

# HIGH SCHOOLS AS CRUCIBLES OF COLLEGE PREP: WHAT MORE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

*ABSTRACT: A departing co-editor's thoughts turn to one thing in particular: the increasing pressure exerted on high schools to ensure adequate preparation for college (and thereby eliminate the need for remediation), pressure exerted above all in the form of state-mandated tests. Hopes of coping with such pressure rest on understanding whence it comes, but also on collaborative ventures between colleges and high schools that are true partnerships, transcending a fixation on state mandates and quick fixes.*

I'm leaving as co-editor of *JBW* just one volume year after Trudy Smoke left. Trudy's valedictory was an impressive review of the journal's publication history during her tenure as co-editor. Starting not long after Trudy (we worked together for a full half decade), I see little point in doing the same sort of retrospective. We would be covering the same ground. It occurred to me instead to say something about what editors often think about: the kinds of submissions they wish they would get but don't. That too seemed a chastening prospect, partly because it might degenerate into an idiosyncratic wish list, partly because the best intentions could hardly transcend a combination of blindness to absences and a reluctance to note them.

But for a few years now one issue has loomed ever larger for me as a research question — actually, a whole nexus of research questions (one whose answers, moreover, outline an agenda for action). This issue scarcely seems to register on our radar. We fail to give it significant attention even as the forces behind it significantly reshape the educational landscape — our topography in particular. And so, as I leave *JBW*, I would like at least to draw a crude map of that relatively uncharted territory.

My initial demarcation of it is my title. The question in it can be

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read in different ways: dismissively (as if, hey, facts are facts, and we need to get on with the work staring us in the face); desperately (as if to set off alarms about a state of crisis and confusion); earnestly (as if there are important questions to be asked, questions we need answers to if we are to serve our students well). You probably have guessed what is in fact the case: I'm inclined to ask that question in earnest. But I won't be coy and act as if I haven't arrived at some answers as well. One is implicit in my title: attention to the academic readiness and success of students is shifting from a variety of experiments and experiences with open admissions in colleges and universities to growing pressure on the high schools. Increasingly, high schools are becoming the crucibles of college prep.

Why is this so, and to what extent? Let me start with the question of extent. The single most obvious fact about the relationship between high school and college is that many more high school students are college-bound than ever before. Fewer than half of all the students who completed high school went on to college as recently as the seventies. In the quarter century from 1972 to 1997, the United States went from having fewer than half of its high school graduates going on to college to having more than two thirds.<sup>1</sup> This dramatic shift in expectations over the last several decades—that many more high school students are supposed to go on to college (that, in fact, the success of high schools is measured by what proportion they send on)—has occurred without a corresponding shift in resources given to high schools, in the status or rewards accorded high school teachers and administrators. If we reap what we sow, we must realize we're plowing and planting the same field yet expecting a much bigger and better crop. To a remarkable degree, the high schools have been meeting that expectation. But now it's crunch time.

How did we get to this pass? The answer is mostly basic economics. As we tell our kids all the time (whether as parents or teachers), the earning power of a college degree is considerably higher for a college grad than a high school grad—in fact, nearly \$20,000 a year higher. In 1999 (the last year for which figures are provided in the most recent *Digest of Educational Statistics*), the median annual income of male high school graduates working full-time year round was \$33,184, while it was \$52,985 for those with a bachelor's degree. For female full-time workers (the glass ceiling still being what it is), the average 1999 median annual income was \$23,061 for high school graduates, \$37,993 for those with a bachelor's degree.<sup>2</sup>

We all have some sense of why this is happening: in a more technologically advanced society and information-based economy, a college degree is increasingly important as a ticket to (or a voucher to remain in) the middle class. In this post-industrial economy, a college education does not promise upward mobility so much as economic

stability and security. The increasing democratization of higher education that started with the GI Bill after World War II and gathered still greater momentum with the reforms of the seventies (reforms that had so much to do with shaping Basic Writing) has created a society that sees college education more as a requirement than an option, more as a right than a privilege. Students have for some time been voting with their feet. As I said—as we know—more and more of them are going to college.

