Progressive education is one of the most enduring educational reform movements in this country, with a lifespan of over one hundred years. Although as noted earlier, it waxes and wanes in popularity, many of its practices now appear so regularly in both private and public schools as to have become almost mainstream. But from the schools that were the pioneers, what useful lessons can we learn? The histories of the early progressive schools profiled in Part I illustrate what happened to some of the progressive schools founded in the first part of the twentieth century. But even now, they serve as important reminders for educators concerned with the competing issues of stability and change in schools with particular progressive philosophies—reminders, specifically, of the complex nature of school reform.

As we have seen in these histories, balancing the original intentions of progressive founders with the known demands upon practitioners has been the challenge some of the schools have met successfully and others have not. As contemporary American educators consider the school choice movement, the burgeoning expansion of charter schools, and the growing focus on standards-based testing and accountability measures, they would do well to look back for guidance at some of the original schools representative of the “new education.” Particularly instructive, The Dalton School and The City and
Country School are both urban independent schools that have enjoyed strong and enduring leaders, well-articulated philosophies and accompanying pedagogic practice, and a neighborhood to supply its clientele. Moreover, both have weathered the vicissitudes of educational reform movements hostile to progressive education.

In City and Country, we find a school that has managed to keep basically intact (some argue this point) Caroline Pratt’s child-centered practices. It does so in part, because of its small size and because it is a Pre-K–8 school, so that parents who are feeling the pressures of college admissions have four more years following City and Country to equip their children with Ivy League credentials. It also attracts parents who consciously favor a progressive school and who are often alumni. It selects faculty members interested in or graduates of progressive institutions. Significantly, a small but highly respected core of dedicated longtime faculty members serve to initiate new colleagues into the ways of the school. When progressive education fell into disfavor, the school faced dwindling enrollments; however, neighborhood and “New Age” parents may have been as influential in preserving the school as stable leadership, retrenchment, loyal alumni, and the choice real estate that helped to provide financial solvency. Finally, City and Country is proud of its heritage and its leadership is respectful of and continues both to articulate and implement the philosophy of Caroline Pratt.

The Dalton School, by contrast, is a large and very successful college preparatory K–12 school that has de-emphasized its progressive roots since the 1960s. It continues to voice the rhetoric of Helen Parkhurst but not her practices on a consistent basis. Its leadership, beginning with Barr through Dunnan, has been hostile to progressive education, and its parent body has increasingly included fewer alumni and more people new to the school. It draws its students from affluent neighborhoods, and particularly from its surroundings on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and it is mindful of the link between college admissions and a large student body as well as the importance of parents and alumni who generously support fund drives. Few faculty members now remember the school as progressive; most who did have retired. Its latest head, alumna Ellen Stein, has noticeably rekindled references to the Dalton Plan, and the school under her leadership has become more racially diverse (although it is not clear how socioeconomically diverse). Nonetheless, Dalton has survived as a market-sensitive institution that delivers—in its case, college admissions and a first-rate education that would pass muster with E. D. Hirsch’s Core Movement.
The Weekday School at Riverside Church is yet another progressive school in New York City that has experienced a degree of longevity and has an instructive history with lessons for current and future progressive schools. Given its inextricable connection to the Riverside Church, the Weekday School has faced certain challenges specific to being bound to a religious institution; however, like Dalton and City and Country, themes surrounding the importance of leadership, community, and financial stability emerge. Gupta demonstrates that the Weekday School has prospered as a progressive institution during times when the school leadership has understood and supported progressive educational philosophies and pedagogies and floundered when such focused leadership is absent. Two aspects of the Weekday School that have set it apart from many other progressive schools, Dalton and City and Country included, are that its location at the edge of Harlem and Columbia's Morningside Heights neighborhood and its connection to a generously endowed progressive church that specifically cultivates a nondenominational and diverse community has provided the school with a more racially and economically diverse student body than most progressive schools. This diversity has placed a financial strain on the Weekday School that continues to present challenges to the administration to this day. Despite these financial struggles and occasional battles between the school and the Church Council over curriculum and school structure, the Weekday School has now been providing a progressive schooling option to relatively diverse groups of children for nearly a century.

Another progressive school from Part I of this volume, the Laboratory School at the Institute of Child Study in Toronto, has been in continuous operation since 1925. While the school has changed dramatically since its founding, it continues as a center of child study with a deeply engrained progressivist philosophy of teaching. Like the schools discussed above, leadership has played an essential role in maintaining close ties to the school's progressive roots. Unlike Dalton, City and Country, and the Weekday School, however, the Laboratory School at the Institute of Child Study is embedded in a society that places an emphasis on ensuring the well-being of all citizens through a range of social and economic policies. As such, the school's progressive practices align with larger societal goals and political perspectives. The fact that the Laboratory School at the Institute of Child Study is in a country that places great emphasis on community well-being certainly contributes to the fact that the school is financially stable and consistently has a waitlist in the thousands.

The Highlander Folk School, an institution that focuses on adult education, provides an example of a school in the social reconstructionist strand of
progressive education that has persisted since the Progressive Era. Throughout Highlander's entire history, it has remained true to the vision expressed by its founder that "the answers come from the people." Such a singular focus on empowering a community to identify and address the challenges that they face has allowed the institution to remain strong for nearly a century. While different from the other schools discussed in this volume in that Highlander does not specifically provide early childhood, elementary, or secondary education, it has maintained a strong set of progressive practices to teach people how to fight for justice. Similar to many of the schools discussed, strong leadership and a clear progressive mission has proved essential to creating conditions that have allowed Highlander to continue its good work through the present day.

