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## **Democratic Bankruptcy: Three Programs to Help Prevent It in Our Schools**

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### **Introduction**

Are many of America's public schools advocating an open classroom environment to invite students to engage in an expression of their opinions on current issues? Are many of the curriculums used in America's public schools reflective of opportunity for students to research, formulate opinions, recite rationally, and promote deliberation? Are many of America's teachers modeling a democratic practice in their teaching to help foster support for democratic values, participation in political discussion, and civic engagement?

We believe that "no" is the answer to these questions though there are important exceptions that we discuss in this article. We fear that our schools are on the verge of what we call "democratic bankruptcy" or the loss of democratic ways of teaching, learning, and deliberation, and we argue that emphasis upon programs such as we discuss here can combat antidemocratic tendencies in our schools. In social studies classes specifically there has long been a call to help students develop into responsible citizens of tomorrow's world. According to Walter Parker "interaction in schools can help students enter the social consciousness of puberty and develop the habits of thinking and caring necessary for public life" (2005, p. 348). Recently John Rossi (2006) has argued that preparing students to discuss public issues lies at the core of our democracy.

Peter Cookson (2001, p. 42) suggests that "education is always personal, passionate, and difficult—the opposite of training, regimenta-

tion, and standardization.” Education is never linear, but creative and continuous. The search must begin for ways to incorporate programs that are designed to allow students to practice the habits of inquiry, fairness, empathy, critical analysis, rule of law. This process can be related both to American citizenship as well as global citizenship. In this article, we shall discuss three such programs that foster these habits of inquiry: *We the People, Choices for the 21st Century Education*, and *Doors to Diplomacy*. We shall show that the roots of these programs are in John Dewey’s social philosophy, most clearly stated in his favorite book, *Democracy and Education* (1916).

Educators should be careful about eliminating programs that help develop deeper and richer understanding of the principles of our democracy. These programs are at risk of being eliminated when schools try to adhere strictly to the requirements of a standardized federal agenda, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. According to the Center on Education Policy (2007), since NCLB was instituted in 2002, 36 percent of surveyed school districts reduced time for teaching elementary social studies. That percentage increased to 51 percent in districts with “failing schools.” While this relates directly to elementary schools, Jeff Passe (2006) notes that this loss of instructional time in the social studies at the early stages of a learner’s development has a direct effect on secondary social studies teaching. Passe further states that it is well documented that high-stakes competency tests have influenced the quality of social studies education at the secondary level. Teachers have begun shifting emphasis from higher-level concepts to lower levels such as recall and comprehension to reach students who enter the secondary social studies classroom “without ever having been exposed to most of its basic concepts and skills” (p. 189).

Social studies at the lower level have long been referred to as the ‘bump,’ or superfluous subject in the elementary grades, but it is now “disappearing from the school day” (Passe, p. 189). Sam Wineburg (2006) echoes this finding, bringing to our attention that “during a time of crisis social studies can be expendable” (p. 402). James Lick High School in San Jose, California, eliminated social studies from the ninth grade curriculum, citing the need to acquire more time to learn and practice reading and writing. Wineburg (2006) further discusses the rationale for another decision to eliminate social studies for middle and high school students in Salinas (California) Union High School District, as being the result of administrators concluding that “social studies is not the right venue for working on and strengthening students’ reading skills”(p. 402). While Wineburg and Passe bring different perspectives regarding the current plight of the social studies crisis, the message is the same.

The weakened state of elementary social studies is also contributing to the problems in secondary social studies (Passe, 2006). Many teachers and administrators are taking the challenge by changing their curriculum goals and paths (Wineburg, 2006). According to Gayle Y. Thieman, the president of the National Council for the Social Studies, principals should understand that interdisciplinary curricula which include technology-rich learning experiences will do more to improve students' test scores than drill and practice. She notes schools using such curricula at Lake Oswego (Oregon) School District and Southeast Island (Alaska) School District which boast SMARTboard and wireless technology. Thieman further states "We have to teach our kids technological literacy skills, and for that our kids have to have access" (cited in Zamosky, 2008, p. 1).