So we need to look at the college end. And what's happening there is just what you would expect: we have many more students on the doorstep, very nearly double the number a few decades ago. (In 1969, undergraduate enrollment totaled 6,884,000; in 1999, 12,681,000.<sup>3</sup>) What happens when you have such dramatic increases in enrollment at the college level? It's a lot like what happens to high schools under the pressure to send more and more students to college: inertia besetting the status quo ensures that this population explosion isn't accompanied by a concomitant increase in resources, support, funding. So the pressure starts to build. Something has to give. The outlet is a great outcry over standards. The high schools are not doing their job, people say; students should be ready for college but too many (of the too many on the doorstep) are not.

What's the evidence for this? As I begin to address this question, I will give you what only seem to be answers, so bear with me. The chief thing people—not least of all politicians and policy-makers—point to is the prevalence of remediation. Among the data we find in *The Condition of Education* (a publication of the Department of Education) is this: over 60 percent of students attending 2-year colleges and 40 percent of attending 4-year colleges need to take at least one remedial course.<sup>4</sup> As this same publication indicates, the kind of remediation that correlates most powerfully with college completion is placement in remedial reading: students who place thus have the lowest likelihood of completing a college degree. And the National Assessment of Education Progress (which, since the 1970s, has assessed the reading levels of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders using three designations: basic, proficient, and advanced) reports that only about a third of the nation's 17-year-olds read at or above the proficient level, the middle level in its three-tier scale (Campbell et al.). Circumstances like these have so incensed some people (notably politicians) that a major redistribution of remedial education (and the blame for it) has been underway in the last decade. The trends are nutshellled nicely in the introduction to the report "College Remediation: What It Is, What It Costs, What's at Stake" (prepared by Ronald Phipps, Senior Associate of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, and sponsored by the Ford Foundation):

Over the past several years, attempts have been made to limit remedial education in states such as Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. More recently, in states like New York and Massachusetts, efforts are underway to reduce the amount of remedial courses offered in postsecondary education. Legislators in Texas and other states are troubled that tax dollars are being used in colleges to teach high school courses, and some states like Florida have shifted virtually all remediation efforts to the community college level. The legislatures in New Jersey, Montana, Florida, and other states have considered proposals that would force public school systems to pay for any remedial work that one of their graduates must take in college. (1)

For many, at least, the issue seems clear: high schools are not doing their job and must be held accountable. And so the demand for accountability is on. For those in positions to direct policy, it has a clear channel to flow in: Christopher Mazzeo recently noted not only how relatively new the trend in "accountability testing" is but why it is so attractive to politicians, observing that "accountability testing provides politicians with a highly visible symbol of action, while also offering at least some leverage to shape and change what educators do and how the system is run" (390). In a wave of change we can fix primarily in this past decade, though the first such step was taken by Florida in the late seventies, 26 states have made exit exams high school graduation requirements. Leading the pack are the most populous states in the nation: New York, California, Texas. Of the 26, 20 have mandated tests coming into full implementation on or after the year 2000. Moreover, these are the results of state initiatives; in fact, this information comes from the National Governors Association "2001 Graduation Exit Exam Matrix" (published at the start of 2002) — the NGA's means of tracking follow-through on its 1998 Issue Brief "High School Exit Exams: Setting High Expectations."

With the states literally taking the initiative, what can be said for or even to the high schools except "High time! Somebody better put this house in order!"? Well, things are a good deal more complicated than I've just made them seem or most people realize. For instance, I've been talking as if what everyone does is go to elementary school, middle school, secondary school, and then post-secondary school. You're a high school senior graduating, and three months later you're a college freshman. Well, yes, sometimes. But it doesn't always work that way. In particular, it doesn't work that way when we take a closer look at who those students in remedial classes in college are. Nearly half of all freshmen taking remediation are over the age of 22 (Phipps 9). They didn't go straight to college; in fact, that may be part of the

problem. If high schools lay a foundation for college, it's not a concrete foundation; a few years away from school will tend to dim ideas of just what constitutes a good essay or a quadratic equation. When we realize that most students *do* go from high school to college and yet nearly half of those who wind up in remediation are exceptions to the rule, high schools begin to look more like the solution than the problem.

