancers of intelligence—for example, exposure to classical music (the so-called Mozart effect),⁹ learning to play a musical instrument,¹⁰ or learning to play chess.¹¹ None have succeeded as hoped.

It’s no surprise then that programs in school meant to teach general critical thinking skills have had limited success. Unfortunately, the evaluations of these programs seldom offer a good test of transfer; the measure of success tends to feature the same sort of task that was used during training.¹² When investigators have tested for transfer in such curricular programs, positive results have been absent or modest and quick to fade.¹³

Transfer and the Nature of Critical Thinking

We probably should have anticipated these results. Wanting students to be able to “analyze, synthesize, and evaluate” information sounds like a reasonable goal, but those terms mean different things in different disciplines. Literary criticism has its own internal logic, its norms for what constitutes good evidence and a valid argument. These norms differ from those found in mathematics, for example. Thus, our goals for student critical thinking must be domain-specific.

But wait. Surely there are *some* principles of thinking that apply across fields of study. Affirming the consequent is always wrong, straw-person arguments are always weak, and having a conflict of interest always makes your argument suspect.¹⁴ There are indeed principles that carry across domains of study. The problem is that people who learn these broadly applicable principles in one situation often fail to apply them in a new situation.

The law of large numbers provides an example. It states that a large sample will probably be closer to a “true” estimate than a small sample—if you want to know whether a set of dice is loaded, you’re better off seeing the results of 20 throws rather than two throws. People readily understand this idea in the context of evaluating randomness, but a small sample doesn’t bother them when judging academic performance; if someone receives poor grades on two math tests, observers judge they are simply bad at math.¹⁵

In another classic experiment, researchers administered a tricky problem: a malignant tumor could be treated with a particular ray, but the ray caused a lot of collateral damage to healthy tissue. How, subjects were asked, could the ray be used to destroy the tumor? Other subjects got the same problem, but first read a story describing a military situation analogous to the medical problem. Instead of rays attacking a tumor, rebels were to attack a fortress. The military story offered a perfect analogy to the medical problem, but despite reading it moments before, subjects still couldn’t solve the medical problem. Merely mentioning that the story might help solve the problem boosted solution rates to nearly 100 percent. Thus, using the analogy was not hard; the problem was thinking to use it in the first place.¹⁶

These results offer a new perspective on critical thinking. The problem in transfer is not just that different domains have differ-



ent norms for critical thinking. The problem is that previous critical thinking successes seem encapsulated in memory. We know that a student has understood an idea like the law of large numbers. But understanding it offers no guarantee that the student will recognize new situations in which that idea will be useful.

Critical Thinking as Problem Recognition

Happily, this difficulty in recognizing problems you've solved before disappears in the face of significant practice. If I solve a lot of problems in which the law of large numbers is relevant, I no longer focus on the particulars of the problem—that is, whether it seems to be about cars, or ratings of happiness, or savings bonds. I immediately see that the law of large numbers is relevant.¹⁷ Lots of practice is OK if you're not in a hurry, but is there a faster way to help students “just see” that they have solved a problem before?

One technique is problem comparison; show students two solved problems that have the same structure but appear to be about different things, and ask students to compare them.¹⁸ In one experiment testing this method, business school students were asked to compare two stories, one involving international companies coping with a shipping problem, and the other concerning two college students planning a spring break trip. In each, a difficult negotiation problem was resolved through the use of a particular type of contract. Two weeks later, students were more likely to use the solution on a novel problem if they had contrasted the stories compared to other students who simply read them.¹⁹ Richard

Catrambone developed a different technique to address a slightly different transfer problem. He noted that in math and science classes, students often learned to solve standard problems via a series of fixed, lockstep procedures. That meant students were stumped when confronted with a problem requiring a slight revision of the steps, even if the goal of the steps was the same. For example, a student might learn a method for solving word problems involving work like “Nicola can paint a house in 14 hours, and Carole can do it in 8. How long would it take them to paint one house, working together?” A student who learns a sequence of steps to solve that sort of problem is often thrown by a small change—the homeowner had already painted one-fourth of the house before hiring Nicola and Carole.

Catrambone²⁰ showed that student knowledge will be more flexible if students are taught to label the substeps of the solution with the goal it serves. For example, work problems are typically solved by calculating how much of the job each worker can do in an hour. If, during learning, that step were labeled so students understood that that calculation was part of deriving the solution, they would know how to solve the problem when a fraction of the house is to be painted.

Open-Ended Problems and Knowledge

Students encounter standard problems that are best solved in a particular way, but many critical thinking situations are unique.

There are no routine, reusable solutions for problems like designing a product or planning a strategy for a field hockey match. Nevertheless, critical thinking for open-ended problems is enabled by extensive stores of knowledge about the domain.²¹

First, the recognition process described above (“oh, this is *that* sort of problem”) can still apply to subparts of a complex, open-ended problem. Complex critical thinking may entail multiple simpler solutions from memory that can be “snapped together” when solving complex problems.²² For example, arithmetic is needed for calculating the best value among several vacation packages.

Second, knowledge impacts working memory. Working memory refers, colloquially, to the place in the mind where thinking happens—it's where you hold information and manipulate it to carry out cognitive tasks. So, for example, if I said “How is a scarecrow like a

blueberry?,” you would retrieve information about scarecrows (not alive, protect crops, found in fields, birds think they are alive) and blueberries (purple, used in pies, small, featured in *Blueberries for Sal*) from your memory, and then you'd start comparing these features, looking for overlap. But working memory has limited space; if I added three more words, you'd struggle to keep all five and their associations in mind at once.

With experience, often-associated bits of knowledge clump together and thus take up less room in working memory. In chess, a king, a castle, and three pawns in a corner of the board relate to one another in the defensive position, so the expert will treat them as a single unit. An experienced dancer similarly chunks dance moves allowing him to think about more

subtle aspects of movement, rather than crowding working memory with “what I'm to do next.”

Third, knowledge is sometimes necessary to deploy thinking strategies. As noted above, sometimes you have an effective thinking strategy in your memory (for example, apply the law of large numbers) but fail to see that it's relevant. In other situations, the proper thinking is easily recognized. We can *tell* students that they should evaluate the logic of the author's argument when they read an op-ed, and we can tell them the right method to use when conducting a scientific experiment. Students should have no trouble recognizing “Oh, this is *that* sort of problem,” and they may have committed to memory the right thinking strategy. They know what to do, but they may not be able to use the strategy without the right domain knowledge.

