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**American Federation of Teachers
President Albert Shanker's
Address to the 1995 QuEST Conference
Washington, DC
July 28, 1995**

Well, as I look around, I'm very proud and I hope that all of you are too. We have here hundreds, more than a thousand teachers, and maybe another thousand state and local leaders. And in spite of the problems that we're facing now, layoffs, increasing class size, demands that we do more, total inclusion, the constant pressure of reform fads in curriculum, school-based management, new types of assessment, in spite of all those things, we're here.

Over the last couple of years, many of us participated in the field tests for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and all of us are trying to do something to bring about positive change in our schools and our districts.

We also face an unprecedented assault on collective bargaining, with legislation that so limits the scope of bargaining as to take the heart out of ninety percent of many of our contracts.

We're facing a continuing demonization of unions; we are the problem. If we weren't there, there wouldn't be any, they say. Of course, there are some states where unions are not very strong, and they're not doing any better. As a matter of fact, most of them are doing worse.

We have here not only teacher members and state and local leaders, but more of you have come this year as teams with a principal, school superintendent, school board member, member of the business community, someone active in the Parents' Association. Many of you are here, as you have been in the past, to get some of the best ideas and to bring them back and to try to apply them in your own districts.

I hope that you know the difference between the Quest Conference and most other educational conferences in this country. There are just thousands and thousands of conferences all over.

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This one is different. Most conferences, in a sense, are shows. That is, they bring on whoever are the latest speakers or the representatives of the latest gimmicks, there's no effort to have any quality control. If someone has the latest buzz word, well, bring 'em in, and that's part of the conference.

We don't do that. Occasionally, we make a mistake and we have somebody, you know, who sounds or looks good but turns out to be a fad, but we spend lots of time and lots of effort trying to think through who are these people and what are their ideas. We're not so much concerned with whether they're popular or even whether they're well known, but if you'll take a look at the list of speakers over the years, and a list of articles over the years in the American Educator, I think you'll find that you have had the opportunity of learning about significant contributions to education in a way that people in no other organization have because of this selectivity.

Now these are tough times, and usually I begin my speech with sort of "the British are coming." Sounding the alarm, some thing's about to happen, and in the past when I did that, there would often be raised eyebrows. Oh, yeah, it's happening somewhere else, but not here, or it's an exaggeration. But I don't think that I have to spend any time at this meeting convincing anyone that we face overwhelming problems, and that there is a huge attack on public education in America.

Indeed, more and more of the critics are not even talking about public schools because they don't like to admit that public schools have some kind of social and public function. They talk about "government" schools. Just like it's okay to blow up "government" buildings, but it wouldn't be okay to blow up a public building because public belongs to the people. We get quite a lot of that.

So I want to touch on a few of the big problems that we face, knowing that I don't have to convince you that we do face them, but I want to talk about what they are, and what is the evidence. Why is it that people are going for them?

And the first big one, of course, is privatization. We've got nine schools in Baltimore and the school district of Hartford.

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If you read this morning's Washington Post, the front page talks about school board in Washington, D.C. meeting tonight to talk about bringing in a private company.

It's happening in other cities, but it's not limited to the big cities: Wilkensburg, Pennsylvania; Pinckney, Michigan. The Edison Project is about to start, and other companies are about to start.

I think that to get a flavor of what is happening, I should read just a paragraph or two from a column in an investment newsletter, printed in the Washington Post business section recently. It's called "It's Elementary; Buy Education Stocks Now" by James Glassman.

"One way to make huge sums in the stock market is to figure out which industries and companies will be thriving ten years from now and invest in them. My candidate for the hottest industry in 2005 is education. Right now, nearly all of the \$400 billion that's spent on it each year flows to government entities and to non-profits rather than to commercial firms. But it doesn't take a genius to predict that the folks who manage education today won't still have their near-monopoly in the next century. 'The education market today reminds us of what the health care business looked like ten or 15 years ago,' says Michael Moe, who heads the Growth Company Group at Lehman Brothers Incorporated.

"There is enormous resistance to change among entrenched interests, he told me, just as there was in health. People would say, you shouldn't make money off hospitals, just like they're now saying, you shouldn't make money off a child's education. But changes are happening and it's inevitable that for-profit firms will enter what Moe calls a gigantic market."

