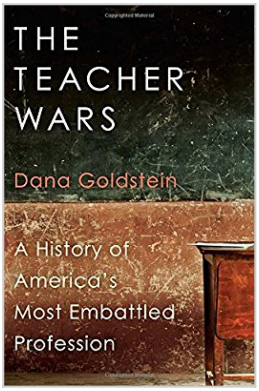

The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession

By Dana Goldstein

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In her groundbreaking history of 175 years of American education, Dana Goldstein finds answers in the past to the controversies that plague our public schools today.

Teaching is a wildly contentious profession in America, one attacked and admired in equal measure. In *The Teacher Wars*, a rich, lively, and unprecedented history of public school teaching, Dana Goldstein reveals that teachers have been similarly embattled for nearly two centuries. From the genteel founding of the common schools movement in the nineteenth century to the violent inner-city teacher strikes of the 1960s and '70s, from the dispatching of Northeastern women to frontier schoolhouses to the founding of Teach for America on the Princeton University campus in 1989, Goldstein shows that the same issues have continued to bedevil us: Who should teach? What should be taught? Who should be held accountable for how our children learn?

She uncovers the surprising roots of hot button issues, from teacher tenure to charter schools, and finds that recent popular ideas to improve schools—instituting merit pay, evaluating teachers by student test scores, ranking and firing veteran teachers, and recruiting “elite” graduates to teach—are all approaches that have been tried in the past without producing widespread change. And she also discovers an emerging effort that stands a real chance of transforming our schools for the better: drawing on the best practices of the three million public school teachers we already have in order to improve learning throughout our nation’s classrooms.

The Teacher Wars upends the conversation about American education by bringing the lessons of history to bear on the dilemmas we confront today. By asking “How did we get here?” Dana Goldstein brilliantly illuminates the path forward.

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Editorial Review

Review
A *New York Times* Notable Book of 2014

"Ms. Goldstein's book is meticulously fair and disarmingly balanced, serving up historical commentary instead of a searing philippic ... The book skips nimbly from history to on-the-ground reporting to policy prescription, never falling on its face. If I were still teaching, I'd leave my tattered copy by the sputtering Xerox machine. I'd also recommend it to the average citizen who wants to know why Robert can't read, and Allison can't add."
—New York Times

"[A] lively account of the history of teaching ... *The Teacher Wars* suggests that to improve our schools, we have to help teachers do their job the way higher-achieving nations do: by providing better preservice instruction, offering newcomers more support from well-trained mentors and opening up the "black box" classroom so teachers can observe one another without fear and share ideas. Stressing accountability, with no ideas for improving teaching, Goldstein says, is 'like the hope that buying a scale will result in losing weight.' Such books may be sounding the closing bell on an era when the big ideas in school reform came from economists and solutions were sought in spreadsheets of test data."
—New York Times Book Review

"Goldstein presents detailed case studies from different periods that should give pause to any contemporary reformer who claims to know exactly how to fix public schools in America. Her careful historical analysis reveals certain lessons useful to anyone shaping policy, from principals to legislators ... thorough and nuanced."
—San Francisco Chronicle

"Dana Goldstein's *The Teacher Wars* is the product of just what the teaching corps needs more of: open-minded, well-informed, sympathetic scrutiny that doesn't shrink from exposing systemic problems and doesn't peddle faddish solutions either."
—The Atlantic

"Engaging ... Goldstein ably sketches reformers past and present, asserting that the common force behind each new wave of school reforms is evangelical conviction, and that new movements often seem based more on faith than on factual evidence ... her ability to illuminate each new wave's 'hype-disillusionment cycle' is a welcome treatment of a fraught subject."
—The New Yorker

"A sweeping, insightful look at how public education and the teaching profession have evolved and where we may be headed."
***—Booklist,* starred review**

"[An] immersive and well-researched history ... Attacking a veritable hydra of issues, Goldstein does an admirable job, all while remaining optimistic about the future of this vital profession."
—Publishers Weekly

"Think teachers are overpaid? Or are they dishonored and overworked? Both positions, this useful book suggests, are very old—and very tired ... Goldstein delivers a smart, evenhanded source of counterargument."
—Kirkus Reviews

