

# HORACE

## Democracy and Equity: CES's Tenth Common Principle

**Principle 10:**  
***"The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strengths of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity and discrimination."***

THE ROOM CRACKLED WITH energy and tension as the 100 members of the Coalition's governing Congress gathered at the 1997 Fall Forum to carry out their historic task. These school people, who came from backgrounds as diverse as the constituencies that sent them to San Francisco from around the world, were about to write a Tenth Common Principle behind which Essential schools everywhere would agree to rally—a principle that called for democracy and equity as central to a youngster's education.

And as they argued out how that new language should go, they made a striking picture of how far the Coalition of Essential Schools has come since its founding in 1986. From a small partnership between Brown University and a dozen high schools, it has mushroomed into an international movement involving more than fifteen hundred schools serving students of all ages. Soon, buttressed by a growing national network of regional Centers and governed by representatives from member schools, it will move its small national staff to San Francisco. Only Theodore R.Sizer, the Coalition's founder and chairman who wrote the original Nine Common Principles, will maintain the formal connection with Brown, where he is Professor Emeritus.

Essential schools now appear in the country's largest districts and its smallest; they serve its most advantaged students and those who have

the fewest resources. And as a growing United States economy divides residents increasingly into haves and have-nots, Essential school people are coming head to head with painful issues of fairness, opportunity, and power.

What do "democracy" and "equity" look like in schools and systems that operate in a society so divided? How will policies and practices have to change, from the bottom to the top, if school people take this Tenth Common Principle seriously? Over 3,000 Fall Forum participants wrestled with those questions in the next days, sharing their perspectives and dilemmas and often challenging the status quo.

At roundtable discussions and in workshops, they told how their schools are changing curriculum, assessment, and classroom practices to affirm the presence and contributions of diverse groups, improving opportunities and raising expectations for students of all descriptions.

Students, teachers, and parents spoke of making their voices heard in systems that have long ignored or silenced them. Administrators looked at how school and district structures and systems, from tracked courses to funding patterns, inhibit or advance student learning. University educators talked of how to prepare a new generation of teachers for the most diverse student population in history.

And Ted Sizer spoke of the central purpose of a democratic educa-

## Equity and Action: Some Prompts for Teachers

■ Make a list of your favorite kids among those you teach. Then disaggregate the list, breaking it down by family income or status, by color, by gender, or by any other group traits. Do patterns emerge?

■ Define for yourself what prevents kids in the bottom quartile of your classes from achieving at high level. What specific strategies do you employ to change that pattern?

Make a list of the "top" classes in your school. Who takes them? Who teaches them? Do patterns emerge?

■ If you live in an almost all-white community or teach in an all-white school or classroom, list the forces that allow that place to look racially non-diverse in the context of the most diverse nation in the world. What other kinds of diversity—class, learning styles, sexual orientation, etc.—do you see around you? Create a course unit around these questions. What would be its important outcomes? Why would you teach it?

If you are a white teacher in a minority classroom, ask yourself what personal satisfaction motivates you to be there. How does that correspond (or not) with your students' learning? Do you have a close support network of minority friends inside and outside school with whom you discuss deep and personal issues of diversity?

■ What are you reading? Does it add anything to your understanding of how to teach an increasingly diverse range of students?

■ What patterns do you notice in the way students associate in your school in student leadership roles, on the playground, in the lunchroom? Are you providing a forum for kids to talk about those patterns, and facilitating the conversations?

*Credit is due to Lisa Delpit and Glenn Singleton for helping frame these questions.*

tion: to help young people become intellectually free.

"If democracy is about responsible freedom," he said, "it depends on a citizenry which sees the world clearly, which is respectful of past ideas but never their prisoner—a citizenry not easily gulled by specious arguments, which can imagine something new in the familiar, which has the courage always to ask the questions *why* and *what if*?"

And such a citizenry depends, John Dewey argued in his 1914 book, *Democracy and Education*, on all students having the equal opportunity to develop and practice those skills in the public schools.

### Hard Data, Hard Inequities

A look at current United States social, economic, and educational statistics makes this vision seem a

long way away. In the past decade, the percentage of minority students in our schools has steadily grown; by 2030, demographic researchers predict, students of color will make up over half the country's school-children, and language-minority students about 40 percent.

