

SAMPLE

CHAPTER 1

LOSING THE PUBLIC TRUST

THE SUMMER OF 1994. I remember it like it was yesterday. The heat from the June sun was baking the small, un-air-conditioned school from the outside in. The front doors and windows were wide open, and all the lights inside were off. As I exited my truck, I was greeted by the smell of warm asphalt mixed with a tinge of freshly cut grass. The musical chirping of sprinklers scattered across the playground. I could hear the melodic wind-chime sounds that you only get in the summer months when the tetherballs have been removed and the chains jingle against the poles as the wind blows past.

I instantly felt the sensation of belonging as I headed for the front doors. The aroma of floor wax, industrial cleaners, a hint of ditto fluid, and the residual smells of 600 children immediately consumed me. All of the lights were off in the building, but the reflection of light coming from the doorway at the end of the long, main hallway caused the newly waxed floors to look like a straight lazy brown river. Standing in the foyer of the school symbolized an end to years of preparation and the beginning of a career that would change everything I thought I knew about the teaching profession.

A quick stop in the front office allowed me to introduce myself to the school's head secretary, Mrs. Bills, who seemed to be sizing me up. Perhaps she wanted to know if the new guy was going to be able to cut it, or maybe she was just gathering information to share with the parents who were surely going to call and want the inside scoop on their child's sixth-grade teacher. After a few moments of small talk, Mrs. Bills handed me the keys to room 13 and pointed me in the right direction. Before heading to my classroom, I peeked into the gym/cafeteria and smiled as I began to imagine using the stage for plays and the gym for the physical education activities. After a short walk down the hall, I

was standing in front of the door to my classroom. My classroom. It all seemed very surreal.

The classroom looked exactly like I had imagined: a large chalkboard in front with bulletin boards on either side. The far wall had a large bulletin board with windows on each side and built-in bookshelves running the entire length of the wall. The back wall had a sink with storage cabinets and a small bulletin board flanked by another large chalkboard. The near wall had two long rows of coat hangers and a large storage closet on each side of the doorway. The room was nearly empty except for a nearly new Apple LCII computer on the back counter and a teacher's desk in the front. The sweltering heat did little to dim my enthusiasm as it began to sink in—this was *my* classroom.

Like many new teachers, I thought I was ready. I had studied, written lesson plans, and spent countless hours in classrooms throughout my practicum and student teaching experiences. Any doubt about my readiness to teach was somehow lost in my youthful enthusiasm and belief that I was destined to change the world.

I don't recall much of my first year. I remember students and moments, but most of that first year is a blur. It wasn't a disaster or an unqualified success. I did OK, and I survived. Most important, I learned—a lot.

I learned that classroom management is critical. I wasn't organized, and my classroom lacked the simple routines that keep things running smoothly. I was constantly trying new things, and as a result, my students were always unsure of my expectations. That first year, I fell into a common trap: I worried about being liked. This often led me to second-guess my decisions to demand more from students when I thought they were slacking. I struggled to properly manage misbehavior. I struggled with consistency, I struggled with organization, I struggled to be prepared, and I pretty much struggled to survive.

I learned that teaching is hard, really hard. I gained a tremendous respect for the countless teachers I had observed throughout my life. I realized that many of the teachers I had thought were mediocre were dramatically better than I was. I also realized that great teachers are exceptionally skilled professionals. When you watch great teachers do what they do, you

ultimately conclude that teaching is easy. They make everything look so damn simple.

I learned to be humble. I knew I had a long way to go, and I frankly wasn't prepared to suffer through another year of mediocrity. Throughout my first year, I kept a list of things I would never do again. It was long. I spent most of summer between my first and second years reflecting on all that I had learned and greeted my second year with eyes wide open. I was far more willing to ask for and listen to the advice of my peers.

I learned that becoming a good teacher is a process. Every day, we are given opportunities to try things that may or may not work, and over time, we become more attuned to what actually works. We begin to appreciate the unique needs of each individual student and learn to adjust our approach to meet those needs. Each new experience and challenge we face prepares us to become better teachers in the future. Eventually we realize that becoming a good teacher has less to do with how well we teach and more to do with how well we continue to learn.