“I wanted to yell ‘Yes! Yes! Thank you for finally talking sense’ on page after page. Anyone who wants to be a combatant in or commentator on the teacher wars has to read The Teacher Wars.”
—Chris Hayes, host of MSNBC’s *All In with Chris Hayes* and author of *Twilight of the Elites: America After Meritocracy*

“It’s hard to know what to make of teachers. In the news and in the movies they are sometimes vampires sucking off public goodwill and sometimes saviors of America’s children. In this totally surprising book Dana Goldstein—who has always been Slate’s sharpest writer on education—explains how teachers have always been at the center of controversy. At once poetic and practical, *The Teacher Wars* will make school seem like the most exciting place on earth.”
—Hanna Rosin, author of *The End of Men*

“Dana Goldstein proves to be as skilled an education historian as she is an astute observer of the contemporary state of the teaching profession. May policy makers take heed.”
—Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers

“A colorful, immensely readable account that helps make sense of the heated debates around teaching and school reform. The Teacher Wars is the kind of smart, timely narrative that parents, educators, and policy makers have sorely needed.”
—Frederick M. Hess, Director of Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute

“Dana Goldstein is one of the best education writers around. Her history of the teaching profession is that and much more: an investigation into the political forces that can help or hinder student learning.”
—Emily Bazelon, author of *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy*

“Dana Goldstein has managed the impossible: She's written a serious education book that's fresh, insightful, and enjoyable to read.”
—Michael Petrilli, Executive Vice President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute

“Teaching has always been a political profession. We all have a dog in this fight. So I can hardly imagine anyone who could not profit from reading this erudite, elegant, and relentlessly sensible book. Listen to Dana Goldstein: ‘We must quiet the teacher wars.’ Reading *The Teacher Wars* would be a great way to start.”
—Rick Perlstein, author of *Nixonland*

“If more people involved in today’s discussion about education reform read this book, our national conversation about schooling would be deeper and more effective. Buy this book. Read this book. Share it with your friends who care about education. A very important work.”
—Peg Tyre, author of *The Good School: How Smart Parents Get Their Kids the Education They Deserve*

“Why are today's teachers pictured simultaneously as superheroes and villains? In clear, crisp language, Dana Goldstein answers that question historically by bringing to life key figures and highlighting crucial issues that shaped both teachers and teaching over the past century. Few writers about school reform frame the context in which teachers have acted in the past. Goldstein does exactly that in thoughtfully explaining

why battles over teachers have occurred then and now."
—Larry Cuban, Professor Emeritus of Education, Stanford University

About the Author
DANA GOLDSTEIN comes from a family of public school educators. She received the Spencer Fellowship in Education Journalism, a Schwarz Fellowship at the New America Foundation, and a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellowship at the Nation Institute. Her journalism is regularly featured in *Slate*, *The Atlantic*, *The Nation*, *The Daily Beast*, and other publications, and she is a staff writer at the Marshall Project. She lives in New York City. Her social policy blog is danagoldstein.com.

Introduction

I began this book in early 2011 with a simple observation: Public school teaching had become the most controversial profession in America. Republican governors in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana, and even the Democratic governor of deep blue Massachusetts, sought to diminish or eliminate teachers' rights to collectively bargain. Teacher tenure was the subject of heated debate in statehouses from Denver to Tallahassee, and President Obama swore in his State of the Union address to "stop making excuses" for bad teachers. One rising-star Republican, New Jersey governor Chris Christie, even became a conservative folk hero after appearing in a series of YouTube videos in which he excoriated individual public school teachers—all of them middle-aged women—who rose at public events to challenge him on his $1 billion in education budget cuts, even as he cut $1.6 billion in corporate taxes.

No other profession operates under this level of political scru- tiny, not even those, like policing or social work, that are also tasked with public welfare and are paid for with public funds. In 2010 *Newsweek* published a cover story called "The Key to Saving American Education." The image was of a blackboard, with a single phrase chalked over and over again in a child's loopy handwriting: *We must fire bad teachers. We must fire bad teachers. We must fire bad teachers.* Wide-release movies like *Waiting for "Superman"* and *Won't Back Down*, funded by philanthropists who made their fortunes in the private sector, portray teacher tenure and its defender, teachers unions, as practically the sole causes of underperforming schools. Everywhere I traveled as a reporter, from the 2008 Democratic National Convention to the 2010 meeting of former president Bill Clinton's Clinton Global Initiative, powerful people seemed to feel indignant about the incompetence and job security of public school teachers, despite polls showing that the American public considers teachers highly respected professionals, nearly on par with medical doctors.