Then there's the issue of whether it's entirely fair to expect every student to be college-ready at the end of high school. For one thing, high schools consistently have less time to work with more students: class periods typically run under an hour and have 30 or more students; teachers can have 5-6 such a day. But that isn't the point to stress here. The fact is that high schools don't (and can't) cast college attendance as the inevitable aftermath of high school. That's cast as a choice — a desirable one as far as all parties are concerned in most cases, but a choice nonetheless. And it's not the high school's choice. It's the students' choice. You can see where I'm heading here: we're leading horses to water only to find that we can't always make them drink. There's proof of this, and I'm not talking about the dropouts now. High schools, with the help of well-established (typically state-mandated) standards, have identified those courses in their curricula that are college preparatory. That's been done so clearly that you can go in and count them as well as the students taking them. Using that data and thereby determining that "just less than half of our high school graduates didn't take the entire curriculum judged by educators to be a prerequisite for college entry," Hunter R. Boylan, longtime Director of the National Center for Developmental Education, also notes (as we already have) that just less than half of those in remediation have let the space of about half a decade intervene between high school completion and college entry. "Given all this," says Boylan, "it should not be surprising that almost a third of those entering our colleges and universities are underprepared. We should have no reason to expect them to be fully prepared. That does not mean, however, that they have no business being in college" (3).

So what's my point here? I mean, whose fault is it anyway? I hope you agree that's the wrong way of putting the question—the wrong question altogether. The more you look at the data, I would suggest, the more you wonder if all the handwringing and outcry is justified. Lord Macaulay, the great Victorian historian, once noted that the one constant throughout history is that, at any point in time, it has seemed to a great many people that the world is going to hell in a handbasket<sup>5</sup>, and that may be the case here. Remember how the National Association of Educational Progress has determined that only about a third of our 11<sup>th</sup> graders read at or above the proficient (or mid-range) level? The NAEP has been conducting its reading assess-

ments for three decades now, and they recently published a full overview. The average score for an 11<sup>th</sup> grader in 1971 was 285 (out of a possible 500); it was 288 in 1999. In fact, in three decades, it has never gone out of the five-point range between 285 and 290, and most changes over half-decade periods have been such slight inchings up or inchings down (like the drop from the 290 peak of 1988-92 to the present 288), that NAEP has to stress these changes are not statistically significant (Campbell et al.). Now, it may be that not making greater progress is in fact a great failure. To believe that, you would have to have much greater faith in NAEP's assessment methods than I do. I'm inclined to say what Andrea Lunsford and the late Bob Connors said in their famous article on the frequency of errors in college writing: working from a stratified sampling of 20,000 college papers and gauging their findings against studies from the thirties to the present, they found that the frequency of errors remained remarkably constant; taking into account the mania for TV watching, video games, and other things we could most kindly call extratextual literacies, Lunsford and Connors said, "In this case, not losing means we're winning" (406). But let's keep in mind most of all the tabulations that really count, the sort of data I mentioned at the very beginning, data from the National Center for Education Statistics. More people are graduating from high school and going on to college than ever before. And this *is* a matter of clear statistical significance. The high school dropout rate has gone down 60% since 1960. The number of students going on directly from high school to college has gone up 15% in just the past decade. These are major reasons, if not the only reasons, we have seen nearly a 50% increase in the number of students pursuing bachelor's degrees in the last three decades.