THE LOSS OF AUTONOMY

I imagine most teachers have probably had a very similar experience. But I have watched over the years as this first-year ritual has slowly and subtly changed. During my first year, I had many positive interactions with my principal and district leadership. They were supportive and highly interested in my progress. I was fortunate to work with great colleagues who willingly provided resources, ideas, and constant encouragement. It was a safe place built on unquestioned trust and respect for those who accept the responsibilities that come with the keys to the classroom.

I have watched teachers slowly lose the trust and autonomy I enjoyed when I entered the profession in 1994. The education system has become paternalistic. Teachers are told what to teach and when to teach it, and are given strict timelines for completion in preparation for centrally aligned and created assessments. Data is crunched externally and presented in easily consumed charts and graphs. Many new teachers now enter the profession never having to create anything—it's all done for them. Some may see this as progress; it is not. Becoming a highly skilled teacher is a process. We learn as we create and try new things. To

deny teachers this responsibility is to limit opportunities for growth. Efforts to centralize the most critical aspects of what it means to be a teacher has led to the McDonaldization of our classrooms—it isn't great, but at least it's the same.

No Child Left Behind ushered in the era of test-based accountability. The metrics for measuring quality teachers, schools, and districts relied on just one thing: improving test scores. It was a slippery slope. From the isolated confines of administrative offices and conference rooms, well-intentioned leaders began the process of slowly stripping teachers of one of their most fundamental responsibilities: mapping the curriculum. The risk that teachers may not focus on the right (tested) material was too great. School and district leaders began to hedge their bets, hoping that implementing greater control over what gets taught would improve test results. In doing so, they have been sending a very clear message to teachers: *We don't trust you.*

A NATIONAL RESOURCE

This wasn't always the case. Teachers weren't always mistrusted. There was a time when we viewed teachers as a great national resource. Over the course of almost 250 years of history, American public school teachers have been asked to do a lot of heavy lifting for the benefit of our nation. There's no mention of education in the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, or the Constitution—education has always been a matter for the states, according to the Tenth Amendment—but even though there's no mention of education in our founding documents, our founding *fathers* felt it was important for the safekeeping of our liberty and freedom. Thomas Jefferson advocated in Virginia for state-supported education in his 1779 *A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge*:

The most effectual means of preventing [tyranny] would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large... whence it becomes expedient for promoting the publick happiness that those persons, whom nature hath endowed with genius and

virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental condition or circumstance...it is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expense of all, than that the happiness of all should be confined to the weak or wicked. (Honeywell, 1931) Jefferson's plan included free education for boys *and* girls for three years, with additional schooling available to students "at their private expense, as their parents, guardians, or friends shall think proper" (Honeywell, 1931). His bill also provided limited scholarships for students whose parents couldn't afford the additional schooling (Honeywell, 1931). Although the bill didn't pass at the time, its message about public education's role—teachers' roles—in safekeeping our liberty is clear.

Jefferson wasn't the only founding father to view education as a valuable resource. Forty years later, in a letter written to the Kentucky legislature, James Madison applauded Kentucky's efforts to provide public education for its children. In his letter, he asserted:

Learned institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind, which is the best security against crafty and dangerous encroachments on the public liberty. They are nurseries of skillful teachers, for the schools distributed throughout the community. (Niles, 1822-1823)

Founding fathers such as Jefferson and Madison viewed the role of state government when it came to education as one of support, not accountability. It was assumed that teachers would effectively do the work of educating our children so that our republic would stay strong.

As our country grew, it experienced growing pains, and it also continued to rely on teachers as a national

resource. During and after the Civil War, teachers were called upon to educate former slaves in how to be free citizens. For example, teachers contributed significantly to the Port Royal experiment. Port Royal was part of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina that were captured by the Union army in 1861. Thousands of former slaves had gathered on the islands, and the U.S. government needed to attend to their needs (Goldstein, 2014). Edward Pierce, an attorney in charge of the experiment, sent out a call for teachers who would teach “important and fundamental lessons of civilization, —voluntary industry, self-reliance, frugality, fore-thought, honesty and truthfulness, cleanliness and order. With these will be combined intellectual, moral and religious instruction” (Chase, 1862, p. 36).

