

Quest/91

REBUILDING PUBLIC EDUCATION:
AMERICA'S FOUNDATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY

ALBERT SHANKER

QUEST '91
No-but @ a
nice ending

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at

QUEST

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ADAM URBANSKI: I would like to introduce to you our featured speaker for this morning's session. In doing this, I am mindful of the three cardinal rules for making good introductions. The three rules are: be brief, be sincere, and be seated.

That's a good match with what I need to do this morning, because you already know a great deal about Al Shanker. He is our main insurance, so that shortage of money is not compounded further by a shortage of ideas. He is a champion of democracy abroad and, in America's schools. He is the primary voice of America's teachers. You already know that he can lead, that he can build, that he can think, and that he can persuade. And, last night, you learned that he can also act. So, now you have a choice. You can follow the advice of Guido Sarducci and subscribe to the school of

the "Five Minute University" or you can take Al Shanker's lead and continue the search for improving our profession, our schools, our industry, and the lot of our children.

So, briefly and sincerely, I present to you the other half of the Shanker-Sarducci team, AFT President, Albert Shanker.

MR. SHANKER: Thank you very much, Adam, and to all of you.

As I look out, see you here, and, as I have seen you over the day and a half of our QuEST Conference so far, I am just filled with a feeling of pride. I want to tell you that it is your efforts and your dedication -- those of you here at this QuEST Conference -- because you are the people who have been creating credibility within your communities and across the country for our public schools. It is almost a joke in the AFT that I am willing to leave the office -- get on any plane, no matter how small or no matter how many propellers and, some say, even if it doesn't have any; any distance; any place -- to talk about restructuring and to engage in the battle for the preservation of public education in American so that we can continue the strength of our democracy, which is based on public education.

It is what you have done in pioneering school-based management and shared decision making. We are finding out that that is a very difficult process, especially with no resources, no models, no training, no help. We are certainly finding that shared decision making and school-based management are not an answer or a method. When you sit down, you still have to find out what it is. You need

ideas. And that is part of what this conference is about and part of what our ER&D training is about. But, you are the ones, as I go across the country and as I talk to you here, who have been experimenting with use of topnotch technology in our schools.

You have been developing nongraded primaries. You have been learning about and applying cooperative learning. You are taking to heart the notion of "student as worker." You are dealing with flexible schedules. You are trying to develop programs where kids are encouraged to study independently. You are introducing seminars where kids are not just answering questions and memorizing facts, but invited to participate as thinkers and as discussants.

Many of you are trying to emulate the cooperative schools of Germany which keep a team of teachers together with the same group of kids for a number of years, so that, instead of a factory model with kids and teachers being moved from place to place, class to classroom, to your room, semester by semester, or year by year, you develop a community that stays, and lives, and learns together for a period of time. You are involved in accelerated learning in schoolwide, Chapter I programs and lots of other things.

I am absolutely convinced that, if it weren't for your efforts, the enemies of public education would be able to point and say, "Look, poor test scores; high dropout rates; nobody's doing anything about it; business as usual." And, by now, we would have lost the battle.

So, what you have done, in spite of all these obstacles and

setbacks and frustration, you haven't solved the problems, and you know that. But you have bought us very valuable time and I salute you for that. Thank you for establishing the credibility of our organization and for me, as President of the AFT, and we will continue to depend on you.

Since we last met two years ago, the world around us has been changing, and changing very quickly. A lot of good things have happened, but, also, many that are very, very bad. Let me touch on some of the good ones.

First, is the development of the national goals. I don't think they are perfect, but it is better to have national goals and for everybody to know what we want to accomplish than not to have any. It is even better to have silly ones, and some of them are. We aren't going to be first in the world in math and science by the Year 2000. But, every couple of years, we will take a look at those goals and we will say that some of them are silly and we'll change them. So, it is good that we have got them. And you saw evidence of the importance of the goals. You saw what involvement in this process has done to provide a kind of self-education for one of the Governors, Roy Romer, who did such a magnificent job in opening this Convention. And you saw the sophistication, the depth of understanding, and you now know that it is very unlikely that we will every have an idiotic wall chart again which just has a lot of numbers on it that are disconnected with everything else and that that wall chart is put out as sort of a report card about what we

are doing.

I think another important issue is that we are coming to grips with the whole question of testing and curriculum issues. It is a scandal that we spend all this time and money on these tests that give us no information and that drive instruction in the wrong way. But that is not an argument against testing. It is an argument against bad testing. What we need are good tests. We are about, I hope, to develop a system of testing and assessment which will define, which will let us know what it is we are aiming for, what our kids should know and be able to do; not in vague generalities, but clear and specific. That will help us create new curriculum materials that will radically change how we educate teachers. It is about time we stopped saying that local control is so important that we have to have 16,000 school districts with 16,000 separate sets of curriculum throughout the country. We've got more mobility in this country than anybody has ever had. We are one country. It is one economy. We move from place to place. No individual school board has the capacity to develop a world class curriculum. And, even though we say it all different, we use the same textbooks, we use the same standardized tests, we have the same teacher education programs. This whole business of all the diversity we have all across the country, all the differences, and why we can't come together and define what kids should know is a "lot of baloney." And people are starting to say that. It's an excuse to say that we can't do it. Mathematics teachers have done

it. they have developed a national curriculum framework. They are developing some marvelous materials.

I wish that all of you could have been with me on Governor Romer's panel during the day on Thursday where we heard from six people who are involved in the development of some of these new mathematical materials. You will be getting them soon. You will be thrilled. It's going to change what you do, what the kids do. You're going to like it and we are all going to do better.

And, now, of course, other fields are doing the same thing. It is going to take some of them more time. No question about it. History is going to be more difficult to get agreement on than mathematics. Even science is more difficult. But, every other country in the world does it, and there is no reason why we can't. There is also no reason why a national curriculum framework cannot leave room for some diversity, some differences of place to place, some differences which would depend on individual interests or local interests. It doesn't have to be the whole thing.