So that's not the only one. There are dozens of these newsletters and there are even some daily newsletters on the education business.

Now, what do we have out there? I'm not going to go through all the evidence, but I just want to review with you. You're a very important group. You're going to go back to your communities. This is a live issue. Well, the one place where we've had privatization for about four years now, with more than one school and with some results, is Baltimore -- nine schools managed by a company called Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI).

What's happened?

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The company promised that within one year, there would be significant improvement in the test scores of youngsters. But if we compare the pre- and post-EAI results, what we find is that the other schools in Baltimore, the overwhelming majority not managed by the private company, have been improving, and the schools managed by the private company have had declining test scores, so that there is a widening gap between the regular schools and those run by a private company.

What are those scores?

Well, in reading, students in the regular Baltimore schools improved four percentiles. Students in the privately-managed schools went down four percentiles, and so there is now an eight point gap between the two.

In mathematics, students in, as EAI likes to call them, the "monopolistic union schools," -- improved six percentiles while the "free enterprise" schools went down three percentiles. So the gap there is nine percentiles over that period of time.

Now when these nine schools were selected, there were nine other schools selected, schools that were identical in student population in terms of free lunch eligibility, poverty, dropouts, absentee rates, and so forth. These are the control group schools.

Now, the control group schools, during this period of time, improved eight percentiles in reading, while the EAI schools went down four, a gap of twelve points. The control schools went up, improved by nine percentiles in math, while EAI went down nine for a difference of 18 points.

Now what is the result of the fact that the control schools improved and the EAI schools went down?

Well, what happened was they took the three highest-scoring control schools and said, you can't be control schools anymore because you're doing too well. And they replaced them with three low-scoring schools so that, in the future, the EAI schools will look better. If the measurements don't come out right, be sure to change the measuring stick.

Now, test scores are not the only problem. There is the question of the integrity of the results released by the company. Every time test scores were about to come out, a few days

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before they were officially released, the company released scores showing that everything was getting better.

Then, when the scores came out that showed that things were getting worse, they said, we're sorry, that was a mistake. We only released the scores of the students who were doing well. It was a clerical error.

But it is not a clerical error that happened only once. It happened every single time the test scores were released.

Now, this is a very clever maneuver because many people don't read newspapers at all, and many don't read them carefully, and many don't read them regularly. Therefore, the first story that EAI is doing wonderfully undoubtedly had equal public impact with the story a week later that they weren't.

From a public relations point of view, the truth got equal space with a lie and had equal impact.

Now, during this same period of time, they have been cited by the federal government as violating special education laws and the Chapter 1 laws.

The company increased class size. These schools that are managed by EAI had an average class size of 18.5 before EAI came there, and they now have an average class size of 25.3.

Fifty-six out of the 205 teachers were dismissed because class size went up and they didn't need them anymore, and 58 of the 81 paraprofessionals were dismissed.

The company was actually paid \$500 per pupil more than any other school. Students, teachers, parents and the city lost, but the company made \$2.6 million in just one of those years.

Now, in spite of that, there are many parents of students in those schools who support EAI. And they support it because EAI had the schools cleaned and painted, and they had new lighting put in.

Now, don't laugh. How do we feel, as teachers, when the teachers' room has peeling paint and is filthy and dark? Do we feel that someone is telling us something about what they think about us? Yes, we certainly do.

Parents feel that way, too. And so we can understand that. So when you get the kind of frustration that parents face, and a company comes in and does something that is clear and visible, it's taken as a sign, a gesture: they care for me. They care how I feel. They care how I think. And the company has a friend.

There's an awful lot to learn from that. There's no reason why trying to understand the feelings of parents has to be limited to a company that is exploiting that cynically. It's something that all of us ought to think about, and not just in terms of painting schools.

Now, our other attack is vouchers. They're back. They're coming back in more clever forms. And the biggest argument against them in the past was that they were obviously going to create greater equity problems than we face today.

But they're now being proposed on equity arguments. That is, those very same people who are slashing all sorts of programs for the poor and minorities in the Congress, and who don't seem to care about what the impact of slashing those programs will be, feel that it's absolutely essential that poor people have the same right to send their children to a wonderful private school that wealthy people have. That's the line. And it's having some impact. There are minority legislators in a number of states who are picking this up and running with it.