For example, principles of scientific reasoning seem to be content free: for example, “a control group should be identical to the experimental group, except for the treatment.” In practice, however, content knowledge is needed to use the principle. For example, in an experiment on learning, you'd want to be sure that the experimental and control groups were comparable, so you'd make sure that proportions of men and women in each group were the same. What characteristics besides sex should you be sure are equivalent in the experimental and control groups? Ability to concentrate? Intelligence? You can't measure every charac-

**Critical thinking
for open-ended
problems is enabled
by extensive stores
of knowledge
about the domain.**

teristic of your subjects, so you'd focus on characteristics that you know are relevant to learning. But knowing which characteristics are "relevant to learning" means knowing the research literature in learning and memory.

Experimental evidence shows that an expert doesn't think as well outside her area of expertise, even in a closely related domain. She's still better than a novice, but her skills don't transfer completely. For example, knowledge of medicine transfers poorly among subspecialties (neurologists do not diagnose cardiac cases well),²³ technical writers can't write newspaper articles,²⁴ and even professional philosophers are swayed by irrelevant features of problems like question order or wording.²⁵

How to Teach Students to Think Critically

So what does all this mean? Is there really no such thing as a "critical thinking skill" if by "skill" we mean something generalizable? Maybe, but it's hard to be sure. We do know that students who go to school longer score better on intelligence tests, and certainly we think of intelligence as all-purpose.²⁶ Still, it may be that schooling boosts a collection of fairly specific thinking skills. If it increases general thinking skills, researchers have been unable to identify them.

Although existing data favor the specific skills account,²⁷ researchers would still say it's uncertain whether a good critical thinker is someone who has mastered lots of specific skills, or someone with a smaller set of yet-to-be-identified general skills. But educators aren't researchers, and for educators, one fact ought to be salient. We're not even sure the general skills exist, but we're quite sure there's no proven way to teach them directly. In contrast, we have a pretty good idea of how to teach students the more specific critical thinking skills. I suggest we do so. Here's a four-step plan.

First, identify what's meant by critical thinking in each domain. Be specific by focusing on tasks that tap skills, not skills themselves. What tasks showing critical thinking should a high school graduate be able to do in mathematics, history, and other subjects? For example, educators might decide that an important aspect of understanding history is the ability to source historical documents; that is, to interpret them in light of their source—who wrote it, for what purpose, and for what intended audience. Educators might decide that a key critical thinking skill for science is understanding the relationship between a theory and a hypothesis. These skills should be explicitly taught and practiced—there is evidence that simple exposure to this sort of work without explicit instruction is less effective.²⁸

Second, identify the domain content that students must know. We've seen that domain knowledge is a crucial driver of thinking skill. What knowledge is essential to the type of thinking you want your students to be able to do? For example, if students are to source documents, they need knowledge of the relevant source; in other words, knowing that they are reading a 1779 letter from General George Clinton written to George Washington with a

request for supplies won't mean much if they don't have some background knowledge about the American Revolutionary War—that will enable them to make sense of what they read when they look up Clinton and his activities at the time.

The prospect of someone deciding which knowledge students ought to learn—and what they won't learn—sometimes makes people uneasy because this decision depends on one's goals for schooling, and goals depend on values. Selection of content is a critical way that values are expressed.²⁹ Making that choice will lead to uncomfortable tradeoffs. But not choosing is still making a choice. It's choosing not to plan.

Third, educators must select the best sequence for students to learn the skills. It's obvious that skills and knowledge build on one another in mathematics and history, and it's equally true of other domains of skill and knowledge; we interpret new information in light of what we already know.

Fourth, educators must decide which skills should be revisited across years. Studies show that even if content is learned quite well over the course of half of a school year, about half will be forgotten in three years.³⁰ That doesn't mean there's no value in exposing students to content just once; most students will forget much, but they'll remember something, and for some students, an interest may be kindled. But when considering skills we hope will stick

with students for the long term, we should plan on at least three to five years of practice.³¹

Some Practical Matters of Teaching Critical Thinking

I've outlined a broad, four-step plan. Let's consider some of the pragmatic decisions educators face as they contemplate the teaching of critical thinking.

Is it *all or none*? I've suggested that critical thinking be taught in the context of a comprehensive curriculum. Does that mean an individual teacher cannot do anything on his or her own? Is there just no point in trying if the cooperation of the entire school system is not assured?

Obviously that's not the case; a teacher can still include critical thinking content in his or her courses and students will learn, but it's quite likely they will learn more, and learn more quickly, if their learning is coordinated across years. It has long been recognized among psychologists that an important factor influencing learning, perhaps the most important factor, is what the student already knows.³² Teaching will be more effective if the instructor is confident about what his or her students already know.

Student age: When should critical thinking instruction start? There's not a firm, research-based answer to this question. Researchers interested in thinking skills like problem solving or evidence evaluation in young children (preschool through early elementary ages) have studied how children think in the absence of explicit instruction. They have not studied whether or how young children can be made to think more critically. Still, research



over the last 30 years or so has led to an important conclusion: children are more capable than we thought.

The great developmental psychologist Jean Piaget proposed a highly influential theory that suggested children's cognition moves through a series of four stages, characterized by more and more abstract thought, and better ability to take multiple perspectives. In stage theories, the basic architecture of thought is unchanged for long periods of time, and then rapidly reorganizes as the child moves from one developmental stage to another.³³ A key educational implication is that it's at least pointless and possibly damaging to ask the child to do cognitive work that is appropriate for a later developmental stage. The last 30 years has shown that, contrary to Piaget's theory, development is gradual, and does not change abruptly. It has also shown that what children can and cannot do varies depending on the content.

For example, in some circumstances, even toddlers can understand principles of conditional reasoning. For instance, conditional reasoning is required when the relationship of two things is contingent on a third thing. A child may understand that when she visits a friend's house, she may get a treat like cake or cookies for a snack or she may not. But if her friend is celebrating a birthday, the relation between those two things (a visit and getting cake) becomes very consistent. Yet when conditional reasoning problems are framed in unfamiliar contexts, they confuse even adult physicians. Much depends on the content of the problem.³⁴

Thus, research tells us that including critical thinking in the schooling of young children is likely to be perfectly appropriate. It does not, however, provide guidance into what types of critical thinking skills to start with. That is a matter to take up with experienced educators, coordinating with colleagues who teach older children in the interests of making the curriculum seamless.

