

**MEMORANDUM**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

TO : Commissioner Boyer

DATE: May 4, 1979

FROM : Richard Whitford

SUBJECT: New York Academy of Public Education - Your Speech for  
May 8, 1979

Ernie:

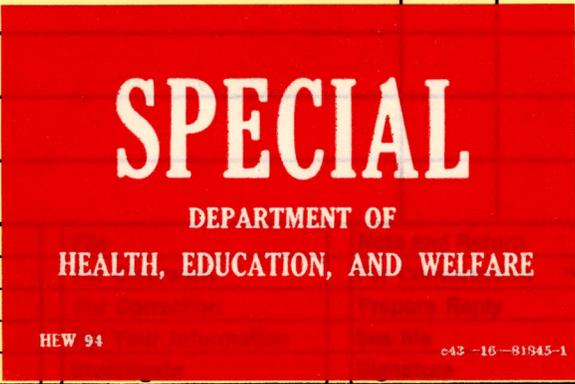
As a follow up to my memo of May 3 and my chat with Bob Hochstein, I've received the attached revised version from Bob - it's now more on target. It speaks to some of the specific issues suggested by Jack Zack and may help a bit.

cc:  
Ed Dorn  
Sandra Gray

ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

Date MAY 4 1979

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number, building, Agency/Post)		Initials	Date
1.	DR. WHITFORD		
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REMARKS

We have revised the attached talking points in accordance with recommendations you made to Bob Hochstein at Peggy's party on Tuesday. Bob has reviewed this revision and believes it meets your recommendations.

Through a clerical error the talking points you received originally were incomplete: the last three of seven pages were missing. We apologize for this error. However, the complete ms. would still have benefited from your recommendations. We thank you for them and hope you find this revision satisfactory.

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DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disposals, clearances, and similar actions

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post) <i>Henry Bretzfield</i> Henry Bretzfield OPA Editorial Services Division	Room No.—Bldg. 2089 - FOR 6
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URGENT

Talking Points

Dr. Boyer's Remarks  
as 1979 Medalist  
of the New York Academy of Public Education

May 8, 1979

I am honored to be your 1979 medalist. I assure you I will cherish the award, in no small measure because so many Academy members are friends and colleagues. We have worked together for a long time to improve the quality of education in New York -- city and state.

Academy members by definition are among the thinkers and doers in the schools and colleges of the New York metropolitan area. As such, you are representative of concerned educators all across the country who are now coming together to search for solutions to crucial problems as we approach the 1980's. It's to you as seekers of solutions to national problems in education that I'd like to address my remarks this evening.

## II

"America is a land of wonders," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, "in which everything is in constant motion and every change seems an improvement."

That was certainly education's credo in the 1960's. It was an era not of rising expectations but of unbridled expectations:

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-- Buttressed by the Coleman Report, courts were beginning to desegregate schools in the South, promising equal educational opportunity at last for black students.

-- Postwar baby boom students, augmented by Vietnam-era veterans, greatly increased enrollments, requiring new construction and programs, supported in part by new federal aid.

-- College research programs mushroomed, again with federal aid. (There was something to the cartoon: "As long as you're up, get me a federal grant.")

-- Education, like the stock market before the crash of '29, was on an expansion kick with no end in sight.

-- We looked to education to solve our social problems, the most unrealistic premise of the decade. At the same time, students used our college campuses as a forum to protest, sometimes violently, our international policies which culminated in the Vietnam war.

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## III

Education in the 1970's has required, in John Foster Dulles' memorable words, "an agonizing reappraisal."

-- We have learned that public funds for education are not unlimited.

-- Public confidence in education is not automatic. Indeed, public faith has been shaken fundamentally by the decline in student achievement scores, increases in student violence and vandalism, increased militancy of teacher organizations -- all as school costs seem to mount inexorably.

-- Desegregation in and of itself has not significantly improved the achievement of minority students. Other factors -- family and teacher commitment -- are clearly essential.

-- Higher education is beginning to panic as enrollments decline, direct aid from government and foundations is reduced, and costs to maintain faculty and facilities continue to rise.

-- In short, there have been no easy answers as we believed there would be a decade ago.

## IV

The academic community in the 1980's must concentrate, in my judgment, on these crucial issues:

1. Basic Skills. Our schools owe all pupils the most basic of human rights -- the right to know how to read, write, and speak the English language with a fluency that enables them to learn more complex subjects later on and, indeed, to manage throughout life in an increasingly complex society.

All we know, all we fear, all we hope are created and conveyed through symbols. And if a child does not master language, he or she is tragically cut off from the benefits of life.

In this regard, too many schools have failed to meet their responsibility.

-- Businessmen tell us job applicants come to them with little knowledge of English grammar or usage. Many young people don't even know how to fill out a job application.

