

# Letters

## CUTTING BACK

I was glad to see the article I helped write, "Proposition 2½—Lessons from Massachusetts," appeared in your January issue.

Ironically enough, I learned the lesson of survival from Proposition 2½. I was one of the unfortunate educators who lost a job. For several months I tried very hard to stay in the field. Now, as the enclosed business card will indicate, I find myself in the private sector, performing an educational function within a corporate setting.

Thus far, I have been delighted with my new position. I will miss being in public education, but I do not regret leaving.

JEFFREY S. LUCOVE  
Program D  
Newton, Massachusetts

## THE GIFTED TEACHER

After reading *Let's Not Fool Prospective Teachers*, by Robin Emmingham [December 1981], I wonder that any young people express an interest in teaching. It saddens me to read such pessimism, although I must admit I agree with some of the points made.

I agree that teachers need empathy and highly developed skills of communication. I agree that they need a strong background in their subject area. I also believe that beginning teachers must have a love of their subject area. The love of subject cannot take the place of careful planning, but it will make the planning easier and the classroom presentation more enjoyable.

After 20 years in supervision and administration, I believe the qualities that separate the truly gifted teacher from the mediocre one can neither be taught nor learned.

Colleges can train people, but supervisors and administrators in a school system must help these novices become teachers. The atmosphere and the teaching position must provide them the opportunity to learn about teaching without losing their idealism or their love of their subject.

I agree that the statements, "The sub-

ject matter excites me" and "Kids are so stimulating," are absurd, but I still believe you cannot teach well without believing both.

The people we need are those with that mysterious mixture of witchcraft and foolishness that makes them want to join our under-paid, under-privileged, unappreciated second-class citizenry that molds the future of mankind.

RICHARD H. WOOTTEN  
Supervisor of Instruction  
Board of Education  
Wicomico County  
Salisbury, Maryland

## SUPERVISION FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Here's an observation concerning the Stickney-Plunkett article on Title I in the January issue. Having spent ten years conducting U.S. Office of Education reviews of Title I programs at the state, district, school, and classroom levels, I appreciate this excellent, difficult-to-write report on the progress of the largest federal compensatory education program. Our review teams found astonishing contrasts in project planning, teaching methods, and supervision among the programs we visited. Researchers have identified and disseminated characteristics of effective programs, some of which were noted in the article. There is one, seldom mentioned in Title I research, which I found with remarkable consistency in high achieving projects with five or more participating schools: systematic instructional supervision.

In the Title I context I saw this function to be essentially that of periodically reviewing instruction by project teachers in the classroom and taking action (demonstrations and so on) to strengthen the performance of those who needed help. Sometimes a project director performed this function; in other cases the regular matter supervisor did it. As we all know, good compensatory teaching calls for the use of a variety of instructional skills—and effective supervision can do much to ensure that

those skills are developed and used.

CHARLES DELL  
Alexandria, Virginia

## EFFECTS OF PROPOSITION 13

Reading David Savage's article in your January issue, I found myself asking whether I live and work in the same state he was talking about. People who say that Proposition 13 has not affected the quality of education in California are being very selective in the gathering of data. The effects, which have already been considerable—and negative—will be intensified over the next few years now that the state surplus funds have disappeared.

An article in the *Wall Street Journal* of February 16, 1982, gives a much more balanced picture:

Economists say budget cuts have hit public education in California hardest. Once part of a model system, the state's elementary and secondary schools make do with the country's highest pupil-teacher ratio, roughly 29 percent above the national average. Elective humanities courses have been trimmed: \$1 billion in maintenance has been deferred; and California, which at one time ranked among the top six states in the proportion of personal income devoted to schools, now ranks 44th.

Publication of your article is a disservice to the many educators in California who are working harder than ever to minimize the negative impact of a very stringent financial situation on the education of our children. Savage is entitled to his viewpoints, but I wish his article had been set next to a presentation more in keeping with reality.