Types of students: Should everyone learn critical thinking skills? The question sounds like a setup, like an excuse for a resounding endorsement of critical thinking for all. But the truth is that, in many systems, less capable students are steered into less challenging coursework, with the hope that by reducing expectations, they will at least achieve "mastery of the basics." These lower expectations often pervade entire schools that serve students from low-income families.³⁵

It is worth highlighting that access to challenging content and continuing to postsecondary education is, in nearly every country, associated with socioeconomic status.³⁶ Children from high socioeconomic status families also have more opportunities to learn at home. If school is the chief or only venue through which low socioeconomic status students are exposed to advanced vocabulary, rich content knowledge, and demands for high-level thinking, it is absolutely vital that those opportunities be enhanced, not reduced.

Assessment: Assessment of critical thinking is, needless to say, a challenge. One difficulty is expense. Claims to the contrary, multiple-choice items do not necessarily require critical thinking, even when items are carefully constructed and vetted, as on the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). One researcher³⁷ administered items from the history NAEP for 12th-graders to college students who had done well on other standardized history exams. Students were asked to think aloud as they chose their answers, and the researchers observed little critical thinking, but a lot of "gaming" of the questions. Assessing critical thinking requires that students answer open-form questions, and that means humans must score the response, an expensive proposition.

On the bright side, the plan for teaching critical thinking that I've recommended makes some aspects of assessment more straightforward. If the skills that constitute "critical thinking" in, say, 10th-grade chemistry class are fully defined, then there is no question as to what content ought to appear on the assessment. The predictability ought to make teachers more confident that they can prepare their students for standardized assessments.

**An expert
doesn't think as
well outside her
area of expertise,
even in a closely
related domain.**

As much as teaching students to think critically is a universal goal of schooling, one might be surprised that student difficulty in this area is such a common complaint. Educators are often frustrated that student thinking seems shallow. This review should offer insight into why that is. The way the mind works, shallow is what you get first. Deep, critical thinking is hard-won.

That means that designers and administrators of a program to improve critical thinking among students must take the long view, both in the time frame over which the program operates and especially in the speed with which one expects

to see results. Patience will be a key ingredient in any program that succeeds. □

Endnotes

1. D. T. Willingham, "Critical Thinking: Why Is It So Hard to Teach," *American Educator* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 8–19.
2. P. C. Abrami et al., "Instructional Interventions Affecting Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions: A Stage 1 Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 78, no. 4 (2008): 1102–1134; and R. L. Bangert-Drowns and E. Bankert, "Meta-Analysis of Effects of Explicit Instruction for Critical Thinking," in *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* (Boston: 1990), 56–79.
3. D. A. Bensley and R. A. Spero, "Improving Critical Thinking Skills and Metacognitive Monitoring through Direct Infusion," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 12 (2014): 55–68.
4. C. F. Lewis, "A Study in Formal Discipline," *The School Review* 13, no. 4 (1905): 281–292.
5. E. L. Thorndike, "The Influence of First-Year Latin upon Ability to Read English," *School and Society* 17 (1923): 165–168; and C. R. Broyles, E. L. Thorndike, and E. Woodward, "A Second Study of Mental Discipline in High School Studies," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 18, no. 6 (1924): 377–404.
6. S. Papert, "Teaching Children to Be Mathematicians versus Teaching about Mathematics," *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology* 3, no. 3 (1972): 249–262; and S. Papert, *Mindstorms* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); see also D. H. Clements and D. F. Gullo, "Effects of Computer Programming on Young Children's Cognition," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 76, no. 6 (1984): 1051–1058; and M. C. Linn, "The Cognitive Consequences of Programming Instruction in Classrooms," *Educational Researcher* 14, no. 5 (1985): 14–29.
7. Y.-K. C. Liao and G. W. Bright, "Effects of Computer Programming on Cognitive Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 7, no. 3 (1991): 251–268.
8. R. Scherer, F. Siddiq, and B. S. Viveros, "The Cognitive Benefits of Learning Computer Programming: A Meta-Analysis of Transfer Effects," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 111, no. 5 (2019): 764–792.

(Continued on page 51)

AFT's Convention Results in Bold New Agenda

At the AFT virtual convention in July, delegates passed bold resolutions to confront the crises our country is facing in healthcare and the economy and its long overdue reckoning with racism. To see the full set of resolutions, visit aft.org/about/resolutions.



BRETT SHERMAN

REIMAGINING OUR SOCIETY, SUPPORTING A GREEN NEW DEAL, AND ELECTING JOE BIDEN

Among the most inspirational resolutions is “Reimagining Our Society and Rewriting the Rules to Enable Opportunity and Justice for All,” which lays out the enormous challenges made worse by a president who flouts democratic norms and the rule of law. The resolution calls for the AFT’s work to focus on envisioning “a more just and vibrant society and democracy” by following 15 essential principles, including access to high-quality healthcare, the cancellation of all student debt, a fair tax system, and ensuring the right of workers to collectively bargain. Delegates also passed a separate resolution supporting a Green New Deal, which combines strategies to tackle climate change, economic inequality, and environmental racism. And, to bring this new vision for a better, more equitable, and greener America to life, delegates passed a resolution endorsing Joe Biden for president. “This is not simply about defeating Donald Trump,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “We need a president who will help change course so this country is a place of fairness, opportunity, and hope. Biden will be that president.” Read the resolutions at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news1>, <http://go.aft.org/ae320news2>, and <http://go.aft.org/ae320news3>.

ENOUGH OF POLICE BRUTALITY

Delegates passed a resolution whose one-word title says it all: “Enough.” The resolution, which opposes police brutality and demands police accountability, names George Floyd and dozens of other victims of police violence. It builds on a groundbreaking resolution the AFT executive council passed in June, “Confronting Racism and in Support of Black Lives,” which lays out 19 commitments to combat systemic racism and violence against Black

people, including the separation of school safety from policing and police forces. The convention resolution “Enough” also affirms that the AFT and its affiliates will advocate for federal, state, and local legislation that imposes strict police accountability. The resolution calls for removing police officers from schools; expanding first responders to include public health officials, social workers, mental health professionals, and related experts; and requiring independent community oversight boards and human rights commissions. The resolution commits the AFT and its affiliates to mentor members of color and other traditionally underrepresented groups for leadership; make anti-racist and anti-oppression training for all members a principal goal of the unions; and calls on all unions, particularly law enforcement unions, to do the same. Read the resolutions at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news4> and <http://go.aft.org/ae320news5>.



