

Introduction to *Was Someone Mean To You Today? The Impact of Standardization, Corporatization, and High Stakes Testing on Students, Teachers, Communities, Schools, and Democracy* (Draft)

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On the Fast Track

One of the things I do in our doctoral program in Leadership, Culture, and Curriculum at Miami University is write with students – pushing them toward early publication, especially by offering writing/publishing opportunities in my classes. I've written about this and done this work extensively (for a sampling see Poetter, 2010; Poetter, 2012; Poetter, 2013; Poetter, 2015). But I decided in the Summer of 2015 that the doctoral and masters students signed up for my special topics course on "The Standardization and Corporatization of the Curriculum" looked so good on paper that I would push them in the course to write a book on the topic in one month. This book took just over 30 days to write. It is my first "flash book" written with students and I'm very proud of their effort.

In case you have no frame of reference for writing anything of this magnitude, length, quality, or depth in 30 days – like a book – remember that Kerouac (1957) supposedly wrote *On the Road* in three weeks and that Brian Baty (2004) has been inspiring budding novelists to write their first book in 30 days by participating in his annual NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing in a Month process at www.NaNoWriMo.org). It can be done, and great writing is sometimes the result. But

the point of this effort isn't to produce a timeless, beat classic or to come up with the best possible idea for a new novel that might be a "hit."

Instead, the point of the work is to weave our stories together in a *currere* project in order to address the topic of our course together – the standardization and corporatization of the curriculum in today's current public school reform movements – in a scholarly way using Pinar's (1975) classic *currere* approach for encountering complicated curriculum conversations through the power of autobiography. Perhaps we could build a response to today's reform malaise together that would inspire citizens to rethink their at least tacit support for it and maybe even to challenge it on the ground with advocacy, citizen based action and organizing, and/or civil disobedience. This became the framework for the class, and we created our *currere* project – this book – through text analysis, dialogue, and writing. This work is a result of that *currere* process. More particulars on how this worked in the class as a framework for study and scholarly production come later in the introduction.

I want to spend a few moments discussing early on why I went about framing the class this way. The fact is that I pushed students to do this work together because I believe several things to be true. These ideas guide my pedagogy with adult learners in Curriculum Studies.

First, our students are on the cusp of becoming scholars, all of them, and this push to write for publication – to make something consumable and defensible out of their ideas and understanding of the field – might inspire them to greater heights, to deeper confidence, to new insights, and/or to make a contribution to the ongoing conversation that is unique, genuine, and helpful *from the very beginning of their work, and not just at*

a later time when they might supposedly be ready. They presented as a remarkably diverse group with deep, individual wells of experience and understanding in education and other walks of life. Why should they wait to do scholarship? Why should they merely write papers for grades from me? Why not participate in the public conversation about one of the most critical topics of our time in public education?

Second, I want students to know that an autobiographical approach can be scholarly, and can constitute research. Our experiences and stories hold great stores of knowledge, experience, and possibility if they are surfaced and put to use. This creative process can yield new insights and unique perspectives for the inquirer and for the consumer of this new knowledge. I wanted the students to grow themselves, and to grow others through their scholarly work, from beginning to end.

But last, I have been using *currere* my entire career, writing and working autobiographically almost naturally. Recently, I have been building stronger connections with my colleague Denise Taliafero Baszile – a long-time professor at Miami in our department, a well-known figure in this work, and a former student of Pinar's at LSU. Our plan is to hold a three-day conference for professors and doctoral students and teachers and citizens and school students at Miami in June of 2016 called "The *Currere* Exchange." I took this opportunity with this class, therefore, to explore the use of *currere* as an approach to teaching, discussing, dialoguing, inquiring, and writing about topics in Curriculum Studies. I wanted to know how structuring a course using the *currere* approach could help beginning scholars in Curriculum Studies to say something in an accessible and scholarly way that could be consumed by the professional and general public. How might *currere* free students up to be more themselves, to see their

lives more clearly, to surface issues and problems and possibilities that may not be surfaced using other approaches? How might the *currere* approach tap their rich, intuitive understandings of the problems at hand and their experiences with them? And, how might *currere* help them to teach each other about relationality, inquiry, and knowing while also making their personal work more public?