Another piece of good news. America's choice: high skills or low wages. Ira Magaziner was here. Now, he didn't say this directly, but he really did. He said, look, it's not all the schools' fault. A good part of it is the way business operates in this country. We still have businesses operating on 19th Century, old fashioned factory methods and, if businessmen are going to continue operating that way, there isn't much reason to upgrade skills. In many cases, they want people who don't think. They

just want people who come on time and follow orders. In every other country, it's the business community that does a good deal of the training and education, especially for adults and, in many cases, of kids who are still in high school part-time and in some sort of an apprenticeship program. It's businesses fault that they don't look at transcripts and at grades and reward youngsters who have done well in school so that mothers, fathers, teachers, sisters, and brothers can say to youngsters, "If you don't do better, this is going to have an effect on what happens the day you walk out of here and get a job." So that is an important realization.

And you have had businessmen on this Commission who support the idea of a 1% tax on businesses committed to further education and training.

Another piece of good news is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. It's in business. Just a few months ago the Congress of the United States, in spite of very strong opposition forces, provided \$25 million which will be matched by private business. So, there is now \$50 million to develop outstanding, authentic assessments and, by 1993, the first teachers in this country will become nationally board certified. Quite a message to the general public that teachers care about excellence and that we have a system to honor and, I hope, to reward those who achieve that status.

And we have other good news, too. There is a continuing

business interest in education, and it's good. National Alliance for Business has taskforces, educational programs, the Business Roundtable - a very good program adopted. Committee on Economic Development continues to put out excellent reports, especially on poor kids and minority kids, on poverty and its effect on education. They testify before Congress. They are meeting with Governors. Very important because only about 20% of the voters in this country are parents of kids in school. So, if we don't have somebody else who is interested in a good school system and in education, just putting the teachers and the parents together is not enough in our society.

There are other good developments too. But, let me turn now to a few of the bad ones.

As we meet here today, many of you are finding it very difficult to concentrate on things like cooperative learning, and thinking mathematics, seminars, national curriculum and assessment. You're thinking about layoffs, salary freezes, cutbacks in health plans and other fringe benefits. You're in communities where mayors who were elected, partly by the union movement, are privatizing various public services because of the budget crunches.

A couple of months ago I was out in California at a meeting with Helen Bernstein, President of UTLA Business Roundtable, and here were a bunch of really good businessmen who want to do something to improve education and Helen walked into the meeting that day and said, well, the other day some of our teachers won an

R.J.R. Nabisco award because they put in a proposal that was funded because they thought it was one of the most creative proposals in the country. Well, the same day they got the R.J.R. Nabisco award, they got their layoff notices.

We've got other bad news. Two years ago, about one in five kids in this country lived in poverty. We are getting pretty close to one in four now. As Adam Urbanski shared with us the other evening, what's true in Rochester is true in many other places, that in many of our schools half the kids who are coming in show evidence of parental crack and other drug addiction. We've seen lots of problems over the years in our schools, but so many of you tell me that you are seeing things, the likes of which you have never seen before.

And, then, of course, the big problem on the horizon is the push for private school choice. Now, this is most unfortunate, because it is very tough to concentrate on trying to restructure schools with all that that implies and at the same time, the same President who calls on us to move toward national assessment, national goals, and change what we are doing, all these wonderful things, and at the same time has changed his mind and is going to take us away from the job of rebuilding to some extent, because the first instinct that anyone has is self-preservation. This is a life or death battle and it is going to be a big fight. I don't know why George Bush changed his mind. Two years ago, he made a speech in which he said, public funds should go only to public

schools, and he was right then. Lamar Alexander, for many years, said the same thing and so did David Kearns, all of them. This does not represent their point of view. This represents a team in the White House that has kind of said to the President, look, no matter what you really believe on this, we have figured out that there are ways of getting lots of voters. This is popular. It's popular because you can lower taxes if you get kids out of public schools. You can be very popular with the parents of kids who are already sending them there. And you will be very popular with parents of some kids who are now unhappy and would like to send their kids there. And, so, we have got this political agenda that we have got to deal with. We have the Chubb and Moe book and it's been very influential, not because very many people have read it. It's full of regression analyses. Very few people curl up in bed with a book like that. But, this is the Brookings Foundation, liberal, democratic.

And, then, of course, we have got the general movement toward privatization. Now, the National Catholic Education Association has hired a topnotch PR firm, spending big bucks, and the President is likely to go out across the country speaking up for this and there is likely to be a pretty massive public relations campaign to reach the No. 1 goal of the NCEA, which is to provide public aid for nonpublic and religious schools. In Detroit, the church is even talking about taking schools that are now catholic schools and turning them into secular schools which will teach universally

accepted moral virtues. And we have these attacks in many places; California, a constant threat, and other places across the country. The New York Board of Regents was talking about this just a couple of weeks ago.]

Unfortunately, the same sort of split is now infecting the minority community. It used to be that organizations that were predominantly black and Hispanic, they practically, with unanimity, supported public schools. But, now, of course, we see black parents in Chicago going to court and suing under the State financing formula, claiming they have a Constitutional right to get money to send their kids to private and parochial schools. We have black parents in Kansas City, under a desegregation order, saying that you can get more desegregation by putting some of their kids into parochial schools than you can by moving kids from either within the district or suburban within a district. And, then, of course, we have Detroit, which has a black superintendent, majority black school board, and there is a proposal from that school board to charter private schools to provide public funds for private schools.

And, then, of course, the big case is Polly Williams, State Legislator in Wisconsin, officer in a separatist militia, former welfare mother, former State Chair of Jesse Jackson's Campaign -- one would think that she would be sort of on the left, liberal side on these issues -- getting together with a Republican Governor to sponsor a voucher legislation. Traveling all across the country,

Polly Williams is the featured speaker at the Heritage Society and the CATO Institute and the groups that basically are moving toward private schools.