PAMELA WOLFE

ELEVATING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Years of disinvestment in public education have led to overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating school buildings, and outdated books, materials, and technology. COVID-19 has not only heightened the challenges many students already face in their daily lives, such as food scarcity and unsafe housing, but also increased the inequities of the digital divide. Delegates passed a resolution that envisions an opportunity to “move toward reopening school buildings and continuing American public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past but as it can be.” The resolution urges AFT affiliates to mobilize members and unite with their communities to win more equitable distribution of education funds and to be more proactive in planning for returning to school buildings by collaborating on programming, space, operations, staff deployment, and scheduling. The resolution sets a goal to establish 25,000 community schools across the country, so students and families can easily access health and social services. And it commits the AFT to work to address the digital divide by collaborating with internet/cable providers and by advocating for greater investment in technology in schools and equitable access online. Read the resolution at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news6>.



CONTINUING THE FIGHT TO PROTECT DACA

Since it was established in 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has allowed recipients to attend college, start careers, and put down roots in the only country they've ever known, free from fear of deportation. The AFT was an original plaintiff with the NAACP challenging the Trump administration's attempt to end DACA. On June 18, the Supreme Court denied the Trump administration's attempt to end DACA—a victory for the immigrant rights movement and the nearly 800,000 people, including many AFT members, who moved to the United States as children. In defiance of the ruling, the Trump administration recently declared that it will not accept new DACA applications and will only grant one-year extensions to current beneficiaries “on a case-by-case basis.” The AFT resolution condemns Donald Trump's authoritarian contempt for the Supreme Court's ruling that reinstated DACA and demands full restoration of DACA now. Read the resolution at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news7>.

SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY, AND GENDER-NONCONFORMING WORKERS

Despite a landmark Supreme Court victory in June forbidding employers to fire transgender, nonbinary, or gender-nonconforming workers, these workers contend with discriminatory legislation in many states and often face discrimination in the workplace. As a result, convention delegates passed a resolution committing the AFT to work collaboratively to compile a list of best practices that locals have implemented in defense of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming workers. It also requires the AFT to compile a list of existing protections in the workplace, housing, and everyday life. The AFT will disseminate these lists as part of its efforts to engage locals in guiding and advocating for the rights of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming workers. Read the resolution at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news8>.

OPPOSITION TO ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILLS

While “active shooter” drills seek to prepare students and school staff in the event of a school shooting, they can be traumatic for all involved. These drills may be announced or unannounced, and the experiences of AFT members across the country show

that they can have long-lasting adverse effects on those who endure them. There is no evidence to support the idea that active shooter drills will save lives, and such drills destroy the school environment as a safe haven. Delegates passed a resolution to oppose the practice of any form of active shooter drill that includes firing blank ammunition, using fake blood, simulating death, or any other potentially traumatizing actions. Read the resolution at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news9>.



COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY COUNCIL-AFT

CONTINGENT FACULTY: A SURVEY AND A SHOW OF SUPPORT

A report from the AFT this spring shows the harsh economic reality facing millions of contingent and adjunct faculty. *An Army of Temps: AFT 2020 Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/Life Report* summarizes the results of a survey of contingent faculty at both public and private, two- and four-year institutions. Of the more than 3,000 respondents to the survey, one-third earn less than \$25,000 per year and only 15 percent can comfortably cover basic expenses each month. The AFT is the largest union of contingent workers; out of 240,000 higher education members, 85,000 are contingent faculty and 35,000 are graduate employees. According to the report, the COVID-19 crisis has made their work even more precarious given the uncertainty around college enrollment. To advocate for them, delegates passed a resolution committing the AFT to support legislation for contingent faculty to be included, enfranchised, and compensated in shared governance work—without regard to their part-time status. Roughly 73 percent of faculty positions are off the tenure track, according to the American Association of University Professors' 2018 “Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed,” which noted that “these are insecure, unsupported positions with little job security and few protections for academic freedom.” Contingent faculty are more likely to be women and people of color, and are more likely to mentor students, said delegate Mia McIver, president of University Council-AFT, which represents non-senate faculty and librarians of the University of California. Read the full report at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news10> and the resolution at <http://go.aft.org/ae320news11>.

WE'RE ON THE BRINK OF HISTORIC PROGRESS

As the nation is confronting three major crises, Joe Biden knows that “the darkest moments in America’s history . . . push forward some of the most remarkable eras of progress.” In a conversation with AFT members at AFT’s virtual convention, Biden showed that he cares about working people and is ready to build a better America.

Rick Lucas, a registered nurse in Columbus, despaired at Trump’s disastrous response to the pandemic. “Many of us go home at night after our shifts without adequate PPE, unable to sleep because we’re not sure whether we are bringing COVID-19 home to our kids, our significant others or our aging parents,” he said. Lucas asked Biden what he will do to prevent this from happening again.

The Trump administration “ignored the warnings and failed to prepare,” Biden said, outlining a proper response that would have saved lives. Looking ahead, there must be a science-driven plan for producing and distributing a COVID-19 vaccine, he said. Biden’s plan will rely on the independent recommendations of scientists and public health experts and be fully transparent for review by the public.

Marguerite Ruff, a special education classroom assistant in Philadelphia, asked Biden about reckoning with racism. Ruff, whose son was murdered, said “we took to the streets not only for George, but for all who preceded him.” She wanted to know how Biden would help fix the systemic racial injustice that plagues our society.

Biden, moved by Ruff’s experience and deeply empathetic since he has lost two children, said, “the country has had the blinders taken off.” Racial equity is a central part of the Build Back Better plan Biden has put forward, and he explained that it must be combined with economic opportunity and a healthy environment. Biden closed with his signature caring and decency:

“ I’M GOING TO DO MY BEST NOT TO LET YOU DOWN, I PROMISE. ”

Engage in the Election to Make a Difference

Visit [AFTvotes.org](https://aftvotes.org) to volunteer and learn more about using these tools to get everyone out to vote!

Election Day is only a few weeks away, and it will be like no other. We’ve had to rethink traditional Get Out the Vote strategies, but the work must continue. Volunteers—who make the difference in reaching and mobilizing voters—are needed more than ever.

We are proud to present different ways to help every member connect with, organize and engage other members, friends and family so that each one of us can make a difference in this election.

Peer-to-Peer Texting

Peer-to-peer texting is a fast-growing method of organizing, informing and engaging people. It harnesses the power of one-on-one conversations through text messages with many contacts. Engage in peer-to-peer texting to talk with your friends and family about the importance of voting.