Regrettably, other progressive schools have fared less well. Countless progressive schools have been forced to close in response to financial instability, changing political and social realities, and wavering interest in their pedagogical and philosophical approach to schooling. While Lab High School, discussed in Part I, ceased to exist as a result of institutional politics and the positive effects of Brown v. Board and school desegregation in the South, other schools have struggled to remain open because of financial instability and declining enrollment.

An examination of the schools described in Part II make it apparent that, with the exception of TEAM Academy (KIPP), they resemble many of the pioneering progressive schools. Each subscribes to a child-centered philosophy and each practices some form of integrated curriculum, although one rarely finds them referring to earlier progressive models or even using the term "progressive education." Although their methodologies harken back to Deweyan practices, many came out of the alternative school movement of the 1960s, a blatantly ahistorical period with respect to the early progressive schools. For some of the newer urban public schools like Central Park East Elementary, Central Park East Secondary School, and Learning Community Charter School, issues of funding may dictate rhetoric since both public and private funding sources tend to suspect the word "progressive." Thus, articulated references to historical antecedents can easily become liabilities. In addition, the accountability and testing movement of the past decade have necessitated less progressive methods. Nevertheless, it is a depressing fact of life, particularly to historians of education, that most American school reformers suffer from historical amnesia and tend to be future oriented. Thus, they spend an inordinate amount of time reinventing the wheel, albeit with occasional great success. Central Park East Secondary School was such a school; despite its relatively
brief existence, it inspired the adoption of progressive educational practices in countless contemporary schools. Central Park East Elementary School and Learning Community Charter School, which have outlasted Central Park East Secondary School, continue to swim upstream against the tide of the accountability and testing regimes of the past decade.

The legacy of Deborah Meier and her contemporary and colleague Ann Cook are evident in the expansion and maintenance of public progressive education. As Kanze and Tyner-Mullings point out, many teachers at Central Park East went on to found or teach at other progressive public schools, some becoming a part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium. Thus, despite the fact that Central Park East Secondary School no longer exists in its original form, its progressive legacy persists in a growing number of small New York City high schools that employ performance-based assessments in place of some of the standardized Regents exams to meet graduation requirements. Meier and Cook’s work demonstrates the importance of each generation of school leaders passing on their philosophy and methods to the next generation.

KIPP and other charter school management organizations have also recognized the importance of institutional knowledge and continuity, and they carefully train their teachers to use uniform methods of instruction that ensure consistency among the growing number of schools in their networks. While some may argue that such uniformity is antithetical to progressive education, others such as Ratner and Nagle argue that these practices allow for the creation of traditions that help build community, which is central to progressive schooling.

We can learn much from both the past and present models as we contemplate school reform. Each of the schools profiled here has or had a particular educational philosophy and a pedagogy that followed from it. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators were (or are) aware of it and, for the most part, subscribed (or subscribe) to it. That some progressive schools survived and continue to implement progressive practices while others have succumbed to the demands of the marketplace clearly reflect such variables as location, leadership, and the temper of the times.

Progressive Education: Democratic Education for All?

Progressive education has increasingly come under attack as an elite form of education. The paradox of progressive education has been described as
democratic education for the elite, often delivered autocratically as well. The late British sociologist Basil Bernstein wrote extensively on progressive education as the education of “the new middle class” or the new managerial class. He pointed to such pedagogic practices as weak classification and framing (integrated curriculum), and implicit pedagogy (internalized, invisible, and often coercive discipline) as evidence of the techniques required of those destined to assume decision-making positions of authority in society.

Clearly, this was not what John Dewey had in mind when he opened the Laboratory School, which he hoped to be a model for democratic education. It is ironic that a century later, Dewey’s school and other such progressive schools founded under the aegis of “the new education” have become institutions to educate the elite, all too often in traditional educational settings (although visitors from more traditional educational backgrounds might disagree). As we have seen, progressive education in the small, child-centered, mainly independent schools founded in the early twentieth century overwhelmingly attracted elite, white populations. Today, however, progressive, experimental or alternative education has become accessible to diverse populations, particularly in the public sector. Accessibility to the “historical” progressive schools can still be problematic for minorities, even though schools with the financial stability to provide scholarships, like Dalton, have made an explicit commitment to change this and have done so with some success.

Caroline Pratt began The City and Country School as a play group in a settlement house in New York City in 1914. Under the influence of her radical socialist companion, Helen Marot, she tried to interest working-class parents in a school that would teach children about their world through play, particularly with blocks. As she established her school, her idiosyncratic vision of block play and jobs suitable for building a democratic community took on substance. She established, in Dewey’s words, “an embryonic community” in which each group had a job or task essential to the maintenance of the school as a whole. Blocks became the vehicles through which children worked together to make sense of their world, first, their immediate environment, then their neighborhoods, until children in the “Sevens” had built a city complete with running water and electricity. This child-centered school continues to use an integrated curriculum that reflects the needs and interests of the children at different developmental levels.

Though City and Country began as a play school for working-class children in the neighborhood (in her book, I Learn from Children, Pratt described her attempts to recruit the children of working-class families), they did not
remain in her school. Parents expressed concern that their children would not fit into traditional schools later on, and ultimately, they withdrew them from her experimental, progressive school. An influx of affluent neighborhood children from families in Greenwich Village—"the new middle class," or struggling artists and writers interested in progressive education—quickly filled the vacuum.

