
The Transformation of America's Public Schools

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Today public educators are expected to succeed with all children. Previously, American public schools functioned to determine who would go on to college and who would directly enter the workplace. This process began as early as the first day the child entered kindergarten and was classified as to his or her abilities. The current expectation that schools provide an effective and appropriate education for all children has provided an enormous shock to the public schools of America, because they were not ready for this new demand. The responsibility for the learning of students has been shifted to the school rather than resting on the students themselves. This is an important, if not critical, shift in perspective.

This new expectation—education for all—is occurring at a time in history when the demographics in the United States are radically changing. New Americans from many different countries are arriving in large numbers and they are not from the same backgrounds and countries as previous immigrants. At the same time, poverty among children is increasing at an alarming rate. Combine these new demographics, higher expectations for all, an alarming increase in poverty, an increasingly technologically complex society, as well as a stagnant economy, and this country faces a problematic historical moment for its public schools.

How can educators committed to making the public schools work deal with all of this at the same time? There is hope. Difficult times can induce doom and gloom, or they can be viewed as an opportunity to forge a new social order with the schools as the focus. A great deal of change by everyone in America is required, particularly those employed in public schools. The key to successful transformation is an understanding and respect for America's growing diversity. This is the enormous challenge before us today.

When educators defined themselves as experts who would teach children independent of everyone else, they opened the door for isolation. Today, the results of that type of thinking are evident. Educators are virtually alone and unsupported by the public. Americans see little connection between an effective quality of life in a community and the quality of its public schools. The

interdependence of community, schooling, and democracy must be recognized by America as part of reform efforts. Our schools cannot be successful until the workers in them and the total community understand that interdependence. Of course, this is further complicated because 75% of the American public have no children in public schools. Senior citizens and childless families ask what is in it for them if they vote to raise taxes. They must be convinced that their own benefit in participating in this democracy is closely linked to the quality of public schools.

Once the need for change in America's public schools is accepted, the method and process of transformation must be addressed. The complexity of the situation and the interdependence of varied forces require four congruent transformations for America's schools to deliver an education needed by a globally competitive and increasingly diverse 21st century America.

These four transformations—Organizational, Pedagogical, Social and Attitudinal, and Political—are basic to systemic change. Although they are all interconnected, they will be discussed separately for clarity's sake. Taken together they must all be applied to the specific issues facing schools. The issue of tracking, for example, cannot be discussed without touching on all four transformations. By viewing schools holistically, major issues can be addressed as part of a broader social change process.

The focus of reform should not be on saving and fostering present structures in school districts and education-related organizations. To reinvent schools, the rules, roles, and relationships of the past that have led us to where we are today must be examined critically. The self-interest inherent in maintaining existing structures cannot continue. The failure to make a paradigm shift has been one of the major failings of our reform efforts in the American public school system during the past decade. Despite rhetoric for change on the part of government officials and education professionals, the evidence indicates that little change has taken place in classrooms.

There is no one solution or answer to the problem of transforming present policies, practices, beliefs, and structures. If this were so, identification and replication

of a model in every school would suffice. We must create processes that lead to self-analysis, reflection, and inquiry necessary to recreate local solutions. Transformational processes are about creating a new future, a new social order, with the schools as the focus. Visions to which we aspire require a common belief system. Consequently, the organizational and pedagogical transformations cannot occur without the social and attitudinal transformation. This is why schools cannot be independent of the larger society and community.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The present organizational model used in public schooling needs to be scrutinized to determine its effectiveness. Although the majority of American educators would conclude our present structure is not an effective organizational model, they have done little to demand organizational reform. Educators are basically repeating a century-old pattern. The following questions must be asked: "Do we use what is available in the research about teaching and learning to make adjustments in the way schools are organized? Do we ask why and what of everything we do in our schools?" The answer is a resounding no.