Now, that, obviously, doesn't mean that the black community has moved over or that all the black organizations have. But, it does mean that there is increasing pressure within black communities because of the dissatisfaction with the results in public schools. That is understandable. But, we have got to realize that it is important. It means that, as we move into this choice fight, we may not have all of the allies with us that we had in earlier fights. As legislation, either introduced or about to be, in California, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Texas, Arizona, Maryland, New Hampshire, Delaware, we've got a new gimmick in New Hampshire and in Delaware and that's the notion that the State passes legislation which gives each school board the right to give kids a voucher at approximately half of what it costs the public schools to educate the child. If the school board doesn't pass the voucher, the citizens in the community have a right to initiate a referendum. Here the big argument will be: look, for every kid who leaves school, you save half the money that it costs to educate them and you make some parent happy because they are going to take the kid to a school that they prefer. It's a gimmick, but its very clever and there will be lots of places that now have economic and fiscal woes that will go for something like this.

Then we've got the Whittle schools. Two or three billion

dollars to open up a national chain. We've never faced that. We've faced the little parochial school at the corner; or, in some cases, a fundamentalist academy; or, in some cases, just an independent school. But, now you are going to have national advertising, national chain, a lot of money behind it, and, undoubtedly, a lot of pressure to have government funds help kids go there.

Now, if you look at the President's program America 2000, almost all the money in it is for private schools. The other things, they are collecting voluntary money from business; they are moving money around. If you were to look at the President's program, not in terms of how many points there are, but in terms of where the money is going, then you would say the President's overwhelming priority is private school choice.

Now, it's very tempting for us to say this is all going to go away. We have been through this before. We had a referendum here in Washington, D.C. and we beat them. Recently, they were beaten in a referendum in Oregon. We had the tuition tax credit fight here during the Carter years and we beat them then. It's easy to walk away and say, well, sure, ^{I'm} glad Al is talking about these things. We need to know about them and we need to mobilize, but we are sure we can beat them back. Let's not be so self-confident. Just remember one thing. The Supreme Court we have today is not the Supreme Court we had in the late 1970's. In the late 1970's, we won the fight in Congress, but one of the reasons was that Jimmy

Carter said he was going to veto it anyway and, so, a lot of Congressmen said, why fight and kill ourselves over this sort of thing when it is not going to pass anyway. We don't have that now; we got the opposite.

The Supreme Court, in ruling on the Moeller case in Minnesota, has already ruled by a 5 to 4 vote in the early '80s -- it would be a bigger vote now -- that it was constitutional to give monies to kids, which they could spend for educational purposes even if they went to religious schools. So, unless you expect this Court to reverse that decision, that decision has already been made. So, if you combine the new Supreme Court, the power of the President, the anti-tax attitude, and the money squeeze as we become less productive and more people are trying to figure out to save money, as you get the demographics that we now have with fewer and fewer adults who have children in public schools and, therefore, perhaps -- it shouldn't be that way, because education affects everybody, not just the children and the parents of the children. But, unfortunately, most people who don't have their own kids in schools are less committed. And, of course, we have the worldwide move, generally, toward privatization.

And there is the frustration with bureaucracies, the slow movement. Look at how many years we have been at this reform, restructuring. What's happened? And, then, of course, people also take a look out there and they see public schools that they used to think of as schools that got all of our kids together to be

Americans and accept a common sense of values. Now, they're reading about public schools that are ethnocentric or schools for black males only and they are asking themselves, well, what's wrong with private schools? So, the old arguments will no longer work.

Now, we need to do several things. First, it seems to me, we need to show that private school choice is wrong in terms of a plan that will bring about improvement of schools. That's the key issue. Will letting kids go to private schools give them a better education? I am going to turn to that in just a minute, because we have got some evidence on that. And I think it is very surprising evidence. I was shocked by it. I am also shocked by the fact that, even though that evidence is out there, very few newspapers or publications in this country have said very much about it.

So, first we need to ask ourselves: If you could get all the kids in public school into private school in this country, if the President could push a button and make it happen, would kids learn a lot more? Would our country no longer be at risk? Secondly, we need new answers.

We need to go before the American people and explain to them why are things go bad? They are. And how can we get it right? We have got to present them with a plan that has got some credibility. And they have to believe that it's a good plan and that it has a reasonable chance of working.

Now, what do we know about private school education or choice? Well, first, let's take a little look at what happened over the

last year in Milwaukee - and this is in your folders. There is a little booklet on choice in there. It's an excellent one. There is a box in one that talks about the Milwaukee Story. Let me just share this with you.

The program started in September 1990. Well, we've been through one year of it. It offered a \$2,500 voucher out of the public school budget. It was open to a maximum of 1,000 low income children in a school district where about 60,000 fit the program's definition of "poverty." The families of 600-750 children -- the estimates vary -- applied for the voucher and only 7 of the 21 private schools agreed to accept these kids. How many students were accepted? Well, I am not sure, but it was somewhere between 341 or 390. With few exceptions, students ended up in segregated schools with an ethnocentric educational program. One financially strapped school that took in a large number of vouchered kids had been a religious school up until the time it decided to go into the program. It had financial problems, so it decided to switch and become a nonreligious school, so that it could get these kids in and get some money. But, what happened? In the middle of the year, the 63 vouchered students were suddenly expelled and only then did the public hear that this private school had been doing a lousy job of feeding, transporting, and providing books to the kids; that the facilities were even more decrepit than the public schools and that very little education took place. Now, the owners' entrepreneurship got her the voucher monies, but the school

collapsed anyway. And what will happen to the school's other students, we don't know. Still, another school has folded and the remaining private schools that have taken these kids have expelled quite a number of them because they were behavior problems. So, that's Year One of Milwaukee.

But, let's take a look now. A couple of weeks ago something came out. The National Assessment of Education results came out in mathematics. There were really two parts of the report. One part was state by state and that's what you read about in the papers -- who was first, who was second, who was third, who was last. And, as you have heard, it showed that there were significant differences, but it also showed that even the best states, everybody was doing poorly. The best states were nowhere near where they needed to be. But, also in this report was information about how kids in private schools and catholic schools were doing. Almost no newspaper or television station covered that. Or, if they did cover it, for the most part, they just said that private schools do better.

Now, there has been a lot of propaganda around about how great private school education is and then there are the Chubb and Moe claims of the benefits. Now there are two issues here: One is, what are the comparisons between the public schools and private schools? We are going to see that in just a minutes. Secondly, we are going to take a look at: are the kids the same or are they different?