City and Country School has always maintained its "downtown" ambience and its "downtown clientele," who are attracted to its child-centered focus and its emphasis on the school as community. Although committed to democratic education, the school has, from the 1970s on, struggled to remain open in the wake of dwindling enrollments following the death of its second powerful female head, Jean Wesson Murray. Now it accepts full-tuition-paying students almost exclusively. Thus, like so many of the independent progressive schools that depend upon tuition for their existence, maintaining diversity continues to be problematic.

The Dalton School is located amid some of the most expensive real estate in the world, and from its inception, Dalton's student population reflected its location. Parkhurst actively recruited the rich and the not-so-rich-but-famous for her school, providing scholarships for those artists, writers and intellectuals she thought would provide visibility for her educational experiment. Indeed, classes in the early years were composed of children of upper-class white Protestants, affluent German Jews (who, because of their religion, found rejection at traditional elite independent schools), along with people in the arts and letters. Never a social reconstructionist school, Dalton sought to mirror life through its students, whose parents reflected different occupations and different economic levels even though creative types and monied businessmen dominated the parent body. Thus, intellectuals barely able to feed their families (and during the McCarthy era often blacklisted as well) would be offered scholarships for their children, who would find themselves seated in the same classroom with the children of the nouveau riche, the old monied Protestants who were interested in progressive education, and upper-class German Jews.

Beginning in the 1960s as Dalton became less progressive and more financially solvent, the population changed radically to include up to twenty percent scholarship students of color along with mostly white, new-monied offspring of Wall Street parentage, and the children of highly visible entertainers. As mentioned above, under Ellen Stein, the school has significantly increased its minority population.
The "schools of to-morrow" Dewey lauded as indicative of the "new education" were innovative in their educational philosophies, curricula, and pedagogic practices. They did not, however, mirror society, writ large, in their student bodies. The reasons are complex, but generally it seems clear that experimental, progressive education often appealed to those who did not fit or who were excluded from mainstream, elite education as well as proponents of the "new education." The archives of many of these schools support the thesis that they met the needs of a number of children who today might be labeled "learning disabled" by providing individualized instruction and allowing them to progress at their own rates. At Dalton, German Jews were significantly represented in many of these schools from their beginnings through the fifties, when they begin to be eclipsed by Eastern European Jews. Interestingly, as religious quota systems in higher education came under scrutiny, access to other independent schools (and particularly boarding schools) became easier, which may partially explain why the German Jewish presence declined significantly in progressive day schools. This decline was particularly apparent at The Dalton School. Dewey's own school, The Laboratory School, has become an elite school for affluent, mostly white children. Notice that these are independent schools with smaller endowments than mainstream elite schools, and they depend on tuition for their survival.

Of course, not all progressive schools catered predominantly to affluent populations. The Weekday School at Riverside Church has struggled throughout its history to maintain a student body that is both racially and economically diverse, while remaining financially solvent. Amita Gupta illustrates how the deep connection between the Weekday School and Riverside Church has ensured that the issue of diversity receives a tremendous degree of attention. While the school largely originated out of a desire to provide a progressive early childhood schooling option for the local families who would be sending their children to progressive elementary schools in the neighborhood like the Lincoln School or Horace Mann, it was the connection to Riverside Church that ensured a more diverse student body. Riverside Church has always maintained a focus on promoting progressive Christian ideals through the construction of a nondenominational community that is diverse in every manner.

While the classes at the Weekday School have always been more diverse than other private progressive schools such as City and Country, the persistent need to charge tuition has made it difficult to maintain the degree of socioeconomic diversity desired. However, under the leadership of Josephine
Bliss between 1958 and 1976, the Weekday School attained additional funds to support a more diverse student body through the New York City Limited Purchase of Service (POS) program. Working with the City of New York has forced the Weekday School to make certain concessions and adhere to regulations that it might otherwise opt out of, but it has allowed the school to provide financial assistance to students who need it. Being flexible to different sources of funding hasn’t entirely ensured the financial stability of the Weekday School, but it has allowed the school to remain open to a diverse student body for most of its lifetime.

The Laboratory School at the Institute of Child Study in Toronto, similar to the other schools discussed here, has faced numerous challenges in maintaining a racially and socioeconomically diverse student population. While the school has consistently recognized the importance of diversity, finances have made it difficult for the school to realize this vision. Currently, tuition at the Laboratory School ranges from $12,420 for students in the nursery school to $19,363 for students in the higher grades. Given the fact that the school, despite its financial stability and tremendous waitlist, is only able to offer tuition assistance to twelve percent of its students, it is clear that the school has worked to create a truly diverse student body.

Two schools from Part I of this volume, the Highlander Folk School and Lab High at Alabama State Teachers College, have not struggled with issues of diversity in the way that the other schools discussed above have. The core mission of each of these institutions was to serve groups of people who lacked the privileges of wealthy, white Americans. Highlander has always served groups of people from diverse backgrounds seeking to build a more just society. On the other hand, Lab High only served African American students, who in large part had been excluded from receiving a sound education under the Jim Crow segregation laws that persisted during much of the school’s history. The student population at Lab High eerily resembles the student population at places like TEAM Academy, profiled in Part II. While the Jim Crow laws that are in large part responsible for the lack of diversity at Lab High no longer exist, residential segregation and a range of other social, economic, and political factors create conditions for schools like TEAM Academy, which serves a population of students that is almost entirely Black.