Virtual Phone Banks

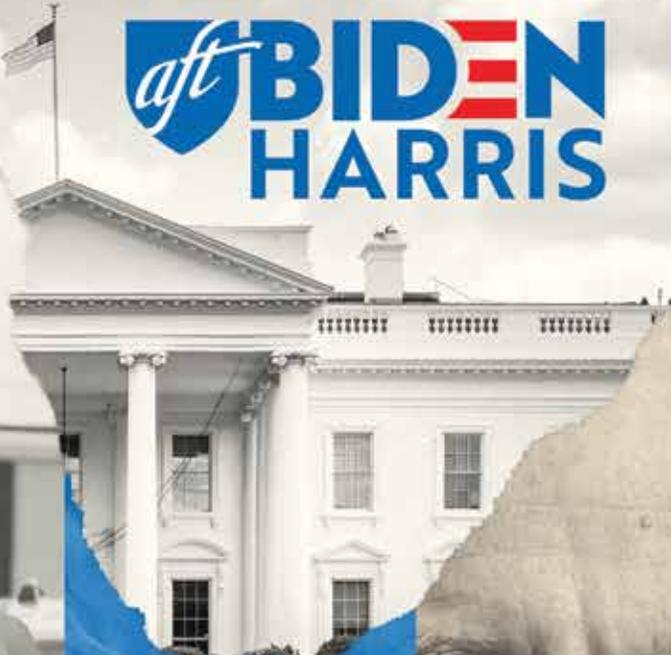
Virtual phone banks are an increasingly important way of reaching people and having conversations about the importance of the election. Talk with your colleagues and fellow members about getting out to vote.

OutreachCircle

Relational organizing is one of the most powerful and effective ways of mobilizing people. It’s using all of our tools to engage our network of colleagues, family and friends. OutreachCircle makes it easier to engage and activate people in our network.

[#AFTvotes](https://aftvotes.org)

aft **BIDEN**
HARRIS



The Crisis of American Democracy

(Continued from page 13)

17. J. Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1974).
18. V. Williamson, "Anti-Immigrant Ads like Trump's Sank the California GOP in the 90s," *Brookings* (blog), August 19, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/08/19/anti-immigrant-ads-like-trumps-sank-the-california-gop-in-the-90s/>.
19. B. Highton, "Voter Identification Laws and Turnout in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2017): 149-67, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-022822>.
20. T. Enamorado, "Georgia's 'Exact Match' Law Could Potentially Harm Many Eligible Voters," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/10/20/georgia-exact-match-law-could-disenfranchise-3031802-eligible-voters-my-research-finds/>.
21. A. Judd, "Georgia's Strict Laws Lead to Large Purge of Voters," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 28, 2018, <https://www.ajc.com/news/state-regional-govt-politics/voter-purge-begs-question-what-the-matter-with-georgia/YAFvuk3Bu95kIMaDiDFq/>.
22. Y. Mounk and R. Stephan Foa, "This Is How Democracy Dies," *Atlantic*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/confidence-democracy-lowest-point-record/605686/>.
23. P. Starr, "The Anti-Entrenchment Agenda," *American Prospect*, June 26, 2019, <https://prospect.org/justice/anti-entrenchment-agenda/>; and P. Starr, *Entrenchment: Wealth, Power, and the Constitution of Democratic Societies* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019).
24. P. Bump, "In About 20 Years, Half the Population Will Live in Eight States," *Washington Post*, July 12, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/07/12/in-about-20-years-half-the-population-will-live-in-eight-states/>.
25. *Re: How to Protect the 2020 Vote from the Coronavirus*, Memo (Brennan Center for Justice, March 16, 2020): <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Coronavirus%20Response%20Memo.pdf>; C. Deluzio et al., *Ensuring Safe Elections: Federal Funding Needs for State and Local Governments During the Pandemic*, (Brennan Center for Justice, April 30, 2020): https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/2020_04_StateCostAnalysis_FINAL.pdf; and B. Bauer, B. Ginsberg, and N. Persily, "We Must Vote in November. This Is How to Ensure That We Can," *New York Times*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/opinion/coronavirus-2020-election.html>.

One Person, One Vote

(Continued from page 18)

3. S. Wang and B. Remlinger, "Slaying the Partisan Gerrymander," *The American Prospect*, September 25, 2017, <https://prospect.org/power/slaying-partisan-gerrymander/>.
4. S. Wang, "The Great Gerrymander of 2012," *New York Times*, February 2, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/opinion/sunday/the-great-gerrymander-of-2012.html?pagewanted=all&mcubz=1>.
5. M. Li and T. Wolf, "5 Things to Know About the Wisconsin Partisan Gerrymandering Case," *Brennan Center for Justice*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/5-things-know-about-wisconsin-partisan-gerrymandering-case>.
6. D. Lieb, "GOP Won More Seats in 2018 Than Suggested by Vote Share," *Associated Press*, March 21, 2019, <https://apnews.com/9fd72a4c1c5742aeed977ee27815d776>.
7. A. Tausanovitch and E. Gee, "How Partisan Gerrymandering Limits Access to Healthcare," *Center for American Progress*, February 24, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2020/02/24/480684/partisan-gerrymandering-limits-access-health-care/>.
8. A. Tausanovitch, C. Parsons, and R. Bhatia, *How Partisan Gerrymandering Prevents Legislative Action on Gun Violence* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, December 2019): <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2019/12/17/478718/partisan-gerrymandering-prevents-legislative-action-gun-violence/>.
9. A. Tausanovitch et al., *How Partisan Gerrymandering Hurts Kids* (Washington, DC: Center for American

Progress, 2020): <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2020/05/28/485495/partisan-gerrymandering-hurts-kids/>.