Consideration of some of the organizational structures in schools reveals we are not using inquiry and analysis to reform organizational patterns and structures. The most familiar structures include the following:

- A school calendar of 180 days
- A school day from 9 to 3
- Age-grade grouping
- Subject concentration in secondary schools
- Rigid scheduling practices
- 45-minute periods, 6 or 7 period day
- No built-in time in the day for staff interaction and development or school improvement
- No time in the day for working with parents and for other agencies
- Carnegie unit completion rather than performance as the basis for measuring success
- Retention as a solution for failure
- Lecture as the main strategy for instructional delivery
- One teacher for 20 to 30 students in an individual classroom
- Teachers working totally independent of each other
- Top-down governance structure command and control as an organizational strategy
- Instruction organized around the principle of remediation
- Children in rows and in lines one behind the other

- Little choice on the part of teacher, student, or parent
- Prescriptions for success
- Acceleration as the exception
- Tracking, on the increase since 1950, as an organizational strategy in spite of the volumes of research that challenge its utility
- Schools organized around covering the content or material, not around having the children learn the material
- The complete separation of teaching services and support services
- A variety of social services other than teaching services provided in a fragmented manner: guidance, drug education, mediation, psychological screening—offered without connection to each other or the outside world and other agencies servicing the youngsters.

While these are 23 of the most obvious problems with our organizational structure, dozens more exist. Not surprisingly, each of these structures has a valid historical reason. What is surprising is the fact that teachers, students, and parents identify clearly and understand the obsolescence of these present organizational structures, and yet these practices still survive.

One of the most serious problems that we have in public education is the fragmentation caused by current local, state, and federal rules and regulations. On the one hand, we tout our interest and support of new pedagogy, on the other hand, we insist on rules and regulations that make it impossible to implement this new pedagogy. The most glaring example of this is the Chapter I program.

A study conducted by a panel commissioned by the Education Department points to all of the issues regarding Chapter I in a clear and concise manner. The *Chapter I Handbook* (April 1993, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. A-229-A-233, by Charles Edwards) presents "Independent Commission Issues 'Framework' for a Revamped Chapter I Program." The recommendations are extraordinarily on target:

1. Establish clear and high standards
2. Require new assessments
3. Inform parents on student progress
4. Provide substantial professional development
5. Provide funding based on need and equity
6. Have accountability for results
7. Integrate health and social service support
8. Reward successful schools

These changes, however, will take years before they are incorporated into the Chapter I program.

Why is it that teachers, students, and parents can clearly identify organizational structures beyond the

cited 23 frameworks that render public school operations effectively obsolete, and yet these structures are not abandoned? Educators cannot continue to support ineffective organizational structures. Their detriment to the youth of America demands that the organizational transformation of our schools begin right now. Concepts and structures that cannot be defended and explained within a larger framework must be eliminated. At the same time, concepts and structures in the organization that work and are good for children must be reaffirmed.

The American public school has been asked to teach the children more and more each year while the time allotted for schooling has not increased. The schools are besieged by proponents of just about anything people feel is critical for children. From bicycle safety to instruction about AIDS, schools are asked to cover more and more topics. Obviously something must give if schools are to add to the curriculum. Peter Drucker (1993), in *Concept of the Corporation*, defines the need to make adjustments in what is done in any organization as "organized abandonment." For any organization to survive, he indicates, it must learn to abandon what is no longer useful. The public schools of America must practice this principle.

Because each of the disciplines wants more time to teach, great curriculum school wars are coming. The battle lines are being drawn and sides are being chosen. Unfortunately, the needs of the children are not the prime considerations in making decisions about what will be taught. Each group operates out of self-interest. Too often, special interest groups spend a great deal of time, energy, and money lobbying for their position. Of course, subject-centered educators themselves support their own specific interests. This can range from more mathematics to more counselors. The better organized the group, the more attention it receives from boards of education.

We talk about whole language, collaborative and cooperative teaching, student centered instruction, and other new pedagogical approaches, but we refuse to recognize the organizational transformations required to effectively implement them.

