

ORGANIZING THE CURRICULUM FOR LABOR CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

Research on labor and its treatment in the curriculum of K-12 schools has not been a popular topic. Society's emphasis on individualism and consumerism has fostered veneration of capitalism throughout public education, with business control of the education policy system. Critical information about the US Labor Movement has been systematically excluded from the public school curriculum, so that labor's centrality to the flow of history and its contributions to the present status of working people are underappreciated, and neoliberalism threatens public education and teacher unionism around the world. This article describes why and how an alliance of teacher educators, teachers, and unionists are

advocating for labor consciousness to be infused into K-12 schooling. This perspective is presented in *Organizing the Curriculum*, an edited collection of essays, and is being implemented by the Education & Labor Collaborative, an advocacy group to promote economic, social and political empowerment through education for labor consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

The present state of global economic crisis is an opportune time to reconsider our approach to education. Only by understanding how history, economics, and politics affect society can students be truly prepared to cope with the job-related issues that inevitably confront working people, as well as the political and social challenges that face society. In this context, efforts are underway to increase the amount and quality of labor education in public schools and the attention paid to both historical and current labor activities, so that students can understand how the heroic struggles waged by working people throughout our history have resulted in improved workplace conditions, employee rights, progressive legislation, and a more just and humane society. Embedded in the history of labor's struggle is an alternative system of values that we sorely need in this era of socially destructive greed and consolidated corporate power. The social utility of knowing the truth about labor's struggle should not be underestimated; this is truly a case of the truth making us free. The values of the labor movement, embodied in collective action for social justice, can counter the gross mal-distribution of wealth and power that has dangerously undermined our economy and politics. A restoration of organized labor's power can promote prosperity by securing a living wage for working people, and reinvigorate democracy by building a politically progressive electorate that bridges the traditional fault lines of difference that have been used to confuse working people and divide them against each other and from their own deepest interests.

NEOLIBERALISM AND EDUCATION

In capitalist countries, but particularly in the US, there is a long-standing tradition of encouraging individualism and self-interest, culminating in today's neoliberalism, "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, pp.11-12). In such individualistic societies, teachers and parents alike share the expectation of student success in a meritocratic system that rewards the best and the brightest.

We applaud individual achievements and teach students to ruthlessly pursue winning in increasingly winner-take-all labor markets. At the same time, we promote the illusion of unlimited social mobility by highlighting celebrity exceptions to the persistent limitations of social class. An ongoing tension between education to meet democratic goals for citizens and education to meet labor force needs has existed since the early years of the Industrial Revolution. As Carnoy & Levin (1985) state: “‘appropriately trained workers with the required skills, attitudes and behavior for efficient production and capital accumulation’ is balanced by the goal of education to enhance ‘opportunity, mobility, equality, democratic participation, and the expansion of rights’” (p. 230).

Even today, in neoliberal globalized economies,¹ including the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, schools “focus uncritically on the transition from school to work, and provide information about becoming a ‘good worker’” (Jesson, 2004, p.54). As Michael Apple (1982) has pointed out: “Education’s role in the reproduction of social relations of production and the control and division of labor has been an overriding interest. The evidence suggests that the educational system, in concert with other aspects of social formation, plays a fundamental part in such reproduction . . .” (p. 7.). Complicity with neoliberalism has affected education with major policy shifts in the name of reform. In particular, the stress on accountability based on standardized achievement tests, vouchers for private education and the expansion of charter schools, along with an aggressive stance against labor unionism has become a characteristic of neoliberal educational policies.² According to the anthropologist David Harvey (2005, pp.11-12), “The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such (neoliberal) practices” [as private property rights, free markets and free trade]. The effect of such neoliberal social and economic policies is to make government create market opportunities for business interests through legislating public policies that benefit private capital while socializing private costs to the public. One example of the neoliberal effect on education is Chicago’s Renaissance 2010 plan; under the current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, it placed public schooling under mayoral control, which closed and converted public schools to charter schools run by corporate and non-profit providers (Weil, 2009). Therefore, when political interests that reflect the perspectives and interests of trans-national corporations call on educators to prepare students to compete in the world economy, it is hardly surprising that teachers and parents promote hard work and complicity with “the system” as the route to good jobs and security.³