But the good feeling (or at least the feeling that we are not, in fact, going to hell in a handbasket) reminds us that what may look like evidence that problems are being solved (or at least addressed) is actually the very thing that loomed as a problem at the outset, the very thing that meant more pressure was being put on the high schools—and the colleges—and all this pressure was finding an outlet in demands to determine accountability and raise standards. We haven't solved that problem at all. We've just found that high schools in particular, coping with the stresses of rising expectations to turn out more and more college-ready students, are finding that no good deed goes unpunished. It is precisely because more students are going to college—significantly more—that the high schools are in trouble. And so are the colleges. Resources are finite, but the students just keep coming, and in ever greater numbers. What to do?

The major answer already being visited on us is the major form that educational reform takes today: mandated assessments (mandated in the name of accountability). As a capitalist society, we do defer to

market-driven solutions whenever possible, and so some outlet is being found in charter schools and voucher systems, but only enough to release a little steam. Ranging from very qualified successes to unqualified, voted-down failures, these outlets are far from the snowballing movement some predicted they would be only a few years ago. We do have a steamrolling or snowballing movement on our hands, and that is the political solution, the matter of mandated standards and assessments. As I noted before, more than half the states either require or plan to require high school exit exams as determinants of graduation from high school. My state, New York, is one that already does. When I talk to people about this growing interest in high school exit exams, they are often aware of how things are locally (though just as often they are not); very few are aware that this is such a powerful trend nationally or what it means. No doubt George Hillocks' magisterial analysis of the trend and its implications in *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning*, published just months ago, will do much to change this. Heretofore, however, a "big picture" view has been offered only rarely, as in last year's article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which noted, "Nineteen states already require their high-school students to pass a test before graduating, and eight more plan to do so. Every state but Iowa requires their high-school students to undergo some form of statewide assessment." The real kicker, the special spin, is in the title of the article: "Universities Push to Influence State Tests for High-School Students." The article itself actually reveals that universities are in no position to have high schools toe the line — yet. David T. Conley, a University of Oregon professor who is director of the Standards for Success project (a nationwide effort on the part of universities to exert such influence), in fact notes that "universities haven't been at the table in any systematic fashion.[...]We want to try to make sure there is some alignment that exists between what state systems are doing and what universities are doing" (Hebel).

In the meantime, all we can really be sure of is this move to mandated assessments, a move that, more than any other circumstance, gives purpose and point to my title — high schools are indeed becoming crucibles of college prep — and mandated assessments, particularly as exit exams that are also college admissions screening instruments, are the great reason why. What's happening in consequence? To be honest, some pretty dispiriting stuff is happening. Massive summer school programs have been initiated in New York and Chicago. Occasioned by these exit exams — or rather failure to pass them on the part of too many students — they are accompanied by charges that their standards are too low (Hadderman). Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Maryland, and North Carolina have delayed their statewide tests because of concern for similar consequences (Hebel). Because accountability is a kind of behavior-mod approach to education reform (predicated on rewards



and punishments), it's no surprise that there have been cheating scandals in a number of states — most recently Indiana, California, and Texas ("More Test Cheating"). Since one thing we have always known is that educational advantages are unequally distributed among the student population — race, ethnicity, gender, and above all socio-economic status have always been powerful predictors of academic success — one important consequence of the mandated exit exams is widespread fear that drop-out and failure rates have increased for poor and minority students in states with mandated tests (Cavanaugh). And even those who hang in there are all the more likely to lag ever further behind their more affluent peers since the tests have, according to George Hill-ocks, "a powerful effect on increasing the gap by restricting what students are allowed to learn in many poorer districts" (102). These problems have prompted widespread discussion, not least of all by teachers' unions, of a 5th year for high school students, a year to address what the tests say must be addressed (Bradley). Finally, I'm sorry to report that there are no great success stories to counter all this bad news: there is simply no established correlation in improved college attendance/performance. On the contrary, as Orfield and Wald report, "High-stakes tests attached to grade promotion and high school graduation lead to increased dropout rates, particularly for minority students" (39). And there is particular concern about this in the case of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students (see, for example, Ioannou). Such consequences and fallout have moved one critic of mandated assessments, Peter Sacks, to say that "the nation's elites now perpetuate their class privilege with rules of their own making, [...] rules legitimated and protected by a pseudo-scientific objectivity" (11).

