

FOURTH
EDITION

America's **TEACHERS**

AN INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION



JOSEPH W. NEWMAN

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America's Teachers: An Introduction to Education

Joseph W. Newman

University of South Alabama

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PREFACE

With this new edition, *America's Teachers* has changed—and, I hope, improved—in several ways. The book you hold in your hands has a new publisher, a fresh look, and new instructional features, but most importantly I've brought the contents up-to-date so they can continue to offer prospective teachers a realistic introduction to a demanding career.

Every chapter contains new material. Chapter 1 brings students good news about the job market—the best news in recent years. Chapter 2, featuring a case study of merit pay and accountability in the Cincinnati Public Schools, highlights the latest trends in teacher salaries and evaluation. Chapter 3 presents current information on teacher education, licensing, and certification. Here the emphasis is on how such groups as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are trying to make teaching more professional while politicians are trying to make the occupation easier to get into. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers move to center stage in Chapter 4. A case study of the “new professionalism unionism” in Rochester pulls together themes from several chapters. Updated information on tenure, AIDS/HIV, child abuse, and academic freedom stands out in Chapter 5. Taken together, the chapters in Part I introduce students to teaching as an occupation.

In Part II, which explores the relationship between schools and society, the emphasis on diversity has increased with every edition of the textbook. Chapter 6 presents new material on immigration and offers historical insights into assimilation, pluralism, and separation. Chapter 7 shows why educators who subscribe to different theories of education are taking different positions on *the* reform movement of the early 2000s: state standards, assessments, and accountability. As I worked to meet my deadline for revising Chapter 8, I was able to include the latest information on demographic trends, school violence, ability grouping and tracking, the culture wars over bilingual education and nonstandard dialects of English, *resegregation*, and gender equity. Chapter 9 surveys political issues ranging from the declining power of local school boards to the state-level politics of “more of the same,” from the ongoing drive for adequacy and equity in school finance to the educational agenda of George W. Bush, a former education governor who may try to be an education president.

The two chapters in Part III analyze trends shaping American education as the new century begins. The latest developments in private education, particularly the strong push for educational choice and the growing popularity of home schooling, highlight Chapter 10. Concluding the book with a study of the conflict between teacher autonomy and high-stakes testing, Chapter 11 explains what happens when groups with very different goals try to get their way with the curriculum.

This edition of *America's Teachers* features Internet boxes to help prospective teachers locate additional information online. Just as I've tried to reflect diverse points of view within the text, I've included links to Web sites as different as those maintained by progressive educator Alfie Kohn and essentialist E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Empower America and the American Federation of Teachers, FairTest and the Educational Testing Service. Links to articles in *Education Week*, the "newspaper of record" for K–12 schools, encourage students to keep up with issues and trends.

America's Teachers gives prospective teachers a candid view of the challenges as well as the rewards of the work they are considering. Two words I often hear students and colleagues use to describe the book are *readable* and *honest*. I consider these words a genuine compliment because I work hard at my writing and try to present teaching as the demanding occupation it is.

Why do I call teaching an *occupation* instead of a *profession*? Terminology is important, as I explain in Chapters 1 and 4, and I want my choice of words to make a statement. Measured against the standards set by medicine, law, and other professions, teaching falls short. There are hopeful signs that teaching may be moving toward professionalism, as medicine and law did during the twentieth century, but teaching still has quite a distance to go.

I write with the utmost respect for teachers. My mother was a career first grade teacher—the best in the world, as far as I'm concerned. My wife is a middle school social studies teacher—she, too, is world class. These two teachers, along with thousands of other superb teachers I've known over the years, deserve a better occupation. Had they gone into medicine or law, they would have experienced greater autonomy, appreciated better working conditions, and reaped richer extrinsic rewards. I know from my work as a high school English teacher that had I entered a professionalized occupation, I would have been able to do a better job teaching students in the classroom.

So as soon as teaching measures up, not just to the standards of medicine and law but to the high personal standards teachers set for themselves, I'll be happy to call it a profession. If I've gotten your attention on this issue, you may want to turn to Chapters 1 and 4 to continue the discussion.

If you have comments or questions, I'd really enjoy hearing from you. My e-mail address is jnewman@usmail.usouthal.edu. I promise to click back.

My thanks to the many people who helped and encouraged me as I worked. My greatest debt is to Linda Cooper, secretary of the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at the University of South Alabama. I would also like to thank the reviewers of this edition including Xu Di, University of West Florida; Mark Isham, Eastern New Mexico University; Larry G. Julian, Brewton-Parker College; Anthony A. Koyzis, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh; Leslie Minor-Evans, Central Oregon Community College; Melvin J. Pedras, University of Idaho; Claire V. Sibold, Biola University; and Mack Welford, Roanoke College.

