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AMERICA'S BEST SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON

LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SECOND CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

HONORING AMERICA'S BEST SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN
1991, AND TO EXAMINE THEIR VIEWS ON THE CHALLENGES FACING
THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ciated with this type of education—the elderly over 65, Blacks, Hispanics, the disabled, and the single-parent wage earner—are increasing. Schools must improve access and delivery options, diversify programs, and implement new approaches to learning. Thus the scenario for education in the year 2000 may be a social studies teacher and her class viewing testimony being presented before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee to teleconferencing with a United States Senator concerning a proposed foreign trade agreement and then predicting in groups the implications of this testimony or of the proposed trade agreement.

The one constant in the scenario for the American educational system is change, for America is no longer a melting pot but a "salad bowl" of cultures. Yet with the resources and the enthusiasm to accept and use our multi-culturalism and our exploding technology, the American school of the year 2000 will be a model for success.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT G. NURANEN, 1991 CITY OF LOS ANGELES TEACHER
OF THE YEAR

EDUCATION MUST BECOME A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE

In a nation that has been entirely transformed territorially, demographically, and technologically since its founding, and where wealth is disproportionately concentrated among the states, we are attempting in a "Rube Goldberg" manner to set equitable educational policies and priorities from the mind of a dinosaur with fifty heads! If we are to meet the mind boggling challenges of the next century the identification of equitable priorities for America's schools will be nearly an impossible task unless the dinosaur's fifty heads are organized to think and act as one.

Substance and equality in American education can only be realistically provided for all students when national standards for uniform and quality education are established throughout the states and then monitored at the Federal level from a truly empowered Department of Education. In order to win ratification for their highly controversial United States Constitution in 1787 our Founding Fathers were forced to reserve some powers to the states and education, regrettably, was one of them.

In 1787 an American child was expected to grow up, grow old, and die within a narrow radius of their birthplace. Today, Americans are born into a society where mobility of residence is the norm, and when adults move from one state to another they expect and deserve to carry viable educational skills and citizenship training with them to their new surroundings. America's schools must provide an educational foundation that will make its highly mobile citizens competitors in the workplace and good citizens in whatever community they choose to call home.

Comprehensive national educational policy cannot be properly structured and implemented until a constitutional amendment reverses the log rolling of 1787 and education is finally enshrined as a fundamental right of the people. The time to act is now, and should we fail in this endeavor nothing less is at stake than the future of our country as "... ONE NATION, UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL."

A "NEW GUARD" FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION

"Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But, like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and follow them until you reach your destiny."

—Carl Schurz

Advocates of the ideals of progressive education as were patterned earlier in this century still possess great influence when state offices of education ponder educational policies. Although they have since the 1950's assumed many aliases the "Old Guard" educators tend to view education from a range of narrow perspectives. Die-hard Old Guards view acceptance of blind nationalism as the perfect expression of patriotism, and believe our nation's youth ought to be prepared to live in a society where economic polarization is inevitable and surviving on a minimum wage, not thriving on a liberated spirit, is the inescapable fate of humankind.

Old Guard school administrators view their school as a feudal manor and go about designing curriculum as though they are empowered with "Divine Right" from what usually is a fiscally conservative Board of Education. Old Guard administrators tend also to view teachers with suspicion and deliberately attempt to design curriculum that frustrates creativity and caters to the economic special interest groups within their local community. Liberal education is held in contempt by the Old Guard and any change in the "status quo" of the curriculum that would include

a commitment to teach students from a global perspective would surely conjure up in their minds visions of the Biblical Antichrist.

"New Guard" educators, on the other hand, value much of what was the best of early progressive experimentation but expand the view of the Old Guard by resorting to pragmatic approaches when setting educational policies for future generations. The New Guard realizes the Information Age will lead to unprecedented cooperation between nations as world economies merge and they accept and welcome the infusion of global education across the curriculum as important to the survival of citizens in the next century.

The New Guard does not shrink from the challenges of the next century and, in fact, accepts personal responsibility for what will become the world our children must cherish. The wise use of natural resources, preservation of the world's environmental integrity, concern for the population explosion, and equity in world wealth and health opportunities, are concerns that are uppermost on the minds of the New Guard. The New Guard seeks the fulfillment of the American dream for all people of goodwill wherever they may live.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND A RENAISSANCE FOR GLOBALISM

Until recently, New Guard educators placed themselves at considerable professional risk when they dared talk of the need for school curriculums that incorporate global education. Since Washington's "Farewell Address" a large number of Americans have always been suspicious of any form of "entangling alliance" and worrying about the rest of the world is thought of by these isolationists as a form of un-Americanism.