Neoliberal economics and policies at the same time promote conservative bias in the curriculum and drive teachers toward meeting achievement requirements imposed on them. Educational sociologist Stephen Ball (2004, p.16) says: “A new kind of teacher and new kinds of knowledges are ‘called up’ by

educational reform - a teacher who can maximise performance, who can set aside irrelevant principles, or out-moded social commitments, for whom excellence and improvement (in whatever forms required) are the driving force of their practice." In education the neoliberal emphasis on accountability and individual efforts militate against the labor movement's call for solidarity and collective action to address common economic problems. This (mis)education does not serve the needs of the vast majority of students, who need more than anything else to develop the capacity for collective action in their own real interests.

It is unsurprising that the educational establishment in capitalist societies promotes the values of individualism and competition over collectivity and solidarity. The preponderance of textbooks used in public schools minimizes the importance of organized labor, and the atmosphere of public schools is permeated by a pro-business bias (Anyon, 1980; Linné, Sosin, Benin, 2009; Loewen, 1995; Scoggins, 1966). Despite the availability of quality teaching materials, such as *The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States* (Bigelow & Diamond, 1988), publications emanating from the California Federation of Teachers' Labor in the Schools Committee that span the K-12 continuum—*The Yummy Pizza Company*, *Golden Lands: Working Hands*, and *Work, Money and Power: Unions in the 21st Century*, and resources like the American Labor Studies Center, a non-profit organization that maintains a website clearinghouse of labor related materials (<http://labor-studies.org>), the struggles of organized labor only make brief appearances in the K-12 curriculum. Unions are explained as a response by working people to the harsh conditions they faced during the Industrial Revolution, and reappear as an attempt by workers to cope with the vicissitudes of the Great Depression. The true dimensions of labor activism in these periods are seldom elucidated. The curriculum makes little mention of labor's activities after World War II, possibly with exception of the AFL-CIO merger in 1955 and Reagan's busting the PATCO strike in 1981. Predictably, the role of organized labor as a relevant contemporary social movement that is in the forefront of the struggle for social justice is not touched on. Rather, if contemporary labor is discussed at all, it is portrayed at best as irrelevant and more often as corrupt and violent. Instead, the curriculum lauds the achievements of business executives, from Andrew Carnegie to Bill Gates. Little is taught about outstanding labor leaders and exemplary social activists, whose contributions, except for Martin Luther King, Jr., are glossed over or simply not taught. Even Dr. King, while universally recognized by US students, is exclusively associated with the African-American struggle for civil rights; his support for organized labor and challenge to the wide-scale poverty inherent in the US economic system are routinely ignored. Moreover, the traditional curriculum does not require serious discussion of the alternatives to corporate capitalism promoted by historic American social and political movements, such as the International Workers of the World and the American

Socialist Party, beyond a nominal mention and subsequent dismissal, and despite the end of the Cold War, Marxist economics is not seriously studied and communism is not considered as an alternative economic system but simply dismissed as the flawed ideology of a deservedly defeated empire.

Values of objectivism and political neutrality in school books and materials has discouraged use of any union- published curriculum resources, a loss of incomprehensible effect in eliminating input from unions and workers' voices, considered special interests by textbook consideration committees. For example, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters first published in 1988 a comprehensive curriculum guide to engage students in learning about unions, which was augmented in 2003 at the union's centennial. *A Union's Story* was sent to thousands of public secondary schools in the US but received little response.

TEACHER SOLIDARITY

Today's teachers do not have the same zeal for unions that their predecessors had when they actively fought to gain the right to organize and won their first contracts. Johnson and Donaldson (2006) found that "Teachers entering schools today hold different views about unions than do the veteran teachers they are replacing. These new entrants are less concerned about job security and more interested in career development. They are less certain that unions are essential and more likely to believe that schools should decide, one by one, how to operate. As the center of gravity in the teaching force shifts toward less-experienced teachers, the kind of union leader these teachers prefer may also shift" (p.139). The current generation of teachers expects regular salary increases, professional status, health and pension benefits, defined and defensible working conditions, and the due process protections of tenure, but younger teachers, for the most part, only tenuously relate to the life of their unions, and seem to have little appreciation of the monumental struggles that were waged in the past to secure their rights and conditions. According to research by Nina Bascia (2006), a "viable teacher union [that] engages intelligently and respectfully with its members, seeking always to be their organization" meets the conditions for success when it vocally advocates for teachers, achieves "economic sufficiency," offers teachers opportunities to participate in decision making, provides professional development and learning, and articulates and promotes a positive professional identity for teachers (pp. 99-102). This listing of priorities and modern conception of the functions of teachers' unions has been captured in the title, "A Union of Professionals," the motto of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Ironically, while teachers are the most highly unionized profession in the US today (Farber, 2006, p. 28), many teachers are ambivalent about their own union membership. Labor scholar Richard Hurd (2000) explains this ambivalence