The Port Royal experiment and later efforts to educate former slaves helped to advance education throughout black communities, but racist policies culminating in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision kept black and white schools segregated, so almost 100 years later, teachers were again called into action. Attorney Thurgood Marshall and his colleagues argued in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that segregation itself, not just inequality in the schools, was unconstitutional

based on the Fourteenth Amendment (Goldstein, 2014). Although many fought the ruling—including those using “naked racist political tactics...that fought desegregation in large part by attacking veteran black educators” (Goldstein, 2014, pp. 111-112)—teachers of all races stepped up to advance the larger issue of equal rights by welcoming *all* students, regardless of race, into their classrooms. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 expanded this fight against discrimination to individuals with disabilities, and teachers were again on the front lines as they welcomed students with disabilities into their classrooms as well.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson pulled teachers into his “War on Poverty” with the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which provided funding to poor schools (through Title I) with the expectation that the additional funds would help these schools better meet the needs of our poorest children. Johnson stated in his remarks while signing ESEA into law (in his hometown in Texas, with one of his own elementary teachers by his side), “As the son of a tenant farmer, I know that education is only valid in its passport from poverty, the only valid passport. As a former teacher—and I hope a future one—I have

great expectations of what this law will mean for all our young people” (Goldstein, 2014, p. 114). The nation had just entrusted teachers with fixing the educational gap created by poverty.

I’ve only included a few examples here, but from the founding of our nation through each phase of its growth, teachers have willingly responded to the calls to action as a valuable resource to lead the change in fixing society’s problems. There were no external metrics on teacher effectiveness during any of these efforts. No sanctions. No incentives. Teachers shut their doors and focused on the Big Three, and we trusted them, even depended on them, to do so.

BALANCE BASED ON TRUST

Throughout my first year of teaching, I was keenly aware of my own shortcomings. As I reflected on that first year, I was grateful for the struggle; I had learned a lot. Year two was going to be different. I was quick to establish routines and found it much easier to implement sound classroom management strategies that worked for me. I knew where I wanted to go and devised a simple strategy to make it happen.

I began the year with a mindset of keeping things simple. Each day, I had a very clear and organized schedule with consistent classroom routines. It didn't take long for my students and me to settle in. My goal for the year was to move away from a rather traditional classroom environment toward a project-based one. I had hoped to do the same my first year but had rushed the process and failed miserably. This year, I was committed to making it happen slowly.

It started with a simple art project. I gave each student a picture that I had copied onto grid paper. Using the grid as a guide, the students had to replicate the picture on a plain piece of grid paper. We did this two or three times before I modified the activity to include a picture that was divided into two sections. Students were asked to work in pairs. One would re-create the top half of the picture, and the other would re-create the bottom half. The students would then align the two sections, creating one complete picture. Our first attempt left much to be desired. More often than not, the two sections didn't align. One or both of the students may have made their half of the picture too large or too small, and the results were less than optimal. Eventually, the students figured out that they could

get together prior to starting their drawings and find the places where the two sections intersected. The students realized that when they worked together the results were better. I eventually had the students working in groups of four, and I also upped the difficulty level. Students were asked to translate the drawings using graph paper that was four times larger than the one found on the drawing. The students loved this activity. They saw it as an art project and naturally learned to work incredibly well together.

We finally moved to a whole-class project where I'd assigned each student a single section or two from the picture and asked them to translate it to a single 8"x 8" square on the grid. The results were massive images that stretched floor to ceiling. It was amazing to watch the students working together as they found the classmates who had adjacent squares and carefully calculated all of the intersecting points. They would make sure that each student was using the right color of crayon for the section and that each was applying the color in the same direction. This was the beginning of our move to a project-based learning environment. The students had learned to work together and were committed to doing their part to ensure the project was done well.

Over the course of the year, I began to integrate projects into academic areas. I began by assigning a single project to the entire class. Students were asked to work together in pairs, and each pair completed the project. Later, I would give the students two options. Each team would decide which project they wanted to complete and work together to do so. Over the course of several months, these project options and team makeups evolved. The projects became interdisciplinary, and students were able to select from a list of ten or fifteen projects. I gave students the option to work in teams of any size, but each week they had to select a completely new team.