We had voucher threats this year, varied threats that have ended, for the most part, successfully. But voucher proponents came very close in Texas, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Arizona, Illinois. There's a new one coming up in California. We actually will have a voucher program of some sort in Cleveland. We didn't win there.

The Milwaukee voucher program was expanded from 1,500 students to 15,000 students and changed so that they now can use religious schools, not just non-sectarian schools.

Again, what is the record here? The record is that there has been no improvement in achievement when you compare the scores of these students with the scores of comparable students, that is, students with the same socioeconomic status, same parental education as those in public schools.

As a matter of fact, in Milwaukee, the elite private schools, the ones that really charge a lot of money, the ones that parents are told if you get vouchers, you'll be able to send your child to this elite school, none of those schools participate in this program.

And the literature that goes out to parents, while it doesn't say that we don't take special kids or those with problems, there are strong messages in the literature so that there is a disinclination on the part of parents of such children to apply.

Several years ago, we presented evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAPE), that if you take students in public schools and private schools and if you compare them not just on the basis of public/private, but on how well do students whose parents have graduated college and who go to public school compare with students whose parents have also graduated college and who go to private school, that the results are practically identical. In some cases, they were exactly identical.

Now, the United States isn't the only place where we can see this. There have been students publicly funded to go to private schools in other countries for some time: Scotland, Holland, Belgium, Australia, Chile. In all of those countries, there is no difference in achievement on the basis of public/private schooling.

What has happened in those countries is that there is greater class and ethnic separation. And in Chile, the private school system was put in by Dr. Milton Friedman, when Pinochet was the dictator and Friedman was the economic expert helping them get the country back up. They set up a really free enterprise private school system with no government regulations, and the idea was that schools would compete.

Well, standards have not gone up. What has happened is that as more parents send their kids to private schools, the government spends less and less money on education and individuals have to fork out more and more, so that the percentage of GNP going to education has gone down very, very substantially.

Now, there is no evidence on the two major threats -- privatization and vouchers -- and yet they continue to be threats, and we'll get back to that in a minute.

Now, here we now face major fiscal crises in cities and states across the country, and we face a big one federally, and I want to spend a few minutes on that because this is campaign time.

Right now, the Congress and the President are negotiating with each other for a budget. This is very important because we're not just talking about one year; we're talking about what's

going to happen over the next seven to ten years because these budgets are being adopted in the framework of an overall plan to eliminate the deficit.

And for education, the Republican plan over the next seven years is to reduce the education budget by about \$40 billion, and the President's plan is to increase it by about \$40 billion, so if you get one plan, you're going to get \$80 billion more than if you get the other plan.

Now \$80 billion is a lot of money, and it's a lot in terms of assistance to college students. It's a lot in terms of Chapter One. It is all of Goals 2000. It's safe and drug-free schools. It's professional development. It's all of that.

And as I indicated in my introduction to President Clinton this morning, we have a president who, out of all the programs in the Federal budget, which is, a couple of telephone books thick, of all the programs, the he has decided to make a stand on education and training.

Everything else is going to be cut, even in the President's budget. Not as much, not in the same way, not over the same period of time. It's more humane, better targeted, but the one thing that isn't going to be cut, education and training.

Now the Republicans are fighting on this and who's going to win? We don't know. Who is going to win depends on telephone calls, mail, letters to the editor, noise from parents' organizations, statements from business groups, from religious groups, from ministers.

When is all this going to happen? Well, it's going to happen between now and September 1st, September 7th, September 15th, October 1st. We don't know exactly when, but soon.

Now the President has drawn that line and said, that's what I want to fight for, but right now I can tell you that there is not an awful lot of mail coming to Congress saying, we support the President on this. We are angry, we don't want our schools cut, we don't want to have to cut programs, we don't want to have to increase class size, we don't want to get rid of professional development, we don't want to have to increase local taxes or state taxes to make up for what the Federal Government is doing. As a matter of fact, we can't do that because we've got crises in our own states.

Now, support for the President isn't there because this is summer and there aren't too many people in schools right now. And our friends who are not here are off, some of them are

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working, some are going to school to further their own education, but we're not in contact with most of our members.