In addition, we do not model in our own analysis, reflection, and inquiry the very pedagogical processes deemed important for use in the classroom. If these processes are good for students, why are they not good for educators? It is inconceivable that the institution that is in charge of learning does not see itself as the ultimate learner. Schools and school systems see themselves solely as teachers and not as learners. Peter Senge (1990, p. 18) says it best in *The Fifth Discipline*: "Learning disabilities are tragic in children, especially when they go undetected. They are no less tragic in organizations, where they also go largely undetected." Imagine schools with crippling disabilities.

This problem of organizational transformation is difficult for any institution but much more complex for schools. First, in order to change or transform the organization, the fundamental theoretical framework upon which school organizations are built must change. In other words, the fundamental assumptions of educators must change. The problem here is similar to home improvement. Installing a new kitchen means going without a stove and refrigerator for a while. Educators cannot put up a sign in front of every public school in America that says: "Closed For Repairs." The schools must continue to operate while making fundamental systemic changes.

Second, schools differ from other institutions. They are much more than organizations that are instruments to create and achieve specific goals. Schools are communities that are infused by the common values of the people in them. Because decisions in the school embody community values and commitment, the work of transforming the present structure of schools becomes a complex business.

A third complication is that schools are presently organized around an industrial model rather than an informational model. Schools are traditionally organized to produce young people who are capable of working in isolation and taking directions. They are meant to produce young people who relate to machines and not to other people. Today, schools attempt to extinguish the natural desire of people to gather, be inquisitive, and interact. Schools are presently organized as places where learning is a private, psychological matter between teacher and learner.

The organizational norm must be transformed to one that recognizes and supports people who work together and collaborate on problem identification, analysis, and solutions. Therefore, how we use time in the structure must be analyzed, including the present practices of grade levels, scheduling, and time devoted to specific subject areas. In addition, the relationship between subject areas, content coverage, length of school day and school year, and subject matter taught, must all be thoroughly examined.

As the organizational structure is transformed, educators must also consider that schools are learning communities that have shared goals, values, and commitments. Unlike other institutions, schools are places that must focus on reflection and inquiry. Educators have a responsibility to define those differences for government and the public in general. Every decision must rest on this sense of schools as communities.

PEDAGOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Pedagogy and organizational structure must be interwoven. One cannot simply rearrange the chairs in a

classroom into a circle and proclaim that this will help instruction. Historically, children have been asked to sit one behind the other and have been told to be still, be quiet, and not to talk to each other. If change constitutes putting the children in a circle and telling them to be still, be quiet, and never talk to each other, little has been done to change the results.

Pedagogical transformation is not about a new method or approach. Challenging the essence of what has been believed for years, this transformation requires a revolution. It will not come about solely as a result of legislation from the federal or state government, nor by imposing new or greater standards or regulations. It will also be stymied if remediation is used as the philosophical and operational process in order to undo what has been done in the schools. A pedagogical transformation requires the liberation of the American educator. It can only happen in conjunction with an organizational transformation.

Teachers and administrators are the key players for a pedagogical transformation. In the process, unions will not be an impediment if everyone understands the social, attitudinal, and political transformations that must take place. A pedagogical transformation addresses such issues as what is taught, how it is taught, and how what is taught is measured. It must address the issue of individual needs of a community as well as the needs of this nation. Each community will have to determine what will be accepted as evidence to prove that the expectations for the schools have been met.

Public schools cannot point to children and say that some come with so many problems that they cannot be educated. Recognizing the problems and issues confronting children, educators must figure out how to solve those problems so that everyone can be effectively and appropriately educated. As part of this pedagogical transformation, a shift from process to results must be incorporated. The emphasis cannot be on the number and quantity of programs developed, but on the results generated as measured by student achievement. A new pedagogy requires the belief that continuing improvement in student results is always the goal.

