WHAT CONSTITUTES A HIGH SCHOOL?

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COLLEGE?

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87th Annual Meeting
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

Chicago, Illinois

March 29, 1982

I.

When this distinguished association began over 80 years ago, there were 82 institutions in attendance here--in the windy city of Chicago. Thirty of the delegates came from collges and fifty-two of the delegates came from secondary schools. Dr. James B. Angell in his keynote address set the agenda for the new association when he said:

> "In recent years a most auspicious change in the relations of the colleges and secondary schools has taken place. In my boyhood there were--in New England--very few high schools which prepared boys for college. The relationships between colleges and schools were far from intimate. We boys--in school--and the public generally knew little of what the college was or what it 'really' attempted to do. People, for the most part, thought of college professors as harmless persons living in monastic seclusion and dissemination 'useless knowledge' to artistocratic and rather eccentric young men."

Dr. Angell concluded by observing that in recent years the public high schools have dramatically expanded. "In the future," he said, "the public schools will be the preparatory schools from which our colleges and institutions must draw the greatest majority of their students." The tone of that first meeting was absolutely clear.

There were dramatic changes in the wind and the nation's colleges and schools were expected to work together. Following Dr. Angell's keynote address, the conferees discussed the topic--what constitutes a high school and what constitutes a college. That was the burning question 80 years ago.

Once again, we have come together in Chicago, and once again the nation's colleges and schools are confronting changes--changes that are far more dramatic than the ones cited by James B. Angell in his keynote address over 80 years ago. And once again, it seems appropriate to ask: what constitutes a high school and what constitutes a college? And to look at changes of great consequence that affect both colleges and schools in the decade of the 1980's.

First, the demography of America has changed and this will have dramatic impact on the nation's colleges and schools.

When this association began at the conclusion of the 19th century, 3.5 percent of 17-year olds were in high school, and 1.8 percent of 18-24 year olds were enrolled in college. The figures today are: 75.6 percent of the 17-year olds are in high schools,

and 40.5 percent of 18-24 year olds are enrolled in higher education. These statistics would have staggered the imagination of James B. Angell and the 83 North Central Association delegates in 1896.

But, young America is changing in other ways as well. At the turn of the century, millions of new immigrants were beginning to pour in to Ellis island. But, we have had more immigrants in the 1970's than at any other decade in our history. But no longer do they come from Eastern and Southern Europe, but rather from South America and Southeast Asia.

Today, white America is growing older--minorities are the younger segment of the population. In 1979, for households with school-age population children (18 and under) the percentages were: White, 28 percent; Black, 33 percent, and Hispanic, 48 percent. By 1982, for households with school-age children (18 and under) the percentages were: White, 38 percent; Black, 50 percent, and Hispanic 66 percent.

Demography is of special concern because Black and Hispanic young people are precisely those with whom most of our nation's colleges and schools have been least successful. In 1979, 80 percent of white nineteen-year olds in the U.S. were high school graduates. However, that same year, only 64 percent of Black and 60 percent of Hispanic nineteen-year olds held high school diplomas.

If minority students continue to leave school at the current rate, 150,000 additional young people--the equivalent of eleven entering freshman classes at giant Ohio State University--will lose their opportunity for further education by 1990. An increasing proportion of our youth will be condemned to social and economic failure. To avoid such tragic human waste, the rising generation of Americans must be adequately prepared for the world they will inherit. Mr. James Angell wrote on one occasion that, "in every child who is born the potentiality of the human race is born again."

Educating a new generation of Americans to their full potential is still society's most compelling task, and I am convinced that to do this job more competently, we must know what constitutes a high school and what constitutes a college--we cannot simply pass along our failures.

II.

Since 1900, America has changed in other ways as well. Eighty years ago the family structure in America was predictable. A popular television show some years ago was titled Leave It To Beaver. There was the typical father, Ward, who went to work each day; June, who was a full-time homemaker, plus the boys, Wally and Beaver, who was the hero of the series.