In the public sector, one finds some cause for optimism. While numerous examples of public progressive schools are located in affluent suburbs with a mostly white affluent population and are closer to schools like Dalton with respect to diversity and the reproduction of social-class inequalities, other
schools do serve the diverse student population that Dewey sought. Since the 1960s, public progressive education has been overcoming struggles to continue to serve more diverse student populations in urban areas. Kanze and Tyson-Mullings’s discussions of Central Park East Elementary and Secondary respectively demonstrate how Deborah Meir applied many of the principles and pedagogies of the early progressive schools in schools serving far more racially and socioeconomically diverse students, with success. The parent founders of Learning Community Charter School, according to Brown, had a strong commitment to diversity in gentrifying Jersey City, but the school, although still diverse, has struggled with maintaining its diverse student population.

The question of how well these schools educate their new students, given both Basil Bernstein’s and Lisa Delpit’s critiques of progressive education as education that often disadvantages working-class children and children of color, needs careful examination. Moreover, this is especially the case in light of the more structured pedagogical methods of KIPP and Uncommon Schools. Given their highly structured and at times authoritarian methods, can TEAM Academy and other KIPP schools and schools like it even be considered progressive?

Ratner and Nagle argue they deserve to be classified as progressive because of their commitment to equity and social justice. However, we believe that while the schools’ focus on community and providing a high-quality education to students from disadvantaged backgrounds warrants attention, the highly structured, teacher-centered environment at such schools is antithetical to progressive pedagogy. Furthermore, schools like TEAM Academy serve a student body entirely composed of children from poor, minority families, which also works against the progressive ideal of building a diverse community of learners.

Students at schools like TEAM Academy and other KIPP charter schools have high test scores, high school graduation rates, and college matriculation rates; however, some researchers question these data because they argue that these charter schools have different populations than comparable urban schools, based on the families that choose to apply, a lower percentage of English Language Learners and Special Education students, and a higher attrition rate prior to the senior year. Furthermore, a growing body of research suggests that the authoritarian and highly structured environments in some of these schools hinder the development of personal character traits that allow students to succeed in college and the workplace. We need more careful
empirical analyses of the educational outcomes in these schools and the public schools like Central Park East that truly rely on progressive practices in order to settle the question of how well progressive schools serve the needs of all students.

Clearly, when independent, progressive schools fall hostage to market forces, they become democratic education for the elite. But were they ever intended to be truly democratic? And what does “democratic” really mean? In their discussion of the Gary Schools, the Deweys were silent on the issue of race, although the Black children there were on a different vocational track than the white children. Is Bernstein right to ascribe the success of progressive education to their new middle classes? For many reasons evident in the histories described in this volume, progressive schools certainly have tended to attract this population. Nonetheless, progressive education has increasingly become an important educational alternative, if not a panacea, for both advantaged and disadvantaged children, particularly in the urban public schools chronicled in Part II. As noted above, the question remains, however; does progressive education, as Lisa Delpit observes, disadvantage them further? Only empirical evidence can answer this question.

Finally, the issue of public and private schooling needs to be critically addressed. Although there are fundamental differences between the two, schools like the independent progressive schools profiled in this volume are often dismissed because they are private.

Such simplistic dismissals ensure that the lessons to be learned from these schools will be ignored. More important, blind praise of public education overlooks their role in the reproduction of educational inequality. Schools like Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools, TEAM Academy (KIPP), and Learning Community Charter School originated because of the failures of urban public education in educating low-income students and students of color. Conversely, most suburban schools in affluent neighborhoods are more racially and socioeconomically segregated than many independent schools. As the U.S. News and World Report rankings of America’s Best High Schools demonstrate the majority of the “best” public schools are in affluent suburbs and educate mostly white, affluent children and the ones that are more diverse are mostly magnet schools with test requirements for entry. Thus, the racial and social-class composition of a school may be as or more important than whether it is public or private to understand the role of schooling in either providing avenues for social mobility or reproducing social inequality. Finally, although there has been significant disagreement
over their findings, Bryk, Lee, and Holland argue that many urban Catholic schools succeed with students from low-income backgrounds because of their unifying philosophy and academic emphasis—qualities that exist (or existed) in all of the progressive schools discussed in this volume, including TEAM Academy (KIPP).

**Individualism and Community in Progressive Education**

Given Dewey's belief that education should balance the needs of the individual and the community, how has progressive education addressed this issue and has it been successful? The histories of these schools provide important evidence on the issue of individualism and community in progressive education. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of social critics from both sides of the political spectrum returned to Dewey's concern with individual and community. They dissected what they saw as the overly individualistic nature of American society. From Christopher Lasch's scathing indictment of American culture in *The Culture of Narcissism*, to Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton's analysis and recommendations in *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*, to Amitai Etzioni's more conservative call for a communitarian society in *Spirit of Community*, to the more recent exploration of the loss of community life in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, American society has been viewed as a nation in desperate need of closer connections between groups and individuals. These critics all recommended that the tensions between individualism and community, so much a part of the history of the United States, be resolved more in favor of community than the trend has been running since the 1960s.

