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# Teachers and School Reform

Missouri Teachers  
Association

November 2, 1989

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SDIEGO3-17, 4/13/89, SPC,ELB/crl, SP

INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for your generous introduction.

I'm delighted to ~~meet again with administrators from the~~ ~~California Public Schools. OF THE~~ ~~MISSOURI EDUCATION ASSN~~

Those of you assembled in the room are the "real experts" on school reform.

~~WHAT EVER IS WRONG WITH AMERICAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS~~

~~CANNOT BE FIXED - WITHOUT THE HELP OF THOSE ALREADY~~

- You fight for excellence every single day.

IN THE CLASS ROOM

- You keep the faith when others are skeptical and even hostile.

And I must tell you that I have unrestrained admiration for

- your wisdom,

- and for your dedication to serve the ~~nations~~ <sup>the children of this nation</sup> ~~children~~, often under painfully adverse conditions.

First the "good news."

- Frankly, I feel "pretty good" about the curricular changes that we've made.



## INTRODUCTION

~~This afternoon~~ <sup>THIS MORNING</sup> I'd like to talk about education in the year 2000.

And my first impulse was to paint an idyllic picture of children

- sitting at their computer consoles,
- retrieving well-programmed information,
- interacting with a mentor, in an intellectual climate Mortimer Adler likes to call "The Social Method."

I was tempted to paint this as an idyllic picture, but I won't.

The truth is that the <sup>new millen</sup> ~~year 2000~~ is just 11 years away. And when I turn the telescope of time back to 1978, I realize that schooling in America remains pretty much the same.

So there will be no "Buck Rogers" predictions in my remarks today.

Still, as we move toward the year 2000 and beyond, there is an unfinished agenda for ~~both the public and independent schools.~~ <sup>NATION SCHOOLS</sup> →

~~and this morning I'd like to~~  
 focus on 4 priorities  
 if we are to achieve

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And this <sup>morning</sup> ~~afternoon~~ I'd like to focus on 4 priorities ~~at~~  
~~educators must confront~~ if we're to ~~achieve~~ excellence in  
education. <sub>SL50</sub>

That we ~~achieve~~  
excellence



I DISAPPOINTED

4

FIRST, I'M CONVINCED THAT  
 (If America is a succes  
~~EVERY~~ CHANCE - Regardless of the  
 CIRCUMSTANCE of its BIRTH  
 must have a quality relation  
 and become socially a seminal experiment

The harsh truth is that  
 even after 6 years of school reform  
one out of every 4 students in the conf  
still drop out of school

And in one city and  
 among the rural poor  
 It's one in 3 or worse!



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(AND ITS DOUBLY DISTURBING THAT  
PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SEEM TO ACCEPT  
THIS FAILURE AS A WAY OF LIFE

(5)

- If snow was piling up on city streets,
- or if garbage was rotting on the curbs,
  - or if a health epidemic was striking 1/4 of all the children in the nation,--

The president and governors and mayors would declare a national emergency, and hold every key official in the room until a realistic plan of action has been drafted.

But when students lives are wasted when thousands of our children leave school--educationally and socially unempowered--public officials go about their business

content to criticize,  
but not to act with the sense of urgency and persistence that the emergency requires.

There are no easy answers. If there were, we would have found them long ago. But what is clear is that the early years of schooling are transcendentally the most important.

It's in the first years of formal education  
And it's here that the battle for  
excellence in education will be won or lost.



It's more than "mere sentiment" to suggest that

in our search for excellence, the early years are  
transcendentally the most important.

And if we do not give children a good foundation, it is  
almost impossible to fully compensate for the failure later  
on.

I'm suggesting that it's in the early years that language  
exponentially expands. And now that I'm a grandpa and  
can observe the process unencumbered by dirty diapers  
and burping late at night, I'm absolutely awed by the  
capacity of little children to discover very early both the  
majesty and the weaponry of words.

There's a special reading  
for 1 year. This is the first  
time.

schools  
built for  
young  
children  
help  
them

When I was a little boy, we used to say

sticks and stones may break my bones,  
but names will never hurt me.

What nonsense! I'd usually say this with tears running  
down my cheeks, thinking all the time

Hit me with a stick, but for goodness sake,  
stop those words that penetrate so deeply  
and hurt so long.