But not all the news is bad, nor all the indicators downturns. If mandated testing is a cloud (a great gray thunderhead, overspreading the land like a gathering storm filmed in time-lapse), it has a silver lining. The fact is that all this testing, as we have just noted, has created problems. They are in fact problems that state mandates have created, and so, as you might imagine, some have state-mandated solutions. Small steps these, they are nevertheless significant ones because they point us to a third solution: not a market solution (charter schools or voucher systems), not even a political solution (mandated testing), and only a top-down solution in terms of where the money is coming from (sometimes but not always). This third solution, neither market-driven nor politically mandated, is collaboration. Colleges and high schools, the greatest and most essential learning communities we have, are starting to take a learning communities approach to their mutual concerns and problems. The way is often opened or paved with where-withal supplied by the state, but the state doesn't script this part. The script is for the high schools and the colleges to write, at least up to a point.

Here are some instances where I actually know the players. Cal



State University had \$9 million made available to 18 campuses to work with high schools as the new high school exit exam in California rolled out (Crouch and McNenny 57). In the wake of the new New York State Regents exams, CUNY asked for \$10 million and was given \$7 million in state funds for its 17 campuses to work with high schools. A FIPSE-funded collaboration between Virginia colleges and high schools called "Aligning Writing Instruction in Secondary and Postsecondary Institutions" proved enough of a success to be extended to a national pilot (Jennings). In each and every case, statewide assessments created a need these ventures are intended to address: the focus was better preparation for college, but the focus of most of the activity and instruction was in the high schools.

Let me tell you a little bit about what's happening in New York, working with that \$7 million annual investment. What most of that money goes for is personnel: we have adjuncts in the high schools, but we also have high school teachers working as adjuncts — in other words, high school teachers who have become college faculty, if only on a part-time basis. The goals of the most of the instruction are frankly if not exclusively about addressing the tests, but they need not represent some crude teaching to the tests; they can in fact be critical explorations of testing and standards, notably college standards. At present, the instructional program — it's PR-motivated name (really a misnomer) is College Now — is in most of the city's 300 high schools. A small part of this (the part I'm really involved in and really want to talk about) is a professional development program called Looking Both Ways (LBW). It's purpose is to bring together high school and college teachers to talk through issues of language and literacy, sharing concerns as well as assignments, modeling activities as well as talk.

Let me tell you a little bit more about the way LBW works. I should explain that it is by no means the full program of professional development for the larger project of working with the high schools. (A principle of LBW is that we don't do training or basic staff development, that we are interested in working with experienced teachers who are themselves likely to do professional and curricular development.) We invite applications from all the CUNY campuses as well as all the NYC high schools, and, upon reviewing them, create seminars of 15 scattered about the boroughs, with each seminar co-led by both a high school and a college teacher. These seminars meet 5 hours for each of 6 Saturdays spread over an academic term; the leaders themselves spend another month beforehand meeting and planning these seminars together. Each of the leaders gets a course release (or the equivalent); each of the participants gets a \$1000 stipend or graduate credit (the choice is theirs). That, basically, is where the money goes. But LBW is four years old now, so it also has (and has funded) scholarly research projects, publications, a website, and a conference.