We should be mindful to examine curriculum changes to better prepare our students for the most important job they will have, that of being a citizen. Parker (2005) argues that the ability to deliberate is "probably the most important foundation of democratic citizenship" (p. 71). While certain skills such as fair play, cooperation, problem-solving, and the awareness and practice of ethics are also very important, it is the ability to deliberate that seems most essential for a democratic citizen. Therefore, educators and policy-makers would benefit children (learners) by remembering there is value in the uniqueness each of us brings to democratic deliberation. Jean Jacques Rousseau said: "Each individual is born with a distinctive temperament . . . We indiscriminately employ children of different bents on the same exercises; their education destroys the special bent and leaves a dull uniformity. Therefore after we have wasted our efforts in stunting the true gifts of nature we see the short-lived and illusory brilliance we have substituted die away, while the natural abilities we have crushed do not revive" (Rousseau, cited in Dewey, 1916, p. 116). There is a real threat in losing this value.

All stakeholders in the education of our American youth would be wise to make sure we do not "stunt the true gifts of nature" through the goal of uniformity. It may offer some rigor, but most certainly will bring greater restriction to the exploring and wondering minds of our youth and to the richness of the dialogue that is part of a vibrant democracy. Of equal concern is what happens to the individual and his/her unique learning style and temperament. Taking the individual out of any ownership of his or her direction inherently accepts that all are the same, that each to his or her own destiny can achieve at equal levels and with equal enthusiasm. This begs for purposeful questioning of the educational aim in our democracy. Standardizing people to conform to norms neither invites creativity or originality, but suggests we should all be judged according to a rule of conformity. Educational leaders need to be

careful they do not just accept this rule without seeking new ideas and new approaches which can coexist with change in a fluid state, focused on sensitivity to multiple possibilities of teaching and learning.

The prospect of teaching today under these rigors of restriction seems to imply one system, one discipline, one subject, and one style. If the restrictions of standardized curriculum and mandated testing are too severe, democratic modes of teaching could be in jeopardy and may even disappear, as documented earlier. These modes at the secondary level may be unable to survive as teachers become more rigid, fearful to be innovative or creative; solely focused on the basics, similar to their elementary counterparts (Passe, 2006).

The social studies discipline seems most likely to cut the broadest swath across the curriculum and has long been recognized as being able to connect with other subjects, representing a network of trans-disciplinary interconnections. For instance, the teaching of the history of the Manhattan Project could easily be incorporated into the physics lab, or the journalism class, as well as government/civics. A rich description of the creators of the Manhattan Project would reveal an accurate portrait of decision-makers, victims, and international implications of a decision. This cross curriculum experience would seem to be imperative for students to gain a deep and vital understanding of interactive responsibilities of a free and open society. Using programs we discuss below and others like them afford the learner greater opportunity to participate in a forum that best models our historical heritage of free and open citizen participation. If students know their findings and opinions are held in high esteem through this process they may become more active learners, while improving the skills which Wineburg (2006) calls for: reading, writing, recitation, and interpretation.

### **The “We the People” Program**

“We the People” is a project developed by the Center for Civic Education in 1987 and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. While judging a “We the People” showcase competition for elementary students, the first author became aware once again of the power of interactive discussion on topics of government and citizenship. When fifth graders had finished their prepared statement for this mock congressional hearing, he realized what separated them from others: they had spent time in purposeful conversation, discussing issues of a divided authority, concepts of limited government, and federalism.

Their questions were more important, however. One young man

stated after admitting that the Supreme Court had final authority regarding disputes between state and federal governments: "I'm just not sure nine people should have that kind of power." A young woman asked, immediately after discussing the phrase all men are created equal, "Why did it take so long to give all people equal rights?" Another young woman privately predicted: "If the next president should be a woman, we will have fewer problems."

These thoughts might be represented by questions, predictions, and clarifications, developed and expressed by respectful discourse even when disagreement is prevalent among their peers. It is vital that students be able to express their opinions and yet remain open to rebuttal that may present opposing views (Martinson, 2005). This willingness to listen to oppositional positions should not be construed to be a weakness but rather an opportunity for both individuals and society to benefit. Dialogue with those who disagree will force students to defend their ideas from a genuine intellectual and rational framework. This represents to many social studies educators and educational philosophers a fundamental and important approach to the teaching of democracy and the essence of civic education.