I'm suggesting that language is our most essential human function and that the top priority must be to help ALL children <sup>ESPECIALLY THOSE AT RISK</sup> become proficient in the written and the spoken word.

<sup>I'm convinced</sup> Specifically, we need a preschool program for every disadvantaged child. And this means full funding of Head Start.

And frankly, it's a national disgrace that 20 years after Head Start was authorized by Congress, only 20 percent of the eligible children are being served.

= 20% of the full school

<sup>I have another suggestion to propose</sup>

Further, two years ago, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., I proposed that we reorganize the first years of formal education into a single unit called The Basic School.

The Basic School—which would combine kindergarten through grade three—

would give top priority to language, =

Build in system  
strong  
well  
sphere

and would have no class with more than 15 students each.

It's silly to suggest that class size doesn't matter

Macdonald

— Especially at a time when children need more attention.

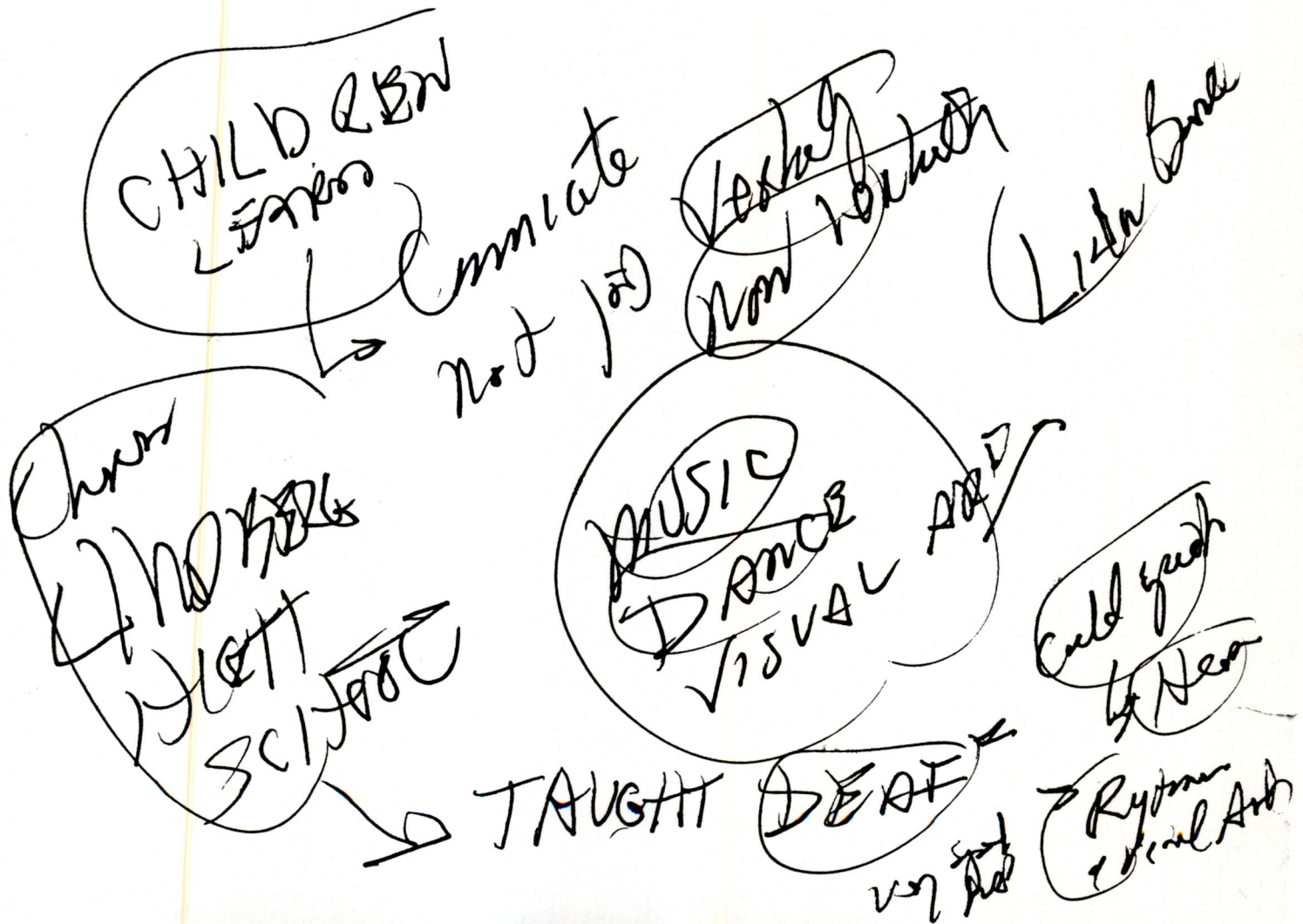


of the Basic School

The goal would be to have all children, from the very first, reading, writing, listening to stories, in an atmosphere the foreign language people like to call the saturation method.