Anxiety about bad teaching is understandable. Teachers do work that is both personal and political. They care for and educate our children, for whom we feel a fierce and loyal love. And they prepare our nation's citizens and workers, whose wisdom and level of skill will shape our collective future. Given that teachers shoulder such an awesome responsibility, it makes sense that American politics is acutely attuned to their shortcomings. So I want to begin by acknowledging: It is true that the majority of American teachers have academically mediocre backgrounds. Most have below-average SAT scores and graduate from nonselective colleges and universities. It is also true that one large review of practices within typical American elementary school classrooms found many children—and the majority of poor children—"sitting around, watching the teacher deal with behavioral problems, and engaging in boring and rote instructional activities such as completing worksheets and spelling tests." Another study of over a thousand urban public school classrooms found only a third of teachers conducting lessons that developed "intellectual depth" beyond rote learning.

In the Obama era, the predominant policy response to these very real problems has been a narrow one: to

weaken teachers' tenure protections and then use "measures of student learning"—a euphemism for children's scores on an ever-expanding battery of hastily designed tests—to identify and fire bad teachers. One Colorado teacher told me (hyperbolically) that the disproportionate focus on punishing awful teachers made her feel "I've chosen a profession that, in the public eye, is worse than prostitution." A spate of online videos and blog posts, in which angry teachers pub- licly quit their jobs, has gone viral. "I can no longer cooperate with a testing regime that I believe is suffocating creativity and innovation in the classroom," wrote Ron Maggiano, a Virginia high school social studies teacher and winner of two national teaching awards. In Illinois, Ellie Rubinstein tendered her resignation via YouTube, explaining, "Everything I loved about teaching is extinct. Curriculum is mandated. Minutes spent teaching subjects are audited. Schedules are dictated by administrators. The classroom teacher is no longer trusted or in control of what, when, or how she teaches." Olivia Blanchard chose to leave her Teach for America placement in Atlanta, where hundreds of thousands of dollars in merit pay bonuses had been paid to administrators and teachers who cheated by erasing and correcting students' answers on standardized tests before submitting them to be graded. After a round of indictments, those teachers who remained in the district were left demoralized and paranoid. When Blanchard clicked Send on her resignation e-mail, she was "flooded with relief," she recounted in *The Atlantic*.

Blanchard, Maggiano, and Rubinstein represent a larger trend. Polls show teachers feel more passionate and mission-driven about their careers than other American professionals. But a MetLife survey of teachers found that between 2008 and 2012, the proportion who reported being "very satisfied" with their current job plummeted from 62 to 39 percent, the lowest level in a quarter century.

I had assumed this war over teaching was new, sparked by the anxieties of the Great Recession. After all, one-fifth of all American children were growing up poor—twice the child poverty rate of England or South Korea. Young adults were suffering from a 17 percent unemployment rate, compared to less than 8 percent in Germany and Switzerland. Over half of recent college graduates were jobless or underemployed for their level of education. A threadbare social safety net, run-amok bankers, lackadaisical regulators, the globalization of manufacturing, and a culture of consumerism, credit card debt, and short-term thinking might have gotten us into this economic mess. But we'd be damned if better teachers couldn't help get us out. "Great teachers are performing miracles every single day," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in 2009. "An effective teacher? They walk on water." The rhetoric could provoke whiplash. Even as we were obsessed with the very worst teachers, we were worshipping an ideal, superhuman few.

This confusing dichotomy led me to wonder: Why are American teachers both resented and idealized, when teachers in other nations are much more universally respected? In South Korea, teachers are referred to as "nation builders." In Finland, both men and women name teaching as among the top three most desirable professions for a spouse. Meanwhile, that old American saw—"Those who can't do, teach"—continues to reverberate, reflecting elite condescension toward career educators.