But despite substantial gains in achievement by minority students between 1970 to 1988, their progress has dropped steadily in the last ten years, as school policies and priorities have shifted. "Our educational system is so full of inequities that it actually exacerbates the challenges of race and poverty, rather than ameliorates them," asserts Ruth Mitchell of the Education Trust, a Washington-based advocacy group. "We take students who have less to begin with and give them less in school, too." (See sidebar, page 3.)

In ways both hidden and explicit, many researchers have shown, schools routinely fail students without social or economic power.

By tracking or placing them into less demanding courses or even into athletics, they limit students' options or contribute to their boredom and failure. By massing kids in large and anonymous school structures, they ensure that teachers cannot know them well and invite an atmosphere of mutual distrust and fear.

"The way we organize schools—even the very way we all too often think about them—still smacks more of early twentieth century administrative Progressivism than of late twentieth century scholarship about human learning and contemporary democratic values," says Ted Sizer.

Recent large-scale research on student engagement and academic achievement bears out his long-held conviction that Essential school principles foster a more equitable and effective education than do traditional bureaucratic models.

After following students in 820 United States high schools for five



HORACE is published five times yearly at Brown University by the Coalition of Essential Schools. Individual subscription (\$20 a year, payable to Brown University), write Brown University, Attn: CES Subscriptions, P.O. Box 910, Oxon Hill, MD 20750-0910 or call 1-800-62-HORACE.

For a list of back issues or for information about the Coalition, write to CES, Brown University, Box 1969, Providence, RI 02912.

Editor:  
Kathleen Cushman

years, V. E. Lee, J. B. Smith, and R. G. Croninger concluded in a 1995 study that all students learned more in more personal learning communities marked by a common and demanding academic curriculum—but poor and minority children improved most of all.

Likewise, disadvantaged stu-

dents benefit more from smaller schools and class sizes. Three recent studies conducted in California, West Virginia, and Alaska show that the achievement of students from both urban and rural poor communities goes up substantially in small schools, while larger schools actually exacerbate the negative effects of

poverty on student learning.

And a major long-term study of elementary students in Tennessee confirmed earlier findings that small class sizes substantially raise student learning—and that poor and non-white students benefit most of all. (Using Title I or other special funds to pull out students for remediation,

## Who Gets to Learn: The Sorry Statistics

A host of studies have documented the inequities that face students in United States public schools, and the bitter consequences that they produce. Among the most recent research are studies that show:

- The education of the adults in the family is critical for family income. The proportion of adults who are not in the labor force and the proportion who experience at least one period of unemployment during the year both decline dramatically as education rises. The poverty rate for high school dropouts is ten times that of college graduates; graduating from high school reduces the probability of being on welfare. Graduates with better skills earn more.

- While 83 out of every 100 African-Americans now complete a high school education, only 40 attend college, and 12 earn a bachelor's degree by age 30. Only one in ten Latinos earns a degree.

In 1990, the U.S. spent an average of \$6,565 nationally in schools with less than 5 percent of their children in poverty, and \$5,173 per student in schools with more than 25 percent of their children in poverty. Even adjusted for local costs and need, the gap remains: \$5,209 in low-poverty schools, \$4,044 in high-poverty schools.

Citizens with less education are less likely to vote.

The reading gap narrowed between white and minority 17-year-olds on NAEP tests from 1970 to 1988, then widened again. The mathematics gap narrowed between white and minority 13-year-olds on NAEP tests from 1970 to 1988, then widened again. The gap persists in college prose literacy.

African-American and Latino students attend predominantly minority schools. Science teachers in racially isolated schools have less education. Classes in high poverty high schools more often are taught by underqualified teachers. Eighth-grade students in poor school districts more often lack math resources. Fourth-graders in poor school districts more often lack reading resources.

- A rigorous math curriculum improves scores for all students. Students who complete advanced math and science also score higher on the SAT.

Students who are poor, African-American, or Latino are less likely to be enrolled in a college preparatory track.

- "A" students in high-poverty schools achieve at about the same level in math as "C" and "D" students in affluent schools.

- Roughly 55 out of 100 white and Asian high school graduates complete algebra 2 and geometry courses; only 35 in 100 African-American and Native American students do. Physics course completion rates vary dramatically: one in four white seniors complete it; one in six African-Americans; one in seven Latinos. Students who take more vocational courses score lower on reading proficiency.

- Nearly one in four central-city schools reported in 1991 that they had vacancies they could not fill with a qualified teacher. Forty percent of high school math courses in high-poverty schools were taught by teachers with no expertise in math. Across subjects, poor and minority students were less likely to be in classes with teachers who have at least a minor in the fields they were teaching.