The results were amazing. Each project had a clear set of objectives and guidelines. Each student had equal and defined responsibilities, and each group was responsible for grading their own project. I could always override the students' grades, but I found that the students were most often harder on themselves than I would have been. The bulk of our afternoons were devoted to projects. The students looked forward to that time and, without exception, worked harder and were on task more during project time. The students nearly always exceeded the parameters of the projects

and displayed an element of creativity I hadn't planned for when I designed the projects.

Each Friday we gathered together, and the teams shared their project with the class. When students created picture books, they shared them with the kindergarten or first-grade students. They performed their plays for other classes and were more than willing to share their projects with anyone willing to listen. Students captured every project on video and maintained a video portfolio that grew throughout the year.

This style of teaching worked for me. It certainly doesn't work for everyone. I share this only to illustrate a point: I am not sure I would be able to implement this in my classroom if I was teaching in 2015. I was given a lot of autonomy and trust when I was teaching. I wasn't worried about making AYP or having my test scores posted in the local newspaper. I wasn't worried about being labeled a failure by the end-of-level tests, and I wasn't worried about getting a pay raise based on my students' performance on that test. I was worried about learning in the broadest sense of the word. If learning had been narrowed to how well my students performed on the math and language arts tests at the

end of the year and the stakes were as high as they are today, I am not sure I would be willing to risk my future on project-based learning.

THE SWINGING PENDULUM

John Dewey hit the nail on the head when he said, “Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either-Ors*, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17). Public education isn’t immune to this. It tends to swing back and forth between traditional and progressive philosophies on a pretty regular basis, although many don’t seem to remember that it had visited the other end of the spectrum before. It reminds me of the resurgence of old songs and clothing styles, that none but the “wiser” (old) among us can remember.

This swing was happening in the 1960s and early 1970s as schools embraced the idea of open education (Cuban, 2004). Open education, although it goes by many names depending on when the pendulum swings its direction, has its roots in Dewey’s idea of progressive education: a culture of individuality, free activity, learning through experience, and the

connection between education and personal experience (Dewey, 1938). This style of education worked because up to this point, teachers were trusted, and so there was balance. As the decade progressed, however, public sentiment about education began to shift. For more than two centuries teachers had been seen as a national resource in helping the United States through its growing pains. But this view was about to be turned on its head because if teachers could help fix America, they could help break it, too.

Although the swing began in the late 1970s, it came into its own in the early 1980s with Reagan's appointment of Terrel (Ted) Bell as the secretary of education. Bell and Reagan were in many ways on opposite ends of the education spectrum. Bell had supported the bill to create the department of education; Reagan wanted to dismantle it (Gardner, 2005). But both were reasonable men, and both had their reasons for supporting the appointment, so Bell got the job.

Bell was aware of people's growing unease about the then-current state of education, as typified by declining student test scores and lax high school graduation requirements (Gardner, 2005). Because of this growing

unease, Bell appointed a commission to review the state of America's schools. The commission included members who would lend credibility to the report's findings, including university presidents and professors (one of whom was also a Nobel laureate), members of state boards of education, principals, and the National Teacher of the Year for 1981-1982 (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Bell hoped to have the commission appointed by President Reagan but couldn't get anywhere with the administration, so he appointed them himself and directed the group to examine the quality of education in the United States and make recommendations (Gardner, 2005). The commission studied papers, meetings, analyses, letters, and other documents for the following eighteen months and in 1983 presented Bell with their results.