I dedicate this edition of the textbook to Wanda, Beth, and Bryan—my family. All of us are involved with schools, Wanda and I as teachers, Beth and Bryan as students. My university students say they can see family love in the stories I tell in class. I'm proud to let the feeling show, and I want this dedication to be one more sign.

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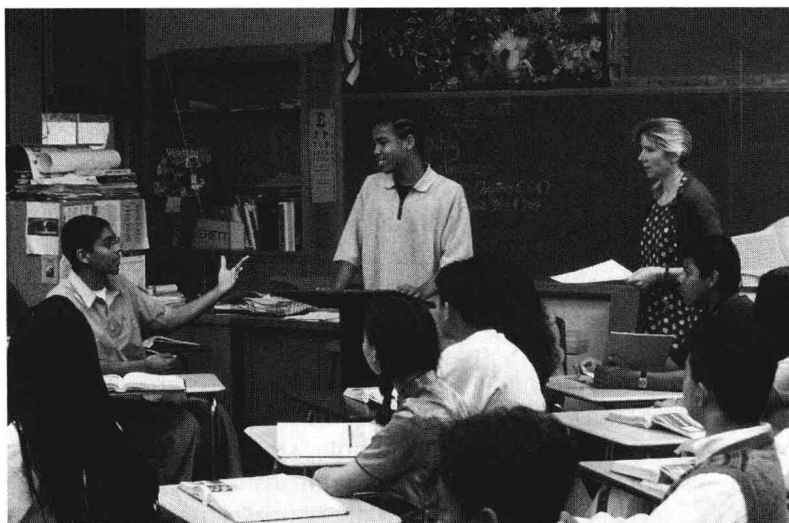
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CHAPTER

1

Deciding to Teach and Finding a Job



I try to show my students a genuine concern, that this isn't just a job, that I am not here just for the buck in the pocket. I am here because I really want to be here. I enjoy teaching and I want to help them avoid the mistakes I might have made. I listen, try to guide them along, help them make the right decisions . . . to make this world a better place.

—California teacher¹

We're expected not only to teach but to help with the total ills of society. . . . We're overworked, often trying to care so damn much about those we teach and yet see the incredible destruction of their lives due to alcohol and drugs. We're underpaid for our services yet we're still under the shadow of the "3 month" vacation idea. In short we're burning out.

—Washington State teacher²

Motives for Teaching

Talking with prospective teachers about why they want to teach is an excellent way to begin a discussion of teaching as an occupation. On the first day of class, I always ask the students in my introductory education classes to write down their major motive for teaching. Comparing their responses with the results of similar surveys conducted around the nation, I see several clear patterns.

Why do *you* want to be a teacher? Although you probably have several reasons, try to narrow them to your major motive for wanting to teach. Now compare your response with those in Table 1.1. If your motivation centers on *students*, you have plenty of company. With remarkable consistency, about half the prospective teachers in my classes link their desire to teach directly to young people. If *academics*—the love of a particular subject or of learning in general—prompts you to teach, you are also in good company. Approximately one-fifth of the future teachers in my survey give academic reasons as their major motive. Surveys conducted throughout the nation show the same patterns: Student-centered motives top the list, with academic motives running a distant second or third.³

Other motives for teaching (and the rounded percentages of my prospective teachers who put them in first place) include *job advantages* (10 percent), the *social value* of teaching (10 percent), and the *influence of other teachers* (5 percent). These patterns, too, are consistent with the results of other surveys. The brief statements quoted in Table 1.1 are representative of the ways future teachers summarize their motives.

Considered as a whole, studies of motivation pay future teachers genuine compliments. Teachers are altruistic; they want to help. Most of them enter the occupation with the welfare of others in mind, believing they can make a difference in their students' lives. The prospective teachers I work with are choosing such words as "to make a difference in students' lives" more and more often to explain why they want to teach. They are convinced young people need responsible guidance more than ever before. Table 1.1 also indicates some future teachers have been helped—or, in a few cases, hurt—so much by their own teachers, they feel motivated to go back to the classroom. Some extend their concern for others to society as a whole.

Now notice what the surveys do *not* say. People do not go into teaching for the money—with good reason, as we will see in Chapter 2. Nor do people choose teaching for the prestige. Americans respect teachers, but it is a peculiar respect—the kind accorded to outsiders or people set apart from the mainstream of society.⁴

Perceived Advantages of Teaching

Can we take at face value what prospective teachers say about their motives? Aren't some of their statements too good to be true? Based on my work with future teachers, I am convinced their altruism and idealism are real. But because of what

they say outside of class, informally and off the record, I am also convinced the perceived advantages of the occupation pull more people into teaching than the surveys indicate.