According to the official poverty measure, in 1995, some 20.8% of all US children were poor (more than 14 million children, including more than 5 million preschoolers under the age of six) compared with an adult poverty rate of approximately 11.3% in that same year and a child poverty rate of 15% in the early 1970s. Children who live with poorly educated, relatively young, or minority-race adults are more likely to be classified as poor than children who do not live in such families.

As compared with whites, black adults have lower earnings on average and are more likely to be unemployed or out of the labor force. Black adults are three times as likely as white adults to have incomes too low to meet even the adult's needs in the family.

Poor children suffer higher incidences of poor physical health, cognitive ability, school achievement, emotional and behavioral outcomes and teenage out-of-wedlock childbearing. Poor children are 1.3 times as likely as non-poor children to experience learning disabilities and developmental delays. Poor-quality schooling correlated with high neighborhood poverty may exacerbate these effects.

Most of the above data come from the Education Trust, *Education Watch: State and National Data Book*, 1996. 1725 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 293-1217. Information on infant mortality comes from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA.

on the other hand, often raises the size of other classes—and so even though the pupil-teacher ratio of the school goes down, the equity gap may actually increase.)

But because children usually go to schools funded by the districts where they live, poor students get unequal access to resources and opportunities. Their classes are bigger; their teachers have heavier student loads and less planning time; their libraries have fewer books. They are less likely to have a teacher who knows them and understands their culture.

And because later success depends on such resources and opportunities, a cycle of failure sets in. "Based on this year's fourth-grade reading scores," observes Paul Schwartz, a Coalition principal in residence at the U. S. Department of Education, "California is already planning the number of new prison cells it will need in the next century."

### Brave Beginnings

Against this bleak landscape, some brave beginnings did gleam among Essential schools that brought their work to the Fall Forum. And the

teachers who gathered there to hear Beverly Daniel Tatum, Anne Bouie, Lily Wong Fillmore, Ruth Johnson, and other educators well known for their work on equity issues seemed eager to engage in the hard talk necessary if public schools are to carry out their charge to educate the free citizens of a democracy.

"We can only arrive at democracy by surfacing inequity," declared Amy Gerstein, the Coalition's Executive Director. "How are we attending to the common good? Why do certain groups of students succeed more than others? How do we know we provide adequate support for all students to meet high standards?"

Wherever such inequities exist—along color and class lines, between boys and girls, between English-speakers and language minorities, among students with special learning needs, or among the community of teachers, students, and parents—schools must expose and struggle to right them, she urges. These biases run deep in our country's history, she points out. So, "Rather than get mired in guilt or blame," she says, "we need to begin to recognize the ways we inadvertently show bias, and act to change them."

Two teachers at McClure Elementary School in Philadelphia, for example, began to worry that many students whose home languages were not English were being referred for special education services without sufficient attention to their cognitive language ability. "The basic tools we use to measure language dominance—a reading inventory in English, for instance—are often the sole source of information," Carol Nejman and Nelson Reyes observed in a Fall Forum workshop they led.

To remedy the situation, McClure developed intake interviews for parents and students in both English and Spanish. Two bilingual counselors now evaluate children's overall language development, modifying the district's standard test battery to get a clearer picture of which

## Characteristics of the Anti-Racist Leader

"What does it mean to me, personally, to be an anti-racist leader?" asks Glenn Singleton, the president of Pacific Educational Group in Palo Alto, California, who works frequently with California's Essential schools on issues of equity, leadership, and whole-school reform. To answer that question, he made up the following list:

I am abnormal. I do things outside what is seen as normal. People often get mad at me or disagree with me.

I am constructivist. I ask questions. I build on what I know about the current, existing, and known places where people are.

I'm conflicted.

I often operate outside my comfort zone. I choose to go there. My own discomfort is my indication that I'm doing it.

I'm in trouble. People complain about what I've said or done. I listen and hear their concerns respectfully, but I only change my behavior or act on concerns as appropriate to further the work. I don't cave in to any and all complaints.

I create and utilize primary-source documents and collect data that surfaces and reveals the presence of issues of race, bias, and equity. I design materials.

I think up things to get conversations going and to get issues of race, bias, and equity on the table.

I live at the extremes emotionally because I choose to keep myself in touch with the hurt and pain that so many students are feeling.