We can trace this emphasis upon discussion and debate back to what John Dewey saw as a necessary aspect of democracy, namely communication. Dewey (1916, p. 87) stated: "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." If we accept this emphasis on the social dimension of democracy this means that a special responsibility befalls democratic citizens: thinking through the implications of our actions for others before engaging in them. To ignite students to explore these ideals regarding the role of the citizen in American democracy, teachers should use programs like "We the People," which will provide "conversation sparks" that can lead to dynamic interaction in the social studies classroom (Moran & Carson, 2003).

The essence of this interaction can be seen in the culminating activity of "We the People." There student participants hold a simulated congressional hearing. Having been involved as an instructor and a judge, the first author has seen this program transform whole classes into vibrant debating teams, which demonstrate scholarly research habits and collaboratively present statements of their findings before a panel of community representatives acting as congressional committee members. The panel frequently includes judges, lawyers, community leaders, former teachers, and professors.

The hearing is an open forum that often brings parents, friends, and the community at large into a rare unity of both encouragement and

learning. The team (referred to as “experts”) present an opening statement they have prepared on one of the five main themes provided prior to the competition, and then they are often questioned and probed by the panel. While the format provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and depth of understanding of guiding constitutional principles, teachers are given equal time for proper assessment.

The “We the People” activity emphasizes the importance of providing a rich and inviting environment for exploring in education, fundamental to the development of principles for democracy. Discourse, discussion, and dialogue with open-ended questions often provide a variety of possible answers. Students and teachers can consider the possibility that perhaps there is no one absolute right or wrong response, which is vital preparation for democratic living. This is what Dewey meant by “conjoint, communicated experience.” It is that linguistic and conceptual space created by varied and perhaps conflicting ideas that gives vitality to a community. The type of activity design in “We the People” allows students to see the give and take of democratic action and this demonstrates that “human knowing is provisional, incomplete, and probabilistic. We rarely act with the absolute security that our choices are the absolutely appropriate ones” (Boisvert 1998, p. 16).

The text material in “We the People” provides a vivid and thorough understanding of the principles which support our way of governing. Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Warren E. Burger served as the chair of the commission and stated:

Many Americans have but a slight understanding of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the later amendments to which we pledge our allegiance. The lessons in this book are designed to give you, the next generation of American citizens, an understanding of the background, creation, and subsequent history of the unique system of government brought into being by our Constitution. At the same time, it will help you understand the principles and ideals that underlie and give meaning to the Constitution, a system of government by those governed. (Center for Civic Education, 2003)

This program also allows one to think as an individual while recognizing the value of his/her decisions on a greater society. We see this process enacted in another program, called “Choices for the 21st Century Education” program, which we shall now discuss in more depth as we pay more attention to the specifically deliberative processes fostered by these programs.

### **The “Choices for the 21st Century Education” Program**

While the “We the People” program supports the kind of active and interactive learning necessary for a vibrant democracy, other programs embed problem solving in a curriculum. Some believe it should also be the mission of schools to encourage recognition of the real world into curriculum choices. By incorporating students’ own knowledge of their world into the school, this might provide greater opportunity for engaging in relevant problem solving. In a global society where technology has brought cultures together as never before it would seem appropriate to utilize a curriculum designed for greater inquiry, research, thoughtfulness, and respectful dialogue. Rossi (2006) reminds us that evidence abounds to support the claim that the “discussion of public issues lies at the core of democracy” (p. 112) and yet the task is not an easy one. It demands proper teacher preparation and a practiced talent to help all students develop the skills and confidence to carry out a reasonable, sober, intelligent rationale for selecting their respective positions on a particular public issue. We suggest that the following program and the others described in this paper offer some hope for critical deliberation while providing abundant opportunities for specific skill development such as reading comprehension.

The “Choices for the 21st Century Education” (2007) program is part of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. The institute develops curricula on current and historical international issues, offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers, and sponsors student programs that link the classroom with the world beyond. The program presents a curriculum challenge, where students must defend their various positions on controversial issues, while recognizing a world where the participants have to gauge carefully the consequences of their actions.

The focus of each unit is a designed framework to offer alternative policies or options in order to challenge students to consider multiple perspectives and to think critically. According to Rossi (2006), “Discussing these questions allows teachers to model and students to practice higher-order thinking skills such as making decisions from an array of opinions, using reasoning to justify positions on an issue, and using evidence to support reasoning” (p. 113). Whether the issues are current such as Sudan, or reflect a historical turning point such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the options presented are supported with primary documents and materials that reflect the time and place of such events. All unit studies end with a culminating lesson that asks students to ponder the importance of the turning point to current problems facing us

today. It is the last lesson that perhaps pushes students and teachers to experience the reality of a more integrated and global society than ever before. It brings about the realization that whatever policies and habits that are designed and supported, one might want to weigh the consequences of their decisions very carefully and fully examine all options before taking action.