The sociological analysis of the tensions between individualism and community is hardly new. The classical sociology of Emile Durkheim was, at its center, concerned with the effects of the decline of traditional rituals and community during the transition from traditional to modern societies. Durkheim's analysis of the differences between mechanical and organic solidarity in *The Division of Labor in Society*, and his concept of anomie in *Suicide*, examined the need for societies to create rituals and institutions to provide for social cohesion and meaning. Likewise, Ferdinand Tönnies's analysis of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft provided a sociological analysis of the effects of modernity on community.
Significant similarities exist between Durkheim’s sociology of education and the sociological underpinnings of John Dewey’s philosophy of education. Central to Dewey’s analysis of American education and his call for progressive education was an analysis of the tensions between individualism and community. As Bowles and Gintis noted, Dewey’s work attempted to reconcile the tensions between the integrative (community), developmental (individualism), and egalitarian (community) functions of education. Although Bowles and Gintis argued that these functions are inherently contradictory in capitalist society, Dewey believed that schools could help balance the often competing demands of the community and the individual. In fact, much of Dewey’s early writings on education simultaneously called for the need for schools to contribute to individual development and to the development of an “embryonic democratic community.” In fact, this tension was historically played out in the two sometimes distinctive branches of progressive education in the 1920s and 1930s: child-centered progressivism, which often resolved the tension in favor of individualism, and social reconstructionism, which often resolved the tension in favor of community.

Thus, social criticism from the 1950s to the present has focused on the tensions between the individual and community. In the late 1950s, in response to the putative conformity of that decade, a number of social critics argued that American society had become overly organizational, bureaucratic, and stifling. As Ehrenreich noted, the challenges to authority that percolated in the 1960s, had antecedents in a number of cultural and intellectual movements of the 1950s, including the “Beat Generation.”

Following the social upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s, where the tensions between individualism and community often ended in favor of the individual, social critics like Lasch urged an increased sense of community. Lasch suggested that American culture had become a “culture of narcissism” and that such unbridled individualism threatened the core of our civilization. In the 1980s, Bellah et al. provided a critique of American individualism, but at the same time noticed a foundation of communitarianism in American life. They argued a little later that a “good society” was based on democratic institutions that allowed both for individualism and for the connections between individuals within a cohesive community. From the 1980s to the present, analyses of individualism and community acquired considerable political overtones. But with both the left and the right espousing increased community, the political vantage points differ widely. Whereas conservatives seek a return to a community of traditional values and decry the pernicious
effects of individualism on the family and on traditional values, liberals and radicals call for an increased democratic community that balances the tensions between individuals and society.\(^{31}\) Neo-liberals have argued that market forces are the best mechanism for balancing individualism and community.\(^{32}\) Etzioni's more conservative branch of communitarianism argues for a return to more traditional forms of community and, like Durkheim, almost a century before, expresses the need for schools to be agencies of moral socialization and transmitters of community values.\(^{33}\)

Like Durkheim, Etzioni overemphasized the cohesiveness of modern societies and underestimated the conflicts between groups over precisely what constitutes a cohesive community and community values. Drawing heavily on Dewey, Lippmann, and Niebuhr, Bellah et al. suggested that the conflicts between groups over competing definitions of community are precisely what democratic institutions ought to resolve.\(^{34}\) Although Bellah and his colleagues did not suggest these conflicts are easily resolved, they believed that democratic institutions can create a society that connects individuals to community meaningfully. Echoing the same liberal optimism about the stabilizing force of schooling that both Durkheim and Dewey expressed almost a century before, Bellah et al. looked to schools as central institutions in the democratic, communitarian society. Thus, both Etzioni and Bellah, et al. looked, from somewhat different political vantage points, to schooling as central to community. These contemporary concerns with the role of schools in solving problems raised by the tensions between individuals and community have, as noted earlier, historical roots in Dewey's writings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Chapter 1 described nine principles enunciated by the Network of Progressive Educators in 1990 as an example of the types of reforms recommended for improving public education. Further, these principles attempt to balance individualism and community. Unfortunately contemporary reformers too infrequently look to the past for guidance. One can learn much from the histories examined in this book. Moreover, independent schools rarely serve as models for public school improvement, even though the schools described in both Part I and Part II practiced or continue to practice at least six of the nine principles:

1. Education is best accomplished where relationships are personal and teachers design programs which honor the linguistic and cultural diversity of the local community.

All of the schools in Part I had a history of close personal relationships between students, parents, faculty members, and the administration. In part,
one can attribute this closeness to size, since initially, these schools tended to be small and gave the children easy access to one another. Nevertheless, the creation of community was central to their philosophies and each school consciously attempted to create this community, through such mechanisms as assemblies, common projects or jobs, common experiences, like grade trips, and a common pedagogy. Although in many of the schools conflicts created political and organizational problems, a close knit community for students remained a hallmark of these schools.

In Part II, the Learning Community Charter School exemplifies a particular communitarian model of schooling. Founding parents meant the school to respond to a mutual set of concerns and a particular philosophy of education. Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools were founded based on creating an embryonic community of child-centered education. Highlander Folk School and Lab High School always had close personal relationships as central to their philosophy and goals, albeit they were different. As for honoring the linguistic and cultural diversity of the local community, this principle has worked in The Dalton School, but not necessarily how the Progressive Network intends. The problem is that Dalton does mirror its local community quite well; however, the community is far from diverse. To be fair, the school has over the years attempted to enroll a more diverse and multicultural population, but it has achieved less success in the lower grades where children must rely on their parents for transportation. As an independent school with a high tuition, the school cannot, even with significant scholarship aid, mirror the diversity of society at large. But as we have seen, if homogeneity disqualifies such a school from consideration as progressive, then most independent progressive schools would be disqualified.