Now, remember that as we look at these results, the NAEP exams, there is a 500 point scale. The measurements on this test go from 150-350. 150 would be people who could just recognize numbers; and, I guess, add and subtract and multiply one digit numbers. Up to 350 goes some algebra, some high school math. Basically, there are anchor points, every 50 points -- 150, 200, 250, 300, and 350. Those are, sort of, the significant separations and they have also been described as having certain grade levels.

So, now let's look at the first chart. You notice that there are columns there for public schools and columns for private schools. These are fourth grade kids. And you will see that practically all the kids have mastered the 150 level; 100% of the private school kids and 99% of the public school kids. The private schools are better because 85% of their kids have reached the next level as against 70% in the public schools. Then, when you get down to the next one, the private schools are a little ahead also; it's 18% versus 10%. Well, that's a good spread. But, you know, fourth grade is just the beginning of school and we don't really know whether the schools have made the difference. The kids may have started with some advantages.

So, let's take a look at what happens in the twelfth grade and let's look at the next chart. Now, in the next chart, you see those first two columns on both sides, that means all the kids, public and private, are at least at the third grade level by the time they're graduating high school. Nothing to be proud of.

Then those who have reached at least the fifth grade level, it's 90% of public schools and 95% in the private schools.

And then those who have reached the seventh grade level, at least, it's 45% and 52%.

Now, please notice that the majority of kids in public school, by the time they graduate, cannot perform at the seventh grade level and 48% of the kids in private schools who are graduating cannot perform at the seventh level.

Now, look at the next one. Those are the kids who score 350, who know some algebra and can probably go to college and take college-level math. 5% of the kids in public school have reached that level and 4% of the kids in private schools. So that when you reach that final line, the public schools are actually slightly better.

Well, what does this show? There is almost the same performance on the part of kids in these two systems. Now, at the beginning, the biggest spreads are fourth grade, but this kind of says that the longer the kids in private schools stay in school, the more they become like public school kids. It means either that the public schools got their kids to catch up faster or that the private schools were doing something bad to hold their kids back, because the spread that was there at the very beginning is much narrower at the end.

Now, let's see. Are these kids the same? What kind of parents do they have? By that I mean, how much education? How

many of their parents were college graduates? How many of them were dropouts? Because we know that, if you are a dropout, you are likely to make not very much money. And, if you are a college graduate, you're likely to make a heck of a lot more. So, let's look at this next chart.

Now, look at the bottom line. This is for fourth grade kids. 41% of the fathers of kids in private school have graduated college as against 26.3% in the public schools. Right next to that is the mothers; approximately the same, a little bit different. In other words, you have got a much wealthier group of parents for the kids who go to catholic and other private schools. Look at that top bunch up there. That's some high school, which means that those are the people who didn't graduate high school. Almost three times as many mothers and fathers of kids in public school are high school dropouts. That is a tremendous, just a tremendous spread.

So, what you read about in Chubb and Moe and these other people who say that, basically, the private schools take the same kids you guys take in the public schools and they do a tremendous job with them, is wrong on two counts: one, is they do about the same the job that we do and, secondly, they've got kids who are much more advantaged.

Now, let's look at the next chart because that will show you the same thing for grade eight. Notice the huge spread of parents who have graduated college, parents of kids in private school. Notice the much smaller group of college graduate parents for

youngsters in public school. And, once again, notice the huge dropout rate of public school parents -- 12% and 13% of mothers/fathers are dropouts; whereas, in the private schools only 4% or 5%.

Let's go to the twelfth grade chart, just to see that there is consistency throughout. So, what we have is the same pattern. We have got a very, very different population in these two sets of schools.

Now, what we have done is to ask the question: How do the kids do? If you take all the kids who are in public school whose parents graduated college and compare them with all the kids in private school whose parents graduated college; and if you take all those kids whose parents were dropouts and whose kids are in public school, or whose kids are in private school, how do the kids do? When you don't just compare rich kids in the private schools with the poor kids in the public schools, but suppose you compare the same kids in the same sets of schools?

The next chart shows what you have at grade four. Now, what you are going to see on this chart is that the average score for kids in the public schools whose parents graduated college is 222 and those in private schools of the same parents 232 or 233. In other words, an 11 point spread on a 500 point scale. An 11 point spread where you are marking major differences in 50 point intervals. For college graduates, the mother was a college graduate. The kid in public school, 277. The father in public

school 281. Private school kids 280 and 282 -- practically identical; 1 point difference and 2 point difference.

And, then, the final chart, which is grade twelve, is really quite spectacular because when you look at the colleges, it is just a straight line. It's 310, 311 - 310, 309. In other words, a 1 point difference is not significant because the margin of error is such. So what you get when you look at this is that there are identical results. Certainly, when you get up to grade twelve, nearly identical results when you are comparing the same kids.

The next one will show you kids in public schools and private schools take different courses because lots of kids -- all right, that's grade twelve. Look at that bottom there. Look at the top. Look at all of them. They are practically straight lines. In other words, if you control for the level of parental education, if you measure the same kids against the same kids, you get no differences. Now that is spectacular. That is a bombshell. That is something that every newspaper or magazine ought to be saying, that there are schools out there that charge you \$6,000 and \$12,000 and they have got all sorts of advantages and look at that.

Let's move to the next chart. This is grade eight. It's very important to look at kids who are taking the same courses because a lot of kids in private schools, especially when you get around the high school level, some of them are in academic tracks, some of them start vocational education, some of them are in more general tracks. Well, look, this one is eighth grade. Essentially, those

who take eighth grade math, the private schools do better, those kids. Those who are in pre-algebra programs, the public school score is 274 and the private school score is 273, same. Those who are taking algebra, the public school students score 298 and the private school students score 294.

So, basically, if you compare kids who are enrolled in the same courses, in one case the private schools do a little better; in two of these cases, the public schools do a little better.

