

Ted Sizer

leading education reformer in the United States

Personal Background

Ted Sizer was born early 1930s and raised on a farm in Connecticut. His father was a faculty member at Yale. He married his wife Nancy when he got out of the army. They had four children. His wife was a teacher and has been a “support system” through out his education career.

Career Path

Sizer earned his BA degree at Yale. He was recruited into the Army as a training officer and classroom teacher. After which he taught while using GI bills to get masters at Harvard. He and his wife taught in Australia for 2 years. Upon returning to the States, he was hired as a full-time faculty member at Harvard. By the age of 31, Sizer earned a doctorate, written two published books, and became the dean of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard. Keeping to his beliefs, he resigned from Harvard when the School of Education’s budget was cut. He was then recruited as the headmaster of Philips Academy in Andover, MA. It was said that Sizer saved Philips Academy by making it co-ed. He created ‘out-reach’ programs that still flourish today. In the late 1970s, after nine years, he resigned from PA to answer the following statement: “why so many obviously good ideas in secondary education never found their way into practice and why schools steadfastly held on to ideas that obviously didn’t make sense.” He began his research. Meanwhile, Brown University asked Sizer to become a faculty member. He agreed as long as he could bring his research to the university. Brown agreed. During his time at Brown, from 1983-1997, Sizer’s experiences led him to founding chairman of Coalition for Essential Schools (CES). His *Horace* trilogy, which was based on the culmination of many high school teachers, was created. During his Brown time, Sizer’s mission was to put his work/research into real world application. CES started with a dozen schools in 1983 and now 1000-1500 school around country. In 1999, Ted and Nancy designed Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Massachusetts and were co-principles for a year, and are now trustees. Sizer’s latest book is *The Red Pencil* which was published in August 2004.

Work Philosophy

Ted Sizer’s can be best summed up in phrases which he has stated throughout his life thus far:

- * No two of our students are exactly the same, and that each changes over time.
- * Smaller student to teacher ratio is imperative for student success.
- * Our schools must fit each child; the child must not be fitted to the school.
- * The problem isn’t the people (teachers), the problem is the system.

* The biggest handicap American educators face is a misguided but undying notion within most communities that each generation of children should receive the same educational experience as their parents.

* In 2002, when he was asked if the coalition was going to have a dramatic impact on the nation's schools, his response was 'Oh, no. I used to think so, but now I don't think it will be dramatic'.

Leadership Style

Ted Sizer respects and encourages team effort. The teachers, administration, and students at his schools are on a first name basis. He encourages and promotes collaboration amongst the staff. He doesn't sit back and dictate how things should be done; he lives and models what he believes.

Ted Sizer is realistic, but never gives up. "If you hang in, stay the course and not look for quick solutions, you can change things."

Influential Events/People (positive or negative)

+Horace Mann – 1830s – ignited Common School Revolution in Massachusetts
Horace Mann believed that schools must be open, for the benefit of every individual and society. Sizer used 'Horace' to name the teacher he 'interviewed' to explain the condition of high schools and how to improve them. 'Horace' was a culmination of the teachers that Sizer worked with during his research.

+James Coleman – died 1995 – world-renowned sociologist –
Coleman's early research on schools and schooling helped shape government policy on racial integration and school busing. The best-known product of that research was "Equality of Educational Opportunity," commonly known as the Coleman Report (1966). Sizer and colleagues debated and discussed the Coleman Report. This was the beginning of Coalition for Essential Schools.

-Chris Whittle – founder of Edison Project for-profit charter schools
Sizer opposes for-profit because investors are put first, students should be priority, the top of the list. Chris Whittle sought Sizer out to talk with him about charter schools. First Sizer was excited because he knew Whittle had the means to get things done and make progress. Sizer found disappointment because of Whittle's for-profit approach, which is essentially creating cookie-cutter institutes

VAC (Values, Attributes, and Characteristics)

When looking at his life, work philosophy, leadership styles, and influences, Ted Sizer's VACs are as follows:

- *personal values in sync with work values/passion
- *optimistic realistic – not looking for quick solution/quick fix
- *practical in expectations
- *put money where mouth is

*pushing autonomy down

Would Ted Sizer generally value the CLIC?

Yes, without a doubt.

What kinds of services would be offered to be in sync with Sizer's leadership style and values?

*The CLIC would support for all teachers to help support the individual learning of the students.

*Because Coalition schools are spread throughout country and each is run with the local demographics of the students in mind, the CLIC would be a central place for information, for the latest learning techniques, for teacher sharing to be organized and disseminated.

*The CLIC would research where additional financial support can come from like Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funding CES Small Schools Project.

*The CLIC would be up-to-date with the latest technology, especially to aid the individual's learning abilities and the staff's teaching abilities.

Resources

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