This situation is to a large degree also true of City and Country, which never could attract the diverse student body Pratt initially recruited. It, too, has made significant efforts to attract a more diverse student body, but fiscal constraints as well as skepticism of working-class parents about the ability of a progressive school to teach their children basic skills hinders these efforts.

Finally, noting a lack of diversity in these schools, one should mention in fairness that these schools have defined diversity differently at different times. As Gupta demonstrates in her chapter on the Weekday School, the school initially defined diversity in terms of ethnicity and social class, reflecting the immediate location of the school and, the social composition of New York City. A concern for race arose later. Contemporary schools like TEAM Academy, Central Park East, and Learning Community Charter School
reflect their neighborhood's linguistic and cultural diversity, but just as the more affluent independent schools do in their way, they also tend to serve particular populations based on race, ethnicity, and social class.

The schools in Part II, Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools, Learning Community Charter School and TEAM Academy (KIPP) all have close personal relationships and honor the linguistic and cultural diversity of their populations, albeit Learning Community Charter School is the only one with an integrated population.

(2) Curriculum balance is maintained by commitment to children's' individual interests and developmental needs, as well as a commitment to community within and beyond the school's walls.

Historically, all the schools in Part I of this book embraced an explicit commitment to the needs and interests of its students as well as to the community beyond its walls. The Dalton School always followed an explicit commitment to the needs and interests of its students, as well as to the community within and beyond its walls. Founded in the spirit of child-centered pedagogy and Dewey's notion of an embryonic community, Dalton was, and to some extent still is this kind of school. As for commitment to the community within and outside, Dalton has a rich tradition in both areas, a tradition that has faded, but has not disappeared.

City and Country has always been committed to the needs of its students. Founded as a child-centered school, it has continually stressed the developmental and emotional needs of its students in formulating its curriculum and pedagogy. In a similar tradition, Central Park East Secondary School and Central Park East Elementary School used its curriculum to encourage its students to study community problems, thus helping them connect school and society. Highlander Folk School's core mission is to help adult students take an activist role in solving social problems and improving society, especially in the Civil Rights Movement.

(3) Schools embrace the home cultures of children and their families. Classroom practices reflect these values and bring multiple cultural perspectives to bear.

Perhaps one of the problems at schools like The Dalton School or City and Country is that they too closely mirrored the affluent community in which they were located, rather than successfully challenging the values of materialism and affluence. Nevertheless, throughout its history, Dalton has attempted
to instill in its students a social conscience. This mission has, however, been difficult. City and Country resembles Dalton in this respect, although it has always tried to offer a multicultural curriculum. The Laboratory School at the Institute of Child Study has faced similar challenges as both City and Country and Dalton. While all of these schools award scholarships to poor and minority students, the student bodies do not reflect the diversity of society, making it challenging to offer the multicultural learning environment outlined by the Network of Progressive Educators.

Although Lab High School as part of a historically Black college, reflected the segregated deep South, it challenged the view that Black students should not be prepared for college. Certainly Central Park East Elementary and Secondary, Learning Community Charter School, and TEAM Academy reflect their home cultures in both their curricula and pedagogic practices; however, it is still difficult to judge just how and to what extent these schools integrate cultures unrepresented in their student bodies.

The Weekday School at Riverside Church has, perhaps, been the most successful at simultaneously embracing the home cultures of its students and presenting a multicultural curriculum. This is in large part due to the diversity of the student body and its relationship with a church that emphasizes multiculturalism in all forms. As Gupta discusses in her chapter on the Weekday School, it is this diversity and emphasis on multiculturalism that attracts many parents to the school.

(4) Students are active constructors of knowledge and learn through direct experience and primary sources.

Historically, all the schools in Part I followed this principle; it is, in fact, what set them apart from their more traditional counterparts. Students remained actively engaged in their own learning, and such progressive experiments as the Otis Farm trip at Dalton and the jobs experiences at City and Country exemplified experiential education. One finds fewer examples of the principle today, although students at Dalton are probably more involved in their own learning than students at most traditional schools. Students at the Weekday School and at City and Country have always used the city as a learning laboratory. At City and Country, ubiquitous blocks still invite students to be active constructors of knowledge. Central Park East Secondary School used New York City as a learning laboratory and engaged their students in their own learning. And Highlander Folk School taught its students to study and change their communities.
Similarly, Central Park East Elementary School and the schools that are part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium emphasize direct experience in the community and the use of primary resources. For example, Kanze discusses the ways in which a class of Central Park East students focused on a study of their East Harlem neighborhood for an entire year. As part of this learning experience, students spent time at a range of neighborhood institutions and directly interacted with the people who live and work in the area.

(5) The school is a model of democracy and humane relationships confronting issues of racism, classism, and sexism.

Although schools like City and Country and Dalton confronted issues of racism, classism, and sexism philosophically (and continue to do so), it is difficult to argue that schools that serve primarily advantaged children serve as exemplars for progressive concerns of this type. Again, it may be unfair to judge a school this way given its population. Nonetheless, few of these schools model democracy in action. Lab High School and Highlander Folk School actively challenged social-class and racial inequality, although in the case of Lab High School it was necessarily segregated given its location and history. The more recent schools profiled in Part II that serve less-advantaged populations, Central Park East Elementary and Secondary and Learning Community Charter School seem to be more egalitarian in how they educate children, more tolerant of difference, and more concerned with confronting issues of racism and classism as part of the curriculum and part of daily living. In fact, both schools appear to have been founded on a philosophy of education that mirrors the principles that the Network of Progressive Educators set forth. TEAM Academy (KIPP) addresses racial and social-class inequalities, but many argue that it is neither democratic nor humane.