in terms of the affinities and antipathies of professionalism; teachers desire professional status and do not consider themselves “workers” doing educational jobs. However, despite major differences between the schoolhouse and the factory floor, the basic exchange of time and effort for compensation under conditions that are primarily determined by an employer characterizes both teaching and factory work. The teachers who began unionizing schools had compelling reasons to become union activists; before unionization, teachers struggled to survive on woefully inadequate salaries and often had to cope with arbitrary, capricious and autocratic administrators. Teachers organized unions to protect themselves from unfair treatment, to exert influence over their working conditions, and to protect their academic freedom.

Today’s teachers’ acceptance of neoliberalism, and their ignorance or lack of interest in the past, rather than a prescription for bliss, is an invitation to disaster, namely, the loss of rights and the deterioration of working conditions for teachers. To the extent that teachers lack appreciation for their unions, it is at least partially attributable to their own inadequate exposure to labor education. Teachers who have little knowledge of the previous generations’ struggles for a living wage and basic rights at work are unable to conceive of situations in which *they* might need the power of collective action, of times when *they* might need union representation, with a powerful voice to speak on their behalf to the school board and administrators. They either have never realized or have forgotten that historically school boards and principals offered better salaries and benefits only when they were forced by pressure from teachers’ unions. From ignorance, these teachers may resent their obligation to pay union dues, testing the patience of their union representatives, and weakening their own position *vis a vis* their employers. Most egregiously, union members who lack union consciousness, and erroneously think that administrative appreciation of their personal merit is sufficient protection, may even cross their own union’s picket line during a strike, jeopardizing the very existence of the union that has secured and continues to protect their fundamental conditions of employment.

At the same time that the current generation of teachers suffers from lack of labor consciousness, there is a neoliberal global attack underway that blames teachers’ unions for most of the problems in education (Compton and Weiner, 2008). Corporate opponents of teacher unionism continually strive to stir up public anger against teachers by blaming them for the poor academic performance of students; to imply that the serious problems plaguing American education are primarily attributable to “incompetent teachers” who are being protected by self-serving and socially irresponsible labor unions is a colossal smear and on the face of it completely absurd. That anyone with common sense gives this libel any credence whatsoever is only due to the frequency with which it has been repeated. There are some inadequate practitioners in every field, but systemic failures undoubtedly stem from failures in policy, planning and

administration in the face of adverse economic, social or cultural conditions. In the education wars, it would appear that the generals want to blame their defeats on their inability to court-martial enough privates.

Administrators accuse teachers' unions of favoring adults at the expense of children, essentially pitting families against teachers. Chancellor of the Washington D.C. schools, Michelle Rhee, is described in *Newsweek* (September 1, 2008) as "angry at a system of education that puts "the interests of adults" over the "interests of children," i.e., a system that values job protection for teachers over their effectiveness in the classroom." Unions have found the continuous barrage of such charges difficult to counter. In one notable example, a huge billboard with an illustration of a worm coming out of an apple appeared on top of a building over New York City's Times Square to publicize a contest to name "The Ten Worst Union-Protected Teachers - Who Can't Be Fired." The 2008 campaign offered \$10,000 to "winners" if they would quit teaching. This publicity stunt sponsored by the "Center for Union Facts" an anti-union group run by right-wing lobbyist Richard Berman, generated responses from the public, some of whom complained both about teachers who committed reprehensible acts and about teachers who "simply didn't seem to care about teaching."⁴ The underlying goal of this vicious contest, which cited "entrenched mediocrity that is bred by bad union policies such as teacher tenure and the absence of merit pay," was to destroy teachers' unions. These and many other examples of teacher union bashing have been omnipresent in both the media and political arena. During the 2008 US presidential campaign, the Republican candidate John McCain, pejoratively used the term "entrenched" to describe the stance taken by teachers unions towards vouchers and choice programs. He said:

