

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES SUMMIT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 20, 1994**

TALKING POINTS

[Acknowledgements: Senator Christopher Dodd; Anne Ford, Chairman of the National Center for Learning Disabilities; Dr. Reid Lyon, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; Dr. Tom Hehir [Hair], Office of Special Education Programs Department of Education; Judy Heumann, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services]

The President often says that we cannot afford to waste one human life, and particularly one child, in this country. To the disservice of many, we have been neglecting a group of people, people with learning disabilities, who have made and do make enormous contributions to our society.

The purpose of this summit is to establish a national agenda on learning disabilities; not only to help the 15% of our people with learning disabilities, but also to end the discrimination suffered by people with disabilities in the future by providing for the children of today.

We must not stop here. We need to continue to come together in meetings like this one intent on evaluating and seeking to improve the programs we create. We can never leave well enough alone, because for the sake of our children, well enough is never good enough.

How many children feel frustrated and helpless in large classes where teachers are ill-equipped with the resources and training necessary to meet the special requirements of so many children? How many children are placed into segregated and unchallenging special education classes where they are not adequately prepared and given the same chances as other students.

How many potentials have been wasted because we as a society have not done enough to include and assist children and adults with learning disabilities? How many more people can we ignore? No more.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

You all know that people with learning disabilities are further hindered by flaws and challenges that infect our current system:

*There is little early recognition of a learning disability.

*When learning disabilities are recognized children are often placed into segregated learning environments -- lumped together

with little regard for individual learning styles and needs.

*There are a disproportionate number of students of color in many of these restrictive classes.

*29% of learning disabled children drop out of high school; this figure is much higher than the percentage of non learning disabled drop-outs. The results are a disproportionate number of learning disabled unemployed, underemployed or employed without benefits such as health care.

ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS

The President wants you to know that his Administration has been working hard to combat these and other holes in the education system. For the first time, federal agencies are working together in a coordinated effort to address the problems we face. And we are making progress:

--Through the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; by improving the quality of education for all students; and by looking at ways to help teachers and schools intervene earlier when children experience reading or other problems.

--Goals 2000 will help all children to reach higher academic standards.

--In the area of health and human services, we are sponsoring major research on reading and learning disabilities through the National Institutes of Health.

--We are seeking to improve access to high quality jobs for all young people. The new School to Work Opportunities Act -- a joint undertaking by the Departments of Labor and Education -- includes strong provisions to help insure that people with disabilities are included in this effort.

--Through programs in our juvenile justice system we are working to improve crime prevention programs for students having problems in school, some of whom have learning disabilities. The Attorney General is striving to break the patterns that get these youths into trouble.

CONCLUSION

When the President talks about ensuring that every American has the opportunity to fulfill his or her God-given potential, he really means every single one of us. As he said at the White House celebration of the Americans With Disabilities Act fourth anniversary in late July: "We must move from exclusion to inclusion, from dependence to independence, from paternalism to empowerment."

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To: Lissa Muscatine

From: Ruby Shamir

Date: 9/16/94

Subj: Talking Points for HRC speech at National Center for Learning Disabilities Summit

Intro

-Thank Senator Dodd for commitment, effort, and vision in bringing this summit together.

-Thank everyone for coming and showing their commitment to this important subject.

Actors Danny Glover, Tom Cruise, Cher, and Robin Williams; West Warwick, Rhode Island Mayor Kathryn O'Hare; sports legend Magic Johnson; and lawyer John F. Kennedy Jr. all have something in common. They all have dyslexia.

In fact, studies have shown that up to 15% of the American population has some sort of learning disability.

These celebrities were treated as many people with learning disabilities are: they were called lazy, stupid, and unmotivated because they did not learn the same way as other students. It took them a little longer to store, process, and produce information. These people managed through hardship to flourish because they persevered to beat the derision of classmates, educators and colleagues.

These are success stories. But we must ask, how many more people are emotionally scarred? How many children feel frustrated and helpless in large classes where teachers are ill-equipped with the resources and training necessary to meet the special requirements of so many children? How many children are placed into segregated and unchallenging special education classes where they are not adequately prepared and given the same chances as other students.

How many potentials have been wasted because we as a society have not done enough to include and assist children and adults with learning disabilities? How many more intelligent, needy people can we ignore? No more.

The purpose of this summit is to establish a national agenda on learning disabilities; not only to help people currently with learning disabilities, but also to end the trend of discrimination suffered by people with disabilities in the future by providing for the children of today.

We must not stop with this agenda. We need to continue to come together in meetings like this one intent on constantly evaluating and seeking to improve the programs we create. We can never leave well enough alone, because for the sake of our children well enough is never good enough.

Obstacles Faced

*There is little early recognition of a learning disability. The student does not get the attention s/he needs, feels alienated and often develops behavioral problems and low self esteem.

*When learning disabilities are recognized children are often placed into segregated learning environments that do not sufficiently challenge the learner. Instead of getting the personalized program that they need children with learning disabilities usually get lumped together with little regard for individual learning styles and needs.

*There are a disproportionate number of students of color in many of these restrictive classes. This is because coming from poor and/ or broken homes children, even with mild learning disabilities, do not get the attention and nurturing assistance they need from home to prosper and are classified as disabled. This is no reason to keep them separated from other children. Additionally, many children from immigrant and non-English speaking homes are placed into lesser, segregated classes because they do not have a full grasp of the English language by a certain age.