Notice the job advantages listed in Table 1.1. Teacher education students often joke, “Teaching has three main benefits: June, July, and August.” Of course the summer vacation is attractive, but should it be someone’s major reason for wanting to teach? Prospective teachers who admit it is, along with others who are reluctant to confess, should consider that some school districts have already adopted a year-round schedule, and the summer break is closer to ten weeks than to twelve in most districts. Taking graduate and inservice courses during the summer further reduces time off.

So does moonlighting. Thirty-one percent of America’s teachers work a second job. Thirteen percent hold an evening or weekend job outside their school systems during the school year, and 18 percent find outside summer employment. Interestingly, many teachers say they moonlight not for the extra income, but for the contact with adults, something they miss on their day jobs.⁵

Another perceived advantage of teaching is the daily schedule. As more nontraditional students (age twenty-five and older), many of them women, go to college to pursue the degrees they did not obtain when they were younger, more

TABLE 1.1 Why do you want to be a teacher? Motives of prospective teachers.

-
- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Students | “I love children.” |
| | “I like working with young people.” |
| | “I want to help students.” |
| | “I believe I can make a difference in their lives.” |
| 2. Academics | “I enjoy [a particular subject].” |
| | “I love learning.” |
| 3. Job advantages | “I like having my summers off.” |
| | “My hours as a teacher will match my children’s hours in school.” |
| | “Teaching is a good job for people on their way to something else.” |
| 4. Social value | “Teaching is society’s most important job.” |
| | “I can improve society by teaching.” |
| 5. Influence of other teachers | “Some of my teachers helped me so much, they made me want to teach.” |
| | “Some of my teachers hurt me so much, they made me want to teach.” |
-

Sources: This profile is based on my ongoing survey of prospective teachers at the University of South Alabama and on National Education Association, *Status of the American Public School Teacher, 1995–96* (Washington, DC: NEA, 1997), 59–61; Susan M. Brookhart and Donald J. Freeman, “Characteristics of Entering Teacher Candidates,” *Review of Educational Research* 62 (1992): 37–60; and Cassandra L. Book and Donald J. Freeman, “Differences in Entry Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Teacher Candidates,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 37 (March–April 1986): 47–51.

students talk frankly about choosing a career that will allow them to spend time with their own children. As a parent, I can appreciate this motive, but should it be first on a prospective teacher's list? Although the nontraditional students in my classes have generally realistic expectations of the occupation, they often underestimate the time demands teaching will make on their evenings and weekends.⁶

Finally, there is the perception that teaching is a good temporary job for people who have other career and life plans in mind. As students sometimes tell me, "Eventually I want to do something else, but I think I'll teach for a while. After all, teaching is easy to get into and easy to get out of." Actually this is an old notion. Historical studies going back to the colonial era show how some teachers (mostly males) have used the occupation as a stepping-stone to other careers, while others (most of them females) have used it as a way station en route to marriage and family.⁷

Teachers Who Love, Teachers Who Care

Americans view teaching as women's work. The feminization of the occupation began in the mid-1800s when school boards turned increasingly to women to fill teaching positions. Females had two advantages over the males who had dominated the occupation: The character and personality of women were regarded as better suited to working with young children, and women constituted a cheap, reliable labor force. These nineteenth-century perceptions are with us still. Today three out of four K-12 teachers and nine out of ten elementary school teachers are women, and the percentages are even higher in areas of the nation where highly traditional views of sex roles prevail.⁸

"I Love Children." Prospective teachers often use these words to express their motivation for teaching. Thus we would expect employed teachers to reflect the same sentiment. The evidence, though, is curiously mixed. Contemporary and historical studies of teachers' letters and diaries reveal few discourses on loving children. Instead, teachers discuss how demanding teaching is or focus on matters unrelated to their work. In these letters and diaries, teaching comes across as a job, something people do for economic survival. Yet for a century and a half, society has been sending women the message they should teach because they love children. They should want to be teachers—obviously not for the money but for the children. It is almost as if women, trying hard to please by saying what society expects, have repeated "I'm going to teach because I love children" so often they have come to believe it.⁹

Perhaps this discussion is too harsh. Teachers *should* care about students, and the evidence suggests the vast majority of them do. Nel Noddings and other feminist scholars applaud the fact that most teachers, especially those who are women, make caring about students central to their work. When asked why they stick with their demanding jobs, teachers have a ready answer: the students. Responding to ongoing *Metropolitan Life Surveys of the American Teacher*, an overwhelming 84 percent of teachers talk about students when asked what they like best about their work.