I suspected that the key to understanding the American view of teachers lay in our history, and perhaps had something to do with the tension between our sky-high hopes for public education as the vehicle of meritocracy and our perennial unwillingness to fully invest in our public sector, teachers and schools included. For two hundred years, the American public has asked teachers to close troubling social gaps—between Catholics and Protestants; new immigrants and the American mainstream; blacks and whites; poor and rich. Yet every new era of education reform has been characterized by a political and media war on the existing teachers upon whom we rely to do this difficult work, often in the absence of the social supports for families that make teaching and learning most effective for kids, like stable jobs and affordable housing, child care, and health care. The nineteenth-century common school reformers depicted male teachers—90 percent of the classroom workforce in 1800—as sadistic, lash-wielding drunks who ought to be replaced by

kinder, purer (and cheaper) women. During the Progressive Era, it was working-class female teachers who were attacked, for lacking the masculine "starch" supposedly necessary to preside over sixty-student classrooms of former child laborers. In the South during the civil rights era, *Brown v. Board of Education* prompted the racially motivated firings of tens of thousands of black teachers, as the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations looked the other way. Then, at the height of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s, it was inner-city white teachers who were vilified, for failing to embrace parental control of schools and Afrocentric pedagogical theories.

Teachers have been embattled by politicians, philanthropists, intellectuals, business leaders, social scientists, activists on both the Right and Left, parents, and even one another. (As we shall see, some of the critiques were fair, others less so.) Americans have debated who should teach public school; what should get taught; and how teachers should be educated, trained, hired, paid, evaluated, and fired. Though we've been arguing about these questions for two centuries, very little consensus has developed.

Amid these teacher wars, many extraordinary men and women worked in public school classrooms and offered powerful, grassroots ideas for how to improve American education. Henry David Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Lyndon B. Johnson are just a few of the famous Americans who taught. They resisted the fantasy of educators as saints or saviors, and understood teaching as a job in which the potential for children's intellectual transcendence and social mobility, though always present, is limited by real-world concerns such as poor training, low pay, inadequate supplies, inept administration, and impoverished students and families. These teachers' stories, and those of less well-known teachers, propel this history forward and help us understand why American teaching has evolved into such a peculiar profession, one attacked and admired in equal proportion.

Today the ineffective tenured teacher has emerged as a feared character, a vampiric type who sucks tax dollars into her bloated pension and health care plans, without much regard for the children under her care. Like past conflagrations over crack babies or welfare queens, which exemplified anxiety over public spending on poor people of color, today's bad teacher scare employs all the classic features of a moral panic. According to sociologists who study these events, in a moral panic, policy makers and the media focus on a single class of people (in our case, veteran public school teachers) as emblems of a large, complex social problem (socioeconomic inequality, as evidenced by educational achievement gaps). Then the media repeats, ad nauseam, anecdotes about the most despicable examples of this type of person (such as "rubber room" teachers, who collect pay, sometimes for years, while awaiting termination hearings on accusations of corporal punishment or alcoholism). This focus on the worst of the worst misrepresents the true scale and character of what may be a genuine problem.

As a result, the public has gotten the message that public school teaching—especially urban teaching—is a broadly failed profession. The reality is concerning, but on a more modest scale: Depending on whom you ask, teacher-quality advocates estimate that somewhere between 2 and 15 percent of current teachers cannot improve their practice to an acceptable level and ought to be replaced each year. Far from confirming the perception that low-performing urban schools are uniformly bleak, talentless places, the latest "value-added" research quantifies what history shows: that even the highest-poverty neighborhood schools in cities like New York and Los Angeles employ teachers who produce among the biggest test score gains in their regions. What's more, veteran teachers who work long-term in high-poverty schools with low test scores are actually more effective at raising student achievement than is the rotating cast of inexperienced teachers who try these jobs out but flee after one to three years.

The history of American education reform shows not only recurring attacks on veteran educators, but also a number of failed ideas about teaching that keep popping up again and again, like a Whac-A-Mole game at the amusement park. Over the past ten years, cities from Atlanta to Austin to New York have experimented with paying teachers bonuses for higher student test scores. This type of merit pay was attempted in the 1920s, early 1960s, and 1980s. It never worked to broadly motivate teachers or advance outcomes for kids. For over a century, school reformers have hoped that tweaking teacher rating systems would lead to more teachers being declared unfit and getting fired, resulting in an influx of better people into the profession. But under almost every evaluation system reformers have tried—rating teachers as good, fair, or poor; A, B, C, or D; Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory; or Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, or Ineffective—principals overburdened by paperwork and high teacher turnover ended up declaring that over 95 percent of their employees were just fine, indeed. Fast-track teacher training programs like Teach for America, the Great Society-era Teacher Corps, and the nineteenth-century Board of National Popular Education are likewise a perennial feature of our school reform landscape. They recruit ambitious people to the classroom, but on a small scale, and do not systemically improve instruction for kids.

