MINUTES

MONTANA SENATE
52nd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Call to Order: By SENATOR CHET BLAYLOCK, on April 19, 1991, at 1:30 P. M.,

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Chet Blaylock, Chairman (D)
Harry Fritz, Vice Chairman (D)
Robert Brown (R)
Bill Farrell (R)
H.W. Hammond (R)
Dennis Nathe (R)
Dick Pinsoneault (D)
Mignon Waterman (D)
Bill Yellowtail (D)

Staff Present: Andy Merrill (Legislative Council).

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

HEARING ON HJR 46

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE BACHINI, House District 14, presented HJR 46, an act to urge the governor to proclaim Northern Montana College Lights Wrestling and Skylights Women's Basketball Appreciation Day. He said that 14 of the 16 members of the Montana College Lights Wrestling Team are Montanans.

Closing by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE BACHINI closed the hearing.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HJR 46

Motion and vote:

SENATOR NATHE MOVED that HJR 46 BE CONCURRED IN. The vote was unanimous. MOTION CARRIED.

SENATOR HOCKETT - carrier.

HEARING ON HJR 47

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE GOULD, House District 61, an act to commemorate the Grizzly Men and Women's Basketball teams.

Closing by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE GOULD closed the hearing.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HJR 47

Motion and vote:

SENATOR FRITZ moved that HJR 47 BE CONCURRED IN. The vote was unanimous. MOTION CARRIED.

SENATOR FRITZ - carrier.

HEARING ON HJR 49

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE TOOLE, House District 60, presented HJR 49 an act which offers a study of the extension of the school year from 180 days to as many as 220 days.

The sponsor presented Exhibit 1, an article from the magazine The Atlantic Monthly entitled "The Case For More School Days", by Massachusetts legislator Michael J. Barrett. (He asked that the Committee give attention to Page 80.) The author being interested in this subject has introduced a resolution to the Massachusetts legislature seeking an extension of school year in that state. There are several other states where this is under consideration.

The sponsor had introduced a bill in the House that would have done the same in Montana. He said that he did not bring a bill with him as he thinks the idea of extending the school year is a revolutionary idea that will require study before implementation.

The sponsor said that there is a longer school year in many other countries of the world and the performance of students in some of those countries is better; particularly, students in Japan and West Germany in such subjects as math, science and reading.

Questions From Committee Members:

SENATOR WATERMAN and members of the committee discussed the fact that HJR 49 will require more funding for teachers' salaries in addition to other expenses incurred with longer school terms such as a need for air conditioning. She said that she had advocated longer school years for a long time. A study will show that many agree that it should be done and there are many ways to do it but it all costs money. She did not think that a study would be that beneficial at this time. She said that "without someone pushing for it" she wondered what benefit the study would be.

SENATOR BROWN and SENATOR FARRELL pointed out that it is true that there are longer school years in some countries but it is usually only to a select few who prove to be academically worthy and others might not have any opportunity for schooling.

SENATOR WATERMAN said when she worked on the new accreditation standards, she discovered that graduation requirements today are almost identical to what they were 100 years ago. She feels progress has been slow and if the schools are simply going to lengthen the school year without changing the curriculum, the length of school years should remain what they are at the present time.

Closing by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE TOOLE closed the hearing on HJR 49, urging the Committee to adopt HJR 49.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HJR 49

Motion and vote:

SENATOR FRITZ **MOVED THAT HJR 49 BE CONCURRED IN. The vote was unanimous. MOTION CARRIED.**

SENATOR FRITZ - carrier.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment At: 3:00 P. M.,