Once this goal is accepted, educators must seek and become proficient in the use of alternative teaching strategies. The methods of the past were not successful with all students. The high dropout rate is not a new phenomenon. What is new is that now the expectation is to reduce the dropout rate. This has come about through a recognition that skilled and educated individuals are needed for the new economy and for the continued survival of a democracy. Saphier and Gower (1987) systematically analyze teaching strategies in *The Skillful Teacher*. Teachers who organize their classrooms and present material with distinct and varied methods, should provide students with the essential instruction, reinforcement,

and growth in a challenging and supportive environment for the attainment of skills.

Technology promises to play an important role both as a tool to deliver an effective teaching and learning model as well as a vehicle for increasing the efficiency of information exchange. Technology can provide all employees in the school system with the information required to make effective and informed decisions about students that will lead to all students having access to equity and academic excellence. Classroom teachers need to investigate the role that technology might play in increasing the quality of teaching and learning in individual classrooms. Computers and other technologies are no longer "add-ons"; they are integral tools for preparing students for life in the 21st century. Technology provides immediate access to all kinds of information, accommodates different learning styles, and provides alternative classroom activities, promising to help educators meet national and local education goals. Technology can link the belief that all children can learn with the repertoire of instructional strategies and skills necessary to make the belief a reality.

This requirement that all students should achieve in school has tremendous implications. Teachers must participate in professional development programs to acquire the new skills necessary to be successful with children. The role of administration and management is to provide training and support for teachers to acquire these new skills. Teachers and administrators must become active partners in the process, and they must give of their time and energy to acquire the new skills that are required for the pedagogical transformation. This must be a shared responsibility.

The pedagogical transformation is an enormous challenge for the teacher unions in America. By providing viable solutions that are reasonable and that allow for this new training for teachers, teacher unions can become the champions of the pedagogical transformation. Teachers and administrators must work closely together to identify the issues and to develop and implement solutions. Neither can walk away from their responsibility to participate in a pedagogical transformation that will make the American public school effectively support economic and democratic development.

SOCIAL AND ATTITUDINAL TRANSFORMATION

Social and attitudinal transformation requires everyone in the community to understand fully the interdependence of school and community. One cannot have an effective quality of life in any community without effective public schools. Each community must form alliances among diverse constituencies including businesses, religious institutions, parents, human serv-

ice providers, community agencies, and senior citizens. These broad alliances are difficult and require major changes in social attitudes. America has not believed that schools should work as part of a larger and interdependent society. In fact, there has been a tendency to keep these structures in the community separate.

America has moved from an industrial society to an information society. During the industrial era, America had a very defined set of expectations for the distribution of results. Society was controlled by a few people at the top (usually men) with most people in the middle working and taking direction from people at the top. Society had to take care of a small group at the bottom. This group would constitute "throw away people," the excess of human capital, those whom society did not need to be economically successful, but for whom a societal obligation was felt.

In moving into the information society, our expectation of the distribution of results is changing. Present conditions in our country are moving us from what has been solely a moral imperative to educate all, to a more pragmatic, economic imperative to educate all. American business is facing a critical challenge in the coming century. The changes caused by technology and by the available work force demand changes in education. In *Business Week*, Elizabeth Ehrlich with Susan Garland (1988, p. 104), identify the forces that affect the dramatic change in the current work force and that of the 21st century: (1) "technology is upgrading the work required in most jobs. . ."; (2) "job growth will be fast, mainly in high-skill occupations. . ."; (3) "the way in which work is now being organized requires a completely new set of skills."

Data from the Hudson Institute clearly identifies the mismatch of needed skills to the skills required of the work force. "As many as 50 million workers may have to be trained or retrained in the next 12 years—20 million new entrants and 30 million current workers" (Ehrlich & Garland, 1988, pp. 104-20). Since workers aged 21-25 have declined, employers will employ the less prepared as well as minorities and immigrants, "who tend to have less education and fewer skills than other employees." With an increase of females in the work force, and an increase in immigrants and minorities, the Hudson Institute predicts that in the current decade "only 15% of work force entrants will be native-born whites."