Ultimately, I wanted our students to have a chance to discuss their individual and collaborative inquiries using *currere* at the *Currere Exchange* in June 2016 and at other conferences during the 2015-2016 academic year. I also wanted them to discuss how they see an autobiographical approach's connection to complicated conversations in the field, to the development of theory, and to their cultivation of a direction for their own study and research. So on the first day, I led with *currere*. What is it? How does it work?

Pinar's *Currere* Method

Pinar writes concisely, if somewhat cryptically, about the *currere* approach to curriculum studies, in his essay "The Method of *Currere*" and in several other key places during his long career (1975, 1994, 2012):

- *Currere* is a four-step process that involves viewing life experience and our interpretations of reality as a venture into curriculum theorizing, that is "the scholarly effort to understand the curriculum, conceived... as 'complicated conversation'" (Pinar, 2012, p. 1).
- The approach is meant to answer the question, "What has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience?" (Pinar, 1994, p. 20). The word *Currere* constitutes the Latin root of the word curriculum, which literally

means the "course to be run." When we engage text, and our life story, particularly our pasts, we construct new text, new meaning, and a new life curriculum, engaging in the "complicated conversations" that yield new insight, new understanding, new possibilities for the present/future.

- In effect, the *currere* process is an attempt at "running our course," of defining our own life curriculum, foregrounding our lived experience as the "data" from which meaning springs.
- Pinar (1994) theorizes that *currere* involves four steps. They are the regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic steps.
- In the regressive step, "one returns to the past, to capture it as it was" (1994, p. 21).
- In the progressive step, "we look the other way...at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present" (1994, p. 24), that is we dream of a future.
- In the analytical step, we "describe the biographic present" (1994, p. 25) – what is happening now – and break it into parts, reconstruct it.
- And in the synthetic step, we juxtapose the three: "past, present, future... What are their complex multi-dimensional interrelations? How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?" (1994, p. 26) In synthesis, we put our experiences and our selves together. We construct knowledge, identity, meaning, perhaps even policy.
- In the end, the steps are fluid, and the jumping in point depends on the problem, the context, the inquirer, and the experience. Every *currere* project is different, in a sense, tailor-made.

I explained on the first day of the class that we would be reading common texts in the course and discussing them in hopes of framing key issues around the problems of standardization and corporatization of the curriculum. I wanted students to sample texts that had autobiographical components. I asked them to read a dystopian, futuristic novel about the demise of the testing movement that I published in 2006 entitled *The Education of Sam Sanders*. My rationale for using it was that I wanted them to see how narrative, in this case fiction, could offer a glimpse at 1) the autobiographical elements of the novel that are educational and that drove the narrative; and at 2) the power of the "progressive," that is of a future dream. I wanted the students to practice gleaning the concepts behind our topic, standardization and corporatization of the curriculum, from the story at hand.

Tienken & Orlich's (2013) *The School Reform Landscape: Fraud, Myth, and Lies*, their treatment of the current school reform landscape – where it comes from, what it's about, what it has done, especially in the era of high stakes testing, of standardization of the curriculum, and of the corporatization of schooling – offered a framework for the wider issues, and for how to make each student's own work more personal, accessible.

Kumashiro's (2008) *The Seduction of Common Sense* takes on the notion of "common sense" and how the right has co-opted almost all of the debate and action in the current school reform debacle, by personalizing the text and arguments each step of the way. I would consider these two books to be expository texts, attempts at analysis/synthesis, framing the story as it is today, according to the authors, based on multiple perspectives from a personal point of view.

And Laura's (2014) *Being Bad* gives us another view of the school to prison pipeline, telling powerfully the story of her brother Chris, and his difficulties in

navigating schooling, the world, and life today and yesterday. She offers a regressive view of the past, what happened in the past, and how it might inform our present.