Chet Blaylock
SENATOR CHET BLAYLOCK, Chairman

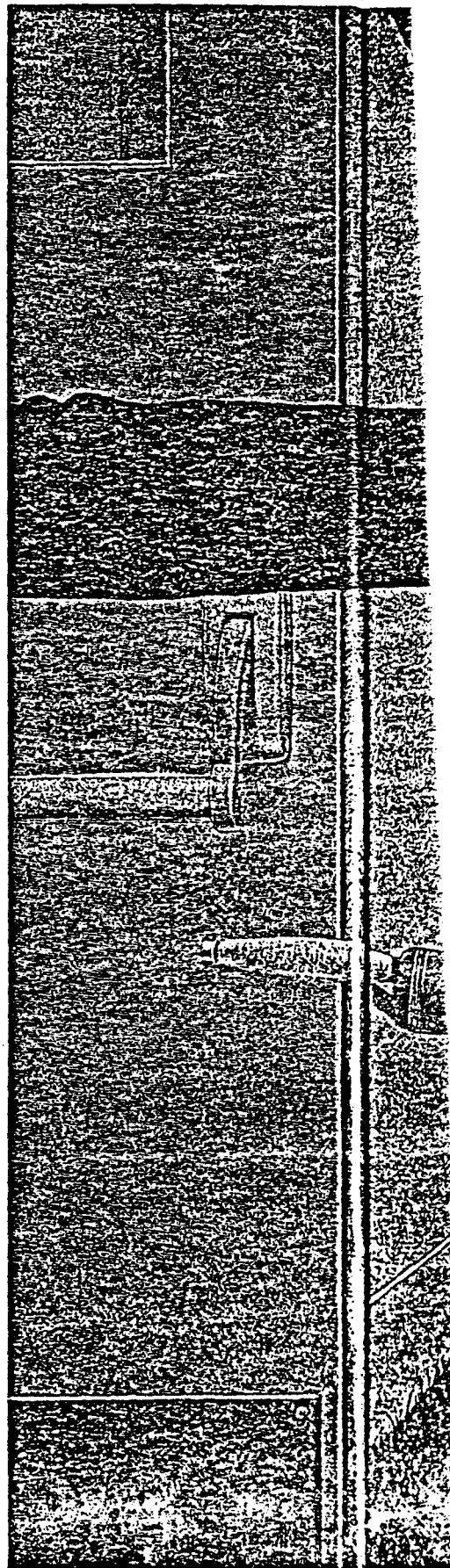
Betsy Clark
BETSY CLARK, Secretary

CB/bc

Call it Huck Finn's law:
The authentic American flourishes in
spite of schooling, not because of it. As applied,
this has meant that American kids
have one of the shortest school years in the Western
world. It shows. Today what Huck Finn
didn't know would hurt him

THE CASE FOR MORE SCHOOL DAYS

BY MICHAEL J. BARRETT



OFF AND ON FOR THE SURPRISING STRETCH OF FORTY YEARS, BEginning in 1949, the Gallup organization has polled the American public on the delicate subject of whether to lengthen the school year. For many years, though the wording of the question changed, the results held steady: by substantial margins people indicated that they did not like the idea. Even in 1959, during the era of *Sputnik* and intensified concern over what young Americans were learning, 67 percent of those polled were opposed to "increasing the number of days per year spent in school" for high school students, while a mere 26 percent were in favor.

In the 1980s something different began to happen. In line with the growing concern about economic competitiveness, Gallup retooled the question to make explicit comparisons with other countries. Interviewees were told that students in some nations attend school for as many as 240 days a year, compared with 180 in the United States. In light of this, Gallup asked, how do you feel about extending the school year by thirty days, to a total of 210? In 1984, fifty percent were against, 44 percent approved—a finding that, however consistent with past opposition, showed a distinct narrowing of the gap. In 1989 came the breakthrough. A new question maintained the comparative focus: "In some nations students spend about 25% more time in school than do students in the U.S. Would you favor or oppose increasing the amount of time that students in this community spend in school?" Forty-eight percent said they were in favor,

44 percent said they were opposed, and eight percent were undecided.

Read together, these figures record a sea change in public feeling, but the dike has not exactly burst; state legislatures and local school committees have not rushed to do anything dramatic. I can offer a personal perspective on the reasons why. As a Massachusetts state legislator, I discuss education with parents, children, and teachers, and as someone who believes in the need for a dramatic extension of the school year, I hold up the unpopular end of many conversations. Education involves matters intimately familiar to people—their kids, the rhythms of family life, their own memories of school—and everybody has an opinion.

Asked how she and her neighbors would feel about lengthening the school year, a constituent of mine, a parent of three school-aged daughters, stiffens and says, "People don't want their options taken away from them. They want freedom of choice in these things." A student just out of high school, told about the long school year in Japan, says, "I don't want to be Japanese. I like my summers. I work hard enough as it is."

If these soundings and others like them are any guide, America's attachment to the 180-day school year is still strong. In a world already reeling from future shock, the notion of extending the year seems punitive, an assault on the idea of summer itself. It raises the specter of joyless cramming. It implies that American parents have somehow failed their children.

Still, with people worried about the direction of the country, the strength of the economy, and the emerging competition from our friends in Europe and Asia, it is time to give the matter another look. It is time, too, to examine the peculiarly American roots of the dug-in resistance to change, and to consider how, in an era of short money and diminished confidence in government, the switch to a longer school year might be achieved.

The accumulating data on comparative education, itself a relatively new preoccupation of policy specialists, point up two trends. First, compared with their peers in Asian and European countries, American students stand out for how little they work. Second, compared with Asians and Europeans, American students stand out for how poorly they do.

Bottom Dogs

AS TO THE FIRST: CONSIDER A LIST, GARNERED from a variety of sources, of the varying number of days in a standard school year. This list was hard to put together—which tells us something about the neglect of this subject in U.S. educational circles.