LILLIAN B. WEHMEYER  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Instruction  
San Mateo City School District  
San Mateo, California

## GET TOUGH VS. GET HELPFUL

I was horrified by your description of Walter Harris's corrective behavior at Ribault High School ["Overview," February 1982]. I can envision a final episode of "Welcome Back, Kotter"



likened to your story of Ribault. Of Barbarino, Epstein, Washington, and Horshack, only Horshack remains. The others were denied their education because they could not function within the dress code and conduct code of the new principal. Kotter asked for a transfer because he was "unhappy" at Woodrow Wilson High. Horshack wears appropriate attire, is so fearful of the consequences of smoking that he swallows nicotine tablets as a substitute for smoking during school hours, and has lost his friends in the neighborhood, who call him "Tom." The "majority" of the students at Woodrow Wilson High are satisfied with the new principal. Our five heroes have paid for the majority's satisfaction with their liberty.

Is the price too high? I think so. Particularly since I can demonstrate that a "get helpful" (as opposed to "get tough") policy introduced in Comstock High School near Kalamazoo, Michigan, resulted in a 300 percent decrease in drop-out rate, a 200 percent decrease in truancy, statistically significant gains in student "school self-concept" and statistically significant gains on five subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test (Advanced Battery) for a group of 45 disadvantaged ninth and tenth graders. All educators applaud creating environments wherein learning can flourish. Those of us who value the first and fourteenth amendments of the Constitution look to means in keeping with these amendments to achieve those ends.

RICK BENEDICT  
*Director, Alternative Education  
 Comstock Schools  
 Comstock, Michigan*

## MATHEMATICS RESEARCH

I have just finished using the ASCD/NCTM publication *Mathematics Education Research: Implications for the 80's* as a required textbook in my graduate course "Theory and Research in Elementary Mathematics." The 14 students enrolled, all of whom were women, were either teaching in an elementary school or were full-time graduate students.

This is the first publication I have used in 18 years of teaching the course that has provided an adequate base of

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

We are tentatively planning the following theme issues of *Educational Leadership* in 1982-83.

Month	Theme	Including	Deadlines for Manuscripts
October	Staff Development	Characteristics and examples of effective training and development programs for teachers.	June 1, 1982
November	Teamwork	Team management. Internal politics of schools. Examples of successful collaboration with business and community.	July 1, 1982
December	Creating Effective Schools	Case studies of effective schools. Examples of programs for increasing effectiveness.	August 1, 1982
January	The Art and Craft of Teaching	The case for viewing teaching as artistry, with implications for teacher preparation, inservice, and evaluation.	September 1, 1982
February	Improving Productivity in Education	Examination of ways to make more efficient and effective use of resources in schools.	October 1, 1982
March	Teaching Today's Youth	Characteristics of today's students and their implications for curriculum and supervision.	November 1, 1982
April	(Open)	—	—
May	Preparing for the Future	Curriculum and organizational changes needed to prepare students for the future. Impact of computers and other technology.	January 1, 1983

All issues also include non-theme articles, so manuscripts on other aspects of curriculum, instruction, supervision, and leadership in elementary and secondary education are always welcome.

Papers should be written in direct, readable style and be as brief as possible (five to ten typed pages double-spaced). We reserve the right to edit for brevity, clarity, and consistency of style.

References may be cited as footnotes or listed in bibliographic form at the end of the article. For examples of either style, refer to a recent issue or to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (University of Chicago Press). Double-space everything, including quotations and footnotes.

Please send two copies. Rejected manuscripts are not returned unless the author provides a self-addressed envelope with the necessary postage.

reported research to assist graduate students with research writing endeavors.

THOMAS GIBNEY  
*Director  
 Division of Curriculum and  
 Instruction  
 The University of Toledo  
 Toledo, Ohio*

**Editor's note:** Readers' comments on our articles are welcome. Address letters to Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Letters accepted for publication may be edited for brevity and clarity.

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