-- Corporations are having to send up-and-coming executives - men and women in their thirties -- to reading and writing workshops.

-- Even some newspaper and television commentators have become casual in observing the fundamentals of grammar and language usage. True, language is not, nor should it be, a static instrument. To be vital and serve our changing needs it must be flexible. But that's no excuse for a singular verb to trail after a compound subject.

2. Competency Testing. An attempt to assess student progress in our schools is healthy. However, I believe testing should be done in the early grades so that remedial help can be provided while basic skills are being learned. Later remediation may be too late to do much good.

-- Tests should not be too complicated or standardized. That could lead to a curriculum so tight it boxes students in and prevents them from developing their own specialities.

3. Education and Work. Schools need to acquaint students with career options from junior high school on. Better guidance and counseling will help teenagers realize that as adults they are going to spend 30 or 40 years earning a living. Whether that time is spent in a meaningful career or in moving from job to job without skills or purpose is largely up to the schools.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics says there are more than 20,000 professional, technical, clerical, and other kinds of jobs in the American economy. How many of these are we telling students about, much less preparing them for?

Colleges, particularly liberal arts institutions, face the same responsibility. For many graduates, the liberal arts diploma has become a ticket to unemployment.

For example, the University of Pittsburgh surveyed some 1,000 graduates of the class of '77. It found that 93 percent of health, engineering, and business graduates said the position they took after graduation was in keeping with their career goals. This was true of only 50 percent of liberal arts majors.

One young Pittsburgh graduate who majored in psychology may typify the experience of many liberal arts graduates. He sent resumes to a dozen health clinics without success. Today he is a department manager in a discount store.

"Nobody gave me any advice," he says, "and I wish they had. They let me do what I wanted to do. I wish they hadn't."

4. Teacher Responsibility. A major reason Johnny can't read with comprehension, or write a grammatically correct paragraph, or speak in complete sentences is that many young teachers don't do these

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things well themselves -- and have even more trouble teaching them. That's not the fault of teachers, but of the institutions that train them.

A logical place to start solving Johnny's problems is in our schools of education. They need to get back to basics. Our use of language is what separates us from all other forms of life. I'd like to see English composition given equal emphasis with teaching methodology courses.

A return to a foreign language requirement would help, too. There was logic in the stress on Latin all those years ago. It was the basis for a fundamental knowledge of how English is constructed. Romance languages can serve the same purpose today, not to mention their value in helping student teachers gain a better understanding of the interdependent world we live in.

I also believe in in-service training for teachers, especially in meeting the needs of disadvantaged and handicapped students.

Assessing a teacher's performance is also an appropriate goal. There is a degree of correlation between good teaching and the outcome of students' written exams. But there is not a neat, absolute overlap.

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A well prepared teacher can bring to life in the classroom quasars and Capulets, great gray whales and Spanish galleons, Thomas Jefferson writing on democracy, and Thomas Aquinas lecturing on scholasticism. Quality is still what matters. There is no way we can bottle it or price or measure it. But we know it when we see it.

## V

We are entering a period of trade-offs in American life. The near tragedy at Three Mile Island has raised grave questions about just how safe nuclear energy really is -- questions that perhaps should have been raised sooner. Americans got a lesson in the hazards that terrible weekend as the hydrogen bubble threatened to explode. If anything, we learned how little we knew about nuclear energy and its role in our society. This fact suggests that nuclear technology should perhaps get more attention in high school science courses.

I think we must agree, however, that nuclear energy is here to stay, simply because we need it. The trade-off is the degree of risk we are willing to assume in order to have nuclear-generated electricity.

There will have to be similar, if less lethal, trade-offs in education.

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Education should view its fiscal constraints as an opportunity to provide the best possible product at minimum risk to its customers -- students -- and at reasonable cost to its shareholders -- American taxpayers.

-- Can we find ways to equalize per pupil expenditure among districts even as we work to make one dollar do the work of two -- or five -- or ten?

-- Can we respond to the needs of many more handicapped children entering regular classrooms?

-- Can we meet the legitimate needs of teachers for pay raises, smaller classes, and fringe benefits while asking them to renew their commitment to teaching excellence?

-- At the higher education level, can we develop programs that attract more adult students as the pool of college-age young people declines?

-- Can we meet head on the whole issue of faculty tenure, so that gifted young instructors can get the job stability they urgently need?

The answer to these questions is clearly "yes." We just don't have any other option.

I look forward to tackling some of the issues confronting higher education when I join the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching early next year.

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I've been on the firing line as an administrator for 25 years. I'll welcome the opportunity to sit back, gather some data, and speculate on what it means.

I will try to make Carnegie projects responsive to the issues you see our colleges and universities facing. And I will do my best to make our studies recommend courses of action that are realistic and cost-effective and, most of all, beneficial to students and supportive of the integrity of the nation's higher education system.

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