Parents ask only for schools that are safe, teachers who are competent, and diplomas that open doors of opportunity. When a public system fails, repeatedly, to meet these minimal objectives, parents ask only for a choice in the education of their children. . . No entrenched bureaucracy or union should deny parents that choice and children that opportunity.⁵

Anti-union rhetoric faults teacher unions for both school failure and for obstructing school reform. In "Teacher Solidarity for Educational Excellence" (Benin & Sosin, 2009), we address this barrage of complaints that teacher unions protect incompetent teachers originating from conservative think tanks.⁶ We argue that teacher unions, especially when allied with families, have historically promoted educational excellence. Teacher unions, despite their imperfections, have been the leaders in creating high quality education; they have historically fought for educational excellence as an aspect of their demand for working conditions conducive to the realization of high professional standards. Far from protecting incompetent teachers, teacher unions have provided professional

development for teachers in need of improvement. As a matter of history, teachers have found that their perspectives on the quality of education are only taken into account when they speak with a collective voice through their union. Unions press for due process protections against unwarranted discipline and restrictions on academic freedom, both of which destroy morale and undermine educational excellence. We see making teachers and their unions the scapegoat for the problems in our educational system as counterproductive, especially when teacher unions are vital to planning and implementing real school reform, including all important staff development projects. Education reform predicated on disempowering classroom teachers by destroying their unions is misguided at best, and at worst represents either managerial arrogance or a hidden privatization agenda motivated by right-wing politics or simple greed, and often both.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Since the inception of public education, there have been struggles about the community's involvement in determining educational policy. As Marjorie Murphy (1990) traces the history of teacher unionism, during the Progressive Era, administrators tried to separate teachers from their attachment to community interests by professionalizing teaching. However, teachers continued to be mainly drawn from the working class into the 1970s, and felt victimized by incompetent administrators and self-serving politicians. According to Murphy (1990), collective bargaining promised teachers more control over their work, higher pay, and greater job security, and both "refined and broadened the concept of professionalism for teachers by assuring them more autonomy and less supervisory control" (p. 209). However, community control advocates and unionists came into conflict in 1968 New York City: the decentralized "demonstration" Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district transferred teachers and administrators involuntarily out of the district without hearings or new placements. From the union's point of view, the community board's action undermined the structure of collective bargaining, leading to a confrontation which escalated into a racially divisive, lengthy citywide teachers' strike that polarized teachers, parents, and citizens, and reverberated as a critical test for community control of education (Podair, 2004). The resulting compromise decentralization did not destroy teacher unionism or community control, but ultimately led to calls for mayoral control as the means to create accountability in a reputedly poorly performing and corrupt system.

Mayoral control is a sweeping change in educational management moving across cities in the US. Martha T. Moore, in *USA Today* (2007) documented and analyzed the push for mayoral control, which it found "reflects rising frustration and desperation over poor student achievement, crumbling

buildings, bureaucratic wrangling among school officials and revolving-door superintendents." *USA Today's* analysis showed that schools under mayoral control in Boston, Chicago and New York improved test scores, avoided teacher strikes and had longer-lasting superintendents. These districts standardized their curriculums, ended social promotion, opened new schools, implemented choice plans, and brought in millions of dollars in corporate donations. However, education specialists are quoted who question whether academic gains are valid and how much credit mayoral control is due for the noted successes. Mayoral control has been criticized as undemocratic and unresponsive to parents. Danny Weil (2009) describes it as "centralizing decision-making regarding public schools in the hands of an elite autocracy; this is often referred to as 'mayoral control'. Under this governance structure, a small group of policy makers are then tasked with the job of legitimizing corporate and financial actors to make crucial decisions about public education without the messy problem of public accountability, public transparency nor public input." Weil and other observers see these governmental policies as more than just reform, but as processes of social transformation, privatizing and commodifying what was once public (Ball, 2004).