(6) Schools actively support critical inquiry into the complexities of global issues. Children can thus assume the powerful responsibilities of world citizenship. (In Chapter 1, this is the eighth principle.)

This has been a traditional hallmark of child-centered progressive schools, particularly those in urban areas. Dalton has, from its inception, been active in educating for global citizenship. Students actively participate in political, environmental, social, and community activities and the curriculum addresses social problems. In many respects, Dalton educators have always attempted to
prepare their students for responsibilities like those Dewey envisioned in his writings on democracy and education.

Although City and Country attempted to address this goal at all levels through the eighth grade, the absence of a high school somewhat limited its efforts to educate for global responsibility. Nonetheless, City and Country attempts to prepare its students for democratic participation. Less clear is how this particular curricular thrust operates in the more recently founded schools described in Part II. Clearly, they broach global issues but the extent to which they emphasize global citizenship and particularly world citizenship remains unclear.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Progressive Education Network has since replaced the above principles with a new set that is almost entirely focused on pedagogic practices as opposed to the role of community. We find this indicative of the larger challenges that progressive education is currently facing in this age of neoliberal education reforms that emphasize standards and testing. Just as the emphasis on standards in American education following the Soviets’ launching of Sputnik in 1957 presented a particular challenge to progressive education, the current movement promoting universal standards and test-based accountability systems trammels those who are attempting to provide progressive schooling options. Given the current education climate, progressive educators, particularly those in the public sector, are struggling to find ways to maintain a progressive pedagogy while preparing students for standardized tests. While traditional schools can shift their curricular focus to specifically prepare students for mandated exams, progressive educators, by definition, cannot and should not teach to the test in such a way. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that one of the current principles of the Progressive Education Network is “progressive educators must play an active role in guiding the educational vision of our society.” Furthermore, while troubling to those who seek to ensure that all aspects of progressive schooling are given appropriate attention, it is also predictable that five of the remaining eight principles focus entirely on pedagogy and that not a single principle mentions the role of community.

Despite the fact that the increasing focus on standards and test-based accountability systems is shifting schools away from progressive practices and towards more traditional teaching, a growing number of parents, students, teachers, administrators, scholars, and policy makers are organizing against these reforms that they see as harmful to children. Lessons from the schools profiled in this book provide some guidance for those seeking to stem the
momentum of education policies that are forcing teachers to use scripted lesson plans and teach to the tests. In particular, the examples of City and Country and the Weekday School demonstrate that parents, teachers, and administrators must bond together to promote the progressive principles that they feel best serve the needs of their students. The example of Central Park East Elementary School and the schools connected to the New York Performance Standards Consortium that grew out of the work of Deborah Meier and Ann Cook shows that the determination and creativity of school leaders can protect a progressive vision even in a public setting. By working through the New York Performance Standards Consortium, twenty-seven high schools have maintained a waiver that exempts their students from almost all standardized testing. While the work is certainly not easy, and many have failed to uphold their progressive practices in the face of changing education policies, the history of education shows that progressive schooling can persist in the face of the greatest challengers and that the political climate surrounding education is in constant flux and remains flexible to reformers of all creeds.

Conclusion

The histories of these schools point to the importance of looking first to the past to formulate educational reforms. Many of the practices used at innovative, progressive schools like Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools, and Learning Community Charter School originated in these schools. As contemporary educators such as Deborah Meier demonstrated, progressive pedagogic practices may work for all children, not just the children of the affluent. Therefore, educational reformers would do well to study the child-centered progressive schools for models of what worked, what failed, and why. For example, all the schools were small enough to create personal communities; and recent high school reforms in New York City, which have built small, alternative high schools as an antidote to large, bureaucratic comprehensive schools, might have been implemented years ago if reformers had only looked to history. Again, the curriculum and pedagogic reforms, including whole language, authentic assessment, the integrated curriculum, and multicultural education appeared in some form in almost all of these schools early in their histories, although most have been eliminated by the assessment and testing movement.
We can also learn from the “success” of Dalton, the struggles of City and Country, and the demise of Lab High and Central Park East Secondary School. Their histories teach us significant lessons about school leadership, shared decision making, a sense of community, and the forces that affect school change. In short, they provide models to emulate, modify or avoid.

For example, in informal, familial organizations as these schools once were (and some still are) like Dalton, City and Country and Central Park East Secondary, leadership was often not shared, although faculty opinion received respect and the leaders made systematic and sustained attempts to involve parents in or inform them about school philosophy and practices. In fact, one of the greatest paradoxes one notices in these schools is that they supported a democratic education delivered autocratically. Several had dynamic, female founders, focused, and even fixated, on particular forms of curricula and pedagogic practices. Revered as visionaries, they attracted loyal followings of teachers and parents who heard them lecture, read their educational tracts and duly enrolled children in their schools. In the early schools, they also had wealthy benefactors and benefactresses to underwrite their visions. In some instances—including Dalton, City and Country, and Central Park East Secondary—strong leadership made it difficult for less charismatic successors to function effectively.