I also posted a few short pieces I have written about testing and a collection of newspaper articles and blog posts about testing, standardization, and corporatization that I have collected over the past five years. I didn't assign these to be read, but offered them as a resource to students looking for inspiration or support for their initial writings in the course, which I called *curre* "bits" and "treatments."

"Bits" and "Treatments" and "Open Space"

In class, together, we explored the possibility of treating our personal and collective "bits" and "treatments" of the problems of standardization and corporatization in the curriculum as a *curre* project. The end goals of the course and the project were to spur a deeper understanding of the topics at hand in each student; to flush out the theoretical and practical aspects of the topics at hand; and to make a personal and public response to the topics. We explored together the complex terrain of the *curre* approach as a lever for both personal understanding and policy framing. The result is this book.

To get here, we had to take a journey, which included, as previously mentioned, our discussions and dialogue around several key course texts. Simultaneously, I asked students, and participated myself in a first *curre* step beyond dialogue, writing "reflections," autobiographical responses to life experiences, readings, images, trends, facts, etc., on our subject that I called "bits." I called them bits, while thinking about how stories come together, with bits of information, bits of experience, bits of meaning, bits of insight. That is, small pieces. A bit in comedy is a short, hard-hitting slice of life. Sometimes things get "blown to bits," that is separated into small pieces. These short

pieces, two pages in length, no more, were meant to ease students into the *currere* process, to help them connect with memories and experiences related to our topics. They were meant to tap the regressive, progressive, and analytic steps students took to engage our topics autobiographically.

In class, we shared our writing "bits"; students read each other's work in class. I hoped that students would gain confidence, get good feedback, and see the range of stories and the emergence of key themes as a result of these writing and reading opportunities. I thought that students would spend most of their time in the regressive, progressive, and analytic steps of the *currere* process when writing bits. I wrote bits right along with the students. Following is a bit about my second grade teacher, Shirley McEvoy. Early in my educational experience I learned that school could be a place of wonder, and opportunity, thanks to Mrs. McEvoy.



The Greatest Teacher Ever (Shirley McEvoy, 1935-2007) – By Tom Poetter

I grew up in a small town in Northwest Ohio called St. Marys, on Grand Lake St. Marys. My father was a pastor at a church there, and my brother and sister and I all attended the local public schools. Our first school was Bunker Hill Elementary, a large brick building that sat on a hill near the water tower at the top of Wayne St. We walked to school every day, about four blocks from the parsonage. The school housed grades K-6, and there was one class of about 20 or 30 students at each grade level.

There were four large rooms, each with wooden floors and plaster walls, on each of the three main floors. A giant center staircase carried you up the steps

toward the upper grades. The building had a large basement room for class meetings and restrooms for boys and girls and a large boiler room where our custodian worked (and where the teachers smoked!). First floor housed Kindergarten and first grade. Second floor housed second, third, and fourth grades. Third floor housed fifth and sixth grades and music/art. There was a small side staircase on the third floor that led to a small attic office for the principal. You did not ever want to have to go up that staircase for any reason.

By the time my younger sister went to the junior high school for 7th grade, the students in our attendance zone would be consolidated into the other two elementary schools in town and the school building torn down. No matter the physical destruction of the building, my memories of 2nd grade could never be wiped away. My teacher was Shirley McEvoy. When I went to second grade in 1970, there had been some drama about whether or not there would be enough students for two classes. We had two first grade classes, but the school decided not to hire another teacher, so more than 30 of us crowded into Mrs. McEvoy's room. Everyone wanted Mrs. McEvoy for a teacher.

But let me put first things first. Mrs. McEvoy was beautiful, and became my first crush. She was so nice, and smart. She never raised her voice, and we had some hellions in there. And I was restless. I had a hard time sitting in my desk. She let me stand behind my desk whenever I wanted to and let me work that way for extended periods. We moved around the class if we needed to in order to do our work, to interact with other students doing projects. We sat in our seats, too, and listened to Mrs. McEvoy explain things at the chalkboard. We

went to the basement for movies and filmstrips and to watch moon launches and splashdowns. And we also got our chances to dream big and to work with students across grade levels.