Another neoliberal educational innovation, charter schools are associated with community participation and choice programs, where ideally interested community members have the opportunity to arrange to provide quality theme-based education. Market-based choice programs and private school vouchers, which were first advanced in the early 1990's by Chubb & Moe in *Politics, Markets and America's Schools*, continue to attract adherents, who blame teacher unions for restricting school management from implementing these "educational reforms." Charter schools have increasingly become important to the school reform efforts of the Obama administration, to the extent that the administration's incentive funding programs require states to lift caps on charter schools (Weil, 2009). Charter schools direct public tax levy funds toward private and even profit-making educational corporations, and in most areas are not required to participate in or negotiate collective bargaining agreements. While teachers' unions find charter schools problematic, they have adopted public positions that do not challenge charters but emphasize teachers' rights to representation, and have even opened their own charter schools. The American Federation of Teachers' (2008) public position is that it "strongly supports charter schools that embody the core values of public education and a democratic society: equal access for all students; high academic standards; accountability to parents and the public; a curriculum that promotes good citizenship; a commitment to helping all public schools improve; and a commitment to the employees' right to freely choose union representation." The National Education Association (2009) policy towards charter schools states that "Charter schools should be subject to the same public sector labor relations statutes as traditional public schools, and

charter school employees should have the same collective bargaining rights as their counterparts in traditional public schools.” However, public positions taken by these teachers unions regarding charter schools mask the deep conflicts between the neoliberal conceptions of education and unionism.

As predicted in *Organizing the Curriculum*, teachers in non-union charter schools in the US are organizing to establish to have their collective voices heard and secure basic workplace rights. A controversy surrounding unionization of charter schools in New York City between the KIPP Foundation charter schools and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), is in progress at the time of this writing. The UFT has filed unfair labor practices charges with the New York State Public Employee Review Board against KIPP, alleging that the administration of the KIPP charter schools is acting unfairly to keep teachers from unionizing. This labor conflict is made more complex by the fact that in New York, when public schools are converted to charter schools, state law requires that the teachers in the converted school retain their collective bargaining rights, but teachers in newly chartered schools do not have rights to collective bargaining unless they petition to join a union.

Newspaper articles document the tense atmosphere that resulted from veiled anti-union threats made by administrators at mandatory “captive” meetings, and report that “school administrators pulled students into a private meeting and asked them to critique their teachers” (Medina, 2009). School administrators distributed pre-typed form letters enabling teachers who had signed union cards to revoke their signatures and retract their authorizations (Sims, 2009a), and other KIPP charter schools submitted petitions to decertify the union. The union was alerted to the problem when a teacher at the former public, but now charter school approached the union’s representative with the complaint that he was being demoted and transferred from one KIPP school to another at a much lower salary. The letter he received stated: “Your employment at KIPP Academy is entirely at will. This means that KIPP Academy may terminate your employment at any time, without notice” (Sims, 2009b). In this ongoing dispute, the union affirms that its duty of fair representation requires it to address this teacher’s grievance, and protect the rights of other teachers that might be similarly affected by the “at will employment” doctrine. This is but one example of how the charter school movement has worked against teacher unions. Nonetheless, as recently as this past June, 2009, the UFT and Green Dot Charter Schools signed a collective bargaining agreement.⁷ This development, and that schoolteachers in more union-hostile charter schools are organizing themselves presents evidence of a resurgence of unionism among teachers who have learned through experience in a non-union environment that they need union representation.

ORGANIZING THE CURRICULUM

Teacher educators have the responsibility of creating a teacher preparation curriculum that helps teacher candidates develop a critical perspective on power relations in education, an understanding of the importance of solidarity among teachers, and an insight into the problems that they will face working in educational institutions. There is no such curriculum in most teacher preparation institutions today, where little time is devoted to helping students to develop the understandings and skills that are indispensable to negotiating the power relationships that are embedded in educational bureaucracies. Central to such a curriculum are lessons that elucidate the role of teacher unions in facilitating the development of the teaching profession and democratic public education.