While American industry today is spending between \$30 and \$40 billion on training efforts for their employees, this investment is not enough. Schools must produce a new kind of worker for the 21st century. This worker will need a new literacy and the ability to relearn and to be adaptable. It is predicted that today's first graders will change jobs from 4 to 7 times during their lifetime. Up to 51 million may need retraining in the next

15 years; 21 million new entrants plus 30 million current workers.

No discussion about the kind of skills students need to be successful in a democracy can be complete without an examination of the purpose of schooling. Is the role of the school to prepare youngsters to enter the work force after high school and perform the tasks required by the employer, or is it to educate in the classical sense of the word so that youngsters once educated are capable of receiving further work-related training once employed? Should one group of students be prepared for work and another group for further education? This argument rages today in our community and our schools.

The question, however, is wrong. It is generated from an old paradigm, which is based on the belief that the purpose of schooling is to sort and select. From the first day a child enters school, instructional practices function to classify and categorize students in such a way that they are defined and thereby differentially treated in the next stage of their learning. In fact, all of the practices in public schools clearly indicate the belief that everyone has limits and that the job of the school is to define those limits so as to not cause anguish to the students or to the teachers trying to teach them.

While this may sound somewhat autocratic, it is exactly how we have organized instruction in American schools. Most operate on the premise that children come to school with their innate ability predetermined by birth or social circumstances. The schools then sort youngsters according to judgments about their educability. As one looks at the present practices and policies in schools today, one sees the natural outcome of such a belief system. It is only when this belief system which emphasizes the impact of innate ability on learning is replaced with a new belief system that sees effort and development as the basis for instruction that the operational practices and policies that exist today can be replaced.

The social context in which we are expected to make this change imposes certain difficulties. Schools are expected to teach more material to more children. At the same time, we are living in an increasingly heterogeneous and pluralistic society. It is made up of different races and cultures with different values and perspectives on life. With the arrival of new immigrant groups, the United States is experiencing an increasing mosaic rather than the melting process that is often spoken of in literature. This makes effective education for all much more difficult than it would be in more homogeneous societies.

In schools throughout the United States, we have struggled with our cultural diversity, even as we have attempted to view our differences as part of our strength. As of yet, however, we have not been fully successful in this endeavor. While educators have tink-

ered with multicultural and diversity programs, they have oftentimes been ghettoized in the curriculum and their limited scope has hampered their effectiveness.

Inclusive Education

A new approach taking hold in many school systems is called inclusion. This approach is holistic rather than piecemeal and views the goal of public education in terms of meeting the social and educational needs of all students in the least restrictive environment. Such a goal calls for a nationwide retraining of administrators, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents and the development of new class structures that promote a single and inclusive system of education.

It is increasingly expected that every classroom in America be involved in activities that will not only promote, but also facilitate inclusive education for all students. Such a vision and environment will make the public schools' motto, "Every child can and will learn," a reality. Inclusive education is a fundamental belief which considers each person an important, accepted member of the school and the community. Inclusive educators work to create a sense of oneness and belonging within the group; they celebrate diversity. The focus is on the positive, including respect and integrity for all people.

- Inclusion focuses on everyone's abilities and possibilities—not on disabilities and limitations.
- Inclusion acknowledges that everyone has different skills, talents, and gifts to offer—no one has to be good at everything.
- Inclusion means a climate of acceptance is created—no one is rejected or left out.
- Inclusion means that all school staff, students, and parents work together as a team in partnership.
- Inclusion is characterized by gentleness, individualization, openness, and humor.
- Inclusion means talking openly about differences in a productive and positive way.
- Inclusion is a daily ongoing process—not just mainstreaming in lunch, art, music, and physical education.
- Inclusion is something that changes all the time. It is a series of small adjustments to meet the needs of the people involved.
- Inclusion is characterized by an attitude of problem-solving to discover what is possible.
- Inclusion creates opportunities for both adults and children to learn and work together.
- Inclusion is a dynamic rather than a static process.