This means that in the future, we will need our most outstanding teachers in primary schools. ~~Education~~

And I'm convinced that if this nation would give as much status to first-grade teachers as we give to full professors, that one act alone would bring excellence to education.





## II. TEACHERS

This brings me to priority number 2.

In the end excellence in education means excellence in teaching.

And to achieve quality by the year 2000 we must give more authority to ~~the local school~~ and more status to the teacher.

Last year at the Carnegie Foundation, we surveyed 22,000 teachers from coast to coast and we discovered that:

- Nearly one-third have no role in "shaping" the curriculum they are asked to teach.
- Over 50 percent do not participate in planning their own in-service education.
- Seventy percent are not asked to help shape retention policies at their school--50 percent said morale is worse than five years ago.



The hard fact is, Dan Lortie said

our real regard for teaching in this country has never matched our professional regard

Several years ago when we were writing a report on high schools at The Carnegie Foundation, I read a fascinating story study about a nineteenth-century Nebraska school, that colorfully described our lack of "real regard" for teachers.

① The writer said that 100 years ago at this little one room school house on the Nebraska prairie

the first teacher was run out of town by boys who used stones as "weapons" of assault.

② The writer ~~said~~ <sup>regretted</sup> that

- the second teacher met the same agony.

③ But the author concluded this sad tale by saying that

- when the third teacher had "soundly thrashed" one boy and had also "thrashed the father of another, the reign of terror ended. (Parents need chastizing, too.)

→ Still the writer said  
Students at this little Nebraska school  
considered the teacher  
PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER 1



~~Still, the writer said, many students at that Nebraska school considered the teacher Public Enemy #1.~~

Today, we don't stone our teachers or openly run them out of town.

But we do expect them to do what our homes and churches and communities have not been able to accomplish.

Teachers today are called upon not only to teach "the basic," but also

- to monitor the playground
- to police for drugs
- to reduce pregnancy
- to teach students how to drive
- to eliminate graffiti

And when teachers fall short anywhere along the line we condemn them for not living up to our "idealized" expectations.

And yet I'm convinced ~~most~~ school critics could not survive one week in the classrooms trying so vigorously to ~~condemn~~.



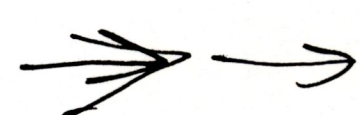
And yet ~~in spite of this~~, I'm convinced that most "school critics",

could not survive one week in the classrooms they so vigorously condemn!

During our study of the American High School we visited dozens of classrooms from coast to coast.

And it became <sup>very</sup> quite clear to me that the basic problem was not salaries or fringe benefits, although salaries must keep going up.

The basic problem I concluded was the <sup>work</sup> ~~various~~ conditions of the teachers with

- too many students
  - too much paperwork
  - too little time for preparation
  - too many mindless interruptions.
- 

And I <sup>do</sup> concluded that

And it is also seemed "quite clear" to me that

the PA system has become a symbol of all that's gone wrong in public education - it's a system that's often more concerned with procedures than with people.

I was in one class where the PA system "belched out" its mindless messages three times in fifty minutes.

And yet the teacher <sup>was</sup> expected to smile <sup>structure</sup> and ignore the fact that she was being rudely interrupted!

And that <sup>(2)</sup> students were being distracted from their learning.

① INCHININ - AVOID VIOLENCE

② WITHOUT <sup>in danger</sup> WARY =

I'm suggesting that for the reform movement to succeed

we don't need more rules and regulations  
we need more teachers and more status for our teachers.

Recognition.

At the Carnegie Foundation, we've just surveyed 2200 teachers from coast to coast.

And nearly one-third <sup>sad</sup> say they have no role in shaping the curriculum at their school.