Japan	243	New Zealand	190
West Germany	226–240	Nigeria	190
South Korea	220	British Columbia	185
Israel	216	France	185
Luxembourg	216	Ontario	185
Soviet Union	211	Ireland	184
Netherlands	200	New Brunswick	182
Scotland	200	Quebec	180
Thailand	200	Spain	180
Hong Kong	195	Sweden	180
England/Wales	192	United States	180
Hungary	192	French Belgium	175
Swaziland	191	Flemish Belgium	160
Finland	190		

Of course, bare counts of school days do not tell us everything we might like to know about academic calendars. Japan's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture prescribes a minimum of 210 calendar days of classroom instruction, including half-days on Saturdays. Local school boards have the option of adding more time, and typically call for a total of about 240 days, often using the bulk of the additional days for field trips, sports activities, student festivals, and graduation ceremonies. In the United States the 180-day school year must accommodate field trips, school-wide assemblies, in-service training for teachers, and anything else that needs doing, reducing the real number of days of classroom instruction to something considerably less than 180.

The gap in classroom time between Japan and the United States widens when student attendance at *juku* is taken into account. *Juku* are the private, profit-making tutorial services that have become ubiquitous in Japan since the 1970s. Operating after school and on weekends —but in such a way as to parallel the regular education system—they provide enrichment, preparatory, remedi-

Elsewhere we find programs built on the traditional notion of summer school, either for remedial purposes or for enrichment, with participation voluntary except for students who fail courses. These represent valuable extensions of educational time, but when attendance is significantly less than 100 percent of the class, the regular curriculum cannot be lengthened and enriched without throwing the next fall's semester into chaos.

Some will maintain that uniformity is a boon to the mobile American family, as it moves from community to community and state to state. But a uniform school year does not provide a uniform education, or anything like it, because the curriculum varies from place to place. The mobile American family is guaranteed a generous, mobile summer vacation, but that is it.

Quantity Into Quality

IN THE 1960S THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIation for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) began to tackle the thorny problem of assessing educational quality across the gulfs of nationality, language, and culture. The undertaking, enormous in its complexity, produced the first installments of a multinational data base on how the world's children are doing in mastering the common languages of the emerging world economy: mathematics and the sciences.

When the IEA conducted its most recent mathematics assessment, in 1981–1982, the results were disheartening for Americans. In an eighth-grade match-up, among twenty school systems surveyed, the American students ranked tenth in arithmetic, twelfth in algebra, and sixteenth in geometry. Japan, our principal economic competitor, finished first in all three of these categories. In an intimation of the economic times that might lie ahead, Hungarian students finished ahead of Americans in all three categories. Even Thailand, until recently considered a Third World country rather than a member of the thriving Pacific rim, saw its students finish ahead of the Americans in geometry.

These international comparisons have attracted their share of critics. For example, one point commonly made is that secondary education in the United States is universal—that the system is open to all children, with 1988 figures showing that 71 percent of those who begin high school go on to graduate—while systems elsewhere are closed or elite, with a consequent creaming effect that inflates test scores.

The universality of American education is, in fact, a great potential strength. Self-congratulation is not in order, however. Other nations, including Japan, currently set the pace for universality. According to 1984 figures from the U.S. Department of Education, 88 percent of Japanese students who began high school went on to graduate. Moreover, in part because of a tendency to "track" students into either academic or vocational channels, and in part because of the unevenness of the curriculum in our peculiarly decentralized educational network, the U.S. system winds up being inclusive without necessarily being either egalitarian or first-rate. As one aspect of its 1981–1982 study, the IEA identified twelfth-grade students from various countries who were engaged in the serious study of mathematics, defined for the United States as those in classes requiring as prerequisites at least two years of algebra and one year of geometry. By such a definition a strikingly small proportion of the American student body qualified for this part of the study. According to the IEA, a serious mathematics education was provided to 50 percent of Hungarian students,

PATIO

I count the bricks
(Each pairing clicks),
Count the space
I need to make
To hold four chairs,
A plate of pears,
And a table of wood
On which the plate
Can sit.

To this green shade
I won't admit
Defeat, or heat,
Or an angry clock
Outraged at having
No time to tell,
Or love embarrassed
Because unanswered,
Or men political
And thick.

Bricks and dirt,
Sand and shade,
The thirsty maples
Still in our service—
Is this how the word
Turns into flesh,
No paten raised
But a summer yard,
One child hiding
Deep in forsythia,
The other boldly
Waiting to be born?

—Christopher Jane Corkery

It seems, then, that students in other countries master more material largely because they get further along in their courses. OTL analysis lends authority to a conclusion that the lay person might reach as a matter of common sense: imperfect as American education might be, forty or so more days of it a year would mean more material covered and more material learned. The United States faces a time-in-school deficit every bit as serious as the trade deficit and the balance-of-payments problem: each year, American children receive hundreds of hours less schooling than many of their European or Asian mates, and the resulting harm promises to be cumulative and lasting.

Huck Finn's Law

IF THE INTERNATIONAL DATA LOOK BLEAK AND OTL analysis points to a lack of learning time as crucial, the question must be asked, Why, when our students do so badly, do we continue to ask them to do so little?