No checklist or definition can capture the spirit and commitment to all children and youth inherent in this

concept. It points to the need for America to develop inclusive schools where all community members participate fully and are valued by all. Inclusion is truly a process through which all children can develop the skills, the attitudes, and the experiences to be fully enfranchised members of society. It can and should be the focus of the American public schools as we move towards the 21st century, for it exemplifies all of the transformations required to make our future a viable one for all people in our country.

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

This area of transformation includes political change within the school as well as in society as a whole. First, it is important to recognize that we live in a country that in recent times has had a large and expanding middle class. As of late, this middle class has not been replenishing itself. There are basically two reasons for this. First, an analysis of our national birth rate indicates that the middle class has about 0.5 children per marriage. By comparison, the birth rate in the lower economic classes is exploding. Second, structural changes in the industrial sector have forced many wage earners out of the middle class because of a decrease in high-paying manufacturing jobs.

Given this demographic trend, accentuated by increasing immigration, the political question becomes defined in terms of the will of the powerful in this country to educate those that it has traditionally ignored. Will American society understand the political and economic repercussions of not educating the growing number of its poor? Will American society support public education in urban centers when the people being educated do not resemble, either in class or color, the people controlling the economics of those urban centers?

A political transformation is required at the local and federal level in the area of funding public education. At present, where one is born, to a great extent, will determine their quality of education. There are communities in this country that spend \$1,200 a year per child while others spend as high as \$18,000 per child. While the issue is not money alone, how could anyone accept that there is not an inherent injustice in this funding approach? Interestingly, referenda for education are the American way; however, referenda are not required for bullets and tanks or for war. As a country, we must recognize that education is the national defense of the years ahead.

The federal government must play a more extensive role in the funding of public education. The link between education and our economic viability as a nation has been clearly defined in public discourse. A tax program that specifically raises funds for education is needed. Why not propose a U.S. Mail education sur-

charge? Why not have a 15 cent education surcharge on every piece of mail, with a higher scale for pieces of mail that cost over one dollar? This education tax would affect every individual and every business in our nation. An equitable distribution plan for this money would also be easy to devise.

This nation must develop a plan to improve education that includes the financial support to deal with all issues that face our children. The appropriate distribution of money must be combined with adequate accountability so that money would not be wasted as is the case in so many federal programs. America must demonstrate that it loves and respects all of its children by providing them with all of the support they need to be successful in school. Will a government controlled by people who are not representative of the cultural and economic diversity of its citizens see the importance of providing for all the needs of that diverse citizenry? The evidence is that this has not been the case in the past. Will the fact that we can now prove there is an economic imperative to educate all (as well as create child and family centered practices and policies) make any difference to the people in charge? It certainly has not worked when we have approached the need for change in the past from a moral and social justice perspective.

Unequivocally, the single most critical issue in education today is one of equity. Does every child born in America have equal access to an effective and appropriate education? The present system is such that if one is born poor, more than likely an inferior education will be received. The difference between what is spent on poor children and what is spent on middle and upper class children is immense. Jonathan Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities* exposes these differences as America's shame. Moreover, research clearly supports the implementation of early childhood programs that provide a firm foundation for continued development and academic achievement. Why not begin all schooling at age 4 and continue for 13 years? This change in the school entry age would not increase the number of years of K-12 education, but would provide education during those important formative years, and would allow students to end at age 17. They could then continue learning as an apprentice at a job or continue a post secondary education. The changes in society and the workplace indicate that the worker of tomorrow must be capable in many skill areas and must have higher thinking ability. Beginning earlier and providing a continuum of educational opportunities will go a long way in addressing these new challenges.

Another required political transformation is in the area of race relations. American history is integrally connected to the enslavement of an entire race of people. Our educational system has been dramatically impacted by that part of our history. The American public school still suffers from practices and attitudes developed dur-

ing the period of slavery; practices that created different expectations for the races.

In addition to asking whether or not those who pay for education will continue to pay to educate those of a different color, a different language, and a different socioeconomic level, we now need to ask whether or not those who govern the educational process will strive for the betterment of those of a different color, a different language, and a different socioeconomic level. So far, too few have fought for equity and excellence for these students.