So what is happening as the result of this small project in a vast system? Well, a number of things, and it's useful to say not just what is happening but why. One of the things about New York's ELA Regents (the English/Language Arts Regents) that almost goes without saying (at least for the sort of people who read this journal) but was also given too little thought (by the people who instituted the requirement to pass the exam with a certain score) was the enormous disadvantage LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students had when confronted with the exam. In New York City, more than a third of the students in the system are not native speakers of English; they were taking a 4-part, 6-hour, 2-day exam in reading, writing, and even listening comprehension, and this test was a terror for them. One consequence of the work done by participants in LBW (who have a tendency to appreciate and even relish the complexity of the teaching and learning situations they contemplate) was to help people realize that the solution couldn't be a quick fix. The targeting of LEP students now begins with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade—and the purpose, quite the opposite of tracking as a separating-off, is to have intensive work with English integrated with work in core subjects like math and science. The discussion of assessments—another place where LBW's resistance to oversimplification is very much at work—has not meant a uniform resistance to mandated assessments. It has, however meant a broadened discussion of the tests and standards, particularly ways of reclaiming some freedom and flexibility in the face of mandated assessments; people have even found how to make working with and toward the tests serve their own pedagogical goals—and they have shared their findings with others. With LBW participants attaining a kind of critical mass in some instructional fields and sites, the project was able to mount a city-wide conference in 2001 ("Braided Lives: Language, Literacy and Urban Classrooms") for sharing concerns, practices, strategies. Held over two days, the conference was keynoted jointly by the Executive Vice Chancellor of CUNY and the Deputy Chancellor of the New York Public School system, each the head administrator for instruction in her respective system. In addition, as I have noted, we've done a book, a series of seminar-specific monographs, writing groups called "scholars programs," and a website.

I don't want to oversell our success, however. On the contrary, I want to lay down some caveats and cautions. First of all, I need to stress again that LBW is a small corner of a much vaster project. (Remember that \$7 million per annum figure for work with the high schools? LBW does all that it does on about \$200 thousand a year.) The larger project may well involve people who are not adequately prepared or supported. And I should say immediately that even and especially what constitutes adequate preparation or support is something we have to be cautious about. Motivated by mandated assessments, part of the top-down movement of money and imperatives, the situa-

tion I'm describing in New York (like the others I've mentioned) is an instance of what we might call forced collaboration—hence my invocation of the crucible and my focus on the high schools. There are some truly tricky steps to take (or avoid) here, particularly for the college partners. The most dangerous is presuming to pull rank and talk down: colleges don't enter partnerships to tell the high schools what to do. (That violates the very idea of partnership.) Another misstep is the white knight syndrome (here we come to the rescue, institutionalized education's form of *noblesse oblige*). Each of these has its corresponding danger from the high school end: being too deferential to the college representatives; expecting to be rescued.

A true partnership requires equal footing, and that has to start from the ground up, not the top down. The very definition of plans and purposes has to be a shared activity. Partners have to co-construct goals as well as share in the work of carrying them out. And owning those goals equally means being wary of putting the partnership in the service of someone else's agenda (supposing the desired outcomes can be adequately measured by improved test scores, for example, or by some crudely defined sense of *quid pro quo*).

So what should a true partnership be? (I don't want to spend more time saying what it isn't than saying what it is.) It should be something that makes knowledge-making about effective teaching and learning a shared activity, a visible enterprise. That's rarer than you might suppose. Teaching is a paradoxical endeavor in that it is always a public performance (something done in front of students as well as on their behalf) that is also a closeted activity. Teachers know remarkably little about how other teachers teach; this is true of their own colleagues, still more true of the teachers who taught the students before or will teach them after. As an experience, high school or college is probably considerably less compartmentalized, more of a continuous and coherent affair from the student's point of view than from any teacher's. (That's a frightening thought, especially if you think back to your own experience.) We are cordoned off from each other, separated by institutional and disciplinary and other boundaries that make our worlds remarkably closed off and self-contained. The profoundest experience for most people involved in the LBW project—the one that repeatedly shows up at the top of the evaluative surveys we do of participants—is what we have come to call *intervisitations*. High school and college teachers partner up: you visit my classroom, witness my teaching, and I return the favor. On a small scale, this represents what we need to be doing on a vast scale: rediscovering each other on both sides of that divide that, in its transversal, gives most students the strongest shock of cultural dislocation anyone is likely to experience in a lifetime. Faced by a compelling need to bridge that divide, we need to collaborate, and we need to find ways that transcend or circumvent

forced collaboration. The question is how.