10. Tausanovitch et al., *How Partisan Gerrymandering Hurts Kids*.
11. J. Levitt, *The Truth about Voter Fraud* (New York City, NY: Brennan Center for Justice, 2007) <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/The%20Truth%20About%20Voter%20Fraud.pdf>.
12. C. Dmonoske, "Supreme Court Declines Republican Bid to Revive North Carolina Voter ID Law," *The Two-Way* (blog), NPR, May 15, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/the-two-way/2017/05/15/528457693/supreme-court-declines-republican-bid-to-revive-north-carolina-voter-id-law>.
13. A. Berman, "Rigged: How Voter Suppression Threw Wisconsin to Trump," *Mother Jones*, December 2017, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/10/voter-suppression-wisconsin-election-2016/>.
14. P. Williams, "Supreme Court Gives Ohio Right to Purge Thousands of Voters From its Rolls," *NBC News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/ohio-wins-supreme-court-fight-over-voter-registration-n873226>.
15. M. Astor, "Georgia Governor Brian Kemp Faces Investigation by House Panel," *New York Times*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/politics/supreme-court/ohio-wins-supreme-court-fight-over-voter-registration-n873226>.
16. "Voting Rights Become A Flashpoint In Georgia Governor's Race," *WABE*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.wabe.org/voting-rights-become-a-flashpoint-in-georgia-governors-race/>.
17. *Voter Registration Statistics* (NC, North Carolina State Board of Elections, 2020) <https://vt.ncsbe.gov/RegStat/Results?date=06%2F06%2F2020>.
18. *Rucho et al. v. Common Cause et al.*, no. 18-422; US, (June 27, 2019) https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/18pdf/18-422_9ol1.pdf.
19. A. Lo, "Citizen and Legislative Efforts to Reform Redistricting in 2018," *Brennan Center for Justice*, November 7, 2018, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/citizen-and-legislative-efforts-reform-redistricting-2018>.
20. N. Reimann, "Coronavirus Infections Spiked in Wisconsin after In-Person Election, Study Says," *Forbes*, May 19, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicholasreimann/2020/05/19/coronavirus-infections-spiked-in-wisconsin-after-in-person-election-study-says/#2420396d14b3>.
21. "Coronavirus in African Americans and Other People of Color," *Johns Hopkins Medicine*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>.
22. K. Moore et al., *COVID-19: The CIDRAP Viewpoint* (Minnesota: Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, April 2020) https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/sites/default/files/public/downloads/cidrap-covid19-viewpoint-part1_0.pdf.
23. AD HOC Committee for 2020 Election Fairness and Legitimacy, *Fair Elections During A Crisis: Urgent Recommendations in Law, Media, Politics, and Tech to Advance the Legitimacy of, and the Public's Confidence in, the November 2020 U.S. Election* (UCI Law: April 2020) <https://www.law.uci.edu/faculty/full-time/hasen/2020ElectionReport.pdf>.
24. R. Hansen, "Trump Is Wrong about the Dangers of Absentee Ballots," *Washington Post*, April 9, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/09/trump-is-wrong-about-dangers-absentee-ballots/>; S. Saul and E. J. Epstein, "Trump Is Pushing a False Argument on Vote-By-Mail Fraud. Here Are The Facts," *New York Times*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/mail-in-voting-explained.html>.
25. Saul and Epstein, "Trump Is Pushing a False Argument."
26. D. Thompson et al., *The Neutral Partisan Effects of Vote-by-Mail: Evidence from County-level Rollouts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, April 2020) <https://siepr.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/20-015.pdf>; A. Bonica et al., *All-Mail Voting in Colorado Increases Turnout and Reduces Turnout Inequality* (Vote at Home, April 2020) <https://www.voteathome.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CO-All-Mail-Voting-2020-Paper.pdf>.

Photo Credits

- Page 14: Voters in Milwaukee, WI, April 2020, © Pat A. Robinson/ZUMA Wire
- Page 15: Protesters oppose gerrymandering outside the US Supreme Court, Oct. 2017, Alex Edelman/ZUMA Wire/Alamy Live News
- Page 16: Supporters of the 1964 Voting Rights Act outside the US Supreme Court during *Shelby County v. Holder*, Feb. 2013, Pete Marovich/ZUMAPRESS.com/Alamy Live News

Page 17: Voters in Atlanta, GA, June 2020, Tribune Content Agency LLC/Alamy Live News

Page 18: An election worker sorts vote-by-mail ballots for the presidential primary, March 2020, Jason Redmond/AFP via Getty Images

Youth-Led Protests

(Continued from page 23)

Endnotes

1. P. A. Goff et al., "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106, no. 4 (2014): 526-45; R. Epstein, J. J. Blake, and T. González, *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017).
2. N.O.A. Kwate and M.S. Goodman, "Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Effects of Racism on Mental Health among Residents of Black Neighborhoods in New York City," *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 4 (2015): 711-8; B. Ghafoori et al., "Global Perspectives on the Trauma of Hate-Based Violence: An International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Briefing Paper," International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, 2019.
3. *The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report: College Students' Views of Free Expression* (Washington, DC: Knight-Gallup, 2020), 8, fig. 4.
4. *The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report*, 12, fig. 8.
5. *The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report*, 20, fig. 17.
6. *The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report*, 26, fig. 22.

Preparing for Racial Unrest

(Continued from page 27)

Endnotes

1. E. Cole and S. Harper, "Race and Rhetoric: An Analysis of College Presidents' Statements on Campus Racial Incidents," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 10, no. 4 (2017): 318-333; S. Davis and J. Harris, "But We Didn't Mean It Like That: A Critical Race Analysis of Campus Responses to Racial Incidents," *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* 2, no. 1 (September 2015): 62-78; G. Garcia and M. Johnston-Guerrero, "Challenging the Utility of a Racial Microaggressions Framework Through a Systematic Review of Racially Biased Incidents on Campus," *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* 2, no. 1 (2015): 49-66; G. Garcia et al., "When Parties Become Racialized: Deconstructing Racially Themed Parties," *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 48, no. 1 (2011): 5-21.
2. Garcia and Johnston-Guerrero, "Challenging the Utility of a Racial Microaggressions," 49-66.
3. Cole and Harper, "Race and Rhetoric," 318-333.
4. Cole and Harper, "Race and Rhetoric," 318-333; Davis and Harris, "But We Didn't Mean it Like That," 62-78.
5. Cole and Harper, "Race and Rhetoric," 318-333.

"Cognitive Apprenticeship"

(Continued from page 40)

Endnotes

1. A. Collins, J. S. Brown, and A. Holum, "Cognitive Apprenticeship: Making Thinking Visible," *American Educator* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 6-11, 38-46.
2. Collins et al., 8.
3. Collins et al., 9.
4. Collins et al., 9.
5. Collins et al., 9.
6. Collins et al., 9.
7. Collins et al., 9.
8. Collins et al., 9.
9. Collins et al., 43.

Ask the Cognitive Scientist

(Continued from page 45)

9. J. Pietschnig, M. Voracek, and A. K. Formann, "Mozart Effect-Schmoztart Effect: A Meta-Analysis," *Intelligence* 38, no. 3 (2010): 314–323.

10. G. Sala and F. Gobet, "When the Music's Over: Does Music Skill Transfer to Children's and Young Adolescents' Cognitive and Academic Skills? A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Research Review* 20 (2017): 55–67.