In 1988, looking back at the five years that had passed since the report *A Nation At Risk* was issued, William Bennett remarked on the lack of progress:

> *A Nation At Risk* also noted that it is not unusual for high school students in other industrialized countries to spend eight hours a day at school, 220 days each year. In the United States, by contrast, a typical school day lasts six hours, and the school year runs 175 to 180 days. *A Nation At Risk* recommended that school districts and state legislatures consider increasing instructional time by implementing a seven-hour school day and a 200- to 220-day school year, a recommendation that has been largely ignored.
>
> American teachers prefer their current nine- or ten-month contracts, and their union leaders have opposed most legislative efforts to lengthen the school day or year. Since 1983, such proposals have been considered in 37 states. But a longer school year has been adopted in only nine of them—and all of those states merely extended their unusually short calendars to the more common 180-day standard. Only five states have lengthened the school day—none to more than six-and-a-half hours.

Bennett's finger-pointing should extend to the average citizen. As the Gallup numbers show, for years there has been weak public demand for more education, "more" meaning greater amounts of time spent in the schools helping children to learn. Once the public realizes the need for change and momentum builds, the school year and the school day will be lengthened, regardless of which other interests are opposed.

The 1989 Gallup poll hints at the beginning of a turnaround in public opinion—but only the beginning. Many parents would insist that their reservations are immediate and practical. They see summer as special, as a time for young people to be with their families, to do something that helps them grow—even if it is only attending summer camp—or to earn some money. Push these parents a little, and the objections become more emotional: kids need a chance to play, darn it, and they're under a lot of pressure as it is. What happened to the idyllic side of childhood? Is life to be all work? When will there be time for young people to explore the quirky and personal magic of their own creativity?

These questions are hard, and those of us who believe in the necessity of more schooling must not answer them glibly. But these questions are also rhetorical, and loaded. They rely for their effect on an idealized image of childhood which does not correspond to the down-to-earth, day-to-day summer experience of even middle-class kids. A school environment can be humane and true to the curiosity of children, and learning to read and write and compute and analyze is the key to unlocking the creative urge, not squelching it. For that matter, extended schooling can allow time not only for more instruction but also for more play. And surely summer is special for many families. But a school year that stretched into the last week of July would still leave more than a month for a family vacation, a stint at camp, or both. If Americans could tolerate going to school Saturday mornings, the break could start earlier.

As it is, American kids have one of the longest summer vacations in the Western world. Like everything in life, this comes at a cost. For years educators have devoted considerable effort to documenting a

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HJR 49

A NEW YORK BOARD OF REGENTS STUDY REPORTED, "NUMEROUS RESEARCH STUDIES INDICATE THAT LONG EXTENDED SUMMER VACATIONS RESULT IN FORGETTING MUCH THAT WAS LEARNED DURING THE REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR. . . . IN ORDER TO START A NEW YEAR EFFECTIVELY, TEACHERS IN MOST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TEND TO DEVOTE FOUR OR MORE WEEKS [TO] REVIEW AND RETEACHING ACTIVITIES."

time when the academic calendar followed the agricultural cycle. Not even this degree of intention can be discerned. Instead, the historical record gives evidence that the period of mandatory school attendance increased steadily over time as it was shaped by two broad influences: on the one hand, the always growing demand for an educated work force, and on the other, the instinct to spare children from formal schooling during the hottest months of the year, regardless of whether they had any role to play in farming. Even if the agricultural theory fit the facts, it would not explain very much. Other countries have agricultural pasts too, but this has not stunted the growth of their educational calendars.

It is true that the common public school spread rapidly in nineteenth-century America. The ideal product, however, was not the academic high achiever but the yeoman-citizen able to read and write well enough to be self-sufficient and to express his own opinion. Learning in and of itself was not thought to be the key to success; native ingenuity and self-directed hard work were. Richard Hofstadter, in his *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, outlined "the ideal assumptions" of the case against getting a lot of education.

> Intellectuals, it may be held, are pretentious, conceited, effeminate, and snobbish; and very likely immoral, dangerous, and subversive. The plain sense of the common man, especially if tested by success in some demanding line of practical work, is an altogether adequate substitute for, if not actually much superior to, formal knowledge and expertise acquired in the schools.

Huck Finn's special dislike for mathematics is an American refrain picked up more recently by social-science research. Harold Stevenson, of the University of Michigan, has done pathbreaking work in comparing Japanese, Taiwanese, and American attitudes toward learning and education. In 1987 he observed,

> Americans generally do not consider mathematics as important as reading in elementary school. According to our classroom observations, American teachers spend more class time on reading (language arts) than on mathematics at both first and fifth grades. Chinese and Japanese teachers, however, divide their time more evenly between these two subjects. . . . Despite the greater amount of time devoted to language arts in the U.S. as compared to the Asian countries, American mothers most frequently said that reading should be given more emphasis in elementary school. Japanese mothers were nearly three times as likely as American mothers to mention a need for greater emphasis on mathematics.