Now, let's move to the next one. This next one has to do with what courses the kids take in high school and how well they did. So, the first one is kids who have not studied Algebra: public schools 251, private 255. Kids who took Pre-Algebra only: public schools 265, private schools 267. Those who took only Algebra I: public is 285, private 292. None of these are very big differences. So, somebody is a few points ahead or a few points below, very small. Now, those who have gone up through Algebra II, the public schools score 310 and the private schools only 304. Those who have taken Pre-Calculus, the public school kids score 328, private schools 323. Those who have taken Calculus, the public school kids 343, the private school kids 339. So, if you compare kids who have taken the same courses, and, after all, it is kind of unfair to test a kid who has never taken Algebra to give him an Algebra test. The amazing thing is the public schools did so well.

Now, lets move to the next page because this tells you how many kids in both systems are academic, college track students,

general students, and voc tech. Look at that middle set of bars. 56% of the kids in public school are in an academic program, whereas 81% of the kids in private schools are. So, the kids in private schools are taking all these math courses. Only slightly over half the kids in public schools are taking these courses. And, in spite of the fact that the kids in public schools, almost half of them aren't even taking these courses, they are scoring just about as well as the private school kids.

Now, the next chart shows us that at each level that, with all the advantages that these private school kids have -- and, remember, that there are other advantages and I will talk about those -- 71% of all the catholic high schools in this country give an examination to youngsters before they accept them in. 43% of the other religious schools give an examination. 66% of the other private schools examine the kids. 71% of catholic school principals said they look at the discipline records in the previous school before admitting any student. So, in spite of all of these advantages, here are the slight differences in each grade, a few points -- 12 points, 10 points, a few points. In Grade 12, the difference is 294.7 to 301.1. That's the difference on a 500 point scale.

Well, sure, private schools are ahead and the newspapers said that, so I can't say that they didn't tell the truth. But that would be something like reporting a chess match in which a Grand Chess Master played a novice and the Grand Chess Master won the

game after 450 moves and the newspaper reports that the Grand Chess Master won. Well, hell, that's not the story. The story is that the novice kept him in the game for all those moves and that's the story when it comes to comparing 500 public schools.

Now, I would like to ask a question: Whether any reasonable person looking at the difference in students, the big difference in students and the small difference in scores, believes that, if you took all the kids in public schools and put them into those private schools, whether the scores would go up at all. I think that it is an absolutely insane conclusion when you look at these. And we intend to put these graphs and the interpretation into a booklet and send it to Governors, legislators, Congressmen, businessmen, church leaders, and parents all across the country.

Now, you might say, "Hey, this is only one test, Al. It's a math test. So, maybe they are not so good at math, but they are really great in reading. There's only one test that was a fluke."

Well, we did a little bit of research and I now want to cite a supporter of private school choice, Chester Finn, who recently wrote a pretty good book on What Ails Our Schools. I see that in Education Week, March 9, 1988, here is what this article says and you will now see that this is not just Al Shanker saying this and it is not just one test and it is not just one fluke. It's been going on for some time.

Using unpublished national test data to bolster his case, Assistant Secretary of Education, Chester E. Finn, Jr., warned

independent school leaders here that the gravest threat they face is a reformed public school system. Citing his analysis of results from two 1986 assessments of student achievement, Mr. Finn said the gap between private and public school performance is very slight and could be closed by reform efforts. "You need to improve faster than the public schools if you expect to continue to have people paying an average of \$6,200 a year for day schools and almost \$12,000 a year for boarding schools in order to get a presumably better education," he said at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Independent Schools.

Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed private school students scoring, at most, about 4 points higher on reading assessment and 6 points higher on history and literature tests, according to the Assistance Secretary. He said, there is a differential, but it's a very small differential in an area where public school performance is scandalously low.

Mr. Finn's use of the NAEP data drew immediate criticism from private school leaders who have long urged that a federally funded assessment includes a larger sample of students from private schools. Mr. Finn, himself a graduate of the Phillips Exeter Academy acknowledged the disproportionately low representation of private school students in his sample and said both assessments could provide only tentative comparisons. But he insisted that data indicate "that the advantage private schools have is not very great."

Results from the 1986 NAEP reading test, which measured the skills of 36,000 students in grades 3, 7, and 11 were released in February and report who reads best. Delayed for more than five months because of an apparent anomaly in its findings, the report did include data on 2,962 private school youngsters. According to Mr. Finn, however, private school third graders averaged a score of 39 out of a possible 100, whereas their public school counterparts average 37.9 out of 100. In the seventh grade, private school students scored 52.2 and public school students 48.4. Eleventh grade, the scores were 60.1 and 55.6. The private school sample included Roman Catholic and other religious schools, Finn said. The NAEP math assessment, scheduled to be released next month, will show similar results, he added. And then he goes on to talk about History and Social Studies with the same sorts of results. And, then, Finn said, as far as the score he gives the schools, he says, I consider this score in the low 60's (which is what these students got) a D-.

Finn argued that such small differences in performance might be solely attributable to influences in the students' backgrounds. For example, he said, more than twice as many independent school students taking the test reported that their parents had graduated college. "Parent education correlates very closely to school performance," Mr. Finn said. "With differences that large in parent education, it is conceivable that there is no school effect showing up here at all." Independent school students

are also more likely than public school students to have participated in preschool programs, to watch less television, to take more core academic courses, to attend school more regularly. All of these were found by NAEP.

So, the dirty little secret in American education is that private schools do no better than public schools and let's get that word out.

But this also tells us something else. It tells us that, if we in the public schools had richer kids, and if we had kids who had two parents at home, and if our kids watched less TV, and if they did more homework, and if we could kick out the kids that we didn't want the way they kick out the kids they don't want, and if we had smaller class size, and if we had more parental involvement, this shows that that would not make any difference.

No, that is not a joke. This is not a continuation of last night's program. Sorry about that.

This shows, basically, that, even when you have got all those advantages, you can still not do the job if we continue to do what we are doing. Basically, they use the same textbooks, and the same curriculum, and the same teaching methods, and they have teachers trained the same way, and they have got everything the same as we do, and they are getting the same results. Now, that's a shocker, too, for most of us. To go back, and it will be very hard to explain to our colleagues that, if they could press the button and if they could exchange their kids with all their problems for these

other kids, look what the difference would be.