And we're going to have to be in contact. Those of you who have schools opening now or very soon will be fortunate. It will be easier for you to go back and to have meetings in schools and to get things out very quickly.

But for those whose schools open later, you've got to do what you do in a political campaign. You've got to get people on telephones, you've got to do mailings because it's all going to be over just about the time that school is opening.

If we don't, forever after, people are going to say, I remember a President once who drew the line on education. Nobody supported him. Where were the letters? Where were the phone calls?

So all of us who, for all these years, have said make education a priority, well, here it is. The President has made education a priority. That's what he's fighting on. Everything else is going to be reduced. This is going to be increased. The difference is \$80 billion.

Now, where are the people to support that?

Well, they're not doing it because they don't know about it. And your members don't know it and your parents' associations don't, and that's the problem.

It isn't that the public wants these cuts. They don't. We know that through poll data. But they don't know what's happening. And so that's something that we can do. We'll do our job in getting mailings out and making calls and reaching those who are not here. But those of you who are here have a head start in this campaign.

Now, it's not all bad news. There is a lot of good news. The public is against these cuts but, as I said, they will sleep through the whole thing and be sorry when it's all over unless they get the message.

The public is not sold on vouchers or privatization, although if they think that things are hopeless, a lot of them will say, things can't get any worse, so let's try bringing EAI in.

Well, Baltimore proved that it can get worse.

So it's been a very worthwhile experiment, because every time anyone has used the argument that things can't get worse, they got worse.

And it will this time too.

Now, all of us know that the question of private management and the question of vouchers deal with governance. And you can't really improve schools very much with governance.

It reminds me of the old dictatorships. One dictator would die, and they would take the picture off, and another picture would come on. But everything that went on everywhere else was all the same, it's just that the pictures changed.

And unless things change in terms of what teachers do and what students do in classrooms, there won't be any different educational outcomes.

Of course, EAI did some things to the classroom. They increased class size, they took out experienced paraprofessionals, so they did have an impact because they wanted to make money.

Now we are at a critical juncture. If the public believes that it's hopeless and you can't really do things because of the bureaucracy, the union contracts, the administrators, then even though they don't like vouchers and they don't like the EAI's and so forth, they're going to say things can't get any worse, even if they can.

Now we have spent a lot of time in this organization in recent months on the report "First Things First" by Public Agenda.

Well, think of what Newt Gingrich and the Republicans did last year. They thought of things that people are angry about and things that people find frustrating, and they very carefully polled the public on each of the items in the Contract with America. And when the contract first came out, everybody laughed and they said, boy, that's sure going to kill them, putting that out, and they rejoiced. Then you see what happened.

They carefully tuned in on some things that people wanted, maybe they didn't do it in exactly the way they wanted, but they certainly came out way ahead by doing that.

Now "First Things First" is a very careful study. And we ought to be smart. We shouldn't just say, well, that's just one study or we don't like what the people in this poll think, and forget about it.

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We should say, look, there are a lot of angry, frustrated people out there and we need to find out what their anger is and what their frustrations are, what they don't like and what they do like. And if we modify our behaviors and actions and do things in such a way that they feel that there's hope, they're not going to turn to these hucksters. But if they feel it's hopeless, they will.

And so it's extremely important that we take this very seriously.

Now if you were a candidate running for office, you'd be getting polls like this every couple of days. And believe me, you'd be sitting there saying, here's what people think. Now, how do we do it that way or how do we get them to change what they think. That's another possibility.

If the people who think all these things are dead wrong, then we ought to figure out a way of convincing them that they're dead wrong. But you can't just say, they're dead wrong, but they're only the people, which is what a lot of educational bureaucrats do. And that's why you get this anger. Parents come in and try to get changes or straight answers, and they don't get straight answers. The parents are not always right; nobody's ever always right. But they do have a right to straight answers, and they don't get them. They get a runaround.

Now, the great news is that the things that parents want are the same things that teachers want.

What are they?

First and foremost, they are what you might call standards of conduct. They want youngsters to behave in certain ways.

Why?

Well, they are concerned about violence. They are concerned not only about violence but they're concerned about regular, frequent disruptions that are not necessarily violent and dangerous, but that destroy the education of all the other youngsters, because you consume all of your time dealing with a kid who's yelling or screaming or cursing or jumping or running or doing something like that.