History also shows that teacher tenure has been widely misunderstood. It is true that tenure protections make it costly, in both time and money, for schools to fire veteran teachers. That is because due process rights allow tenured teachers accused of poor performance to "grieve" their evaluations and terminations to an arbitrator, who can rule to send them back to the classroom. Yet tenure predates collective bargaining for teachers by over half a century. Administrators granted teachers tenure as early as 1909, *before* unions were legally empowered at the negotiating table to demand this right. During the Progressive Era, both "good government" school reformers and then-nascent teachers unions supported tenure, which prevented teaching jobs from being used as political patronage and allowed teachers to challenge dismissals or demotions, once commonplace, based on gender, marital status, pregnancy, religion, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, or political ideology. Tenure has long existed even in southern states where teachers are legally barred from collective bargaining.

Today it is usually assumed that teachers enjoy much more job security than workers in the private sector. Even if we set aside the nearly 50 percent of all beginner teachers who choose to leave the profession within five years—and ignore the evidence that those who leave are worse performers than those who stay—it is unclear whether teachers are formally terminated for *poor performance* any less frequently than are other workers. In 2007, the last year for which national data is available, 2.1 percent of American public school teachers were fired for cause, a figure that includes tenured teachers. Compared to federal workers, who one study found are fired at an annual rate of .02 percent, teachers are exponentially more likely to be terminated. There is no comparable data from the private sector, because the Bureau of Labor Statistics groups layoffs with firings. But in 2012, companies with over a thousand employees, the closest private counterpart to large urban school systems, lost only about 2 percent of their workforce from firings, resignations, and layoffs combined. In short, teachers are more, not less, likely than many other workers to get fired.

It may well be that we want teachers to be fired more often than other professionals because their work is so much more important. Still, the public conversation about teaching rarely offers a realistic sense of scale—of how many bad teachers there truly are, and what it would take to either improve their skills or replace them with people who are apt to perform at a higher level.

It is often said that teachers ought to be as elite and high per- forming as attorneys or doctors. But teaching employs roughly five times as many people as either medicine or law. There are 3.3 million American public school teachers, compared to 691,000 doctors and 728,000 attorneys. Four percent of all civilian workers are teachers.

In some recent years just as many new teachers were hired—over 200,000—as the total number of American college graduates minted by selective institutions, those that accept fewer than half of their applicants. The National Council on Teacher Quality estimates that high-poverty schools alone hire some 70,000 new teachers annually. Reformers sometimes claim that this huge demand for teachers is driven by overaggressive class-size limits, and they argue for decreasing the number of teachers while raising class sizes and recruiting a smaller, more elite group to the profession. In California and Florida, poorly designed class-size laws did lead to the overhiring of underqualified teachers. But the leading teacher demographer, Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania, has shown that the decrease in average elementary school class sizes since 1987, from 26 to 21 children, does not fully explain the "ballooning" of the teaching force. There are two other factors that together account for a larger part of the change: first, the explosion of high-needs special-education diagnoses for students, such as those with autism-spectrum disorders, and second, the increase in the number of high school students who enroll in math and science courses. Those trends are not likely ones we can or should reverse. While teacher prep programs in regions with an oversupply of teachers should raise their admission standards or shut down, calls for 100 percent of American teachers to hail from selective colleges are, frankly, absurd, especially if we also lay off the bottom, say, 2 to 15 percent of teachers each year—66,000 to 495,000 people—as many reformers would like. Currently, just 10 percent of teachers are graduates of selective colleges. Teach for America recruited 6,000 teachers in 2013. Another elite alternative certification program, The New Teacher Project, recruited about 1,800 teaching fellows. Urban teacher residencies, which are also highly competitive, produced some 500 teachers. These are tiny numbers relative to demand.

Moreover, with the possible exception of high school-level math teachers, there is little evidence that better students make better teachers. Some nations, such as Finland, have been able to build a teaching force made up solely of star students. But other places, such as Shanghai, have made big strides in student achievement without drastically adjusting the demographics of who becomes a teacher. They do it by reshaping teachers' working days so they spend less time alone in front of kids and more time planning lessons and observing other teachers at work, sharing best practices in pedagogy and classroom management. According to Andreas Schleicher, a statistician who researches schools around the world, Shanghai "is good at attracting average people and getting enormous productivity out of them." The future of American education likely looks similar. As John Dewey noted in 1895, "Education is, and forever will be, in the hands of ordinary men and women."