Even in the era of high tech, American mythology has adapted cleverly rather than given way. According to Hofstadter, the American scientist singled out for respect is the practical person who moves quickly to translate exotic research into something commercially marketable. Thomas Edison and the electric light, the Wright brothers and the airplane, Steven Jobs and the user-friendly computer—it is the figure of the American inventor-entrepreneur, not the American scientist-thinker, who nicely reconciles, in a technological age, our drive for achievement with our mistrust of the bookworm and the nerd.

The country's lukewarm feelings about academic high achievers, Hofstadter argued, arose out of our democratic and egalitarian traditions. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, this instinct to downplay intellectual effort had to confront two powerful new forces, the theories of Darwin and of Freud. Both lent authority to the idea that native predispositions, aptitudes, and innate traits—including intellect—were critically important. In truth, these theories seemed to say, people really are quite different from one another. Divisive as the message might have been, Americans found a way to reconcile it with egalitarianism. A belief in innate traits and personal aptitudes could be said, after all, merely to mimic the individualistic strain in American culture. People might be different, and some might be stronger intellectually than others, but who cared in a country where success could come through grit and hard work?

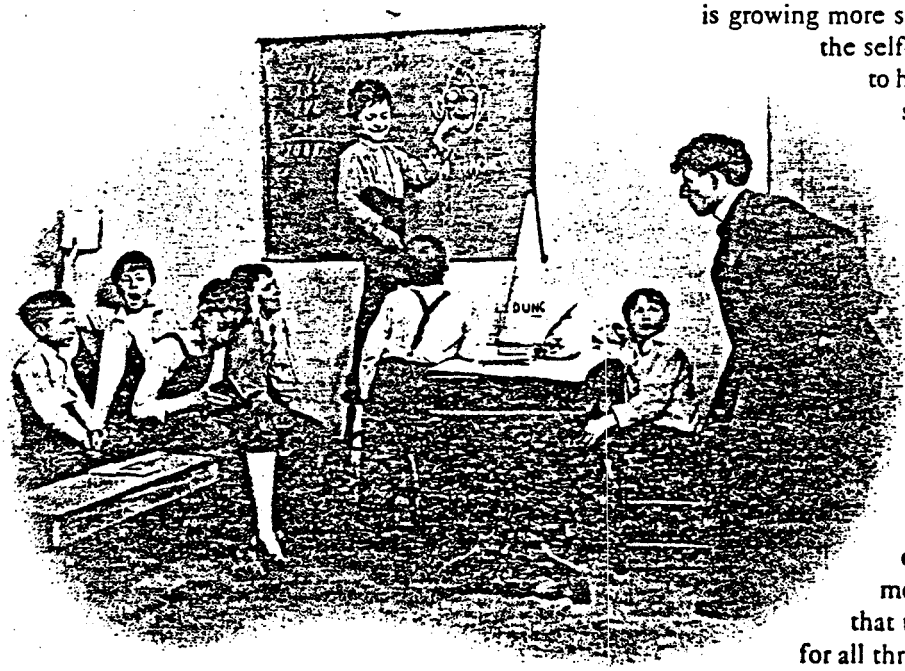
Effort Versus Aptitude

A LINE OF REASONING THAT SOUGHT TO MINIMIZE the importance of intellect while accepting high-powered theories of intellectual differences was bound to break down as education and academic achievement came to mean more and more in the economy. In present-day American culture observers like Harold Stevenson and Merry White, a professor of sociology at Boston University, see a terrible inversion at work. Embracing the credo that every child is different, we make early efforts to pinpoint differences in ability and interests. Then we channel children into tracks according to what we think we have found. Thus a practice rooted in the American celebration of the individual operates to subvert the real-life chances of many American students.

RATHER THAN ACKNOWLEDGING THAT AMERICANS PUT OUT LESS EFFORT THAN DO STUDENTS IN A MULTITUDE OF OTHER COUNTRIES, WE DEFINE THE ISSUE NARROWLY, AS A CHOICE BETWEEN OUR VALUES AND THOSE OF OUR STRONGEST COMPETITOR. HAVING SET UP THE STRAW MAN, WE BRIDLE AT THE THOUGHT OF "BECOMING JAPANESE."

scribing to the notion that the United States is in "decline." But that doesn't mean we admire the competition. Rather than acknowledging that Americans put out less effort than do students in a multitude of other countries, we define the issue narrowly, as a choice between our values and those of our strongest competitor, Japan. Having set up the straw man, we then bridle at the thought of "becoming Japanese," shorthand for our fear of being dragooned into conformity and workaholism, all in the name of meeting stiff economic competition.

Instead of examining Japanese culture, rejecting many of its features but accepting others in order to improve our own, we Americans focus on claims that the Japanese are imitators, not creators; that they pirate our technology; and that they cheat to gain advantage in international trade. These impressions are used time and time again to disparage proposals to extend the school year. All you



ever get by doing that, people argue, is a pocketful of misery, in terms of uncreative children and diminishing interest in classwork.