- (2) Over 50 percent do not participate in planning their own inservice education programs.
- (3) Seventy percent are not asked to help shape the retention policies at their school.
- (4) And over 60 percent are not involved in deciding which students will be tracked into special classes--70 percent less involved.

(5) *Pro* *When we remember why it's hard to recruit good students into the system!*  
 Is it little wonder 50 percent said morale is worse than five years ago. Twenty-two percent said its \_\_\_\_\_.

Frankly, I find it ironic that while American Industry talks about involving workers in decisions, school reform in the United States is moving in just the opposite direction.

In all too many states we're trying to impose excellence from above. When, in fact, it can only be accomplished by inspired teachers who meet with children every single day.

When I was United States Commissioner of Education, I called together twenty high school students from around the country. We spent the day talking about schools and how they should improve. Near the end, I asked the students to grade the teachers they had had from A to F.

*Students if they had had an outstanding teacher*

*! when there is so little support or even "gentle" as well*



When everyone had responded we ended with an above average grade—a solid “B” at least. And all student said that they had at least one teacher who was “absolutely tops”—someone who had changed their lives forever.

Then I asked the crucial question: “How many of you ever thanked a teacher?” Not one hand went up! As one student put it, “It’s just not the thing to do.” These high school students had been with teachers <sup>every</sup> day for four years and yet not once—even after an exciting session—did a student stop by the teachers desk and say thank you very much. — *parmse me me thy-*

I’m suggesting that great teachers live forever!

Several years ago, I couldn’t sleep. Instead of counting sheep I counted all the teachers I had had.

I remembered, “rather vividly,” fifteen or more—few nightmares in the bunch.

I then tried to think about the great teachers, the truly outstanding individuals—in college or in school—who had touched me or truly changed my life.



- They teach year after year with no in-service education.

And then we wonder why our most gifted students do not go into teaching!

During high school visits I concluded the basic problem is not salaries, not merit pay.

[Working conditions and the PA system a symbol]

I'm suggesting that to achieve excellence we don't need more rules and regulations, we need more teacher recognition.

And perhaps it's here that we can borrow something from the Japanese. In Japan, parents are intensely supportive of the schools, and in that culture

the term sensei-teacher-is a title of great honor.

while here in the United States we say "He's just a teacher."



And begin to give them the time or the tools they need to do their job.

But let the record show that none of these important moves would have been accomplished without the aggressive leadership of the Kansas chapter of the NEA.

Again, I salute the vigor and the vision of this magnificent organization which for a century and a quarter has been committed to excellence for all children!

But there is still much more to be accomplished.

~~And in the end, I'd like to see teaching excellence become a national crusade.~~ I'd like to see this nation be less concerned about getting weapons system into space and more concerned about supporting teachers here on earth.

- I'd like to see an
- Specifically, I'm convinced we need a teacher innovative fund trend in every school to help teachers quickly implant a good idea.

- I'd like to see
- We need a teacher travel fund in every school so teachers can go to conferences occasionally and be intellectually renewed -- something college professors simply take for granted.

- I'd like to see some fellowships for teachers
- like the NEA group that President Eisenhower introduced a quarter century ago



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14 (8)

*It'll be to see*  
21 Speaking of teacher recognition, I suggest that  
(4) Mr. Bush--who wants to be the Education  
President--invite the "teachers of the year" from  
all 50 states to a dinner in the East Room of the  
White House.

It's a symbolic act, but we live by  
symbols.

And to celebrate teaching in the White House  
would send a powerful signal to the nation. It  
would say that teachers are the unsung heroes of  
the culture.

(5) And I'd also like to see a national crusade to  
recruit outstanding students into teaching,  
beginning with young people still in junior high.

*Phuh*  
(6) And I'd like to see full tuition scholarships for  
students who agree to teach at least 3 years in our  
most disadvantaged schools.

Twenty years ago, John Kennedy inspired the  
nation's youth to join the Peace Corps to serve  
the needy overseas. Why not inspire the brightest  
and the best to serve in inner city schools and in  
rural districts here at home?



Martin Luther King declared on one occasion that, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve." And I'm convinced that the young people of this nation are more than ready to be inspired by a larger vision.

Simply stated: If we want better schools we must attract and hold outstanding teachers.

Since all of us are where we are today because of an inspired teacher.