I balance then and now. I can be future-focused because I realize where I've come from. My own personal inquiry helps me stay future-focused and grounded.

I do personal, autobiographical study that helps me know what to do.

I think about, design interventions for, and ask specially focused questions about students not previously served in school.

I learn from kids; I respond to kids. I seek out ways to stay informed and feel the feelings students of color have as they experience school.

I am patient but persistent. I am often frustrated but recognize that real change takes time.



kind of instruction—bilingual-transitional, English as a Second Language (ESL), or other special education—best fits a child's needs.

This is just one example of how assessment policies—whether at the school, the district, or the state level—can either support or inhibit the learning of diverse student populations. At worst, the growing trend toward high-stakes, multiple-choice, standardized tests can sharply limit the future options of students who bring different starting points, understandings, and learning styles to school.

Moreover, by labeling resource-poor schools as unsuccessful on the basis of one-shot outcome indicators, districts often ignore their effectiveness in bringing student learning up from starting points well below that of their richer neighbors. More sophisticated analyses—which may control for incoming language ability, or for income-related enrichment opportunities—can show academic gains far more encouraging.

Essential schools typically use portfolios and exhibitions to assess students' abilities to solve problems and express ideas in deeper and fuller ways. In dozens of Fall Forum workshops, teachers described techniques that provide fairer achievement measures for students with very different backgrounds.

But even when teachers design classroom assessments specifically for alternative learning styles, subtle issues of equity can result.

"In breaking out of the essay-only mold, we often latch onto presentation forms that might engage students—but that don't push them to represent deep understanding," notes Eileen Barton, who teaches at Chicago's Sullivan High School. "Is it fair to ask a child to demonstrate knowledge of the solar system by writing a play whose characters are the planets?" Maybe, she says—but only if both teacher and student already have the basic understanding it takes to create a three-dimensional model of the solar system.

## You Get What You Expect: Teacher Expectations

In an ethnographic study of a kindergarten class in an inner-city school, Ray Rist showed that within eight days the teacher had grouped the children—not by academic indicators, but according to skin color, behavior, clothing, hygiene, and previous experience with siblings. Subsequent academic placement tests bore out the teacher's expectations, and by the end of first grade the teacher's initial expectations were virtually set in stone. ("Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations," 1975, Harvard Education Review Reprint Series, 50)

Dividing a litter of virtually identical laboratory rats by placing them randomly in two different boxes, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson instructed graduate student observers to teach maze-running to those in the box marked "fast-learners" and to those in the box marked "slow-learners." The observations bore out just what the "teachers" expected: though identical in every way, the "fast-learning" rats were seen as smarter, more attractive, more lovable, and in every way a better class of rats. Moreover, they actually mastered the mazes more quickly. (*Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectations and Pupils' Intellectual Development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968)

For 20 years David Weikart followed 260 children from a housing project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, half of whom had enrolled at ages three and four in a preschool enrichment program aimed at internalizing high life expectations for themselves. Immediate IQ test gains by the Head Start group evened out by fourth grade; but later, these students showed lower rates of juvenile delinquency and teen-age pregnancy and higher employment rates. ("Research and Related Issues: Interactive Instructional Model," 1987. ERIC document 297873)

Elementary school teachers in an inner city school were given a randomly selected list of their students and told that these children were predicted to blossom academically in the coming year. Sure enough, in a year's time the identified students had shown marked gains—children who were Latino and African-American even more than those who were white and of Asian descent. (*Pygmalion in the Classroom*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968)

## Who Can Learn What?

All these instances have to do with democracy and equity—whose voice matters, who gets to decide, who learns what, whose vision of the "good life" schools foster. From the top to the bottom of the ladder, school people live with the dynamics of power and control.

States and districts dictate what schools must teach and even how many minutes students must spend on different subjects. Scores on impersonal tests dictate who can take which courses, and what kinds of social and economic power result from which kinds of course. Textbooks promote an "official knowledge" that strips issues of controversy and differing perspectives. Teachers, students, and parents

have little say over how students may demonstrate learning, and whether the materials they study have anything to do with the real issues about which they may care.

In a system dominated by a few key players at the top, no one expects teachers to critique the way things are. Broad participation in matters like this, after all, creates a contentious mess. Things go much more smoothly if teachers agree to be the system's compliant technicians, not its inquiring critics or change agents, and if parents and students just stay in their place.