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform begins with a sobering assessment:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only

one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility.... The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)

That phrase, “rising tide of mediocrity,” and the bleak landscape it painted of eroding American competitiveness, captured people’s imaginations. Fear can be quite compelling. The report went on to compare the United States (unfavorably) to Japanese, South Korean, and German efficiency and asserted that “learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the ‘information age’ we are entering” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). It also cited low international test scores, adult illiteracy, declining SAT scores, and increases in college remedial courses

among its “Indicators of the Risk” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Bell established the commission in order to provide recommendations to schools, but as Diane Ravitch (2010) points out, “[The report] was notable for what it did not say” (p. 25). It refers to grades, high school graduation requirements, curriculum, college admissions requirements, and standardized assessments of achievement that “should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another and particularly from high school to college or work” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). But it doesn’t refer to high-stakes accountability anywhere. It doesn’t even include the words *accountable* and *accountability*. It does recommend that “citizens across the Nation hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms,” but it also recommends “citizens provide the fiscal support and stability required to bring about the reforms we propose” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). High-stakes accountability using standardized testing is nowhere to be found in this report.

What it did do, though, was create through its rhetoric a sentiment of fear and solidify a new set of growing assumptions about education. Until this point, the prevailing attitude about public education was that it was a national resource, a public good that could be leveraged to address social and economic challenges in this country. The assumption was that America was great, in large part, because America was educated. And teachers were trusted to do the educating. The new assumptions erased the nation's trust in our public schools—and by default in our teachers—and replaced trust with fear.

Society had not yet swung all the way from trust in teachers to trust in testing and external, high-stakes accountability, but the pendulum wasn't done swinging yet.

DO YOU HAVE KIDS?

“Do you have kids?” I was initially surprised by how often parents would ask me this question. It always struck me as a little too personal and a bit passive aggressive. I believed they were questioning my ability to understand the needs of their child simply because

I didn't have children. It typically came up during parent-teacher conferences and was often coupled with a discussion about their child's unique needs. I always reassured them that I truly understood their concerns and would do everything I possibly could to help their child succeed. I cared about my students, and I really couldn't see how being a parent would change that.

My son was born on August 31, 1999. Ironically, it happened to be the very first day of school and my first day on the job as a middle school assistant principal. I had never worked in a middle school before and had fretted over the first day for several weeks. I woke up to a beautiful late-summer morning and rushed out the door to ensure an early arrival. I have always loved the nervous but excited energy that fills a school on the first day. I remember feeling surprisingly calm as I entered the school.

As I opened the door to my new office, the phone was already ringing. "Good morning, this is Mr. Goble. How can I help you?" I was surprised to hear, "This is your wife, my water just broke, and you need to come and take me to the hospital." I had been planning for a hectic first day on the job, but this was a bit of a shock. I

quickly raced out of the building, and before I knew it, we were at the hospital. Amy was in labor fourteen hours before Elliot finally decided to make his entry into our lives. Looking at him for the first time, I had a new appreciation for why parents so often asked me if I had children. Having a child absolutely changed the way I viewed the world and more specifically changed the way I viewed education. From nearly the first moment I held Elliot in my arms, I began to worry about his future. I worried about his safety, I worried about his health, I worried about his development, and I worried that I might not be able to protect him.

Like all parents, we noticed his every milestone achievement and wondered how he compared to his peers. He began walking at ten months. That seemed above average. He began speaking at an early age—that was surely a sign of giftedness. We read to him for what seemed like hours every day. We were overly enamored by his progress and completely consumed with helping him learn and grow. For the first eighteen months of Elliot's life, he was the absolute center of our world.

Our daughter was born in March of 2001. Much to my surprise, Maggie was very different from Elliot. She

would fall fast asleep the moment we placed her in her crib, whereas Elliot required an exhausting routine of rocking, reading, and singing before carefully placing him in his crib. Maggie was easy-going and highly adventurous, while Elliot was serious and inquisitive. Maggie loved to sing and dance, while Elliot preferred shooting hoops in the living room. It was humbling to realize Maggie and Elliot were not just byproducts of the parenting we were providing them; rather, they were two entirely unique people with individual personalities, talents, interests, and needs that came with them into our family, independent of anything Amy or I had done.

While they were very different in many ways, there were many similarities, too. Maggie walked at ten months and would sit in our laps for hours while we read her favorite books. They both devoured every *Magic Tree House* book in sequence, and Elliot's love of Harry Potter was eventually surpassed by Maggie's obsession. As parents, we have always considered ourselves lucky to have two amazing kids. It is a joy to watch them grow and evolve into complex individuals. Much of their growth can be attributed to amazing

teachers who have helped them see the world from different perspectives.