Well, what does that mean? It means that we are not going to win this argument by bringing out the old slogans. Sure, we deserve more money, but we can't make an argument here. Look at all these advantages, different kids, lower class size, in many cases more money. All these things are good. But it shows that these are not the things that make THE difference, if you do what you are doing now. It doesn't mean that if you did things differently, you wouldn't need more money. But, if we all continue to do things the way we do them now, then that doesn't make very much of a difference.

So, we've got to turn to the American people and we've got to tell them a story that makes sense. We've got to speak the truth. We've got to give them a story that they'll believe. We've got to raise the question: Why are all the schools, public and private, getting these bad results; what could possibly explain it?

I am going to give you an explanation. Basically, it's the same explanation that I shared with you two years ago. It's just that the evidence now is much stronger. What I said two years ago was how many people do you think would pay taxes if taxes were voluntary? How many people would pay the Union, or do pay it or join the Union, to help pay for services if they don't have to? We know that many will not pay their fair share or their dues. What if America passed a law tomorrow saying in the future all going to work is voluntary? You go when you want to and when you like to,

but you still get your salary and all your other benefits. Well, let's face it. We pay our taxes and we go to work because we have to and sometimes we would do it because we believed in it, but you can't run a system founded on the hope that everybody is going to be self-motivated all the time and do the right thing. It would be nice if that were the case, but it isn't the case. And the reason these kids are not learning very much is simple. You can't learn unless you work at it. And I mean not the teacher working at it, but the kids working at it. They have to read. They've got to write. They've got to question. They've got to think. They've got to build. They have to work at it in order to learn. And people work, generally, because they have to in order to get something that they want. People work because they have to make a living. They need to support families. They want to buy a car. They want college education for their kids. They want to eat. That's why people work. And kids in school work because they want something.

What do kids in school want? Well, some of them want to go to college. In most countries of the world, they work very, very hard because they know that unless they reach a certain standard, they will not get into college. Now, in the United States, you do not have to reach any standard to enter many colleges. No student needs to work beyond passing the minimum competency test, which is an elementary school level to get a diploma. And, therefore, that is one of the issues.

One of the issues is those kids who want to go to college, if

you want them to work harder -- and, by the way, if you want their parents to say, "Shut off the TV set, do your homework." -- you've got to say, "You don't get into college unless you meet a certain standard." If you don't, the kids are just going to say, "Hey, what are you bugging me for? I am going to graduate. I am going to get into college. What are you cruel for? I have learned all I need to learn to get these things that you want me to get." The kids are armed with the best possible argument when they turn to their teachers and their parents. Leave me alone. I've already accomplished what you want me to accomplish. There is no other country in the world where, with the kind of lack of achievement that exists here, you are guaranteed entry.

We need to have standards. Not immediate. Because, if you did it, you would shut down your colleges. And, also, you wouldn't be providing additional education for these kids who need it. And, by the way, I am not saying we are trying to reduce the number of kids who go to college. I think, if you raised standards, you will get more kids to work hard and our colleges will be as full as they are today and they will be full of students who are able to learn at a college level. And you won't have the huge dropout rates that you now have in college because so many kids go there and then they're just not able to do the work.

And then you need institutions, as Ira Magaziner said, for those who can't quite make it to college, but who can learn an awful lot and do an awful lot and make a decent living. You need

programs and you need funding. This is not an effort to screen out or to abandon. It's to develop and motivate each youngster to reach the maximum. If this happened, we would return authority to the classroom teacher and we would return authority to parents within our society.

Now, who are the other kids. Well, the other kids want jobs. Ira Magaziner talked to you about that yesterday. What did he say? He said that most employers do not even look at a transcript. They don't ask what courses you took. Now, kids know that. If, once you know that it doesn't make much difference whether you got good marks, or bad marks, or what you did in school. If it doesn't make any difference, then the only kids who are going to work at learning are the kids who are highly self-motivated. That's a small number of kids, as we saw on those national assessment charts.

So, no matter what else we do, if the kids don't work because they don't have to work, nothing else will make the schools succeed. I'm not saying that that's all that we need. Once we have kids who do want to work, we have to be able to reach them and help them and make sure that they succeed. Just raising the hurdle doesn't get somebody to be able to jump it. You've got to train and build up to it and do it. So, I am not putting all this on the kids. But, unless the kids want to do it, they're not going to no matter how much we want them to.

Now, we need to give ourselves 10 or 12 years, maybe, until we

reach world class standards in college. And we need to expand our two-year institutions, as was pointed out yesterday. And we need to have that relationship between work. By the way, it was proven, just in the 1970's, minimum competency test. We told kids you can't graduate high school unless you pass a minimum competency test. Lots of people said, "Kids are going to drop out." "They're going to fear that they can't pass the tests." "They're not going to make it." "This is going to have a very bad impact, especially on poor kids and minorities." "Don't do it." The minimum competency tests were put into effect and what happened? All the kids who were illiterate and semiliterate all of a sudden became literate. They worked at it and their teachers worked at it. And they did it. And they did not drop out. The dropout rate actually went down. Kids tend to stay in school when they are challenged, not when they're just being warehoused.

Now, we do have problems with this. All this sounds like common sense, but when you talk about high entry standards in college, a lot of kids, a lot of kids and their parents are going to be worried that new rules are being put in that are going to keep lots of people out. They will not see that what we are trying to do is get lots of them in, most of them in, but ready for college work.

We have, in terms of the work standard, there is a very serious problem in relationship to Civil Rights legislation. We are going to have to meet with our friends in higher education, our own

members, and others and talk about what our intentions are and how to do this. We are going to have to meet with Civil Rights organizations because, years ago, the courts established -- there was some outfit that was asking people who were applying for very menial jobs to produce their educational credentials. And that particular firm was using it as a way of screening out minorities. And, so, it became against the law. Now, the new Civil Rights legislation -- it's still under discussion and everything else -- but, in some forms, if it passes, it will practically make it illegal for an employer to ask for a transcript of grades. Now, that's a real dilemma. Have employers in the past sometimes used educational qualifications as a way of discriminating? They sure have. But is it a real killer in terms of educational motivation for kids to know that no employer is ever going to see what they did in school? It sure is. We had better work this one out. Because, if we don't work it out, kids know it. We are going to have a very, very clear problem.