I came to this project with sympathy for educators. American public school teaching has typically attracted individuals taking their first, tentative steps out of the working class, and one of them was my maternal grandfather, Harry Greene, a high school dropout. In his first career as a printer, he led a drive to organize a union at a nonunion shop, and for a while the fallout from that made it difficult for him to find work. When he was fifty-two years old, Harry finally earned an associate's degree, and in 1965 began teaching vocational courses in New York City public high schools. He benefited from the early years of teacher collective bargaining. As a teacher, my grandfather made a steady middle-class salary with periodic raises for the first time in his life. That financial stability allowed my mother, Laura Greene, to attend a four-year private college.

My dad, Steven Goldstein, was another first-generation college graduate who became a public school teacher. He attended Adelphi University on a soccer scholarship. Always the jock, my dad discovered he had a passion for history, too, and taught middle and high school social studies for ten years before going into school administration, because he wanted to earn more money. He worked in several socioeconomically integrated suburban school districts, and would sometimes say that the teachers union could be an

administrator’s greatest ally in removing a bad teacher from the classroom.

In addition to being the daughter and granddaughter of educators, I attended public schools in Ossining, New York, with a diverse group of white, black, Latino, and Asian classmates. A few parents, like my mom, commuted down the Hudson River to New York City for corporate jobs; others were single mothers on public assistance or line cooks in the kitchen of our town’s maximum-security prison, Sing Sing. But regardless of whether they were college professors or home health aides, the most involved parents in Ossining wanted their kids in the classrooms of the most experienced teachers. My junior-year math teacher, Mr. DiCarlucci, wore a full suit and tie every day, accessorized with blingy gold jewelry. Though he taught precalculus, he assigned research papers on high-level concepts like topology, to inspire us to stick with math over the long term. The white-haired Mr. Tunney guided English classes through dense classics like *All the King’s Men* with uncommon energy drawn from his infectious love for the books he taught. When teachers like that retired, the entire community mourned.

When I began reporting on education in 2007, I quickly learned how lucky I had been. Most American schools are socioeconomically segregated, very little like the integrated schools I attended in Ossining, where highly qualified teachers aspired to build long careers, and to teach both middle-class and poor children. In 2005, the average high school graduation rate in the nation’s fifty largest cities was just 53 percent, compared to 71 percent in the suburbs. International assessments conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, show American schools are producing young adults who are less able than our counterparts in other developed nations to write coherently, read with understanding, and use numbers in day-to-day life. Even our most educated citizens, those with graduate degrees, are below world averages in math and computer literacy (though above average in reading). I do not believe schools are good enough the way they are. Nor do I believe that poverty and ethnic diversity prevent the United States from doing better educationally. Teachers and schools alone cannot solve our crisis of inequality and long-term unemployment, yet we know from the experience of nations like Poland that we don’t have to eradicate economic insecurity to improve our schools.

What I do believe is that education reformers today should learn from the mistakes of history. We must focus less on how to rank and fire teachers and more on how to make day-to-day teaching an attractive, challenging job that intelligent, creative, and ambitious people will gravitate toward. We must quiet the teacher wars and support ordinary teachers in improving their skills, what econo- mist Jonah Rockoff, who studies teacher quality, calls “moving the big middle” of the profession. While the ingenuity and fortitude of exemplary teachers throughout history are inspiring, many of their stories, which you will read in this book, shed light on the political irrationality of focusing obsessively on rating teachers, while paying far less attention to the design of the larger public education and social welfare systems in which they work.

To understand those systems, we will begin our historical journey in Massachusetts during the first half of the nineteenth century. Advocates for universal public education, called common schoolers, were challenged by antitax activists. The détente between these two groups redefined American teaching as low-paid (or even volunteer) missionary work for women, a reality we have lived with for two centuries—as the children of slaves and immigrants flooded into the classroom, as we struggled with and then gave up on desegregating our schools, and as we began, in the late twentieth century, to confront a future in which young Americans without college degrees were increasingly disadvantaged in the labor market and thus relied on schools and teachers, more than ever before, to help them access a middle-class life.

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Paul Andrews:

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