As one Indiana social studies teacher stated to the first author, “I like the Choices curriculum because if used properly students have a very solid and well- researched base from which to explore the topic.” Another secondary social studies teacher from Indiana added: “The Choices program offers teachers a great deal of freedom, you can begin at different places in the curriculum, utilize it several different ways, and all students regardless of their ability level can relate to the themes being studied. The curriculum also allows for teachers to use it as supplemental or it can stand by itself” (Waterson, 2007, p. 93). Clearly some social studies teachers use this program as a curriculum choice to help challenge students to think about public issues while being supplemented by substantial research.

Regardless of how the Choices Program is utilized, educators can appreciate that it reflects our civic responsibility to share ideals of a ‘connected society’ where democracy really means working toward an individual’s potential, but with the recognition that anything you do will have an effect on your fellow human beings. To avoid discussions about such public issues denies students the essential skills needed to develop and arrive at an answer (Rossi, 2006). As Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy state in regard to Deweyan pedagogy, “It is a world in which their status as participants cannot be abrogated” (1998, p. 25). This world of connection and responsibility is vital, and leads us to discuss another program that in several ways complements the two programs already discussed.

### **The “Doors to Diplomacy” Program**

In the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the need for international awareness, understanding, and cross-cultural sensitivity became more critical than ever. The world is a more complex and interconnected entity which requires knowledge of international relations. The study of international relations is also exciting and relevant to students and teachers alike. Today’s world not only offers new challenges never encountered before, but also new opportunities. As former Secretary of State Colin Powell stated on August 15, 2003, “People to people diplomacy, created through international education and exchanges, is critical to our national interests.”



Teachers and students would do well to move toward curriculum programs and methods that are designed to expand knowledge of world affairs by bringing to light opportunities which lie beyond the scope of the traditional social studies methodology and our local educational domain. One such program that the first author participated in during the 2002-2003 school year is the "Doors to Diplomacy" educational challenge. The U.S. Department of State sponsors this challenge to encourage middle school and high school students around the world to produce web projects that teach others about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy. There are four components to the challenge: collaborative web project, project narrative, peer review process, and awards (Doors to Diplomacy International Competition).

The Doors to Diplomacy program was designed to allow five to seven students to form a team for the purpose of teaching others about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy. This contest encourages students and educators to join together to build high-quality, education web sites on a variety of topics and share them as learning tools to millions of people around the globe. The team must record and share their experiences by writing and posting a narrative that will be viewed along with the entire web site by peer teams from other countries. After the initial evaluation by three other teams, the finalists are evaluated by education and government professionals. The final selection is made by a State Department official in the Bureau of Public Affairs. The winning project is linked to the State Department's youth site. As winners of the Doors to Diplomacy Award, each student team member receives a \$2,000 scholarship and the winning coaches' school receives a \$500 award. In addition, the entire team of students and their coaches are invited to Washington DC to receive a private tour of the State Department facilities, meet key officials, and participate in a special award presentation, as well as presenting a brief message to invited press, educators, and government officials.

The competition is sponsored by the U.S. State Department and the Global SchoolNet Foundation (GSN). Founded in 1984 by teachers who believed in a connected world that students need a global perspective, GSN brings together youth from 194 countries to explore community, cultural and scientific issues that prepare them for the workforce and help them to become responsible and literate global citizens. GSN's free membership program provides project-based learning support materials, resources, activities, lessons and special offers from GSN partners.

"The idea of the contest is to engage and interest the younger generation in international issues," said Janice Clark, a State Department public affairs specialist and one of the contest judges. "While they may

have some understanding of the world, it won't be the same as when they pick a topic and do the research." Clark said the contest is Internet-based because "this generation is very familiar with it and interested in it. We thought it was the way to go instead of, say, an essay contest like my generation would have done" (USINFO).