“Do you have kids?” When Elliot and Maggie started school, I was able to better understand why parents asked me this question. Sending your kids off to school is scary. You can’t help but worry. I have never asked that question of my children’s teachers, but I can see what those parents were really trying to say. They were really saying, “I need you to understand that my child is the most important thing in the world to me, and I need to know that you care. I need you to see in her what I see. I need you to know that I worry about her safety. I want her to fit in with the other kids. I pray that you will lift her up when she falls down. I want her to be excited to go to school every day, and I want her talents to be nurtured and her weaknesses to be strengthened. I just wanted to know if you have kids because if you do, you will know why I asked. You will understand that I am entrusting you with the thing I value the most in the world—my child.”

TO NCLB AND BEYOND

A Nation at Risk solidified a growing doubt in society’s minds around the effectiveness of our schools.

Before, when society viewed teachers as a national resource, accountability was local. Parents held teachers accountable for the safety and learning of their children, but this accountability was based on trust, not doubt. Teachers' artifacts of accountability, such as syllabi, were directed to parents, students, and principals. Teachers didn't have any other artifacts—they didn't need them. Parents trusted teachers to do their jobs and keep their children safe.

When the pendulum began to swing and society began to doubt instead of trust, teachers were unprepared to show accountability in any significant way other than through the students they taught, and policymakers were unprepared to demand accountability in any other way, as well. It was on this foundation—this vacuum of documented accountability—that national interests began to build the external, high-stakes accountability we have today.

In the wake of *A Nation at Risk*, there was near universal consensus across political parties that the time had come for government to take a more active role in ensuring that our schools were up to par. But that didn't mean that ubiquitous testing and high-stakes

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accountability showed up right away. *A Nation at Risk* hadn't indicted teachers. But it did imply that all was not well with teachers in three areas: (1) teachers are "beleaguered," and various efforts should be made to ease their burden; (2) teacher preparation programs need to do a better job of preparing teachers; and (3) teaching needs to be a more rewarding and respected profession. (There are many references to teachers within the report, but none are condemning of them. For examples, see pages 12, 22, 29-30 and "Recommendation D: Teaching," beginning on page 30 of *A Nation at Risk*.)

A Nation at Risk's primary focus was on the underperformance of our nation's high schools. The report includes in its introduction the following statement: "The Commission's charter directed it to pay particular attention to teenage youth, and we have done so largely by focusing on high schools" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report includes very little information about elementary or middle schools. It includes only one elementary-level finding, and the only recommendation directed specifically to elementaries is to begin

teaching foreign language (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Armed with this relatively scant information, states began looking into how they could help schools improve. But where to begin? *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) had made five recommendations:

- **RECOMMENDATION A:** Strengthen state and local high school graduation requirements.
- **RECOMMENDATION B:** Adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, higher expectations for academic performance and student conduct, and stricter requirements for college admission.
- **RECOMMENDATION C:** Provide more time for learning.
- **RECOMMENDATION D:** Make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession.
- **RECOMMENDATION E:** Expect society to hold educators and politicians responsible for providing necessary leadership to “achieve these reforms” and be willing to pay for the reforms that educators and politicians implement.

Recommendation A was relatively easy—high schools around the nation began to strengthen requirements for graduation. Recommendation B inspired our entire movement of standards-based education reform and the standardized testing that would go with it. Recommendation C was hard. It would cost money and time and restructuring to get it right, so any serious attempts to implement it were largely avoided. Recommendation D resulted in some additional or alternate requirements to become teachers, as well as some merit-pay attempts that kind of fizzled over time (Goldstein, 2014). But recommendation E was key, because it gave permission for politicians to move from the role of offering support to one of ensuring accountability.

In September of 1989, President George H. W. Bush, building on educational reform momentum in states such as Tennessee and Arkansas, organized a National Educational Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, to discuss ideas about reforming public education (New York State Archives, n.d.). Bush, along with governors from forty-nine states, business leaders, and Cabinet members discussed educational goals. Bush also made it clear that he was not there to establish a federal role

in any solution—just to provide support. Education was still a matter for the states.