The lesson here is the importance of strong, dynamic leadership both in founding and maintaining schools with practices at variance with traditional expectations. Additionally, one notices the importance of providing for smooth transitions for the people destined to follow strong leaders. Moreover, the freedom these founders enjoyed in selecting like-minded faculty members bears attention. A common feature in independent schools, this freedom sometimes appears in alternative public schools or choice schools in some school districts, but it is still a rarity. Nevertheless, a faculty that shares the vision or mission of the school is likelier to see to its success.

All of these progressive schools, as we have seen, created a sense of community. Thus, current reformers interested in building school communities can usefully look to these schools for models. Again, one can hardly overemphasize the model presented here of small school size, and a philosophy and pedagogy that creates common experiences, and common traditions for all in the school community: Arch Day, an end-of-year festival at Dalton in which each grade walks through a flower covered arch or the multicultural celebration of holidays at the Weekday School.
Moreover, the schools profiled in Part I suggest the complexity of school change, particularly when propelled by forces many of these schools could not control. Neighborhood location, for example, helped shape the destinies of many of these schools, particularly Dalton, City and Country, Highlander, Laboratory High School, and the Weekday School. The politics of education writ large is another strong influence upon school change. The history of American education in the twentieth century chronicles both the rise and decline of enthusiasm for progressive education, and this shifting attitude definitely helped shape the destinies of these independent progressive schools. Because most depend on tuition, they have accommodated—some more, some less—the demands of the changing “market” in education in an attempt to maintain a healthy enrollment and to balance the budget. Sadly, the marketplace too often controls the destinies of schools that depend on tuition for their existence, and the majority of schools in Part I have been particularly vulnerable since most of them lack “patrician” donors and endowment funds that often support elite boarding schools.

Finally, with respect to the tensions between individualism and community so central to contemporary political and educational debates, the histories of these schools provide significant evidence of how progressive schools have struggled with these tensions. In particular, the Dalton School has, throughout its history, attempted to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the community. In fact, the Dalton Plan itself was a pedagogical attempt to do exactly that, with House a mechanism for integrating students into the community; Lab, a place for individuals to receive individualized instruction and guidance; and Assignment, a mechanism for individualizing common assignments and accommodating different learning rates. Likewise, City and Country has always emphasized the idea of democratic community central to Deweyan progressivism. Through its community service and jobs component, students become part of a microcosmic democratic society. At the same time, the instruction has always been child-centered and linked to the individual needs of children.

Ideally, these chapters demonstrate how historically progressive schools attempted to balance individualism and community. It also suggests that many contemporary progressive educational reforms have their origins in the early child-centered schools and that progressive education continues to exist, particularly in the public sector. It is time that educational reformers and practitioners stop reinventing the wheel. It is also time for historians of education to assume active roles in policy conversations. An examination of
schools like Dalton, City and Country, and the other schools in Part I help us see that the past has much to teach us. By studying such schools as Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools, Learning Community Charter School and TEAM Academy (KIPP) we see as well that the present may hold the same exciting possibilities for children as the “new education,” “progressive education,” once held.

These schools, both old and new, reflect a dearth of knowledge about progressive practices, especially regarding their origins and implementations, about what worked, and about what failed and why. In part, one can attribute this dearth to the failure of specific schools to educate their teachers and parents; at Dalton, for example, one new teacher thought The Dalton Plan was an insurance plan. The problem does not, however, solely reside in progressive schools that have lost their progressive visions. It also resides in schools of education and accrediting agencies that, in many cases, encourage the teaching of methods and the process of modeling devoid of any historical context or a philosophical base that would encourage critical reflection and that would lead students to ponder what worked, what did not, and why. This has worsened with the advent of alternative certification routes and non-university based teacher education programs that eschew theory for practice. Few prospective teachers now read Dewey; even fewer know of the work of Colonel Francis W. Parker, Marietta Johnson, Caroline Pratt, or Helen Parkhurst. Yet they often graduate from various teacher education programs, subscribing to hands-on learning and use of manipulatives for mathematics. They often introduce integrated units of study, practice cooperative learning, and engage students in project work, often through differentiated instruction. They still, despite the attack on it, often teach reading through Whole Language, thinking they practice “modern education.” Ironically, Dewey would insist that they are.

Finally, these school histories demonstrate that the commitment to child-centered methods continues, and has been extended in many small urban public schools to issues of equity and social justice. In this context, progressive pedagogy continues to be challenged by those who believe more structured schooling is needed, especially for low-income children. Perhaps the disciples of Basil Bernstein, whose empirical work has demonstrated that mixed pedagogy is the most effective method for these students, are correct, thus supporting Dewey’s argument in *Experience and Education* that all “either-or” approaches to education are detrimental to true progressive schooling.
Notes

1. This conclusion is adapted from Susan F. Semel and Alan R. Sadovnik’s "Schools of Tomorrow," Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education. In order to best support our arguments in this chapter, we have drawn upon examples of progressive schools from the 1999 book as well as the current book.


6. See American Promise PBS Documentary, 2013 for an examination of the lives of two African American male students at Dalton.


13. See for example, Paul L. Tractenberg, Gary Orfield, and Greg Flaxman, New Jersey’s Apartheid and Intensely Segregated Urban Schools: Powerful Evidence of an Inefficient and Unconstitutional State Education System (Newark: Institute on Education Law and Policy, 2014) for an analysis of racial segregation in Essex County, New Jersey.
21. Emile Durkheim, Suicide (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951; original 1897); and Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society.

38. See Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel, eds., *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Leaders during the Progressive Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) for biographies of Johnson, Parkhurst, Pratt, as well as other female founders and an analysis of their leadership.