11. G. Sala and F. Gobet, "Do the Benefits of Chess Instruction Transfer to Academic and Cognitive Skills? A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Research Review* 18 (2016): 46–57.

12. For example, A. Kozulin et al., "Cognitive Modifiability of Children with Developmental Disabilities: A Multicentre Study Using Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment-Basic Program," *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 31, no. 2 (2010): 551–559; D. Kuhn and A. Crowell, "Dialogic Argumentation as a Vehicle for Developing Young Adolescents' Thinking," *Psychological Science* 22, no. 4 (2011): 545–552; and A. Reznitskaya et al., "Examining Transfer Effects from Dialogic Discussions to New Tasks and Contexts," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 37, no. 4 (2012): 288–306.

13. R. Ritchart and D. N. Perkins, "Learning to Think: The Challenges of Teaching Thinking," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning*, ed. K. J. Holyoak and R. G. Morrison (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2005), 775–802.

14. R. H. Ennis, "Critical Thinking and the Curriculum," in *Thinking Skills Instruction: Concepts and Techniques*, ed. M. Heiman and J. Slomianko (West Haven, CT: NEA Professional Library, 1987), 40–48.

15. C. Jepson, D. H. Krantz, and R. E. Nisbett, "Inductive Reasoning: Competence or Skill?," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 6, no. 3 (1983): 494–501.

16. M. Gick and K. Holyoak, "Analogical Problem Solving," *Cognitive Psychology* 12, no. 3 (1980): 306–355; and M. Gick and K. Holyoak, "Schema Induction and Analogical Transfer," *Cognitive Psychology* 15, no. 1 (1983): 1–38.

17. For example, Z. Chen and L. Mo, "Schema Induction in Problem Solving: A Multidimensional Analysis," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning Memory and Cognition* 30, no. 3 (2004): 583–600.

18. K. J. Kurtz, O. Boukrina, and D. Gentner, "Comparison Promotes Learning and Transfer of Relational Categories," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning Memory and Cognition* 39, no. 4 (2013): 1303–1310.

19. J. Loewenstein, L. Thompson, and D. Gentner, "Analogical Encoding Facilitates Knowledge Transfer in Negotiation," *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* 6, no. 4 (1999): 586–597.

20. R. Catrambone, "Aiding Subgoal Learning: Effects on Transfer," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 87, no. 1 (1995): 5–17; R. Catrambone, "The Subgoal Learning Model: Creating Better Examples to Improve Transfer to Novel Problems," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 127, no. 4 (1998): 355–376; R. Catrambone and K. Holyoak, "Learning Subgoals and Methods for Solving Probability Problems," *Memory & Cognition* 18, no. 6 (1990): 593–603; and L. E. Margulieux and R. Catrambone, "Improving Problem Solving with Subgoal Labels in Expository Text and Worked Examples," *Learning and Instruction* 42 (2016): 58–71.

21. J. S. North et al., "Mechanisms Underlying Skills Anticipation and Recognition in a Dynamic and Temporally Constrained Domain," *Memory* 19, no. 2 (2011): 155–168.

22. K. Koedinger, A. Corbett, and C. Perfetti, "The Knowledge-Learning-Instruction Framework: Bridging the Science-Practice Chasm to Enhance Robust Student Learning," *Cognitive Science* 36, no. 5 (2012): 757–798; and N. A. Taatgen, "The Nature and Transfer of Cognitive Skills," *Psychological Review* 120, no. 3 (2013): 439–471.

23. R. Rikers, H. Schmidt, and H. Boshuizen, "On the Constraints of Encapsulated Knowledge: Clinical Case Representations by Medical Experts and Subexperts," *Cognition and Instruction* 20, no. 1 (2002): 27–45.

24. R. T. Kellogg, "Professional Writing Expertise," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performances*, ed. A. Ericsson et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2018).

25. E. Schwitzgebel and F. Cushman, "Philosophers' Biased Judgments Persist Despite Training, Expertise, and Reflection," *Cognition* 141 (2015): 127–137.

26. M. Carlsson et al., "The Effect of Schooling on Cognitive Skills," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 97, no. 3 (2015): 533–547; S. Ritchie and E. Tucker-Drob, "How Much Does Education Improve Intelligence? A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Science* 29, no. 8 (2018): 1358–1369; and T. Strenze, "Intelligence and Socioeconomic Success: A Meta-Analytic Review of Longitudinal Research," *Intelligence* 35, no. 5

(2007): 401–426.

27. S. Ritchie, T. C. Bates, and I. J. Deary, "Is Education Associated with Improvements in General Cognitive Ability, or in Specific Skills?," *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 5 (2015): 573–582.

28. Abrami et al., "Instructional Interventions"; D. F. Halpern, "Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer across Domains: Disposition, Skills, Structure Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring," *American Psychologist* 53, no. 4 (1998): 449–455; A. Heijltjes, T. Van Gog, and F. Paas, "Improving Students' Critical Thinking: Empirical Support for Explicit Instructions Combined with Practice," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 28, no. 4 (2014): 518–530.

29. D. T. Willingham, *When Can You Trust the Experts? How to Tell Good Science from Bad in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

30. A. Pawl et al., "What Do Seniors Remember from Freshman Physics?," *Physical Review Special Topics—Physics Education Research* 8, no. 2 (2012): 020118.

31. H. P. Bahrick, "Semantic Memory Content in Permastore: Fifty Years of Memory for Spanish Learned in School," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113, no. 1 (1984): 1–29; and H. P. Bahrick and L. K. Hall, "Lifetime Maintenance of High School Mathematics Content," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 120, no. 1 (1991): 20–33.

32. D. Ausubel, *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).

33. J. Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

34. D. T. Willingham, "What Is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?," *American Educator* 32, no. 2 (2008): 34–39.

35. P. D. Parker et al., "A Multination Study of Socioeconomic Inequality in Expectations for Progression to Higher Education: The Role of Between-School Tracking and Ability Stratification," *American Educational Research Journal* 53, no. 1 (2016): 6–32.

36. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance: 2018 OECD Indicators* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018).

37. M. D. Smith, "Cognitive Validity: Can Multi-Choice Items Tap Historical Thinking Processes?," *American Educational Research Journal* 54 (2017): 1256–1287.



Apply to Become a Peer Reviewer

American Educator strives to publish the highest quality research and ideas. To strengthen our work, we need to draw on your experience and expertise—so we're developing a peer review board. If you share our commitment to educational equity from early childhood to adulthood, please visit aft.org/ae/peer-review to learn more about becoming a reviewer and submit your application today.