One day I told Mrs. McEvoy that I wanted to write a play about Lincoln's assassination. I was reading a short biography about Lincoln and had been moved to action. "We need to tell this story," I told her. So she encouraged me, and gave me some rudimentary instruction about writing dialogue, and I put pencil to paper. Once I had a script in three acts, she encouraged me to recruit actors from the entire school. Once I got a cast, we worked on the play at recess and after school and when it was ready to put on, the entire school met (in two shifts) to watch the play. It was my first experience directing in school. I had been directing all manner of games in the neighborhood for years already, but this experience made me hungry for the next orchestration.

The facts remain: that in second grade I had a beautiful, smart teacher who let me stand in class – even walk around if I needed to – who encouraged me to read books, to write a play, to cast and direct the play, and to present it to the whole school. This was routine. Things like this happened all the time in our classroom and school. Thank you Mrs. McEvoy, for giving me my first chance to direct in school. I haven't stopped since!



My intent with this story was to visit the regressive, and to highlight one of my best experiences in grade school. My difficulty in moving forward without challenging the status quo is knowing, now, that an education like the one I experienced, offered to every middle class student in that town in the presence of excellent teachers, is a rarity

today. The simple fact is that the curriculum, narrow as it is, and the testing regime, as gluttonous as it is, allows little room for real teaching, student interest, student curiosity, or student initiative.

After two weeks of reading and writing bits, I asked students to take the next step, by extending their writing to "treatments."

These "treatments" would be four-page, scholarly essays with an autobiographical perspective "synthesizing" the course readings, course writing by other students, discussions in class, the news, societal trends, recent movements in the reform universe, etc. (*currere's* synthesis step). I wanted students to lay the groundwork for this work, taking a step further by connecting resources, scholarship, theory, and insight to their bits. What I wanted them to begin seeing were the complex connections among our stories, the emergent themes that became resonant, and the power of a larger story, told by all of us, about the problems that the current "reform" movement has created for American public schools, students, teachers, citizens, and democracy. This synthesis step would be our final step in the *currere* process together.

We discussed several issues related to how this project might emerge. I'll admit that at the end of the second week, despite my assurances, students were worried about the structure of our project. How will it come together? I decided to use a democratic, transparent, dialogue-based method for determining the next movements of this project called "Open Space Technology" (Owen, 1992). A group seeking to set its own agenda for a meeting or for a conference from the "ground up" might use the organizational process of "open space." In our abbreviated use of it, over one class period (about two hours), students surfaced what they saw as the six most critical "organizing themes" in

the course so far (the book's six chapters), along with four "threads" (writing interludes that act as narrative transitions that synthesize our work around our notions of "democracy," "the golden age," "rhetoric/language," and "trust"). The class members decided which organizing themes they would attach themselves to through the remainder of the course, taking primary responsibility for constructing the narrative core of a chapter. The rest of the story of making this book has to do with the ride we took together to get to this point. Once you have a direction and some momentum, the fun really begins!

An Inter-textual Ride

As we began the process of collating bits and treatments, I felt as though I needed to provide some more framing for the project beyond discussing in generalities several approaches and commitments in the course. Students raised questions about the purpose, the perspective, the audience, the grounds for the project. All good questions. The first thing I wanted to establish was the primacy of the autobiographical. It's critical to stick with this commitment, and not slip into generalizations so immediately that we lose the story, the ground of experience, and the potential concepts and understandings that can come from our memory of and renditions of the particular. It's in the particular that we find meaning. It's in the particular that we notice the trends or themes or threads of our experiences, the connections to important and new ideas, the impetus to translate our experiences and memories into new steps, new adventures, and new ends.

Our lives become curricula, guided, influenced and honed by our sense of our relationship to a number of things in the world, including our relationship to practices, influences, and ideas, and especially to the world of the social where we are in relation to

peers and other citizens engaged in projects for social reconstruction, especially toward equity and social justice, and especially in public education. For the course, I called these connection spots "texts," reminiscent of Derrida's notion of "there is nothing outside of text" (Derrida, 2015), that is that we and our words and our relations and our social experiences, etc. – everything – is a text that can be expressed and interpreted.