Beyond the competition this challenge requires original writing, research ideas supported by citation of sources, and information that is beneficial to visitors of the web site. While the web site has to be published in English, it can be constructed to appear in multiple languages. One of the things the first author especially enjoyed was when his team of five students developed "History of Foreign Relations" the inaugural winner of this international competition. These students then assumed responsibility to take what was learned and move to the local community to teach others. The most impacting lesson the students learned was that global learning can broaden the perspectives of not only students and teachers of this project, but also whole communities. That should be one of the goals of education.

### **Dare We Not Model Democratic Principles?**

In considering the educational value of these programs, we have become aware that a danger for a society that refuses to re-define itself and to re-examine its past is that growth and development become stagnant. Educators need to continue to re-think and re-evaluate long-standing beliefs, not only for their students, but also for themselves. Teachers as scholars should be a model followed in the light of self-reflection, which will empower both teachers and students alike (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 19). There is no fixed terminus at which point one can claim to be a completed or finished self. The affair, which is our life, is never completed. There can always be more development and awareness summarized by the term growth. That is why Dewey and other progressive educators believed that education is never ending, that the goal or terminus of education is simply more education, more learning.

Without freedom to pursue active engaging curriculums that invite critical thinking and inquiry, teachers will experience limited ability to explore and create opportunities for free-flowing discourse. Such programs as the "We the People," "Choices for the 21st Century Education," and "Doors to Diplomacy" represent these ideals in that they engage the student in problem-solving with real life considerations, allowing for multiple conclusions that are fluid and change with the context of the times. They also draw truth from historical research, and findings that are analyzed and presented through public conversation in deliberate

dialogue and debate. In every “We the People” session the first author has witnessed it becomes apparent that children learn quickly about social injustice and government policies that may illustrate a conflicting story of American history. Students often have questions regarding fundamental ideas about our heritage. Specifically, they ponder about how the constitution is founded on perfect principles, but we as a people have fallen short of that perfection.

### **Democratic Bankruptcy?**

Our American constitutional founders understood the possibility of abuses of power. Jefferson believed that education of the people would help correct these shortcomings. We argue this today, stating that there must be room in the curriculum to allow for greater intellectual imagination and creativity. In citizenship development, such is needed to avoid what Passe (2006) declared as “students who are poorly prepared for secondary school, grievously unprepared for university courses in social sciences, and overwhelmed by the responsibilities of democratic citizenship” (p. 190). If these issues are not addressed quickly we may witness a generation of students in America who experience what can be called democratic bankruptcy.

Democratic bankruptcy is characterized by the absence of democratic ideals in teaching and learning. Students should have some input into their learning, such as being allowed periodically to choose topics or themes for study within given parameters established by their teachers, which is in line with Dewey’s belief in the value of a guiding teacher. Allowing such student input might better assist students in developing the ability to critically think and make informed decisions, which arguably are foundational to the growth and development of a more effective democratic citizen. To help facilitate the process of a more effective democratic citizen, teachers should also be able to model deliberation, especially when issues are abstract, controversial, or complex.

The acceptance of guided student input, and teachers modeling deliberation, may help produce more prepared learners who can become better global citizens and relate to a global society. This requires a learning environment where free exchange and debate of ideas can occur, not just a repetitive exercise for rote memorization. Developing habits of respect for one another takes practice in the acceptance of disagreement for the search of truth to occur, which suggests a more democratic approach.

To avoid democratic bankruptcy for our youth, we must ask ourselves as educators whether the motivation of the educator today is to

teach children how to think, how to reason, and how to deliberate. The programs that we have discussed actively work toward these goals. We must interrogate our teaching and our curriculum to see whether we are simply processing children as future consumers and workers. While we acknowledge the significance of education for productive work in society, and the importance of modeling the wise use of economic resources, there lurks danger with excessive emphasis upon such work for economic gain for the health of a democratic state.

In a democracy the people hold the power elite accountable, not allowing ‘insulation’ from the problems of the masses. This process becomes more than a debate over educational policies and methods; it is fundamentally an issue of the ethical ideals of democracy. Dewey believed teachers should teach children how to think scientifically, emphasizing inquiry and reason. “Scientific judgment, he argued, was not an esoteric technique but a refinement of everyday reflection, and the native and unspoiled attitude of childhood, marked by ardent curiosity, fertile imagination, and love of experimental inquiry, is near, very near, to the attitude of the scientific mind” (Westbrook, 1991, p. 169).

