

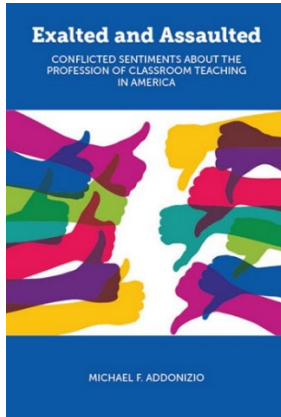


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Exalted and Assaulted

Conflicted Sentiments about the Profession of Classroom Teaching in America

Michael F. Addonizio

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KALAMAZOO, Mich.— K-12 classroom teaching in America is at a crossroads.

This is a profession that everyone agrees is critical to the social and economic growth of our nation, yet teachers are increasingly pilloried by parents, administrators, and policymakers. Why is it that we demand so much from K-12 teachers but treat and reward them so poorly? And why are teachers cut out of the decision-making directly related to their classroom work and then blamed for the continuing slide in academic preparedness?

In this new book from the Upjohn Press, Michael F. Addonizio delves into this paradox: while the importance of education continues to grow, so does the opposition to teachers and the power of their unions. This animosity, according to Addonizio, is a key reason why the profession is in crisis with a growing number of teachers leaving for other fields and fewer entering teacher preparation programs.

The book begins with a discussion of the labor market for public school teachers and the influences that shape supply and demand at the national, state, and local levels. Addonizio then describes the major reforms and institutions impacting the profession and chronicles the rise of public-school teacher unions in the 1960s and 1970s, contrasting that with the concurrent decline of union membership in the private sector. This rise drew resentment, leading to nationwide efforts to curb both the unions' power and teachers' job protections that came along with it.

Charter schools in the U.S. embody efforts to privatize public education. Addonizio traces their growth and the efforts by charter school management and outside groups to weaken the influence of classroom teachers in matters of curriculum, pedagogy, school governance, and working conditions.

He then traces the origins and current state-of-the-art of teacher evaluation and accountability methods and discusses research on “value-added” modeling. Addonizio describes the policies stemming from this type of modeling and how “value-added” measurement came to dominate teacher evaluation and accountability at the state and federal levels.

It may be unfair to characterize public education as a failing entity nationwide, as the range of success across states varies widely. To demonstrate the types of reforms that work and others that do not, Addonizio looks at two divergent states: Massachusetts and Michigan. Educational outcomes in the Bay State are generally the highest in the U.S., while Michigan’s, despite numerous reforms, are trending downward. Addonizio explains how state and local policies impacting classroom teachers in both states have contributed to the growing disparity in outcomes.

The book concludes with a discussion highlighting several problematic trends that discourage qualified individuals from entering the teaching profession and that also encourage the early exit of incumbent professionals. Addonizio then examines the #RedForEd movement and offers reforms aimed at strengthening the classroom teaching profession.

Finally, in the book’s epilogue, Addonizio addresses the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 classroom teachers. One thing is clear, he says, the pandemic highlighted the inequities between affluent and poor schools and communities. Stresses placed on teachers and schools—especially in poorer areas—resulting from pandemic-related impacts on classroom teaching have taken a toll. According to a RAND Corporation survey taken in 2021, some one in four teachers said they were likely to leave the profession by the end of that year, compared to one in six prior to the pandemic. Even more troubling, that number was nearly one in two among black teachers. Addonizio suggests that that these negative impacts may be mitigated by fairly allocating one-time federal emergency aid to schools and by permanently increasing state support. While increased financial resources alone may not be sufficient to balance our educational outcomes, following the lead of states like Massachusetts that implemented successful classroom reforms would help.

Michael F. Addonizio is Charles H. Gershenson Distinguished Faculty Fellow and professor emeritus of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the College of Education at Wayne State University. He is the coauthor of *Education Reform and the Limits of Policy: Lessons from Michigan* (Upjohn Press 2012).

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