I positioned each person in the class, and myself, at the center of the project, as citizen-teacher scholars posed to surface and reveal their own autobiographical connections to our course material and to the world as the primary form of inquiry together. The center of the course text is each individual student/author. Surrounding them, interacting with them, as texts, are at least four distinctly different texts, all interacting with each other simultaneously in personal and collective experience.

One text is the unique set of interactions, relations, and possibilities inhabiting our classroom, this course, which has dynamics all its own, with tensions and problems and dysfunctions and treasures all its own. Many of these will be buried, not revealed, divulged, and explicated in this final work. But they have had an impact, no matter, shaping and framing us as we move along, haunting us, improving us, setting us back, framing us.

One text is the many, many first person accounts of experiences and reactions to experiences in the world of standardization and corporatization of schooling and education in the world. These texts were expressed initially as bits, then embedded in treatments, then in interlude texts connecting the pieces. Our stories, our experiences, are critical texts for moving forward with our understanding and our work together.

One text is our perceptions of key events taking place in the world that have an impact on standardization and corporatization. These are the everyday accumulation of events that get reported in the news, on television, in the media, in blogs, in newspapers, that become data for further inquiry, that spur us on to inquire more deeply, to study more texts, to search for more accounts. These texts surround us, but we must consume them, attend to them, make a conscious effort to contemplate their cumulative effects on us, since singular events have a tendency to roll off us and to be forgotten.

One text is our understanding of policy, of educational history, of the practices of "reform" since the early 1990s. We have been co-opted by NCLB and the standardization and corporatization of the curriculum, and of the everyday practices that have shifted to support a system that is now focused on, supposedly, efficiency, and accountability, and production, and profit. We interact with these texts everyday in the larger and smaller context, as our lives and identities become immersed in the commonsensical movements of the large system, the difficult to shift norms that embody the systems and the decisions we make on a daily basis that reify the status quo.

All of these texts interact, with us personally and here in this new text with the themes and organizing threads we determined to develop. Figure 1 below depicts this cycle/swirl, our multiple texts (those depicted among others) interacting inter-textually not only with each other, but especially with the inquirers, us, both individually and as a body. As a result of the interaction, we develop new texts, new forms of interaction and expression that lend themselves to the definition and understanding of lives lived in relation to each other and with the hope of creating a new reality in the public domain in terms of the expression and practice of education.