Such defensiveness misses the mark, and should be forsworn so that we might indulge instead an American habit. After all, we are energetic imitators of the good ideas of others, born appropriators of bits and pieces of Old World practice, great borrowers from the different cultures that have shaped our immigrants. In 1810–1812 did not Francis Cabot Lowell, of Massachusetts, give himself a grand tour of textile plants in the British Isles, memorize the design of the great power looms in order to outwit English laws against technology transfer, and return home to establish the first modern factory in America? Robert Dalzell, Jr., a historian at Williams College, writes that Lowell's feat is viewed as a "stunning act of industrial piracy." We Americans take pride in our pragmatism, our flexibility; no fixed principle is more important to us than the principle that nothing is fixed. If there are things dogged and determined in Japanese attitudes that we admire, if there are features of their educational system that seem to work—even if there are few points to be gleaned about equal opportunity—we should be shamelessly American and adapt them for ourselves.

In any event, dwelling on the negative cannot carry us very far. Our understanding of the way the Japanese live is growing more sophisticated all the time, and some of the self-serving truisms of today are not likely to hold up very well. One staple of conversation among American parents is the supposed association between the rigors of Japanese education and suicide among Japanese youths. The figures were once more troubling than they are today. According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education, in 1975 the suicide rates in Japan for the age groups ten to fourteen, fifteen to nineteen, and twenty to twenty-four were all higher than the U.S. rates. But by 1984 the Japanese numbers for the three age groups had gone down and the American numbers had more or less held steady, with the result that the American suicide rates were higher for all three age groups.

Japanese students do seem to be under considerable pressure to excel, but they do not seem especially unhappy, at least in the early elementary grades. Merry White, in her short and useful book *The Japanese Educational Challenge: A Commitment to Children*, wrote,

> Because of our preconceptions of Japanese schooling, a walk into a typical fifth grade classroom in Japan may shock us. We might easily expect an environment suf-

Quality Versus Quantity

GET PAST THE QUICKSAND OF AMERICAN MYTHology, American complacency, and American defensiveness, and the argument for extending the school year comes up against the educational establishment. One group of professionals has created a large and complicated body of literature, riven with statistical analysis, on the question of "time and learning." Two of the premises are unassailable. First, additional time by itself does not guarantee successful learning. More is not necessarily better, because other factors come into play, ranging from the quality of the teacher to the quality of the textbooks to the health of the student. Second, time is a commodity that comes in different sizes. The length of the school year, the length of the school week, the length of the school day, the number of minutes diverted to "classroom management" and lost to instruction, the number of minutes allocated to a particular subject, the amount of homework, the rate of pupil attendance and absenteeism—these blocks of time interrelate, and the importance of any one of them cannot be analyzed without considering its impact on the others.

Generally speaking, these theorists are not interested in the larger, garden-variety units of time such as the school year, the school week, or the school day. They prefer to deal with the smaller units, rearranged according to concepts of their own devising: "time on task," "engaged time," and "academic learning time." Nancy Karweit, of the Johns Hopkins University, does work that is representative of the group. In one article she presented a graph, based on her observation of twelve classrooms, to contrast what she termed "scheduled time," "instructional time," and "engaged time" in math class. Scheduled time was the number of minutes in a week that a teacher allotted for math instruction. Instructional time was the time left in scheduled time after classroom-management time and interruptions were deducted. Engaged time was the time left in instructional time after student inattention was deducted.

Karweit's aim was to take the official class period of forty-five or so minutes and, after close observation and careful counting, lop off all the minutes that were not used well. Her eye is on the micro-management of the educational experience. The focus is on using scheduled class time more effectively, shortening the transitions between tasks, minimizing distractions to learning, increasing the proportion of the class period in which the teacher is actively engaged with students, and increasing the quality and appropriateness of instruction. The length of the school year, in contrast, is what she calls a "global time measure." Whether to increase it is a question that might interest the generalist, but for her it is simply too big a clump of time to matter; too many other factors intervene to affect learning.

Time-and-learning theory finds a statistical relationship between the amount learned, as measured by achievement-test scores, and the time spent learning, but it is not a strong one. The reason is that so much else affects the student. Herbert Walberg, of the University of Illinois, has surveyed the literature to identify, in all, nine "educational productivity factors." Three have to do with personal characteristics: ability, chronological development, and motivation. Four have to do with psychological environments: home life, the classroom social group, the general peer culture, and television viewing. Only two have to do explicitly with instruction: the quality of teaching, ranging from the curriculum to the individual teacher's method, and, finally, the amount of time students are engaged in learning.