Dewey stressed that “without initiation into the scientific spirit one is not in possession of the best tools which humanity has so far devised for effectively directed reflection” (Dewey, 1916, p. 197). Learning to think scientifically is important because scientific intelligence is a resource essential to effective freedom (Westbrook, 1991). Dewey believed many some virtues, such as free inquiry and diverse opinion, were necessary for a democratic society and polity.

### **“Laboratories of Knowledge-Making”**

To the practitioner today, Dewey’s ideal of scientific thinking exemplified a social group in which intelligence was “socialized,” and thus schools should organize themselves as, in part, little scientific learning communities. “Children should be engaged in ongoing experimentation, communication, and self-criticism, constituting themselves as a youthful commonwealth of cooperative inquiry” (Westbrook, 1991, p. 170). Three key findings in the current research of Donovan and Bransford (2005) reflect Dewey’s ideals of the scientific mind. *How Students Learn* is directly related to the importance of student’s preconceptions and emphasizes the importance of providing students with conceptual structures and tools with which to organize and manipulate (relate) factual knowledge. The volume also notes the importance of metacognitive approaches that enable students to reflect on and control their own learning.

If we refer back to the questions our fifth graders postulated during

the “We the People” showcase, these principles of learning are easy to view through their words. All students come with preconceived notions and thoughts, and it is imperative to build upon those even if they are not sophisticated or polished. Some believe if student voices are not heard it can be very detrimental to their development as democratic citizens. It only takes one comment from a teacher such as: “No, that is not the way it happened” to diminish even the most intrigued and motivated student. Building the foundation for students to think as historians and to search for the “mysteries” of history will bring both interest and enthusiasm for *their findings* (Barr, Barth, and Shermis 1978).

### **Modeling Change in Curriculum Design and Pedagogy**

For this process to be even remotely effective all must be allowed to participate and be agreeable to the purpose and benefit from this open process, and of course be willing to adjust some of the rules of standardization. Simply put, teachers may benefit from employing the ideals of what Bennis and Thomas (2002) call “neoteny.” Neoteny is the trait that allows people to adjust to change and circumstances by willingness to learn and in some cases relearn.

One of the key points for students to be able to learn ideals of democracy relates to teachers’ pedagogical disposition. To invite students to inquire through conversation about the issues of history, educators must view themselves as more than managers creating human beings modeled after machines. In this context the conduct of a master teacher will encourage opportunities for interesting and honest work. They will be open to occasions that arise for meaningful conversations about history, democracy, and life in general. For example, the point of learning history is that students can make sense of the past, and in doing so know some historical content. But understanding the discipline allows more serious engagement (deliberate conversation) with the substantive history students study, and enables them to do things with their historical knowledge. The understanding of history is complex and demands reflection. To acquire significant understanding students need to think about what they are doing and the extent to which they understand their findings.

This kind of thinking is precisely what the third principle of *How Students Learn* implies: a better understanding of democracy in America. Building ideas that can be used effectively is a challenge that requires constant review and rethinking on the part of both student and teacher (Donovan & Bransford 2005, p. 40-46). This implies an on-going fair and open dialogue between pupil and teacher.

### Conclusion

To engage students who want to explore and investigate issues of controversy it is vital to teach and develop intellectual operations used by historians that all school children should acquire. Thirty years ago, a pathbreaking book on social studies stated: "Teaching the mode of inquiry of history and the social studies lies at the heart of the new social studies" (Barr, Barth, & Shermis 1978, p. 68). History by nature is controversial because it provides a way for society to define itself and move to what it wants to be. The many culture wars, although fraught with emotion, offer an opportunity to debate with historians and history teachers how history is written, how research has changed in recent decades, and how this whole process is an example of democracy at work.

Perhaps what American students need to explore is the ideal of 'effective freedom,' the actual ability to carry out a course of action. It signifies the "power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from action upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation" (Dewey, 1938, p. 61). If so, this type of democratic thought is missing from our schools, our workplace, and our society in general. Total harmony is not the goal, but to hold to what we have in common, even in disagreement, is to think more democratically, to teach more democratically, and perhaps to become more democratic. Avoidance of democratic bankruptcy through active engagement is typified by the programs discussed. This should be the goal of America's public school system if we are to continue as a society that honors opposing viewpoints and a vitality of public deliberation.

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