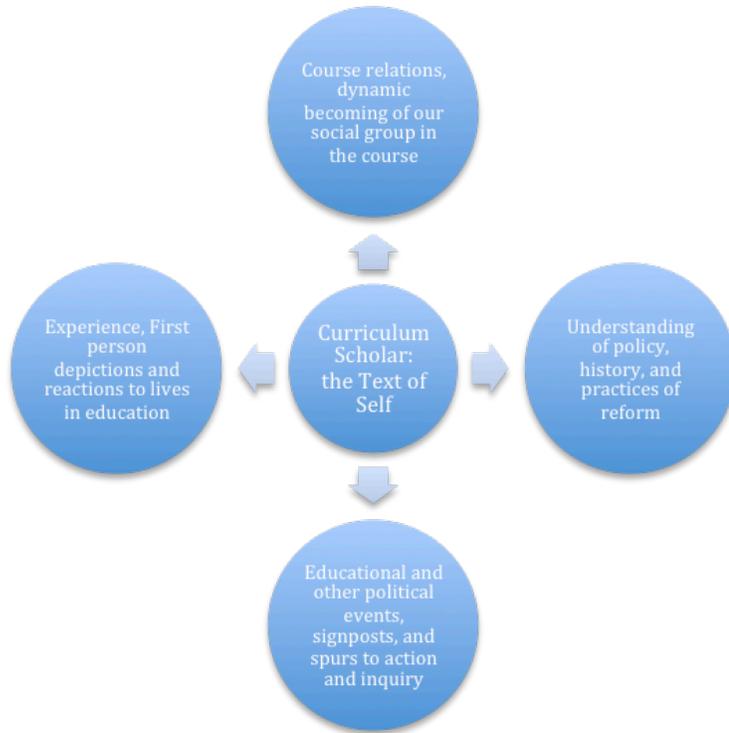


FIGURE 1: INTER-TEXTUAL INTERACTIONS IN CURRERE ENGAGEMENT

Organizing This Text

Beyond this introduction and explanation of our project, teams in our course developed six areas that became chapters here. They treat the inter-textual dynamics of this text in their own unique, autobiographical ways, drawing on bits, treatments, and their own research, inquiries, and interpretations to structure an argument, presentation, and story regarding critical aspects of the current reform movement oriented toward the standardization and corporatization of the curriculum.

In Chapter One entitled "NCLB: Educational Genocide," Jody Googins, Chamina Smith, and Tom Schoen examine the effects of standardization and corporatization on today's students, illustrating the current classroom environment while examining how this crippling culture is converting our students into numbers and cogs for the workforce.

With the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, the doors for further privatization were opened. As a consequence, creativity, critical thinking skills, and the recognition of the journey have met their shallow graves.

In Chapter Two entitled "The Dismantling of a Profession," Robin Blathers and Katherine Smith explore how educators are seen as laborers, not as professionals. This anti-intellectual image is perpetuated by educators' public employment and local control of school districts. Both the business sector and the government sector view educators as less important than other professions. Along with this image comes a loss of autonomy of all educators and marginalization of certain teachers who teach non-core subjects.

In Chapter Three entitled, "Disproportionately Burdened: The Effects of Standardization and Corporatization on Marginalized Groups," Kimberly Jenkins, Vanessa Winn, and Kim Cooper address issues of marginalization in schools. The authors recognize that as individuals in the course, they have each witnessed the divides between marginalized groups, whether based on race or other categories of otherness that include: language, class, ability, gender, sexuality etc. The authors find that their conversations about marginalization are often tethered to histories, their own identities, as well as to present circumstances. They attempt to make their way forward, addressing differences and exploring new ground.

In Chapter Four entitled "Oppressive Institutional Forces: The Intersection of Technology, Standardization, and Corporatization," Shoabing Li and Jennifer Ellerbe discuss the intersections of technology, standardization, and corporatization and the benefits and consequences for education, schools, classrooms, and students. They ask,

"How is technology as an institutional force controlling and distorting students' learning, outcomes, and the implementation of curriculum in education?"

In Chapter Five entitled "White Lies: Rhetoric in a Democratic Society," Spencer Cawein Pate and Don Murray foreground reflections on the rhetoric ("white lies") and the reality of both corporate education reform and the democratic resistance movements mobilizing against it. The pieces focus on such ideas as linguistic "reframing," political and ethical values, and psychoanalytic theory-praxis in order to discover effective strategies and tactics for inspiring political and pedagogical change.

In Chapter Six entitled "Viable Solutions," Cheryl Young, Nancy Tracey, and Peg Larrick generate viable solutions toward real change in education. They explore experiences, and with the help of other textual pioneers such as Tienken & Orlich (2013), Kumashiro (2008), Laura (2014), and others, they tell a story that will introduce a dialogue, inspire activism, and help readers begin their own journey forward in education.

In our Epilogue, each member of the class reflects on the course journey and comments on the power and limitations of currere for this project. Each author's bio is included there as well.