Today, only 7 percent of American families fit the Beaver model. Today, 50 percent of the couples married since 1970 are now divorced; 20 percent of school-age children live in one-parent homes; nearly 50 percent of children now in first grade will live in one-parent homes before they graduate; and today one out of six families are headed by a woman. Today, families are less involved in school, with 20 percent of American households moving every year.

And, it's curious that parents themselves are amazingly frank in their appraisal of the job they do. When Gallup asked to give a grade to "parents in their community," one out of four parents with children in school responded by saying "D" or "Fail." In fact, the poll showed that the public gives parents lower ratings than they do to the school themselves.

Another important point. Student values appear to have changed dramatically. One-third of today's young people have sexual intercourse by their 15th birthday; 40 percent of high

school students say they have had five or more drinks in a row during the past two weeks; every hour--57 teenagers try to kill themselves; and 40 percent of 14-year old girls will be pregnant at least once during the next five years.

It seems quite clear that students are more sophisticated and biologically more mature than were their grandparents years ago. But, yet we kept them in a rigid lockstep, and they develop the disease called "senioritis." More flexibility is required and so we ask the question: What constitutes a high school, and what constitutes a college?

III.

Since the beginning of the North Central Association, there also has been dramatic changes in the world of work. In 1900, 42 percent of Americans were farmers. Today, agriculture is only 2.8 percent of the nation's work force. Only 30 percent of the work force is in the blue collar or goods producing sector.

The shift is from non-factory to business--today, McDonalds Corporation employs more people than U.S. Steel. Many teenagers are new employees. Sixty-six percent of today's high school students have jobs. They work on the average of 20 hours a week, and 3 out of 10 make approximately $200 per month.

Schools and colleges also must confront the changing length of education. In 1900 life expectancy was 47 years. In those days, life was divided up into slices like a great big salami. There were 4 to 5 years of happy play; 6 to 12 years of formal educaton; 20 to 40 years of full-time work, and then the little nubbin at the end called "dignified decline."

Today all of this has changed. In 1900 life exectancy was 47 years. In 1981 it was 74 years and more for women. By the year 2000, 30 percent of Americans will be over 60. Today, people change jobs 6.6 times in a life time. One requires formal re-education. Today education is life long. Part-time enrollment in college has dramatically increased, and 40 percent, or 4.9 million, of all postsecondary students are part-time, and the "step-out" is the rule rather than the exception.

Also, corporate education has grown enormously. It has become a booming business. Workers from coast to coast can now thumb through company catalogues, pick and choose their course, and go to classes ranging from basic skills to post-graduate education.

Company-run education and training programs--costing over $30 billion annually--are, in fact, the nation's fastest growing education sector. More than 2,000 of these courses at 138 different corporations merit college credit, according to the American Council on Education.

Bell Telephone, one of the nation's giant new school masters, pours over $1 billion each year into employee education. IBM runs the equivalent of an in-house university with thousands of students. Arthur D. Little, the management consultant firm, operates its own graduate level institute and Wang Industries, a manufacturer of computers, offers a degree in Software Engineering.

Employees can even study on a corporate campus. The McDonald Corporation has Hamburger University in Elk Grove, Illinois, where students take courses ranging from human relations to fiscal management. Holiday Inn University is a sprawling institution in Olive Branch, Mississippi, with courses covering such topics as principles of professonal salesmanship and performance evaluation. And the Xerox campus in Leesburg, Virginia, combines a lovely setting, a rich curriculum and the latest technology for effective teaching.

Clearly the line between the corporate classroom and the college campus is becoming blurred. Both work and education has changed dramatically since 1896, when NCA came into being. Continued education is a necessity for all. With the changing relationship between work and education, we must ask again: What constitutes a high school? What constitutes a college?

IV.

The fourth shift of great significance to college and schools has to do with the new techers in our culture.