And parents want something done about it. And I think they're very smart because what they have said is, we don't care what kind of reforms or curriculum or assessment or school-

based management or teacher training or anything else you have, no reform will work if you don't have youngsters who behave in the classroom. Nothing will work.

Now, this is the only country in the world where we allow one student to destroy the education of the other 25. It makes absolutely no sense.

And what is happening is we are driving the 25 into private schools through vouchers and we'll end up with the one. And I say, get rid of the one and keep the other 25.

Now, when I say "get rid of," I don't mean throw him out in the street and don't do anything for him. That youngster deserves an education and deserves every effort that we can make to help him. But he does not have the right to destroy the education of all the others.

Now, I have no idea whether we can do anything for some of these youngsters. We should try. And we should have separate facilities to do that, but we should not destroy the education of the others.

I think we need to zero in on this over and over again, that the overwhelming majority of youngsters come to school, they want to learn, they understand what proper behavior is. If they don't understand it, they can be made to understand it very quickly.

But the schools are teaching youngsters to misbehave. How do we teach them to misbehave? When one youngster gets up in the first or second grade, and does something that is outrageous, all the other youngsters are waiting for something to happen. They are sure that something is going to happen, they say "Thank God, I didn't do a stupid thing like that because that kid is going to get it," and then nothing happens.

And then the youngster who did that turns to the others outside of school and says, "You're chicken." And if you don't do what I do tomorrow and join me, I'm going to get you after school. And that youngster becomes the head of that classroom, and the teacher has lost it.

And what has happened is that we have taken one problem and we have converted it into five problems or seven problems or twelve. It's like when one kid brings a gun into school. If you don't get rid of that kid and the gun, you're going to have lots of guns in school because all the other kids have to protect themselves.

And you've got to draw the line at the first one. You've got to say "zero tolerance."

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So what we need are codes of conduct. They're pretty obvious. They shouldn't be complicated. They shouldn't be overly burdensome. They should take into account that children are children. They should deal with things that really disturb and disrupt the educational process and not things that are minor annoyances.

They should take into account that sometimes kids have a problem that is just today's problem and they misbehave once or twice because of something else that's on their minds.

In some cases, it may be with one teacher but not others. Or today and tomorrow but not before, not after. All these things need to be taken into consideration.

But we need to make sure that the schools, in addition to teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, are also teaching youngsters that in the world, there are rules. And if those rules are broken, there are consequences to pay.

And for many of the youngsters who grow up and get into terrible trouble, the schools have helped them get into that trouble because in first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and all the way up, we have said you can violate the rules and nothing will ever happen to you.

And finally they break a bigger rule, and somebody gets them, and we are have helped teach them those values. We have taught them that you can get away with it.

And this is true, by the way, for disabled youngsters as well. It doesn't help the other 25 youngsters if someone with a disability does all of the disrupting. It still destroys everyone's education. And it doesn't help the youngster who's got the disability either.

But if you're a parent and you want your kids to get an education, and you come in and complain to the principal, he says, your kid is getting an education, he is learning how to live with a really disruptive kid. That's what a lot of them are learning. But that's not what the taxpayer is paying money for.

And so we need to get rid of that excuse. We're working on that in federal legislation and we need to get to principals who, when a teacher says, I've got this problem, the principal says what did you do to provoke those youngsters.

It's not the disruptive child's fault, it's the teacher's fault. In other words, shut up and don't bring your problems to me or otherwise, I'm going to get you.

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And we need to get a better and different and cheaper and faster and fairer system of due process than the one that exists now where the courts inevitably send kids back, no matter how bad their problems are.

Now I know that for many years, people have said, it's hopeless. Well, if it is hopeless, let's say goodbye to public education because the public is not stupid. They are not going to tolerate the destruction of the education of their children because we have decided that the place to reform the disruptive child is in the regular classroom at the expense of their children.

And besides which, what evidence is there, over all these years, that any of these disruptive youngsters have been reformed as a result of remaining in regular classrooms? Absolutely none at all.

The evidence is that as a result of keeping them in regular classrooms, we don't have one or two disruptive youngsters, we have many, many more. So we haven't solved the problem, we have magnified it.

Now we've got some successes. We've actually got some zero tolerance legislation in some legislatures, over the last year and a half.

