



Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens

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L STEUART BROWN
President

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Executive Director

April 4, 1975

The Honorable Frank S. Beal
The Secretary of Public Welfare
The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Room 333 Welfare Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17020

Dear Secretary Beal:

I have been asked to give P.A.R.C.'s reply to a document entitled "Modular Unit Plan" and a subsequent letter dated March 27th, both written by Harry Herman, Superintendent of Ebensburg State School and Hospital, in which he requests that modular classrooms be constructed on grounds.

We appreciate the earnestness of Mr. Herman's approach to some very serious problems, but there are some questions that must be asked and some options that need to be considered as alternatives to Mr. Herman's recommendations.

It appears that Mr. Herman is addressing himself to two problems. The first is the need for transitional experiences to prepare students for community classroom experiences, and the second problem is the need for program space for those individuals who are over 21 years of age.

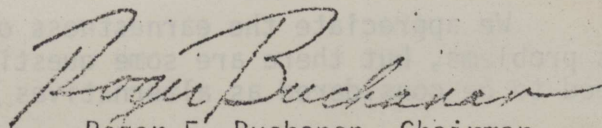
In his defense of transitional experiences, Mr. Herman makes some comments suggesting that the real intent is permanence not transition. He states that as the school-aged population declines "at this point Intermediate classes all be held within the modular unit facility". The word "all" in this sentence is distressing because apparently many students are going off grounds and hence such an arrangement would be a step backwards. Mr. Herman discusses these classrooms in terms of better working conditions and in terms of the normal curriculums of instruction, hence they sound like alternatives to community facilities rather than transitional. Furthermore, Mr. Herman seems to be saying that the real slow-down in moving students into the community is not the inadequacy of his current transitional classroom but the lack of space within the community, hence we conclude that the problem of transitional experiences can be solved with the present facility provided that the community classroom facilities exist. Transition for the individual student should not be made a long-term problem when it can be solved with short-term structured learning.

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We note that the Governor's budget for 1975-1976 for Special Education doubles the amount of funds for state schools and hospitals. The increase is greater than \$4,600,000, thus the I.U.'s have the resources for solving their classroom problems without having to consider the option on the bottom of the list which is favored by no one, namely, building classrooms on the grounds of state schools. We would hope that the superintendents would stop trying to solve the I.U.'s problems with an eye out for possible space some day in the future which might be used for those individuals over 21 years of age.

We agree with Mr. Herman that programs for those over 21 years of age is a serious problem. Our membership is becoming increasingly concerned with this matter. Let us deal with this issue directly and consider the totality of the problem. Perhaps the place to begin this discussion has begun with the request of the State Task Force on Right to Education to the Departments of Public Welfare and Education that a plan be presented which would constitute compliance or at least proposed compliance with that section of the Consent Agreement which speaks to the issue of those over 21 years of age who have been denied an appropriate program of education. We look forward to the reply to the Task Force and suggest at this time that we meet with the superintendents to plan and to implement proposed solutions for those over 21.

Sincerely,



Roger E. Buchanan, Chairman
Right to Education Committee

REB:ras

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