Well, there is another aspect to this and that is I mentioned in my opening remarks that we are approaching a point where one quarter of our kids will be living in poverty. I don't have to tell this to you. You face this every day. But you know that if a kid does not come to school with a healthy body, with an undamaged mind, with a fairly stable home situation -- as a matter of fact, if a kid doesn't have an adult that he can spend an awful lot of time with and who is absolutely crazy about him or her, the

kid is not going to learn very well. Here we are, one of the richest countries in the world, and we still have -- we have, and are increasing, the amount of Third World conditions for so many of our kids.

Now a lot of these poor kids are very, very smart. Rich kids perform better, not because they're smarter, but because they are advantaged. And a lot of these poor kids are performing more poorly they're not able to concentrate on learning. So we need to -- at the same time that we say we are going to set high standards -- at the same time that we say to kids no longer automatic admission to college -- at the same time we say we are going to look at your transcripts and its okay for employers to reward people who did well at school -- in order to give incentives and motivations to kids who are in school so that they all know that the day you walk out of school what you did in school makes a difference -- if we are going to do that, we'd better ^{teach} leave the charge on Head Start, and on preschool, and on prenatal care, and on parental education, on parental leave, and on all agenda of a children's crusade. We really have to convince the people in this country that what they're doing to a huge number of children is a ticking bomb which will explode.

All this is still not enough to counter the choice threat. Most people believe that there has to be accountability in any organization. Now most of the accountability schemes they come up with are not very good. We had merit pay in the old days. Nobody

seems to talk about that anymore. But, this new one still has appeal. School choice has a great deal of appeal because a lot of people say, look, people in schools will try harder to change the institution if they know that if they don't succeed, they're going to lose kids. If they lose kids, they're going to lose jobs. Maybe if they lose enough jobs, the place is going to close down. And, therefore, we're sure, they say, that this is going to bring about improvement. That's the argument. And a lot of people buy it. Where they don't buy it, they do buy the idea that every school should be turned over to a parental majority council, which has happened in one place and which is under consideration in others.

So, the idea is a very simple one and a very common sense one. And I happen to agree with it. Namely, that kids are people. That's why they have to know that there are consequences to their actions. They have to know that if they do a good job and work hard that that will have one effect. They've got to know that if they are lazy, misbehave, don't work, and everything else, there will be another effect. And adults need to know the same. That's what most people out there think. They feel that any system where it makes no difference if you succeed or if you fail -- now, it might make a difference in your own mind, and it sure does -- but what they mean, make a difference in terms of consequences. Because there are some people who might not care. And there are in every system some who don't care. And that's one of the reasons

that we have a worldwide privatization movement, because people who believe that those who work for government don't care. Of course, private businesses aren't so good either, when you see businesses going bankrupt and the Chief Executive Officer gets bonuses of a million and half dollars while the company is sinking. That's not exactly rewarding. So, their arguments aren't all that good. But the answer, of course, is not to make all institutions work like this. The answer is to put in systems that work.

Most people believe that no organization will operate well in the long run if there are no differences, no consequences, nothing different that happens if a job is well done or if a job is poorly done. So what I am about to share with you is controversial. It's not new, but I will have some new twist to it. But I want you to know that the Executive Council has been debating this. They haven't accepted it. If it were put to a vote today, they would reject it overwhelmingly. Maybe you would too. And I am not sure that I've got the exact idea that has to be put into place. The whole question about how to get people moving together, trying, improving, how to get them to be really concerned. The whole issue of people's motivations is a very complex issue. Different people are motivated by different things. Some people can be motivated by money at one time and a few years later, when they have taken care of some of their problems, they really aren't interested at all. So, it is something we've got to think about.

But I do know this, that if we do not answer this -- come up

with some answer to this question -- that is, how do we put into the school system a system where it makes a difference, where we can go out to the general public and say, look, this isn't the old days. In the old days, it's true, there were a lot of schools that were consistently terrible, nothing ever happened; there were schools that were excellent, nothing happened to them; and ones in between. We've changed that and we need to have an answer for that.

Last year -- and, by the way, choice is not the answer. It seems to me that the crucial point is this: How do I, how do you go into your community and talk to your Governor, talk to your Mayors, talk to people in the general community, talk to businessmen, how do I respond to George Bush as he starts traveling across the country? I would like to say this. I would like to say, Mr. President, the ability to attract students to your school is not the same as the ability to educate them. You can attract students by offering daycare facilities. You can attract students by giving easier grades, higher grades. You can attract students with athletic programs. You can attract students because their friends are there. You can attract students for all sorts of reasons that have nothing to do with improving the school. If you really want to improve schools, you have to provide rewards for those who are successful in improving them. Reward what you want. If what you have is choice, you're going to reward those schools that are clever in terms of enticing students. It might be great advertis-

ing. It might be false claims about how good your school is doing. Or it might just be some convenience. You will get changes if you have choice, but the changes will not be excellence in education.

Now, two years ago, I proposed that we have a kind of competition where schools that succeed in bringing students up from where they are a great deal, that they get large financial rewards and that there be a whole spectrum. Now, I still think that ought to be considered. And many of you have heard me talk about it during the year. You have and some of you have agreed and others have disagreed. That isn't the only way to do it. It's perfectly possible to do it in a different way. For example, we are going to have, probably, a new national examination system. And it may be something like elements of NAEP where some kids are at one level, and another level, and the kids are at the top are able to do algebra, or able to write essays, and so forth. Suppose that the schools didn't compete against each other, but suppose schools that were outstanding in moving their kids from one level to another, to another -- suppose that any school that did that successfully, that the faculty, that there would be a sum of money and there would be other forms of recognition. Oberlin College does a terrific -- they have a program -- they have a lot of students in foreign languages and music -- and they count on running their university -- they count on a lot of outstanding high school teachers to produce and prepare students. You know what they do for the teachers who prepare those students and recommend them to Oberlin?