The performance of Black and Hispanic students over the last quarter century has conditioned everyone, including their parents, to think that they are not able to achieve at the level of White, middle class children. It is going to take a great transformation to have those who govern education—teachers, principals, administrators, school board members, and especially the general public—to believe that poor Black and Hispanic students can be taught and will be able to learn as well as middle class, White students.

What is it going to take to make that transformation? It will necessitate a different approach to the preparation of educators. It will require a different environment than what we now call the school. It will entail a new vision and a new belief system. It will mean a major educational paradigm shift. It will demand brave and bold leadership.

The transformation must be built one success upon another. For we must see that our old "truth" is a lie. We have ample evidence that indicates poor Black, Hispanic, and female students can compete and achieve as well as anyone else. But until we actually "see it with our own eyes," the transformation will be incomplete.

SUMMARY

In summation, the aforementioned transformations can take place in America if we understand and accept the following precepts:

- More money to advance the transformation of public schools is absolutely necessary.
- Children do not come to school the same way; however, it is our response to how they come that makes the difference. It is the role of school personnel to provide students with highly challenging learning opportunities as well as to present them with instruction that considers the learning style of each student.
- The superintendent of schools must be the CAC—Chief Advocate for Children—and have the responsibility to lead the development of a community vision and assure its realization.
- The present system of funding public education is inequitable and must be changed. Some children cost more to

educate than others. Furthermore, where one is born to a great extent determines how much will be spent for their education. It is in the nation's best interest to educate everyone equally.

- The present model of education must be adjusted so that first time quality becomes the norm and not remediation as is presently the case. Schools must change their focus. Education or schooling should begin at 4 years old for all youngsters. This can be done without spending additional money. All we would have to do is rearrange our present curriculum and keep children in school for 13 years—just beginning one year earlier.
- The relationship between the school, the home, and the community must be understood and internalized. Schools need the community and the community needs the schools.
- Our goals and curriculum must be realigned. What do students really need to know for the 21st century? Every community must ask itself what do we want our children to know? What will be accepted as evidence that they have learned? How can what they have learned be measured? Multidimensional assessments must be developed to accomplish this task.
- Schools and classrooms and the way they look and are organized must change dramatically. They must be organized around the interest and needs of the students and not around the interest and needs of adults. Enough is known to do this right now. Although there is an abundance of research on how children learn, not one-tenth of what is known about learning and teaching has been implemented.
- Technology as the key to the future must be emphasized. Not even one-tenth of the power of technology is currently being used. We must move from the chalkboard to the electronic board. We must integrate learning areas around the technology that exists.
- The principle of organized abandonment must be learned. Abandon the things that have not worked for a long time, such as age-grade grouping, retention, tracking, standardized tests, the Carnegie unit as a process and not a product unit; abandon the present system of scheduling, particularly at the high school level; abandon specific student to teacher ratios, and let teachers decide what is necessary, appropriate and effective.
- Our schools must be transformed from places where people are told what to do, to places where students, parents, teachers, and administrators identify the issues and invent the processes that will be used to implement and manage the changes necessary to meet their goals. These constituencies must be able to exercise control over their own destiny. The classroom and school is the unit of change and as such local governance must be promoted, encouraged,

and maintained. With this control and power will come increased accountability.

- Choice as a school reform device must be used with great care lest we create new inequities.
- Massive professional development programs are needed at the school level, and they should be planned and implemented by teachers with the support of administrators.
- Additional time is needed in the school day where teachers can plan together around the issues that confront them. Schools must become the units of change where teachers see the interdependence of what they teach and how they work and support each other.
- The interdependence of the quality of life in our community with the quality of our schools must be stressed. The relationship between quality of education and the prerequisites of democracy must be understood.

The educators of America's schools have an awesome task. At the same time, this awesome task has provided a great opportunity. America is poised for its greatest failure or its greatest success. Educators have been placed in an enviable position. They will decide the fate of the great American experiment called democracy. America cannot and will not survive without an educated populace. What a challenge! What an opportunity!

