told his sons that if they ever contemplated teaching as a career, he would disown them. Many of the best of us, in terms of ability, can bear the life no longer and in increasing numbers are opting to walk out of the classroom. it is common knowledge that the only way "to get ahead in teaching is to leave it."

Given the conditions of the profession, it does not seem astonishing to me that Roland Barth hears no talk of "visions" in the halls of our public schools—like Langston Hughes with his "dream deferred," most teachers have seen early visions wither and die "like a raisin in the sun.

Yet, despite all this, many of us, behind a mask of cynicism, which is the best defense against repeated disappointment, have kept the ideals that lured us into the classroom in the first place. But we have gone underground with them, exposing them to only a few close colleagues and, of course, to our closest colleagues—our students—but never to the outsider like Barth whose insistent optimism is at odds with our reality. We know that the way to make our visions come true would mean, as it is so beautifully put in In Search of Excellence, "that those who implement the plans must make the plans." Now there's a vision worth pursuing. But this would mean acknowledging the existence of the invisible teacher as the major factor in the educational paradigm; this would mean, as Theodore Sizer states, "empowering Horace," and Horace and I both know that this will never happen.


Boyer, p. 144.

Good News! A Response to Dombart

Roland S. Barth

It hurts, of course, to be bludgeoned about the head and shoulders with a sharp instrument—in this case a pen. But I find behind the ad hominem attack in this strong statement far more good news than bad. The format of Dombart's article is really a letter to the editor of Educational Leadership written in reaction to an article in another journal, Kappan. There's not enough cross pollination among compartments within our profession. I like it. Secondly, the author has clearly read and been provoked by my article. Most of us who write are never sure our work will be read, let alone what response it will evoke. More good news. Third, this public school teacher clearly demonstrates that a teacher can grade essays, create learning centers, and engage in good writing about practice. Very good news. Finally, Dombart has articulated with great insight and passion the pathological characteristics that interfere with teaching becoming a profession.

When we have that cup of coffee in the teachers' lounge, I look forward to talking about her personal vision of good schools, about the presence of visions among others who work in schools, and about the costs and benefits to teachers and administrators of revealing their visions. I'd also like to compare notes from my years as teacher and principal. I'm delighted that my writing helped elicit hers. I agree. We need many good, strong, wise words in print coming from within schools. Even if scorched a bit by it, I celebrate the persistence under trying circumstances of this lively spark. Good news indeed.

Roland S. Barth is Senior Lecturer in Education and Codirector of The Principals' Center, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education, Monroe C. Gutman Library, Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.