The Walberg list suggests that those who oppose a longer school year because they favor "quality" over "quantity" draw a misplaced contrast. Seven of Walberg's nine factors involve neither the quality nor the quantity of education but other considerations altogether. What is significant is that with the exception of lengthening the school year or school day, both of which can be done for thousands of students at a time, these productivity factors defy easy improvement by interested human beings. For masses of people across the entire society, personal qualities, psychological environments, and the quality of teaching will be slow to change.

The educational theorists concede as much; the prevailing mood in their ranks is either outright pessimism or a cautious allowance that things might improve at the margins. While they are quick to criticize proposals for change, they hesitate to put forward concrete alternatives of their own. For all the seeming precision gained by measuring learning in relation to engaged time rather than the raw number of days in the school year, these researchers are quite vague about how much to increase engaged time per day or per week. "How long can teachers be expected to productively interact with their students?" Karweit wonders. "How long can students be expected to be on-task?" Summarizing the current state of the literature for the Consortium on Educational Policy Studies at Indiana University, three researchers wrote, "Increased instructional time does have modest effects on student achievement; unfortunately, research is inconclusive on the most effective and practical ways to increase time."

There is a hidden irony, in any event, in the efforts of Karweit and others to boost "quality time" in the classroom. At first, those who speak of quality rather than quantity will always claim the higher moral ground. But the casual observer of American education comes away with the impression that past a certain point, gains in learning per hour will always be elusive—slipping and sliding in every school system with changes in teachers, administrators, teaching techniques, theories of learning, curriculum additions, and who knows what else. By its

The Matter of Leadership

WHAT, THEN, IS TO BE DONE? AS THE DEBATE over lengthening the school year is joined, how is public apprehension to be overcome, a public consensus to be formed?

First, there is the matter of leadership. Recall that in the late 1950s, after *Sputnik*, Americans did not balk at being challenged to run a race with the Soviets for world scientific supremacy. In fact, this nation has always reacted well to competitions summed up in muscular imagery by our leaders: Americans run races, go for the gold, vie for championships, all with admirable zest.

But these days the message of civic, political, and intellectual leaders is different. The tone is unrelentingly dour. Americans are not dared to run a race; they are told that the race has already been run, the United States has lost, and they are to blame—because they did not "work harder." Both the political right and the political left have generated cottage industries centered on the person of the scold, the critic, the moralist. These entrepreneurs of gloom engender a very mixed reaction, because people are ambivalent about being lectured to. When Roger Porter, a presidential aide for economic and domestic policy, labels American education "depressing and uninspiring," dismay at our prospects dampens our appetite for meeting the challenge. The end-of-the-American-century, fall-of-a-great-power talk has gone too far.

Where education is concerned, the Gallup polls tell us that people are now open to a message of change. Complacency is no longer holding us back. But the tone of the message must be optimistic, and resonant with the American themes that lend themselves to the task of mobilizing for change—specifically, the notions that we have always risen to the challenge of competition, felt free to adapt the good ideas of others, worked like demons when the prize was self-improvement, and had a special knack for exploiting the practical fruits of learning.

Americans are up to the game of international educational competition, but we need to know what the rules are. When the rest of the world plays a twenty-minute period, American students cannot be expected to rack up as many points in fifteen. Our toughest competitors are, in fact, playing a school year of 220 days or so, with results that bode poorly for America's future. It is up to this country's leaders to get the word out, in a way that inspires rather than dispirits their audiences.

Once these leaders make the effort, they will find that many people are way ahead of them, and not only because of concern about international competition. An entirely different dynamic is also at work, one that promises to tip popular opinion further in favor of more schooling. Aspects of it were detected by the 1988 Gallup poll on education, in response to the question "Would you favor or oppose the local public schools' offering before-school and after-school programs where needed for so-called latch-key children, that is, those whose parents do not return home until late in the day?"

To those familiar with public resistance to extending the school year and school day, the response was stunning. Seventy percent of the sample were in favor, 23 percent opposed—a spread repeated when Gallup asked the question, in slightly different form, last year.

The forces at work here are formidable. More than 25 million women in the United States have children under the age of thirteen, and most of those women work at least part-time. Latchkey children, who spend some part of the working day at home without adult supervision, arouse particular concern. A 1987 Harris survey indicates that 12 percent of elementary, 30 percent of middle school, and 38 percent of high school students are left to care for themselves after school "almost every day."

In the seventh-grade class I taught for a day, the majority of the students lived in housing projects. They were not averse to the idea of a longer school year. Instead, they volunteered that kids would be kept off the streets, that now they were "spoiled" by too much TV and too much Nintendo, and that there was nothing to do over the long summer vacation. The students also had suggestions about what a longer school year might include: more sports, more time to study, and more opportunity to take courses in subjects that interested them.

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latures declined to assume the cost of funding these good acts. Instead, the new laws took the form of state-imposed mandates on municipalities, to be paid for out of property taxes. Legislatures had the right to do this because then, as now, state constitutions placed local communities under the power of state governments.