To counter union busting and raise labor consciousness, labor education needs to be implemented from elementary school through teacher education. Labor education for teacher candidates is a crucial step, because teachers who are aware of their own union's history and appreciate their own union's values are better positioned to effectively teach unionism to their students. Historian Howard Zinn (1999) advises:

If teacher unions want to be strong and well-supported, it's essential that they not only be teacher-unionists but teachers of unionism. We need to create a generation of students who support teachers and the movement of teachers for their rights. (p. 76)

Under the prevailing corporate state what happens to the least of us will inevitably soon happen to most of us. *Organizing the Curriculum: Perspectives on Teaching the US Labor Movement* (Linné, Benin & Sosin, 2009), a collection of essays and teaching materials provides a look at the systematic exclusion of the labor movement's history, perspective and values from the school curriculum, the consequence of which is that young people know pitifully little about labor's traditions or contemporary relevance, and are less likely to become labor activists or engage in collective struggles for social justice.⁸ Through examples of teaching points across the subject areas and references to extant sources, the collection provides entry points to teachers and teacher educators that help students understand workers' interests and how to collectively secure them. Patrick Finn's (1999) promotion of "literacy with an attitude," in which students from working-class backgrounds learn to read and write to advance their own interests, and his conception of a "new paradigm of Freirean motivation" for working-class students (Finn, 2009), as well as the application of his ideas by other scholars to urban and teacher education (Finn, Johnson & Finn, 2005; Finn &

Finn, 2007), influenced *Organizing the Curriculum*, and the launching of the Education & Labor Collaborative as an advocacy organization.

Teachers who are willing to infuse their classroom practice with the values and historical knowledge of the labor movement often have to develop their own curriculum. To be sure, it requires time and effort to locate and adapt lesson materials, which is work that at present, only a limited number of teachers see the importance of doing. However, the new scholarship in history begins with the premise that all people matter, as espoused by Howard Zinn in his *A People's History of the United States* (1980). This historical view has been implemented for the classroom by Zinn, by teachers who use the People's History as a resource, and most recently by Bigelow in *A People's History for the Classroom* (2008). As teacher educators enact the perspective we advanced in *Organizing the Curriculum*, and utilize curricular materials such as those available through the American Labor Studies Center, the California Federation of Teachers' Labor in the Schools Committee, Rethinking Schools, and the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education, to name just a few sources—we *will* make progress in developing greater labor consciousness among youth.

THE EDUCATION & LABOR COLLABORATIVE

The mission of the Education & Labor Collaborative is to promote the economic, social and political empowerment of students by enhancing labor education in the schools. The group has affiliated with academic institutions, in particular Adelphi University, and has gathered support from labor and social justice advocacy groups. Our convictions, expressed as a set of goals explained as "Why Education and Labor Must Collaborate" on the group website, are that teachers can best advocate for their students by giving them an appreciation for the labor movement's values and tactics, thereby equipping them with necessary tools for activism in their own interests.⁹ In our view, an excellent education is one that empowers students to improve their lives and futures by teaching them the knowledge, skills and values that they will need, not primarily for individual success in a competitive environment, but for collective action to cope with the wreck and ruin that results from an unchecked, unbridled, and socially irresponsible competition that is content to let the devil take the hindmost.

The first Education & Labor Collaborative Forum was organized as an opportunity to bring over one hundred unionists and academics from Canada, the United Kingdom, and from across the United States to the headquarters of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City in March 2008 to converse with each other, to hear a vocal concert by the New York City Labor Chorus, to interact with distinguished panelists from the labor movement, and to share successful teaching strategies that raise labor consciousness in K-16 classrooms. The enthusiasm obvious at the Forum showcases growing interest in

transmitting the labor movement's values and hard-won gains to future generations. A second Education & Labor Collaborative Forum was held in April, 2009, hosted by the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), at which teachers and unionists demonstrated solidarity with threatened UTLA teachers, shared their work and developed strategies to move the Education & Labor Collaborative agenda forward.

There are opportunities to broaden interest in labor by recognizing that labor unionism today is part of a global social justice movement, that labor organizations are being reshaped away from conventional trade unionism toward interests that go "beyond their constituencies to include the broader working class" (Seidman, 1994, in Webster, 2008, p.250). The Education & Labor Collaborative is actively fostering partnerships between academics, labor activists and schoolteachers to transform the current anti-labor curriculum into one that promotes labor consciousness. This effort promises to make education more relevant to all students, whether or not they attend college directly following high school. The challenge is to change how the issues of work and labor organization are taught in schools, and thereby influence the next generation of workers. As the global economic recession and growing sense of imminent depression end political complacency and bring the trickle-down economics of neoliberalism into disrepute, we anticipate and welcome a resurgence of labor consciousness.