*29% of learning disabled children drop out of high school; this figure is much higher than the percentage of non learning disabled drop-outs. The results of this are a disproportionate number of learning disabled unemployed, underemployed or employed without benefits such as healthcare.

Administration

This administration has been working hard to combat these and other holes in the education system.

We are working toward the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; improving the quality of education for all students; and looking at ways to help teachers and schools intervene earlier when children experience reading or other problems.

We are attempting to create a system of education that helps all children learn to higher standards.

In health and human services we are sponsoring major research on reading and learning disabilities through the National Institutes of Health, and coordinating it with our education research.

We are seeking to improve access to high quality jobs for all young people. The new School to Work Opportunities Act includes strong provisions to help insure that people with disabilities are included in this effort.

This administration is working in new ways to better academic and employment outcomes.

Through programs such as juvenile justice we are working to improve crime prevention programs for students having problems in school, many of whom have learning disabilities. The Attorney General is striving to break the patterns that get these youths into trouble.

Conclusion

Integration and inclusion are the keys to a solution. Studies have shown that children with mild learning disabilities who are in mixed classes score much higher on standardized tests than do segregated students. Their social skills improve dramatically and they tend to have fewer adjustment problems than children who are separated. Additionally, students without learning disabilities learn to be more sensitive to their peers and learn not to cast a person off simply because s/he takes more time to read or comprehend a mathematical problem.

Opening the door to young children will help adults with disabilities as well by improving their prospects for jobs and creating a more sensitive environment.

There is so much to be done for the sake of our children. We cannot allow one more human potential to be lost to the confusing jumble of letters and words that remains neglected and untreated.

VERY IMP. (Admin. Activities on
- RUBY L.D.)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

FAX MESSAGE

9/16/94

TO: LIZ

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FR: Susan Murray
U.S. Department of Education
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2 pages follow

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Liz: Please call if you have questions. Also, Tom Hehir (205-5507) is a good resource, as he is co-chairing the program.

Hope this information is helpful in preparing the First Lady's remarks.

Susan

Learning Disabilities: A National Responsibility
September 20, 1994

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♦ President Clinton has pledged to work for "inclusion not exclusion, independence not dependence, and empowerment not paternalism" on behalf of disabled people. For children, youth, and adults with learning disabilities, this means opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

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Administration Initiatives

♦ I am pleased and proud to note the participation of people across federal agencies at this conference. The fact that Secretary Riley, Secretary Reich, and Secretary Shalala are all here is evidence of this Administration's commitment to meet the life-long needs of individuals with disabilities. (NOTE: The Attorney General's participation is not confirmed at this time).

♦ All of these agencies, and others, will be spearheading initiatives to help learning disabled individuals be full participants in all aspects of school and community life, and to experience better outcomes.

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♦ For example, in education we are working toward the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; improving the quality of education for all students; and looking at ways to help teachers and schools intervene earlier when children experience reading or other problems. To be effective, the help must begin in the primary grades and we are committed to finding ways to help that happen. And, of course, Goals 2000 will help us create a system of education that helps all children, including those with learning disabilities, learn to higher standards.

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♦ In health and human services, we are sponsoring major research on reading and learning disabilities through the National Institutes of Health, and coordinating it with our education research.

⑤
♦ Early in this administration we recognized the need for education and labor to work together to improve access to high quality jobs for all our young people. The new School-to-Work Opportunities Act includes strong provisions to help insure that people with disabilities are included in this effort. Currently, too many of our learning disabled youth end up being unemployed or underemployed, often in part-time or low-wage jobs without benefits. This Administration is working in brand new ways to improve both academic and employment outcomes.

♦ Through discretionary programs in juvenile justice we are working to improve crime prevention programs for students having problems in school, many of whom have learning disabilities. These young people are at high risk for being in trouble with the law later in life, and the Attorney General is working to improve those outcomes, and also to find better ways of serving people with learning disabilities who are in correctional settings so that they can break the patterns that put them there.

♦ The fact that the people responsible for putting together the program for this summit are from two different federal agencies encourages me, too. Just as we are all benefitting from the NIH research perspective of Reid Lyon and from the education perspective of Tom Mehir, I am hopeful that children and youth with learning disabilities will benefit from our resolve and commitment to work together in new ways.

Some items specific to learning disabilities:

Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students, U.S. Department of Education

♦ 2.4 million students in our schools are identified as having specific learning disabilities. 29% of high school students with learning disabilities drop out.

♦ For those who drop out, the results are unemployment or underemployment; part-time jobs; jobs without benefits such as health insurance; and dead-ending: never getting past the entry-level jobs.

We must do things differently to improve outcomes:

♦ Improve the capacity of our teachers and classrooms to educate children with learning disabilities. Find out what works, and do it early in the child's school life.

♦ Increase the services and supports available to learning disabled students, in the classroom and in the community.

♦ Increase the range of alternatives and options available. For example, we know that vocational education is positively related to school completion and better post-school outcomes. We don't want to "track" learning disabled students or any others into vocational programs, but that option must be available.

♦ Building on Secretary Riley's initiative, we must promote the development of family-school-community partnerships to increase family involvement in their children's schooling.

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