Here then is my conclusion

If we hope to sustain Excellence  
in Education

we don't need more laws  
Rule & Regulations

we need more teachers ~~Engaged~~  
+ ~~Recognition~~



## II. CURRICULUM

As we approach the year 2000 - we also  
~~This leads me to priority number two.~~

~~I'm convinced that in the days ahead, we~~ *MASTER TEST TIME*  
 I'm convinced that in the days ahead, we need a new  
 curriculum for the schools, one that focuses on the future,  
 not the past. *SYNOPSIS DONTW CUM FROM 8 then*

Today's students take a "smattering" of unrelated courses.  
 But what they fail to see are patterns that would give them

- a more coherent view of knowledge,
- and a more authentic, more integrated view of life.

Barbara McClintock, the Nobel Laureate in Biology wrote  
 on one occasion that all knowledge is one. You cannot,  
 Dr. McClintock said, draw a line between things.

I wonder if Dr. McClintock has looked at a school or  
 college curriculum in recent days.

Frank Press, the President of the National Academy of  
 Science, in a recent speech said that scientists are, in  
 some respects, artists, too. He suggested that discovery  
 of the magnificent Double Helix was not only intellectually  
 compelling, it was aesthetically satisfying, too!

Victor Weiskoff, when asked what gives him hope in troubled times, replied, "Mozart and Quantum Mechanics." But where in the curriculum do students discover connections such as this?

When I was United States Commissioner of Education, Joan Ganz Cooney, who was the brilliant creator of Sesame Street, came to see me one day.

- She wanted to start a new program in science for junior high school students.
- It subsequently was developed and it's called 3-2-1 Contact.

In doing background research for the program, Children's Television Workshop asked junior high school students such questions as:

- "Where does water come from?" And a disturbing percentage said, "the faucet."
- They asked, "Where does light come from?" And they said, "the switch."
- "And where does water go?" "Down the chute."



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The harsh truth is that today's students will live in a world that is economically, politically, ecologically connected. It's a world in which

1. the ozone layer is depleting;
2. our shorelines are polluted;
3. and where the tropical rain forests are being destroyed at the rate of 100,000 square kilometers every year.

And yet, for far too many students, their knowledge goes about as far as the VCR knob, the refrigerator door, and the light switch on the wall.

I'm suggesting that all students need to become culturally literate, to use E. D. Hirsch's helpful formulation. But in a complex, integrated world, we need a curriculum in which the disciplines achieve a larger, more integrated end.

Over forty years ago, Mark Van Doren wrote that, "The connectedness of things is what the educator contemplates to the limit of his capacity." Van Doren concludes by saying that, "The student who can begin early in life to think of things as connected . . . has begun the life of learning."

The goal of education is not just information, it's integration, too.

*And I'd like to give teachers time of  
- to redesign a more creative more integrated curriculum  
that helps  
students  
gain  
insight*

# III ASSESSMENT

me to say a word about Agent

This leads

~~to the~~  
~~very few~~

push to Enter  
 to JUBA

Between now & the year 2000

~~the future~~ ~~estimated~~ ~~very~~ ~~much~~ ~~more~~

~~to become~~ ~~more~~ ~~exploited~~  
 don't have to evaluate the  
 presence of on exhibits

①

②

Ad have to measure school results



Today's students are  
forced taking tests

From kindergarten to grade 12  
we ask them to recall isolated facts

Did not check marks  
on the paper

But in the process

- Creativity is suppressed
- Good thing is restricted

At the end - we  
measure just which  
smaller best.





- And what about the students who do not take the SAT?

[We need a Manhattan Project on assessment for schools and colleges.]

Today's students are forever taking tests. From kindergarten to grade 12, we ask them to recall isolated facts, and put checkmarks on the paper.

But, in the process,

creativity is suppressed, and good teaching is restricted.

And, in the end, we measure that which matters least.

Howard Gardner, at Harvard, in his provocative book, Frames of Mind, reminds us that children have not only verbal intelligence, they also have

- logical intelligence,
- mathematical intelligence,
- spatial intelligence,
- physical intelligence,



- personal intelligence,
- and, I suspect, intuitive and social intelligence as well.

I'm suggesting that if our goal is to educate all children, we must broaden our definition of potential.

James Agee wrote on one occasion that,

- with every child who is born under no matter what circumstance, the potentiality of the human race is born again.

This should be our vision <sup>my dream</sup> ~~in the classroom~~ as we approach the year 2000.