Teachers who are oriented toward social justice of necessity must teach their students the importance of organized labor, because without labor solidarity there can be no substantial progress toward social justice. And teachers who learn to value the union movement for its vital contribution to the struggle for social justice will provide opportunities for students to critically examine the importance of unions in resisting corporate control of our society: our economic and political system, social structure, and cultural institutions—not least important of which are our educational institutions. Moreover, teachers who understand the importance that solidarity played in improving the teaching profession and the quality of education will be more likely to, and better able to, foster labor consciousness in their students. These teachers will both prepare their students to cope with the conditions that they will encounter in their own working lives, and create a political and social environment more supportive of unionism.

As the global economic downturn fosters realistic fears of imminent depression, and the complacency that attended prosperity is replaced by anger and a sense of urgency, there may be an opportunity for a paradigm shift toward Patrick Finn's Freirean vision of teaching working-class students to act in their own self-interests. In the US, President Obama has made progress in selecting a diverse panel of education advisors, and the Obama administration's Department of Education has promise for positive developments in the policy

arena. Nonetheless, unionist teachers are justifiably wary of the Obama administration's embrace of the characterization of teachers' unions as protecting privileged adults against children, fearful of Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan's endorsement of charter schools, and disturbed by the extent of the sway of standardized testing advocates. No Child Left Behind is being considered for renewal and amendment by the US Congress, with substantial energy and funds invested by many lobbying groups. Additionally, as we close writing this article, we are hopeful that the many millions of Americans who voted for change will also pressure the US Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). Passing EFCA into law will be a signal for union renewal; organizing momentum will increase labor's power, result in greater respect for labor's issues, initiate revival of working-class identity, and may work towards infusing the labor movement's communitarian values into the school curriculum. We hope and expect that both *Organizing the Curriculum* and the Education & Labor Collaborative will contribute to advancing labor education in public schools, which in some measure represents long-range organizing for labor's much needed resurgence.

NOTES

1. For a definition of globalization, see: "Anthony Giddens and Will Hutton in Conversation" in Hutton, Will and Anthony Giddens, Eds. (2000), *Global Capitalism*, The New Press, pp. 1-2. For alternatives to neoliberal globalization, see: Aronowitz, Stanley (2006), *Left Turn*, Paradigm Publishers, pp. 208-220.
2. For a discussion of international neoliberalism on changes in teachers' work and the challenges facing teacher unions, see the *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, volume 11, 2007 at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/iejll/vol11/stevenson>.
3. "... the ideal of a liberal corporate social order was formulated and developed under the aegis and supervision of those who then, as now, enjoyed ideological and political hegemony in the United States: the more sophisticated leaders of America's largest corporations and financial institutions." Weinstein, James (1968), *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, Beacon Press, p. ix. Through the influence of businessmen, "... American Education was pushed further into the training of clerks and factory workers and by that much further away from the liberal education of free men." Callahan, Raymond E. (1962), *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, The University of Chicago Press, p.14.
4. Center for Union Facts, http://teachersunionexposed.com/worst_nominate.cfm, Retrieved July 14, 2008.
5. Transcript: John McCain's Speech to the N.A.A.C.P. *New York Times*. July 16, 2008. Retrieved from NYTimes.com.
6. Think tanks funded by the business elite "... are central hubs for generating the policy ideas that ultimately guide the U.S. government." Rothkopf, David (2008), *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They are Making*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, p. 123.
7. For the UFT press release and a copy of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with Green Dot in pdf format, see <http://www.edwize.org/uft-green-dot-sign-pioneering-contract-for-nyc-charter-school>.
8. Organizing the Curriculum website: <http://organizingthecurriculum.org/default.aspx>.
9. For the Education & Labor Collaborative goal statement see: <http://organizingthecurriculum.org/aboutus.aspx>.
Also see: http://education.adelphi.edu/edulc/rationale_goals.php.

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