We have some school boards that started adopting some good policies.

We have some contracts which have developed some pretty good procedures here, so that's one piece of it.

The second piece is standards of achievement. Now the standards have to be clear. They have to tell teachers and students and parents what's expected.

Now, I've been looking over some of the standards that have been developed by states, and some of them are very good because they do tell you what to do, and others are very bad.

Examples. Here's a good standard for English language arts: "Explain how the sound of a poem (rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, repetition, alliteration, and parallelism) supports the subject and mood."

Here's one that's terrible: "Internalize a continuous self-adjusting system."

Here's another bad one: "Locate and use information for specific purposes and from a variety of sources." That really tells you what to do.

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In social studies, here's a good one: "Students should be able to describe how United States federalism was transformed during the Great Depression by the policies of the New Deal and how that transformation continues to affect United States society today." A good standard.

Here's another bad one: "The learner will describe the times in which various people lived."

Here's one in science that's good: "Demonstrate an understanding that a gravitational force exists between any two objects in the universe and that force is directly proportional to the mass of the objects."

Here's one that's not good: "Science is applied to a variety of problems that require many approaches to finding solutions." That certainly tells you what to do tomorrow morning!

And in mathematics, a good one is "build models of three-dimensional figures such as prisms, pyramids, cones, and other solids. Describe and record their properties."

And here are two that are terrible: "Learn to value mathematics." And "All students will represent different of forms of numbers and their relationships."

We've got a long way to go.

But there's good news here, and it's news that you ought to share with members of your community. Write the newspapers, talk to people in the business community, talk to parents.

The good news is that schools are getting better. In 1983, the year of "A Nation At Risk," the percentage of African American students who took four years of English, three years of social studies, and two years of math and science was 28 percent. In 1990, it was 72 percent.

Now, I know what you're thinking, because I asked the same question. Did they just take that old Business Arithmetic" and call it something else? In other words, did they just change the labels and give the kids the same courses?

Well, during that same period, the verbal SAT scores of African American students scores went up 21 points, and math scores went up 34 points.

Well, maybe these scores went up or maybe the percentages of students taking the courses went up because there was a lot of kids who dropped out.

Well, actually, the dropout rate fell from 18 percent to 13 percent during that same period of time.

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So we have higher, tougher standards. The youngsters responded and did better. And the dropout rate went down.

In 1982, only 48 percent of the kids took geometry. In 1992, 70 percent did.

Those taking calculus went up from four percent to ten percent.

Those taking chemistry and physics went from ten percent to 22 percent.

The NAEP results reflect an increase of nine points on the math and science scores for 17-year-olds, which is basically an increase in one year. And not only did top students show an increase, but the bottom students also showed an 11 point increase in math and a 12 point increase in science and again a reduction in the dropout rate.

Standards went up, tougher courses, harder work, more students did the harder work, more students learned more, more students remained in school.

Now, the problem is that taking more courses and harder courses is not sexy like vouchers and private school management. It's just ordinary common sense.

But, you know, I think if we go out to the parents in our communities and say, look, you can have vouchers or EAI, or we're going to require youngsters to take these courses and we're going to examine them and we're going to be tough and they're going to learn, I think parents will see the difference between those two approaches.

Now I want to spend some time on one example that I think illustrates a number of things. In Baltimore, during this period of time, all the concentration has been on the EAI schools, which have done miserably and then on how the rest of the system has been going slowly upwards.

But in Baltimore, one school has really taken off, called the Calvert-Barclay School.

The Calvert School in the state is a private school that been around for a long time and has a very old-fashioned liberal arts curriculum. As a matter of fact, they still use some books that were published in 1905, because the kids love the stories and the poems and they don't throw them out just because they're 1905. They have a very specific curriculum that they sell for parents to use at home. The Calvert School brought its curriculum and teacher training to the public Barclay school, and it became Calvert-Barclay.

Now what was this school like? Well, 82 percent of the kids in school are on free lunch. The Maryland average for free lunch is 26 percent, and the Baltimore average is 67 percent. So you see that they are 15 points above the average Baltimore school in free lunch youngsters.

This is a tough school. Now, what did they bring to that school? They brought a very specific curriculum. Do this first, do this next, and here's how you mark this, and here's what you do, very specific. No free-for-all about creativity. It's very, very specific.