## IV. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

I have <sup>the</sup> final priority to propose, one which some may consider simply a diversion.

But the longer it goes the more I'm beginning to suspect that the focus should be

- not just on the school,
- but on the family,
- and on the children in this country.

In our survey of 22,000 teachers, I was struck that ~~the teachers~~ talked ~~and much~~ about the kids ~~and about families~~ as they did about the schools.

- ① <sup>said that</sup> 90% ~~report that~~ lack of parental support is a problem at their school.
- ② 89% say that <sup>be</sup> abused and neglected children is a problem.
- ③ And 70% report "poor health" among their students.



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In our survey - we had an open ended question

Nearly 11,000 teachers actually wrote comments about their work. And described in powerful and poignant fashion their deep concern about the desperation of their children.

Teacher's Voice

One teacher put it this way:

now ten  
my state  
section

"I'm sick and tired of seeing my bright-eyed first-grade kids fade into the 'shadows of apathy' and become deeply troubled by age 10."

These kids desperately need parents who deeply care and appreciate their own children. Teachers simply cannot do it all.

Another teacher said that the difficult part of teaching is not the academics. The difficult part is dealing with the great numbers of kids who come from physically, socially, and financially stressed homes.

"Nearly all of my kindergartners," she said, "come from single-parent families. And we are raising a generation of emotionally stunted youth who will, in turn, raise a similar generation."

"What is the future of this country," this teacher asks, "when we have so many needy children?"

Last year we decided to go directly to the children. We surveyed over 5000 fifth and eighth graders, and we found that:



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LAST year WE DECIDED TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE CHILDREN.

WE SURVEYED OVER 5000 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Graders And we find that

- 40% said they go home to an empty house;
- 60% say they wish they could spend more time with their mother and their fathers;
- 2/3 say they often wish they had more things to do;
- and 30% say their family never sits down together to eat a meal

~~What we found--in a word--was alienation.~~

~~INSIGHT~~  
We found that all too often children are left to "drift aimlessly" ~~after school~~ <sup>after school</sup> ~~too often they~~ feel <sup>unneeded</sup> and ~~unconnected~~ to the larger world.

Dr. Harold Howe put it perfectly when he said that today's youth are

an island in society,  
cutoff,  
but yearning to belong.

we can't have an  
island of Excellence  
in a sea of indifference

Parents not home

More responsibility for  
check

That's why I'm beginning to believe that we should start talking less about our schools and more about the condition of our

~~children~~ ~~THE CRISIS OF FAMILIES~~

NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Explores  
the  
problems  
of  
TIME



Miyat media

30

16

Healthy Culture  
3 5 months  
vitaly interesting

In Down

I'm especially concerned about the increased intergenerational isolation in our culture. We are separating the young and old, placing them in one sort of institution or another.

- babies are in nurseries,
- toddlers in day care,
- children are in school,
- parents in the workplace,
- and older people are in retirement villages, all alone.

gave me only  
with two people

Mass killing  
↳ Conflicts  
Cultural

What's especially disturbing is that this sense of alienation is often found within the school itself.

- There is in many <sup>large</sup> public schools a feeling of anonymity among the students.
- Teen-agers in ~~these schools~~ move <sup>they</sup> facelessly from class to class--and have no serious interaction with adults. <sup>and</sup> They lose their identity at the very time a sense of belonging is needed most.

And may drop out  
Because no one noticed that  
they had in fact dropped out

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~~24~~

**And I'm convinced the most urgent ask our generation now confronts is the rebuilding of the nation's schools and restoring the dignity of children.**

*A Guy Hope & Children*



## CONCLUSION

Here then is my conclusion.

- As we move toward the year 2000, we must give top priority to ~~early~~ <sup>early</sup> education with an emphasis on language.
- We must give empowerment to the teacher.
- ~~We must give a sense of purpose to the students.~~
- ~~And, in the end,~~ we must evaluate effectively <sup>what</sup> the results.

BUT ABOVE ALL WE MUST GIVE  
A SENSE OF PURPOSEFULNESS TO STUDENTS

John Gardner said on one occasion that

- A nation is never finished. You can't build it and leave it standing as the Pharaohs did the pyramids. It has to be recreated for each new generation.

and left them  
with that state  
\* BE  
TAVLY  
HMM  
me  
out some