Mandates made people upset. One hundred and fifty years later they still do. When the state dictates to the city and town, critics object either that the content of the mandate is bad or that the content is fine but the dictator should foot the bill. The mandating power, these critics say, makes accountability impossible, places a financial burden on the lower governments, and offends the unwritten but powerful tradition of home rule.

True enough, but mandates have an overriding virtue: awkward in principle, they work in practice. Systems of government must somehow sort out responsibilities. In the American system the sorting out gets done by the U.S. Constitution and the constitutions of the various states, as interpreted by the courts, and by the U.S. Congress and the state legislatures. From the start, the public schools have been left to local communities to run—but the ground rules have been written elsewhere, and they have changed as the country and world have changed.

Those who insist that states fully fund their education mandates would lead us into the political bog, and soon be stuck themselves. Legislatures and Congress might respond by declining to set higher standards, which would be disastrous. More likely, these bodies would set the standards, assume the costs—and then extend their influence even further, into day-to-day policy-making, which should be left to local people. Full funding would have the effect, ironic for the locals who demanded it, of leading inexorably to more state encroachment and oversight. It is an axiom of political finance, and probably of human nature: If you pay for it, you will want to run it. It follows that if a healthy measure of control over schools is to remain at home, local officials must live with mandates, and without insisting on full funding.

One is able, then, to lay one's hands on a blunt but historically effective tool of change: the mandate. One can envision the pattern of change, true to federalism and the maxim of Louis Brandeis: a leapfrog trail from one state to the next, as each works out the problems of persuasion, politics, and finance. One can describe several elements of change. A longer school year should be phased in over some period, because time will be needed to plan, and because local governments cannot tax their citizens into penury, even when mandated to do so. Stepped-up revenue-sharing should come from state legislatures, because while full funding of the mandate is neither possible nor desirable, a generous partnership is.

And one must insist upon some help from the federal government. The Chief Executive of the United States must be asked to be the education President he says he wants to be, and to sponsor and sign into law a program of federal aid to school districts as they switch to a longer year. The federal government's tax base is broad enough to help finance the expansion of the school year. Nothing is more critical to national security in the post–Cold War era than schooling our children, yet education's share of the federal budget in fiscal year 1990 was an abysmal 1.9 percent. The issue here is priorities, not capabilities. The question, as the old saw goes, is not whether we can afford to do it but whether we can afford not to.

While a broad-based movement builds, more immediate levers of change present themselves. If civic or political leaders are determined to see a 220-day school year in their state by the year 2000, they might begin by raising private-sector and public-sector matching funds to extend the year for ten or so medium-sized districts, spread among the poor, the middle-class, and the well-to-do. And if this arrangement does not work, a handful of affluent districts can take the plunge on their own, using their taxing power and their long-standing prerogative to go beyond state minimums in setting the local school year. This would be financially feasible in the short term and politically formidable in the long term. In my own state of Massachusetts, what Lexington does today, Concord will feel impelled to do in relatively short order.

Some will hesitate, in the well-intentioned belief that the school year should not change for any district until it changes for all. But, as a matter of tactics, this is not shrewd. The issue is not whether all schools change to 220 days; the issue is whether no schools whatsoever change, depriving us of the chance to get the process started. Once the trend begins in earnest, the courts or the legislatures will come under mounting pressure to do the right thing by poorer communities. In the past two years the supreme courts of New Jersey, Kentucky, Texas, and Montana have handed down landmark decisions on inequities in the financing of rich and poor school districts. If the aim is social justice, it becomes important to set a longer school year as the standard of record, even for a handful of wealthier districts, so that poorer districts can then be brought up to par.

Find a way to begin the process, and watch it build on itself. Who will abide having his children receive forty fewer days of education every year than the kids in the next town over? For that matter, who will abide, for much longer, having her children receive less education than the kids in the country the next continent over? The world is shrinking. Change is inevitable. It is only a matter of time. □

The historical prints and photographs of American schools and schoolchildren which appear throughout this article were obtained from the following collections: Culver Pictures, Inc. (pages 80, 81, 90, 97, 104, and 105); The Bettmann Archive (page 87); and The Granger Collection, New York (page 96).

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Lester C. Thurow
Dean

February 14, 1991

Representative Howard Toole
Montana House of Representatives
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59801

Dear Representative Toole:

I would be glad to publicly support your bill lengthening the school year in Montana.

In a modern world economy, there is a simple fact of life. If you aren't better educated and skilled than the competition in the rest of the world, your wages will have to fall to levels dictated by them. Skills are the only route to higher wages.

The rest of the industrial world and increasingly large parts of the developing world now have school years and days that are much longer than that of the United States. Learning is a function of effort and effort has to begin with more time spent learning. No matter how well run, Americans cannot learn in 180 days what the rest of the world learns in 220-240 days per year.

In the long run, nothing is more important to our standard of living that improving K-12 education. Without an upfront commitment to more school, improvements are not going to occur.

Sincerely yours,

Lester C. Thurow mf

LCT:ml