Governor Clinton of Arkansas played a key role in the summit, which eventually led to a set of national goals for public education. The following January, Bush (1990) read the six national goals, endorsed by the coalition of governors, in his State of the Union address:

- By the year 2000, every child must start school ready to learn.
- The United States must increase the high school graduation rate to no less than 90 percent.
- And we are going to make sure our schools' diplomas mean something. In critical subjects—at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades—we must assess our students' performance.
- By the year 2000, U.S. students must be first in the world in math and science achievement.
- Every American adult must be a skilled, literate worker and citizen.

- Every school must offer the kind of disciplined environment that makes it possible for our kids to learn. And every school in America must be drug-free.

If we read carefully, we can see a subtle shift toward external accountability along with the efforts around higher expectations as recommended in *A Nation at Risk*. Every child *must* start school ready to learn. We are going to *make sure* our schools' diplomas mean something. We *must* assess our students' performance. The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), a norm-referenced, standardized test in use since 1969, was still voluntary at this point. (Technically federal law still indicates that the NAEP is voluntary, but NCLB tied Title I funds to the requirement to participate in the NAEP for fourth and eighth grades reading and math [National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.b].) But the pendulum wasn't done swinging.

The following year, Bush again presented the six goals (which had been a bit spruced up) as a "long-term national strategy," in part to encourage Congress to pass the AMERICA 2000 Excellence in Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). The act didn't pass, but on page 33 of the sourcebook is some

foreshadowing of future directions: most notably, the federal government rewarding progress and spurring change. And the pendulum still wasn't done swinging.

Bill Clinton had been deeply involved in the creation of the AMERICA 2000 goals, so it made sense that he would continue on that path once he became president. Clinton expanded on the six original goals and added two more:

- By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.
- By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (United States of America 103d Congress, 1993)

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed into law in March of 1994. It was boldly ideal. Some of the expanded goals hearkened back to Johnson's

War on Poverty: “children will receive the nutrition, physical activity experiences, and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies” (United States of America 103d Congress, 1993). Others foreshadowed No Child Left Behind: “the academic performance of all students at the elementary and secondary level will increase significantly in every quartile, and the distribution of minority students in each quartile will more closely reflect the student population as a whole” (United States of America 103d Congress, 1993). It even gave a nod to the increasing presence of business in education: “partnerships will be established, whenever possible, among local educational agencies...and...business...to provide and support programs for the professional development of educators” (United States of America 103d Congress, 1993). When we look back at the goals in this act, we can see that the shift from trust to accountability wasn’t complete, but we also see that teachers were firmly in the need-to-fix category.

Later that same year, Congress took up the scheduled reauthorization of Johnson’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Congress periodically modernizes laws to reflect societal changes, and

when they do, they must reauthorize the law (National School Boards Association, n.d.). This presented the Clinton administration with the opportunity to influence school reform efforts in a beefier way than with the Goals 2000 Act.

The successful reauthorization, titled Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), included requirements for states to create state-level standards, define annual yearly progress, and develop or adopt yearly student assessments. But more important, it finally shifted the balance from trust to accountability—although the accountability wasn't yet directly tied to teachers—when it tied the state's ability to receive Title I funding to these measures. One of Johnson's key programs in his War on Poverty had just been appropriated as a means of enforcing local compliance with federally mandated goals.

States began working to meet the requirements of IASA, and a patchwork of accountability measures began to take shape across the country. Almost everyone was on board with the basic premises found in the law (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

But by the year 2000, none of Bush's original six goals had been met:

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOOL READINESS:** Although the percentage of children who lived in families with incomes below the poverty level fell 1.7 percent between 1989 and 1999, 16 percent of America's children still lived in poverty (Johnson, Kominski, Smith, & Tillman, 2005).
- **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION:** 85.9 percent of adults ages eighteen to twenty-four had completed high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).
- **STUDENT ASSESSMENT:** Ten states tested students in elementary, middle, and high school in the subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies. (If you only count math and language arts the number jumps to thirty-four.) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).
- **INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT:** U.S. students ranked eighteenth in math and fourteenth in science achievement on the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001)

- **ADULT LITERACY:** Approximately 86 percent of American adults had at least a basic level of literacy (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.a).
- **SCHOOL SAFETY:** 71 percent of public schools experienced at least one violent incident, and 27 percent of schools experienced at least one incident of possession or use of alcohol or illegal drugs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Accountability didn't seem to be budging things much, but the decade was still young.