So they had an academically rich curriculum. They trained the teachers both in the curriculum and in the pedagogy. The teachers who felt uncomfortable with it because they didn't want something that was that specific were permitted to transfer elsewhere, and teachers who felt they wanted to do something like this were permitted to transfer in with the cooperation of the union. They made sure that supplies and books were there and on time to the point that if a youngster's pencil point broke, there was a pencil in his hand within ten seconds.

At Calvert-Barclay, they were sure that the same thing was happening in all the classes. Now, this program's been going on for four years and there has been an independent evaluation by Sam Stringfield from Johns Hopkins University. In addition to program and the school being interesting, it's a really quite spectacular evaluation.

Now what has happened in that school?

In the competency test in basic skills, the youngsters are at or above national averages, in one case is over the 70th percentile.

The youngsters in the program were also given the ERB exam, which is an exam given to youngsters in private schools across the country, and they performed above the national norm compared to all the other private schools in the United States which give that examination.

Grade four in the Calvert-Barclay program out-performed the grade five that was there before the program.

I want to quote from the report. For language, arts and writing: "By the end of the third grade, the program appears to have accelerated the writing skills of Barclay students by more than two years. Same in mathematics. Attendance up. Special ed reduced by more than 50 percent. Huge number of students referred to the citywide gifted and talented program.

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Tremendous reduction in discipline problems. The cost here was about \$500 per pupil to do this training, get the materials, and so forth.

Now, you know, this goes against almost everything that's out there now. Creativity. Every school and every teacher should be different. And if you ever use anything that you've used before, you're an old fuddy-duddy and you're lazy and you're rigid.

You know, this whole cult that you've got to be instantly creative constantly is very professionally destructive. Suppose you went to a doctor who said, look, most doctors would give you this, and this cures 99 percent of the people, but that's boring as all hell. I'm going to be creative.

The fact is that there are professionals in other lines of work that are complex. Medicine is complex, law is complex, people who are air traffic controllers certainly perform a very complex task.

And do you know what's true about all these tasks? A very high percentage of what they do is routine. It's deliberately routinized so that you can think about real problems as they come up, instead of thinking about everything that you have to do every minute of the time.

And that's what this Calvert-Barclay program does.

Now, what we're being told to do is to be wizards constantly, and then we're made to feel guilty if we're not creative every second of the time. There's no profession that is based on people being creative all the time. There just isn't any.

The evaluation concludes that "such striking results derive from the adoption of a very well designed, highly demanding, continuously evaluated curriculum and instructional program and a set of reliable implementation techniques" -- making sure that everybody does it right.

Well, where are we with the public?

Now the unfortunate thing is this school gets no headlines. A school that makes major breakthroughs, nō headlines.

Scores in EAI schools go down, but Washington wants to bring them in.

And the Washington Post says that the superintendent is very creative for bringing in an outfit that has failed everywhere else. Now, you know, this is going to the bald barber to ask him how you can grow your hair. It's absolutely ridiculous.

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Now the public is pretty smart. It does not like gimmicks. It does not go for whole language instruction that doesn't have any phonics. It does not go for using calculators instead of teaching youngsters to learn their math tables.

It is opposed to automatic promotion.

And 87 percent believe that a student should not get a diploma unless the student has learned what the student is supposed to learn.

And the public opposes heterogenous grouping. And they're opposed to heterogenous grouping not because they have read books about it; they were all in school in heterogenous groups. And you know what they said? They said there were so many kids with so many different abilities that the teacher never had time to get to me because the teacher was dealing with three or four different groups.

Now they understand that if you take a heterogenous group and teach them all the same thing, then most of the kids won't understand what you're talking about, or they'll be bored to death, or if you have different groups, I mean, you know, it's like treating five patients simultaneously.

But parents understand that.

By the way, it's not a racial issue. Same percentage of African American parents as white parents as born-again Christians, and not through ideology, not through books. They were all in classrooms and they had the experience that they didn't get the attention that they should have gotten. And by the way, most of them feel that they were average, but there was this slow kid there, taking the teacher's time and this very sharp kid there, and they were the average kid getting lost and not being helped.

Parents will not want severely disabled children to be included in regular classrooms if the disability is such that it destroys the education of the other youngsters.