Political and social changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have knocked Marx and Lenin from their pedestals and the successful role of the United Nations in curbing the ambitions of Saddam Hussein have placed the United States once again in the center stage of world leadership, and a Republican president calls for a New World Order. These colossal historic changes have inflicted a mighty blow upon the Old Guard isolationist fortress, and the New Guard now have a perfect opportunity to seize the initiative.

All of the hopes of the enlightened humanity that followed the defeat of world fascism in 1945 have been given another chance to blossom. The United Nations has won new respect, the Information Age provides the world with instantaneous communication and would be dictators can no longer rely on the ignorance of their people to retain power, and the emerging borderless world economy makes the infusion of global studies into the curriculum a necessity.

"Rejoice! We conquer!" was the shout to the people of Athens from the lips of the first marathon runner. Let the New Guard start the building of the New World Order, and let us welcome a Golden Age for all who walk upon the Earth.

THREE GOALS FOR 2000 AND BEYOND:

DEMOCRACY MUST BE TAUGHT AND PRACTICED IN SCHOOLS

With the passing of each election the media and cold statistics warn us of the ugly spectre of increased voter apathy. It is becoming increasingly clear that a fraction of the citizens in our republic are electing government at all levels. Do we accept this tragic evolution, or do we view it with enough alarm to realize this rule by a minority, no matter how elaborately disguised in the pageantry of election fanfare is, absolutely, a potentially very dangerous form of tyranny. If laws can be passed to prevent people from smoking and to force people to wear seatbelts so that their lives might be saved, then why can't a law be passed that requires citizens to vote so that the life of our democracy can be saved? In ancient Athens even terminally ill citizens were carried to the Assembly to cast their votes. Is our democracy any less precious?

Urban America need not decay and fall into ruin. Soaring crime rates across the spectrum provides evidence that increasing numbers of our citizens have little or no instruction as to what constitutes civic responsibility. Those who do not understand power as it flows in a democracy will feel powerless and will, in one form or another, seek to destroy that which they don't believe they can control. A democratic mind cannot be assumed to be innate. Children must be taught democracy at all levels of instruction so the day after they graduate from high school will be the same day they are prepared to enter the life of their community prepared to do their part as good citizens. Either we commit ourselves to instilling democratic values now, or we prepare ourselves to deal in the next century with a new wave of fascism much greater than that which was experienced in the 1930's.

Students must be encouraged to form democratic communities that model governments as they will be one day experienced in the adult world. Why can't a student government have a Student Congress, Student Supreme Court and Student Executive? Let students experience the art of compromise and what constitutes "checks and balances". As Jackie "Moms" Mabley so aptly expressed it, "The teenagers aren't all bad. I love 'em if nobody else does. There ain't nothing work with young people. Jus' quit lyin' to 'em."

EXCELLENCE AND UNIFORMITY IN TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS

The quality of teacher preparation programs varies widely from state to state, and no matter how well prepared and hard working the majority of teachers, the taxpayer will judge the teaching profession by the performance of its substandard teachers. In order to satisfy the public's demand for competent teachers the United States Department of Education must take the lead in offering to the states nationally identified criteria and programs that would assist state offices of education establish the highest possible standards for teacher training programs and subsequent certification.

Higher standards will result in a greater willingness on the part of the public to support the mission of their schools. Higher standards will insulate the teaching profession from a never ending parade of redundant "bandwagon" movements. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, higher standards will attract talent to the profession as improved schools will garner more support at the polls when millage is voted upon, and the money will be provided to pay good teachers what they deserve.

Increased professionalism will result in increased cooperation between teachers as they will be charged with carrying out the curriculum of the 21st century. New Guard educators must pressure the states and Federal Government to promote thematic, interdisciplinary and global education K-12. The door to the classroom must remain open.

"Honesty, responsibility, integrity, respect for the individual, the spirit of cooperation, the brotherhood of man, these are the values that fall in the category of incidental learning, learning that is in a sense a byproduct of the main goal . . . they are made central and sought directly."

—I.N. Thut

"WORLD CITIZENS" FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In the final analysis military might did not bring down the Berlin Wall. Informed citizens, World Citizens, brought down the communist monolith by presenting a united and unafraid democratic front to the henchmen of despotism. In the 21st century the World Citizens will continue to stand up and demand from their governments policies that promote democratic ideals, and the population explosion will create a world army of citizens demanding wise use of natural resources and equitable distribution of the planet's wealth.