AFT Health Care Inaugural Issue

As our country faces three crises—a public health crisis, an economic crisis, and a long-overdue reckoning with the crisis of racism—the AFT is committed to reopening safely and building a better nation for all. That's why we're excited to bring you *AFT Health Care*, a new journal focused on improving the healthcare system and addressing the social, economic, and environmental factors that affect individuals' health and communities' well-being.

This journal is for everyone who cares about promoting wellness. **The first issue will be available for free starting Oct. 2 at aft.org/hc.**



Healing Our Society
As COVID-19 lays bare systemic racial and economic injustice, healthcare professionals are vital to building a better nation.



REFLECTIONS ON HOW THE PANDEMIC IS RESHAPING EDUCATION

In response to the pandemic, educators have rapidly developed practices for remote instruction and fought to address dire inequities. Our goal is not to get back to normal, but to build a better society. How can schools and communities reimagine curriculum and instruction? What supports do educators need to strengthen relationships between families and schools?

These are among the questions that “Teaching and Learning During a Pandemic,” a blog series published by the Albert Shanker Institute, seeks to answer. In more than 15 posts, educators and researchers reflect on how the pandemic is reshaping education. Their pieces range from the scholarly, “School Organizational Practices and the Challenges of Remote Teaching During a Pandemic,” to the personal, “Have We Found Héctor, Yet?” Here, we share excerpts from the series; to read more, visit www.shankerinstitute.org/resource/teaching-and-learning-during-pandemic-blog-series.

—EDITORS

WHEN SCHOOLS SUDDENLY CLOSED in March and moved to online instruction, I wondered how I would have responded if I’d still been a high school English teacher. I imagined having to prepare a series of engaging Ted Talks with follow-up Q&As. But having talked with many administrators and teachers, I’ve realized that good online schooling during the pandemic is a team sport not a solo performance. It calls for careful preparation and coordination among many players. Just as COVID-19 has revealed hidden shortcomings in our society, it has exposed the limitations of compartmentalized schools that continue to rise or fall on the skills, autonomy and self-reliance of individual teachers.

—Susan Moore Johnson, “Teaching During School Shutdowns Should Be a Team Sport,” May 28

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, everyone is asking one question, “When will we get back to normal?” A cry similar to that of previous generations who often beckon back to the “good ole’ days.” If we are honest, the desire to get back to a place called “normal” is not because the past was better, but simply because it was familiar. The very fact that our past “normal” included a system where, in most school districts, you could identify by race and ethnicity which students were more likely to be suspended, expelled, or less likely to graduate says it all. Our past “normal” was actually abnormal (unless, for some reason which defies all science, you believe that intellect is distributed by race and ethnicity).

In America, the “good ole’ days” meant prevalent systemic racism, a widening achievement gap, and scarce resources for our students and teachers. Rather than longing for “back to normal,” our public school system has the opportunity to once again move us forward towards creating a more equitable and just “new normal” for students, parents, and families.

—John Jackson, “For Students, The ‘Good Ole’ Days’ Are Not Good Enough,” July 7

AS WE TURN OUR EYE towards next year, there is increasing concern about “catching students up,” particularly those students who are presumed to have done the least learning during quarantine. This might mean summer school, double blocks of reading and math, and high doses of remediation.

We have a different suggestion. Marie Kondo the curriculum.

As everyone now knows, Marie Kondo is the Japanese cleaning expert who showed you how to declutter your home by keeping only the items that bring joy.

The curriculum is as overstuffed as most American houses. Curriculums are often decided by committees, who have different views of what is important, and they compromise by giving every faction some of what they want. The result is a curriculum with too many topics and too little depth.

—Jal Mehta and Shanna Peeples, “Marie Kondo The Curriculum,” June 25

DURING PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES, the most common refrain from parents to their children has been “I work to the bone to make sure that you have everything you need.” Parents stake their lives on assuring their children get opportunities for success that they weren’t afforded.

If parents can invest that much hope in their children, then our education system—including the educators that serve at the behest of the public—can reimagine the operations and principles of schools better now. We can do away with high-stakes standardized testing and other narrow measures of intellectual capacity. We can make internet access and high-capacity devices a public utility for everyone. We can bolster schools that serve as community hubs. We can develop deeper communication with parents about their students’ educational progress, while creating flexible plans for students whose parents have been deemed essential workers from now on.

—José Luis Vilson, “Our Profession Requires Hope, Now and Ever Since,” May 19



INTRODUCING DELL'S MEMBER PURCHASE PROGRAM



AFT MEMBERS ENJOY 10% OFF SELECT DELL COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, AND ACCESSORIES.
SHOP ONLINE AT WWW.AFT.ORG/MEMBERS-ONLY.

Copyright © 2020 Dell Inc. or its subsidiaries. All Rights Reserved. Dell Technologies, Dell, EMC, Dell EMC and other trademarks are trademarks of Dell Inc. or its subsidiaries. Other trademarks may be trademarks of their respective owners. 369205



A Union of Professionals
AFT+
Member Benefits



Buying or Selling a Home?



- **Convenient online application** and unionized loan officers to assist you on the phone
- **Union Plus Mortgage Company is union-owned***
- **\$500 gift card** for all purchase and refinance transactions
- **Special benefits** for first-time homebuyers



Call **855-UNION-53 (855 864-6653)** or visit unionplasmortgage.com

*The AFL-CIO, Union Privilege and a group of unions own Union Plus Mortgage Company and will benefit if you get your loan through the company. However, you are not required to use Union Plus Mortgage for your loan and are free to shop. For your Affiliated Business Arrangement Disclosure Statement, please visit www.unionplasmortgage.com.



**sharemy
lesson**

By Educators, For Educators

FREE RESOURCES FOR PREK-12 DISTANCE LEARNING

DISTANCE LEARNING

is part of a new normal for so many of our teachers, school staff and parents. And whether your school is starting with hybrid learning or in a fully virtual format, teaching and supporting students remotely can feel overwhelming, especially on top of other back-to-school and pandemic-related concerns.

AFT's Share My Lesson has a

NEW ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING COMMUNITY

for preK-12 teachers, school staff and parents who want to get support, download resources and share ideas. You'll find free content, including:



Professional webinars with distance learning strategies and tools at sharemylesson.com/webinars/distance



Learning-at-home materials



Mental health resources for students and adults



Inclusive ideas for English language learners and students with special needs, including Capstone Projects created by AFT members



School reopening guidelines



We're in this together. Join our new community to access free resources now.



sharemylesson.com/distance