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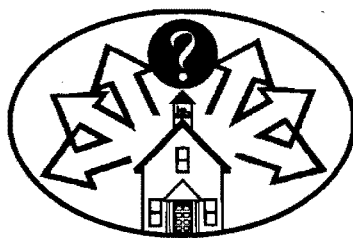
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FOCUS: TOUGH QUESTIONS. HARD CHOICES.



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Carl Sandburg tells us in "Crapshooters" that for every winner there must be a loser too. That doesn't seem to be the case today as educators are forced by changing circumstances and populations to make decisions not based on what is best, but on what does the least damage.

In this issue, we turn your attention to some of the hard choices facing educators today and ask you to grapple with the sometimes dispiriting questions that plague the field.

Sometimes these dilemmas come in attractive packages. That is the situation Amy Huntley explores in her article. What if, she asks, a student were to force us to put our money where our canonical mouth is? We think it is not as hypothetical a question as it seems.

Rita Paye continues the discussion of how a violent society presents itself in our classrooms. We have read that violence is often the result of unequal power relationships and Paye's straightforward discussion of the politics of writing about violence is both intriguing and a little unsettling.

If censorship were a metaphor it would have to be the many headed Hydra because just when one head seems to have been killed, another head returns with more challenges than before. Ann Legore Christiansen and Cathy D'Agostino take us on a safari that, while it doesn't kill the beast, at least shows how it was bested for a time in one Illinois classroom.

Testing has been variously referred to as the savior and the bane of education. It is probably both. In his article, Ron Sudol examines some of the familiar and perhaps consciously overlooked complications of assessment as it does, and does not fit with teaching and learning. He describes how those who struggled with the development of the Michigan Framework for Writing attempted to bring honesty to the job of measuring students' writing skills.

Mary Harmon is also concerned with the implications of testing, particularly for those who don't fit the conscious—and unconscious—assumptions test makers have about the students who will be measured by the instrument they create.

In true Sandburgian form, Gloria Nixon-John presents us with an object lesson on the implications of the choices we make and the value we attach to those choices. Sometimes the winner and loser are one in the same.

Next Miriam Bat-Ami turns our attention to choices that show themselves subtly, almost invisibly, in the stories we tell our children. As teachers we know that the lessons students take away from the classroom aren't always what we intend. Sometimes students take their lesson from the world we present to them, regardless of our intentions.

Continuing the exploration of societal roles, Rita Paye takes us on a journey through a subject only now coming to our attention—sexual harassment in the classroom. What she finds is both frightening and promising.

Fred Barton

Diana Mitchell

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