George W. Bush said he was running for president because he wanted “to help usher in the responsibility era, where people understand they are responsible for the choice they make and are held accountable for their actions” (4President Corporation, n.d.). His vision to improve education included school choice, character education, local control, rewards for success, and sanctions for failure (4President Corporation, n.d.). After a *very* close race (and some recounts and a lawsuit), Bush took office and appointed Rod Paige as the U.S. secretary of education. The appointment of Paige was significant because he had been the Houston school superintendent who was credited with the

“Texas Miracle,” and Bush modeled his reauthorization of ESEA in part on this “miracle” (Leung, 2004).

Bush drew elements from Clinton’s IASA—the disaggregation of data by demographics, the linking of federal funding to federal requirements—and combined them with Paige’s ideas around accountability to create the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The provisions of this law are probably better known than any other piece of federal legislation. The law requires schools to administer annual standardized tests in math and language arts for grades 3–8 and for one grade in high school. And the results of these annual exams are to be used almost exclusively to determine the success or failure of schools (United States of America 107th Congress, 2002). Ninety-five percent of all students are required to take the exam for the school to receive a passing grade. Year over year, improvement must be shown, along with increased graduation rates and one other metric, such as student attendance. State agencies are required to submit plans that met these stringent criteria (United States of America 107th Congress, 2002).

NCLB is nothing if not detailed on the enforcement end. Schools that don't meet adequate early progress (AYP) move through a series of increasingly painful sanctions, and although teachers aren't individually targeted by these sanctions, many of the sanctions require that teachers get fired if schools don't meet AYP (United States of America 107th Congress, 2002).

The pendulum was almost there. Bush's reauthorization of Johnson's ESEA—about which Johnson (1965) assured members of Congress, “Federal assistance does not mean federal control”—was the most dramatic imposition of federal control on state and local public education in the history of our nation. But one requirement in particular of this law doomed it to failure and provided opportunity for the pendulum to finish its swing.

NCLB included within its vast number of pages one small paragraph:

IN GENERAL - Each local educational agency plan shall provide assurances that the local educational agency will use the results of

the student academic assessments required under section 1111(b)(3), and other measures or indicators available to the agency, to review annually the progress of each school served by the agency and receiving funds under this part to determine whether all of the schools are making the progress necessary to ensure that all students will meet the State's proficient level of achievement on the State academic assessments described in section 1111(b)(3) within 12 years from the end of the 2001-2002 school year. (United States of America 107th Congress, 2002)

OK, nothing written by the government is *small*. In English, this is the section that requires 100 percent proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. This was, of course, an impossible goal. And as 2014 got closer and closer, it became clearer and clearer that most schools were going to fail.

In 2011, the Obama administration (Bush was long gone by now):

invited each State Education Agency (SEA) to request flexibility regarding specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. (U.S. Department of Education, 2012)

States were being asked to rob Peter in order to pay Paul in return for waivers on twelve NCLB requirements, including the 100 percent proficiency requirement. Schools and districts would now have to implement teacher and principal evaluation systems that included “as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities)” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The Obama administration had used incentives to promote policies before. In 2009, when states were struggling financially, it offered Race to the Top grants that gave points for adopting “a common set of high-quality standards” (i.e., the Common Core) (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Cash-strapped states adopted the standards in order to be able to *apply* for the grants, without any guarantee they would actually receive funding. As NCLB began to slowly strangle schools with its rigid requirements, states willingly adopted the devil they did not know—and the pendulum finally hit the wall.

Over the course of a mere thirty years, society went from trusting our teachers to applying external, high-stakes, *individual* accountability for someone else's work—proof of professionalism based largely on only one element of the Big Three: identifying student levels of understanding as measured by a single test score.

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