But in schools around the country, people are beginning to reject this view. Refusing to be silenced or excluded, they are creating new ways to practice democracy.

At a shelter in Louisville, Kentucky, homeless parents worked with The Right Question, a Boston-based advocacy group, on three key questions: "How can I support my child's education? How can I monitor my child's progress? How can I advocate for my child?"

In this district of many Essential schools, where state standards and tests drive rewards and punishment for all schools, one parent attended the session "to understand the standards expected of my child," she said. Another wrote that he would "not settle for 'doing OK' anymore."

"These parents are a model of participatory democracy," says Dan Rothstein, who directs The Right Question. "They are building the

skills they need to focus effectively on student learning, holding the system accountable to its citizens."

When local school councils made up of parents and teachers hold authority over decisions about hiring, budgets, and other key matters, some long-standing control patterns have begun to shift. In Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, Essential schools and others have struggled to keep such reforms meaningful in a climate of top-down assessment and accountability.

In Santa Rosa, California, Piner High School takes extra steps to involve adult advocates of students from under-represented, lower-income, or ethnically diverse populations. In the Bronx, University

Heights High School parents work on hiring, curriculum planning and implementation, assessment, creating and carrying out school policies, and networking with other schools.

Other schools have taken steps to make more rigorous curriculum available to all students. The Brooklyn (NY) International High School developed a "Law and Theory" curriculum for its very heterogeneous student body of recent immigrants, who represent an array of cultures, educational backgrounds, and levels of English language development. At Chicago's DuSable High School, teacher Malik Bush has worked toward gender equity in students' use of technology resources. And many

## Making Decisions in One Democratic Essential School

Students at the Alternative Community School (ACS) in Ithaca, New York voted in 1998 on a Constitution that designates who makes which kinds of decisions at the school:

### **The ACS staff shall have purview over:**

- Joint student/staff curriculum committee to survey students, design curriculum, with final approval by staff
- Which teachers teach which classes
- Requirements and attendance policy of each committee
- Requirements and expectations of each individual class (with input from classes)
- Which projects are offered [Note: ACS "projects" are scheduled elective offerings by staff and students.]
- Who teaches which projects
- When each project is offered (Student project leaders decide what, when, and how they teach.)
- Who leads each trip

### **All-School Meeting shall have purview over:**

- Committee creation
- The "school look" (murals, permanent displays, flags, logos, school colors, etc.)
- Trip funds and funds for student projects
- Rules and regulations

### **The Site-Based Council shall have purview over recommendations to the ACS principal concerning:**

- Budget
- Hiring and firing of staff
- Buildings and grounds

### **The "two-thirds veto process" shall be used for:**

- Timetable
- Graduation requirements of the school
- Attendance policy

- Evaluations
- Goal-setting, policy statements
- Amending the Constitution

**The principal has purview over health and safety issues, as required by law.**

The decision process for proposals relating to any areas not addressed here shall be determined by the Agenda Committee when such proposals are made, based on previous handling of such proposals and on common sense. If there are objections to that committee's decision, the proposal will be put on hold and the Constitution must be amended to determine process for that area.

*Sample path of a proposal by a student:* The proposal goes to All-School Meeting. If it is not passed, the proposal dies; if it is passed, the staff votes on the proposal at the All-School Meeting for prompt consideration. The staff either approves the proposal or vetoes it by a two-thirds vote, in which case the proposal goes to a Compromise Committee.

*Sample path of a proposal by a staff member:* The proposal goes to a staff meeting. If it is not passed, the proposal dies; if it is passed, the proposal goes to All-School Meeting, where the student body may either approve the proposal or veto it by a two-thirds vote, in which case the proposal goes to a Compromise Committee.

The Compromise Committee includes three staff members and four students; the proposal's author may join that committee. After listening to minority opinions, the Compromise Committee comes to consensus on a fair solution, and the proposal as adapted gets a trial run. A proposal may only go to the Compromise Committee once.

Essential Schools, from Fenway Middle College in Boston to Piner High School in Santa Rosa, California, have adopted integrated math programs that teach high-level algebra to all students.

When parents and students contribute to such decisions, they also tend to take responsibility for what results. At the School Without Walls in Rochester, New York, students are deeply involved in developing and negotiating the curriculum itself, often arranging to pursue studies at local colleges or with community mentors. Daily attendance is 90 percent; discipline problems are few; test scores are better than for comparable groups; and 80 percent of students go on to college.