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

September 11, 2000

Dear Colleague:

By now you should be well into the start of your school year or into the other endeavors for those of you who have assumed different responsibilities. I hope all is going well for each of you.

It is time to touch base about the National Teacher Forum, which will be here before we know it! I am looking forward to meeting those of you whom I have not, and renewing acquaintances with those of you I had the privilege of meeting at Space Camp. The theme of this year's Forum, "Dreaming Change", will challenge each of us to consider our responsibilities as we dream about the changes in education that are possible through our leadership.

Many of you have called or emailed with questions about the Forum, and I hope to address those questions and concerns for you in this letter. Please read carefully!

1. Travel

By now, your travel itinerary should be set, and a copy is enclosed.

- **PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO DOUBLE-CHECK IT! ALSO, PLEASE BE SURE THAT THE NAME ON YOUR ITINERARY MATCHES THE PHOTO I.D. YOU WILL BE USING AT THE AIRPORT.**
- Because the airline carriers are not officially contracted until October 1, you cannot call to confirm your reservation until after that date. By using the confirmation code on your itinerary, you can go to www.virtuallythere.com to confirm your reservation, check the weather in Washington, DC, and get other relevant information. Almost everyone will be issued an e ticket. This means you will NOT have a hard copy ticket. You just have to show your driver's license to the ticket agent for your airline. The exceptions include those taking the train or flying from one of the territories. The number for Carlson Wagonlit Travel is on your itinerary, should you need it.
- I strongly suggest that you contact the airline one-day prior to your departure to confirm your flight. Also, please bring your itinerary with you to the airport for easy reference.
- Those who are driving will be reimbursed after the Forum. Please keep an accurate log of your mileage and be prepared to present this information upon registering at the Forum.

2. Accommodations

- **You will need a credit card only for incidentals at the hotel.** Please be prepared to present your card when you register at the hotel.
- You will receive a check for \$35 to cover ground transportation when you register at the Forum registration desk. In the next mailing, I will send you specific information on your options for getting from the airport to the Washington Court Hotel, but know that you can take the Super Shuttle (\$12-\$17 each way), a taxi (about \$20 each way), or the metro (\$1.10 each way!). You may use the check any way you choose.

3. Additional Information

- Many of you will be bringing family members, and I am sure they will have a wonderful time touring the city while you are busy at the Forum! The Washington Court Hotel is close to the Capitol, Union Station, the Mall, and the Smithsonian Museums. The metro is close by and easy to use.
- During our time together, we will provide you with two very lovely evening receptions, two breakfasts, and two lunches. Because of our limited budget, we are not able to honor requests for family members to join us during those meals and receptions. You may also want to have lunch before the "Get-Acquainted" session on Wednesday. We will provide cookies and juice, but not lunch, and the reception is not until 6:30 in the evening.
- You will be extremely busy during the three days of the Forum! Please do not count on time for sightseeing with your family.

4. Attire

- The weather in Washington, DC has been beautiful, but consider bringing a light jacket and umbrella. Dress for the Forum is professional.

5. Pictures

- On Wednesday during the "Get Acquainted" session, pictures will be taken of you and your state partner. We will have the picture ready for you before the conclusion of the Forum on Friday.

6. Visits with Congressional representatives

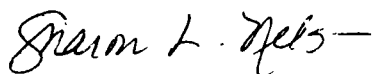
- You will have an opportunity to visit with your state legislators on Thursday, October 12, from 4-6 p.m. We have a tight schedule during your three days here, but we want you to have the option to schedule a visit at that time.

In the next and last mailings before the Forum, I will send you an agenda and some questions for you to ponder prior to your arrival in Washington, DC. But, I think this is enough information for now!

Lastly, I am enclosing an article that I hope you will read and think about before the Forum in October.

Please do not hesitate to call or email me with any questions you may have. I want your visit to Washington, DC and our time together to be inspiring, enjoyable, challenging, and productive!

Sincerely,



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