Also, we intersperse texts throughout that we call "Interludes," which address threads that the entire class identified throughout the course as critical themes that cross our chapter headings and stories. First, we intend to explore "Democracy," and how a notion of democratic schooling reflects us at our best, and how we have to work to claim and reclaim political and social democracy at each critical turn. Second, we intend to explore how all of our work, which at times may collect experiences and ideas from the

past and privilege them as superior to present approaches, must resist a tendency to suggest, even tacitly, that there ever was a "golden age" in education. Our public system has always been tainted by challenges (Goodlad, 1984), though we reject the notion that it has ever been in crisis, except for now under fire from the reformers (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Third, we wrestle with how "language and rhetoric" play a role in how we understand what is happening around us, how schooling in a reform era gets portrayed and sold to the public. How can we become more discerning citizens with regard to education? Fourth, we wonder how all of the "trust" has drained from the public for teachers and teaching and schooling. How can we reclaim the status and power that teachers and schools have had that allowed them to function as engines for learning and becoming, especially in places where autonomy and humanity reside? These "interludes" blend into the text, not always taking on a new heading or section, as the one I supply below.

Interlude: On the Standardization and Corporatization of the Curriculum

This introduction so far has laid out the course and its main assumptions for creating this project, but hasn't dealt specifically with the topic of the course: the standardization and the corporatization of the curriculum. These are big, big topics, and class members did their best to learn about what has been happening, what is happening, and what might happen with the current school reform efforts and the issues, contradictions, and problems with the movement. Many of the students have lived the horror as teachers. Many have seen the damage done to their own children. Others have been bystanders and want to contribute to the next generation of possibilities for public education that are morally defensible and not corrupted by misplaced purposes, greed,

and corruption. Some have seen the impact that the testing regime has had on students that come to us in higher education and enter society as workers and citizens. So here, let me say just a few words about standardization and corporatization.

Last spring the opt-out movement flourished around the country, especially in Ohio, home of Miami University. I have been a supporter/advocate for opting out for many years, suggesting in a work of fiction as early as 2001 that opting out was the best way for parents and students to stem the tide of the testing regimes sweeping the nation, beginning in Texas with Perot's TAAS and then spreading like wildfire, burning the textures and contours of student interest and teacher control in public schools all across the country (Poetter, 2001, 2006). Of course, the standardization movement was reified with NCLB, with testing mandates imposed by that law.

The tests reversed what I would call a critical commitment by professional educators throughout the 20th and early 21st century: that is to view teaching and teachers as the final arbiters of the curriculum (Eisner, 1979), and to design school programs, at least in part, with the means to learning as primary, as opposed to having to script the ends of every activity, every bit of content, every unit, every course, and measuring the attending objectives in a quantitative way ahead of educational experiences in order to prove whether or not something was learned or that it had any value. We began to privilege the notions that "what matters gets tested," and "what gets tested gets taught." This is bass ackwards! Great teaching and curriculum sometimes start with an experience, an interest, a curiosity. Just think of Mrs. McEvoy! Sometimes great classrooms are exploratory, based on students and what they need, not always exacted by outside influences. But this progressive norm, not present everywhere but at least part of

the fabric of many great classrooms and schools, has been disappearing. In fact, it is practically extinct. When we standardize children, standardize their teachers, standardize the curriculum, and standardize their schools, we get what we pay for: a very, very impersonal and ineffective system of public education, ripe for takeover.

And so corporate power has seeped into and sometimes blitzkrieged schools. There are so many fronts being lost. Materials and tests cost taxpayers billions, and corporations flourish as a result of the one size fits all standards and tests. The high stakes nature of NCLB made schools run for cover, to try and reach test score goals, and the government funded remedial clinics to "help" students, as well as vouchers and for profit charter schools when the public schools "failed." Billions upon billions of dollars have been dumped into the private sector as we have over-regulated schools, making way for deregulation. In a cruel twist, corporations gain everything from over-regulation and everything from de-regulation practices in public education. And the losers are everyone in sight, except those with gold-lined pockets. The American way.

This work tries to get to the bottom of this situation from an autobiographical perspective. Perhaps you can see yourself here, as well as a new path forward. Maybe you can position yourself inside the democratic conversation, and help us all claim new ground. And a final note: this work was completed by an amazing group of beginning scholars. We are passionate and dedicated to our work. But it is on the way somewhere, certainly not all together complete. Consider as you read how you might complete the conversation, or add to us. Join with us on our *currere* journey. Inquire with us.

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