### Sharing Work and Credit

The Met school in Providence, Rhode Island focuses learning around student choice, based on the interests of individuals and groups of students. Every student has a learning plan created and monitored by a team of parents, the student, teachers, and outside mentors; learning is assessed through portfolios. Schedules are individual; work takes place through projects, not in formal courses.

The Scarsdale (NY) Alternative School involves both teachers and students in enforcing agreed-upon school rules and settling issues that inevitably surface in a high school community. Like many other Essential schools, its democratic structures include community meetings, advisory groups, and a Fairness Committee that hears and mediates grievances. But Scarsdale stands out because students must each year affirm the school's Constitution and renew their commitment to upholding it.

Students and teachers at the Village School in Great Neck, New York take their shared jurisdiction even further, to encompass academic credit as well as behavior norms. In a court-like proceeding twice yearly, they meet in "credit

## The Elusive System of White Privilege

"I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious," wrote Peggy McIntosh in a groundbreaking 1988 essay that laid the foundation for contemporary discussions of privilege systems. McIntosh, who is Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, compared white privilege to an "invisible, weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks." Comparing her experiences with those of African-American women in her building and line of work, she listed 46 ways in which she daily experienced unearned advantage based on her skin color. Some of the examples:

- I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
- I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another woman's voice in a group where she is the only member of her race.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
- I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
- I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
- I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
- I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-serving.

"White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Learning to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" is available for \$8 from the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181 (tel.: 781-283-2520; fax: 781-283-2504). SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) establishes teacher-led seminars in K-12 schools and universities to focus on making curriculum, teaching methods, and school climates gender-fair and multi-culturally equitable.

boards" to decide who will receive course credit for the semester's courses. Students have an equal vote and often outnumber faculty at the proceedings, which are preceded by three six-week "modules" in which parents and children meet with advisors to assess progress.

Issues of democracy and equity can give rise to tense situations in schools, which often see their function as maintaining stability, not challenging who holds the reins within the school culture and the larger society. Even when they espouse "multicultural education," schools can easily be promoting a version of diversity that serves the interests of those already in power.

### CES Web Democracy

Schools with access to the Internet can now join an ongoing discussion of Essential school principles, practices, and activities via the Coalition's Web site at <http://www.ces.brown.edu>. The site posts regular reports on actions of the CES National Congress, allows text searches of Coalition documents, and invites participants to contribute to an interactive on-line conversation. No password is required.

The steps to raise awareness of these issues may be small, but they can have a steady positive effect. Concerned that their public school of choice was too white, for example, students and teachers at the Alternative Community School in Ithaca, New York began ten years ago to recruit more students of color. An Anti-Racism School Leadership project soon developed, which used every avenue to raise awareness of racism throughout the school. Today, that group has become a catalyst for surfacing all forms of bias; and a new graduation requirement asks students to demonstrate some concrete and personal way in which they have taken action for a more equitable community.

"Nobody ever wants to give up power," says Lisa Delpit, whose books on race have influenced teachers for a decade. But as Essential school people look more closely at the purposes and effects of their routine policies and practices, hard decisions about shifting power and resources may in time dislodge the comfortable bedrock of privilege on which the current system rests. Their attention to equity in education cannot be dismissed as "political correctness"; it is the very backbone of American democracy. □

### Some Useful Resources

Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD; (410) 516-8800. Resources and research on effective schooling of disadvantaged students. Web site: <http://scos.csos.jhu.edu/>

Education Trust, *Education Watch: The Education Trust Community Data Guide* provides help to local communities that want to pull together basic data on educational attainment, achievement, and practices. 1725 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 293-1217.

Linguistic Minority Research Institute, Building 402, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106; (805) 893-2250. Professional development and research on language-minority teaching and learning.

Mobilization for Equity Resource Center provides materials to involve parents in public schools; 16 national partners. 100 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116; (800) 441-7192.

The Right Question Project teaches educational advocacy strategies to underserved citizens. Dan Rothstein, 218 Holland Street, Somerville, MA 02144; (617) 628-4070.

Study Circles Resource Center offers a guidebook for facilitating conversations about race. P.O. Box 203, 697 Pomfret St., Pomfret, CT 06528; (203) 928-2616.

Carl Glickman, *Revolutionizing America's Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.



**HORACE**

Coalition of Essential Schools  
Box 1969, Brown University  
Providence, RI 02912

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Providence, RI  
Permit No. 202