In a recent article "Why Learning Communities? Why Now?" K. Patricia Cross, formerly of Berkeley's (and also formerly of Harvard's) School of Education, argues that learning communities are no mere trend; they participate in a revolution both epistemological and practical. And both revolutions are reflected in how learning communities help to fulfill the dual mission of most universities as well as most high schools: to train the future workforce and educate a responsible citizenry. Interestingly, she elects to make her most impressive argument on practical grounds. Drawing on *The Double Helix of Education and the Economy* (1992)—a book arguing that *A Nation at Risk*, that famous and infamous bombshell of the '80s, misdiagnosed the problem in education—Cross argues,

The problem is not so much the deterioration of the quality of education, the solution to which is to invoke higher standards and stiffer requirements.[...] It is that students at all levels need a different kind of education.[...] The structure of traditional schools met the demands of the old workplace pretty well. In the old economy, the goal was to reduce unit costs through standardization and mass production. That was best accomplished in a system of slow change, low worker discretion, and high supervision... The schools operated with a similar structure—high supervision, high standardization, and interchangeable students. The problem is that standardization and high supervision are failing in both education and industry. This is not an era of slow change and predictable futures in the economy. Industry is beset by intense international competition, the demand for more varied and customized products, and faster product cycles—all accompanied by increasing instability and uncertainty. Such a system requires workers who can operate independently of supervision in a less well-defined environment. (9-10)

Cross points out an interesting semi-paradox: collaboration breeds independence. By working together—by building and participating in a community of practices that builds from the deepest sense of common ground we can discover together—we can learn to how to be much more effective at working independently. If we can do that we are likely to see another key principle emerging: the chief point of collaboration between high schools and colleges is that this knowledge-sharing and community-building models what it produces: a way of building knowledge, pooling information, sharing resources—and in a time when knowledge is unstable (in need of constant re-creation), information rapidly obsolescent, and resources both too scarce and too var-

ied not to share. True collaboration, based on equal partnerships and mutual respect, produces greater independence and self-realization. And it practices what it preaches: it models the very learning it seeks to cultivate. This agenda, as a call to research and action, is what I'd like to leave you with as I leave the editorship of *JBW*.

## Notes

Author's Note: This piece is based in part on a keynote address I gave at a conference titled "Strategies for Effective Transitions: High Schools and Universities Working Together," University of Houston, April 2001.

1. National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. Chapter 3: Postsecondary Education. Data Table 184. College enrollment rates of high school completers, by race/ethnicity: 1960 to 2000. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/digest2001/tables/dt184.asp>>

Given the difficulty of locating the specific data table without a full citation (too unwieldy for intext documentation) or a URL that's unintelligible out of context, I am citing the NCES data via endnotes. Here I'll add that there has been a slight falling off since 1997 in high school graduates going on to college—so that the percentage for 2000, the last year for which numbers are provided, is only slightly more than 63%. It's unfortunate that, at present, the NCES statistics stop when they do: they document the situation during a boom time of unprecedented low unemployment, when job opportunities even for high school graduates proved extraordinarily high: the time since has seen a sharp turn into sustained recession and high unemployment, and these causes would no doubt send the percentages back up significantly.

2. National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. Chapter 5: Outcomes of Education. Data Table 382: Median annual income of year-round, full-time workers 25 years old and over, by level of education completed and sex: 1989 to 1999. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/digest2001/tables/dt382.asp>>

3. National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001*. Chapter 3: Postsecondary Education. Data Table 188. Total undergraduate fall enrollment in degree-granting institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control of institution: 1969 to 1999. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/digest2001/tables/dt188.asp>>

4. National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education*. Student Effort and Educational Progress - Postsecondary Persistence and Progress - Indicator 29: Remediation and Degree Completion. <<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2001/section3/indicator29.asp>> (This site

collects data from the three annual publications of *The Condition of Education*: 2000, 2001, 2002.)

5. Actually what Lord (Thomas Babington) Macaulay said was "Those who compare the age in which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in imagination, may talk of degeneracy and decay; but no man who is correctly informed as to the past, will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present" (*History of England*. Volume 1. Chapter 1).

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