American education policymakers must accept this shift in world attitude and, indeed, plan to benefit from it. We must boldly plunge into a world awareness program in our schools so that students of today will be on the cutting edge of possibilities into the 21st century.

The time has come to advance the use of a global language. Esperanto, or a new equivalent, should be taught in schools around the planet. Just as Arabic numerals became the universal symbols for mathematics so must an international language that favors no particular culture become the tongue of all educated World Citizens. The goal is not to abolish national languages wherein people express their unique cultural heritage, but, rather, as world economies merge and the Information Age explodes across all continents the necessity for the immediate transmission of ideas begs for the use of one international language.

Finally, let us end in a grand manner the saga of what was once called "The Space Race," by holding in space a "Continental Classroom in Space Program" where teachers from the world's continents could dramatically demonstrate to children around the globe that cooperation across all boundaries, political and racial, is a positive possibility. On the heels of this undertaking the nations of the world should join together to form a massive student exchange program to create Continental Classrooms on Earth in every country. Can the same nature be a lover of

wisdom and of falsehood? By no means. *The true lover of knowledge must, from childhood up, be most of all a striver after truth in every form.*
—Plato

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LOUIS J. GOTLIB, 1991 NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

What will our schools be like in the year 2000? I suspect they will be very much like schools of today, in much the same way that schools of today (and far too much of today's teaching) closely resemble schools and (teaching) of 20 and 50 years ago. I realize that this is not the most optimistic opening comment, and yet I make that comment with the full realization that we, as a nation, are fully capable of having whatever caliber of school we want.

This nation has seen a plethora of reports that have warned us of our failure to provide outstanding educational opportunities for all of our students. We have known this for quite some time and yet we continue to place blame everywhere else (in almost every report that is generated, the people writing the report manage to place the blame on everyone but themselves), to reduce one of our most important national responsibilities to a series of slogans and cute phrases, and to avoid accepting responsibility and making a true commitment to improving education.

It seems to me that we suffer from a failure to accept the observation of the American philosopher Linus (of Peanuts comic strip fame) that "There is a great difference between a bumper sticker and a philosophy." Unfortunately, in too many places across the nation, education is nothing but a bumper sticker—a few catchy phrases and "buzzwords" that may serve political expedience, but in no way accomplish what should be one of our highest priorities.

Having said this, I am still very optimistic about the possibilities. There are many places in America where education does work and there are many places where it works for all students (and not just for those with advantages most students lack). I teach in a school that has made some real changes—changes that have made teachers more professional, and that have helped provide better opportunities for all of our students.

I would like to focus on a number of topics, beginning with how schools should be run, which I feel must include the roles of both teachers and principals. Schools are not businesses, although we can certainly learn a great deal from some of the successes of businesses. Businesses have learned that workers who are actively involved in the decision-making process are more productive, enjoy their work more, and simply do a better job. It should come as no surprise that we need to think along similar lines in looking at how schools should be run.

I teach at a small school in rural North Carolina—hardly a part of the nation that is generally considered to be overly progressive in most ways. However, we have restructured our schools in a way that we now rely on teacher input for much of our decision-making process. Our principal is the type of person who is willing and able to share the decision-making process with the faculty, and the faculty members have eagerly accepted the responsibility.

This idea is not new. We are aware that many companies (and all types of companies) have found site-based management to be helpful. At South Granville High School, our faculty is involved in setting graduation requirements, establishing the school schedule, setting school policy on a variety of issues, and in selecting courses to offer. It is not "business as usual." We have made significant changes over the past 4 years, and not all of them have been totally successful. But we are aware that while it may be easy to continue to do what has always been done, that is far from being in the best interests of our students.

We are not afraid to try new things and to take risks, and in doing so, we have made our school better. Our students learn more, and they like school more. Our parents have more positive views of the school and of education in general. I feel very strongly that the best schools will be those where the faculty work in cooperation with the administration, and where the goal is to do what is best for the students regardless of the amount of work. Schools exist for students. We seem to have far too many schools that give lip service to this idea, and not enough schools where people truly believe it.

In addition to working with the administration toward the goal of helping all students learn, teachers will need to understand that all students can learn. "All students can learn" is a very common slogan, yet a slogan will not help us teach better. We need to realize that all students can indeed learn, although not at the same pace and in the same manner. Good teachers (and we have many, many good teachers