Well, once a year, they invite these teachers there. Let's say these are foreign language teachers. They'll bring in three or four authors from France and Germany. They will bring in outstanding professional musicians and they will spend a week together as guests of the University with these outstanding people in their fields as a sign of appreciation. At the other end of the spectrum, if a school is consistently very, very bad, there has to be the possibility of closing the school, of reopening it with new faculty, and of developing a new culture in the school. If we can't say we've got a better plan of getting people really involved, more involved than they would ordinarily be -- you can trust them to run the school. You don't have to have all these bureaucrats watching them. You can get rid of a lot of middle management, because now it's in their own interest. They are trying to bring their kids up. One, because they're dedicated people. That's why they entered the field. And, two, for the handful who are not dedicated, you might want to stop them. There are rewards that are involved that are tangible and there is also the fate that you might be closed down.

Now, if we can go forward and say we've got a plan that will really get people to improve schools, whereas yours is just going to be a plan that moves kids from one place to another, I think we can beat that. But I do not believe -- I want to repeat that -- I do not believe that the American people will ultimately accept the notion that people are going to do the best job they possibly can

if there are no positive or negative consequences. You don't believe that in your lives. I don't believe it. The public doesn't believe it.

I know it's going to be difficult. We have to come up with a proposal that we can believe in and that the public believes in or otherwise we will get some crazy form of accountability imposed on us, which will not be good for education.

Well, I've gone much too long. I apologize.

I want to deal with another issue and then wind up.

An argument that I've heard around here a great deal around here a great deal, and I am very sympathetic to, is, well, how can we really go back and restructure our schools? Look, what's going to happen. We are going back. People are going to be laid off or there are freezes. Our people are angry as anything. How can we get them involved in changing? I know that very well. I was President in New York City during the previous fiscal crisis and, believe me, it was no fun facing angry, hostile members and facing teachers who were laid off and going into schools where class size had skyrocketed.

Unfortunately, that is exactly when people usually restructure. Companies don't restructure when they're doing great. When you are doing great, you leave things alone. It's when you start losing. When it looks like you are going to go out of business. When somebody else either gets ahead of you or is catching up so fast that you feel that you might lose. It is precisely at a time

when, from the point of view of your own morale, you are least prepared and least willing, that's when you got to do it, or otherwise you lose. And we have to. We've got to do the same. It's the only way we will turn it around. Of course, in the process of doing new and interesting things, I think that we can win the public over and I think that we can convince them to invest in the schools.

One final point, which I touched on before, and that's this whole business of multiculturalism, ethnocentric curriculum, introducing diverse theories of interpretation into the schools. Let me say what I am not saying. I am not saying that we should not educate our people to live in a multicultural society, in a multicultural world. It is, and they should get such an education. I am not saying that we should make believe that we are all melted in one pot and we are all the same. We come from many different backgrounds. We are proud of them. Our country was built on the idea that you can have this diversity and still have a single country and there is no reason why our curriculum should not reflect that. I am not saying that we should have a curriculum that does not make us conscious and aware of the contributions of every group of people who come to this society -- of blacks, of Hispanics, of women, of the labor movement. I have a huge list. I am not saying that we need a curriculum which teaches us to be nationalistic and to believe that our country never did anything wrong and that all we need to do is wave the flag, we are fault-

less. No, our history should include all of our faults and, indeed, all of our very serious sins. But, when all is said and done, do you really believe that the people of the United States are going to pay taxes for schools that have a curriculum which looks like it is intended to divide. What's one of our best and biggest arguments in terms of money for private schools? Well, once you give it to the good private schools, you can't prevent extreme groups from opening up their own schools and instead of the taxpayer, most of whom have no kids in school -- instead of the taxpayer getting what he or she wants, which is to educate the future American citizen, you're going to be educating for a different purpose. And, so, we need schools where unity is stressed over diversity, but diversity is recognized. Where we are not ashamed to be patriotic without being nationalistic. Why shouldn't we love this country and teach kids to? We should. But we also need accuracy. Now, of course, there are different theories. Of course, history is rewritten. So is science rewritten. So is everything rethought and rewritten. But you don't put it into the schools until it is accepted by the scholars in the field. For instance, there are some people who are pushing to put creationism in the schools. But we don't put it in because it is not accepted by the scientific community. And, similarly, we should not be putting curriculum materials in the schools which are not accepted by the community of scholars in that particular field. Because, if we do, we will be saying to the public that the

curriculum that your kids get in this country is going to be determined by whoever yells loudest. In each and every community in America, it's going to be very different. It's going to be very diverse. And it's not going to be the truth. It's going to be who makes the noise. We need to stand up against that. It is a threat to our schools. We have not much of an argument for public education when we say this is the place where we bring all people together so that they can be learning to live and work together in spite of their differences and learning to appreciate and value those differences. We will not be able to say that if we support moves towards separatism in curriculum and school organization. If we don't support creationism, we shouldn't support what is the equal of creationism here.

Well, this, I think, the most exciting time in the history of public education in America. But, please remember that President Bush may very well go out on the stump pretty soon. He may go to different states and he may be working it all up for school choice. Anti-public-school groups will come out in full force and will get the public relations campaign. But this is not going to be decided by us and it is not going to be decided by the forces on the other side.

↘ The future of this country's public schools is going to be decided by millions of honest and concerned American citizens. What we say and what we do will make the difference. If we can stand and say, don't go for private schools. ^{because} One, they're no

better. But, two, we have put our act together. From now on kids are going to work harder because they're going to know it counts. There are a few holdouts and those who, at times, get tired or frustrated and think that maybe they should stop for a while, they, too, will have the incentive and the motivation to move on. Nobody is going to believe that a system that has not changed in a century is going to change without some major differences like the ones that I have talked about.

Either we design those differences and convince the public or someone else will create the differences and impose them on us. I hope that when the history of this period is written, it will say that the AFT was able to turn it around.

Thank you.