Today this monopoly has crumbled. Peers are the most influential teachers of the young, replacing parents. And television is the second greatest consumer of student's time second only to the time they sleep. Specifically, young people spend about 20,000 hours in front of television and only about 11,000 hours in the classroom. And by the time they graduate from high school, students will have watched 400,000 commercials on TV.

These electronic teachers are here to stay and contrary to the critics, I believe the potential for better education is enormous. A student who has gone with Jacques Cousteau to the bottom of the sea, or has traveled with an astronaut to outer space, or visited Jerusalem with Anwar Sadat, or watched Leonard Bernstein conduct the Vienna Philharmonic, or listened to the "creationism debate" on MacNeil/Lehrer--such a student has seen and heard far more than classrooms can provide.

There, is course, another side. Not all television is as thoughtful as Bill Moyers, as instructive as Jacob Brnowski, as stunning as the Royal Shakespeare Company, or as innocent as "Our Miss Brooks." More likely, the four or five hours of television that high school students watch every night is deadening, not

enriching. But one point is very clear. Since 1900 technology has become the nation's greatest teacher alternative to the classroom.

V.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the changing purposes of education.

When this association first began, the nation's schools and colleges were fairly confident about the aims of education. In 1904 Professor Albion W. Small of the University of Chicago said:

> "Responsibility for moral/influence is a part of the teaching functions all along the line from K to Professor School."

In 1909 A. T. Perry, President, Barietta College, noted:

> "If the chief aim of life is to live worthily, then the chief aim of education is to train man to live worthily."

In 1919 Dean Lotus D. Coffman, University of Minnesota, said:

> "The strength and safety of a democracy depends upon the intelligence of all people and the higher we raise the intelligence, the greater the strength and safety of democracy."

The goals of education were: morality, democracy, and a worthy life.

At the turn of the century, there was a confidence rooted in coherence. But soon confidence in the unity of the established order began to fade. In The End of American Innocence, historians demonstrate the evaporation of Wilsonian idealism and the cultural upheaveals of the 1920's hastened social fragementation. Past certainties were shaken by scientific inquiry, and education's confidence in its moral mission weakened.

Commenting on this loss of coherence, Robert Hutchins described the modern university as a series of separate departments held together by a central heating system; and Clark Kerr characterized the multi-university as an assemblage of faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking.

Thirty-five years ago, the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, identified the goal of education as culture. Culture, Jaspers said, is "a given historical ideal (and) ...a coherent system of associations, gestures, values, ways of putting things." The educated person, Jaspers concluded, was one for whom culture--so defined--had become second nature. Today, a generation after Jaspers wrote, we find ourselves, as a nation, deeply hesitant about the aims of education. In Jaspers' terms, what, precisely, would characterize a person of culture in our fragmented post-

modern society? The absence ofanswers is haunting.

Still, deep down inside, the belief persists that education at its best can hold the intellectual center of society together. John Gardner said on one occasion that "the deepest threat to the integrity of any community is an incapacity on the part of the citizens to lend themselves to any worthy common purpose."

Gardner goes on to reflect on "barrenness of a life that encompasses nothing beyond the self." Vachel Lindsay, "It is the world's one crime--its babes grow dull: not that they sow, but seldom reap; not that they serve, but no God to serve; not that they die, but die like sheep." In response to such barrenness, America's colleges and schools still are expected to perform for society an integrative function, seeking appropriate responses to life's most enduring questions.

CONCLUSION

Over 80 years ago when the nation was in transition, men of vision formed this association to relate the nation's colleges and schools to the changing social context.

Today the ground rules are changing once again. We confront a new order of students. We confront a new structure. We confront a life-long education process. We confront non-traditional teachers in our culture. We confront a world in which the purposes of education have become increasingly confused.

I'm convinced that we must above all maintain the intellectual rigor and the moral integrity of the nation's colleges and schools.

But, we also must respond creatively to these dramatic changes in our midst. And, to achieve this goal, I also am convinced that the North Central Association will continue to have an historic role to play in combining integrity and great vision.

Thank you.