Parents are not in favor of creative writing that does not bother with spelling or punctuation.

They are not in favor of critical thinking where there is nothing, no subject matter, to think about.

And they are not in favor of interdisciplinary studies where what you're studying is interdisciplinary because you don't know any disciplines!

And so we can give the public hope. We can fight for policies that oppose social promotion. We can fight against the idea that a principal has the right to come in and change report card grades that a teacher has given.

And if we do that, we'll organize the majority of parents and the general public and they'll forget about vouchers and all-these other things because they will have hope that what they believe the schools ought to be doing can be done and will be done.

But if we don't do it, the more they're going to say it can't get any worse, and let's try something new.

And our job is to give them hope. And we can give them hope because the majority's on our side. It is a democratic country.

And you heard the President of the United States today talk about something which you haven't seen, and it's something we've developed.

The American Federation of Teachers is about to launch a nationwide campaign on the two issues that I have just talked about; standards of conduct, and standards for achievement.

Every local is going to get a kit, and we're going to have kits that are directed toward school people and the community, and we're going to have materials directed toward policymakers.

Now what is this campaign about?

I want to read to you the basic document of the campaign, which is the bill of rights and responsibilities that the President cited several times. He told me that what we're doing in education is what he is doing with the family values issue. It's the same thing, and it's very smart.

Here it is, a bill of rights and responsibilities for learning: standards of conduct, standards for achievement.

"The traditional mission of our public schools has been to prepare our nation's young people for equal and responsible citizenship and productive adulthood.

Today, we reaffirm that mission by remembering that democratic citizenship and productive adulthood begin with standards of conduct and standards for achievement in our schools.

Other education reforms may work. High standards of conduct and achievement do work and nothing else can work without them.

Recognizing that rights carry responsibilities, we declare that:

All students and school staff have a right to schools that are safe, orderly, and drug-free.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts and schools that have clear discipline codes with fair and consistently enforced consequences for misbehavior.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts that have alternative educational placements for violent or chronically disruptive students.

All students and school staff have a right to be treated with courtesy and respect.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts, schools and classrooms that have clearly stated and rigorous academic standards.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in well-equipped schools that have the instructional materials needed to carry out a rigorous academic program.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in schools where teachers know their subject matter and how to teach it.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts, schools and classrooms where high grades stand for high achievement and promotion is earned.

All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts and schools where getting a high school diploma means having the knowledge and skills essential for college or a good job.

All students and school staff have a right to be supported by parents, the community, public officials and business in their efforts to uphold high standards of conduct and achievement.”

This is the bill of rights and responsibilities for learning: It's a beginning document.

We intend to develop the campaign in terms of policies that school boards can adopt.

We intend to use this in terms of shaping federal and state legislation.

We intend to go with this to get the support of parents and business and policymakers around each and everyone of these points.

I believe that this is a basis for restoring hope. The overwhelming majority of the American people will be with us in this campaign.

There isn't anything ideological about it. It's plain common sense. It's too bad that nobody really thought of making it real before. It's hard to explain.

But this provides for a future for public education in this country.

We're going to need your help. But so far, we have met with groups of you and everyone who heard about it has been enthusiastic. I have never seen the enthusiasm around anything that I've seen around this.

This is the beginning of the campaign. I hope that you'll work very hard to make it successful.

We suffered quite a blow last November. I do not believe that the American people voted to abandon Medicaid, Medicare, Head Start, college education, elementary and secondary education, environmental laws, and many other things. I don't believe that.

I think they were angry. There are many good programs that don't work right all the time. Some of them have gotten quite far away from their original purposes, and no one tried to bring the back on track.

No one did with many of those programs what we're trying to do here with education in the schools.

And the people had a choice. They could either just keep quiet and go along with the frustration and the anger of seeing programs that they didn't want destroyed. Or they could get fed up and angry and say we want to send a message: You can't do it the same way anymore.

They will send the same message on schools if we just sit and wait. But we don't have to sit and wait. This program is designed to bring about the changes that teachers and parents want. It's designed to bring about the changes that children need if they are to get a good education.

It's a program that can get us beyond the cynicism and beyond the hopelessness and give people a view that there is a purpose to government and to public institutions. They can work, they can be changed, and they can be turned around.

It's up to us.