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The dedication speech of the John F. Kennedy by the United States Commissioner of Education gives two principles which guide federal efforts in providing special help for educational problems common to all regions and in setting priorities for federal investment. Five priorities for federal financial support of programs for the handicapped are discussed; research in and refinement of techniques for identification and new knowledge of handicapped children (Research and Development Centers); rapid dissemination of educational information (Instructional Materials Centers); the need fo r trained teachers of the handicapped (traineeships and fellowships); development of programs for mentally and physically handicapped culturally deprived children to reduce imbalance in quality education present in this country; and the need for a proper physical environment for special education classes and schools (a consideration of school design, classroom placement, flexibility of spatial arrangements, and special instructional materials and equipment). Greater state contribution to programs for the handicapped and the cooperation of public and private agencies are recommended. The goal of educational opportunity in this country is described as including the handicapped as well as minorities and the majority. (SN)

NEW HOPE FOR THE HANDICAPPED*

An Address by Harold Howe II
U.S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

I am deeply honored to be here today to take part in the dedication of this fine new facility. Our late President made his life a triumph over obstacles that would have consigned a lesser man to obscurity. And so it is entirely fitting that this Center be graced by his name--a name that meant help to all in need of help, a name that brought hope to a world desperately searching for hope.

New buildings often suggest the end of something, as well as the beginning of something: What was once only a set of blueprints, a construction contract, and a sign on a vacant lot has become a structure of steel, glass, and concrete. What was once simply a hope--and not too realistic a hope at that--is now the John F. Kennedy Center for Research on Education and Human Development. Where once stood only one or two people professionally concerned and professionally trained for work with the handicapped, we now have a complex staffed by a small army of researchers, teachers, and assistants.

It is tempting, in such circumstances of obvious progress, to believe that the goal of providing proper education for handicapped children is now in sight. Buildings like these and the human concern they reflect can hasten the work for which the Center was designed and strengthen our determination to finish the job. But they can, on the other hand, lead some to believe that we've paid enough attention to this particular problem for a while, that we can relax.

*At the Dedication of the John F. Kennedy Center for Research on Education and Human Development, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2 p.m., Sunday, March 31, 1968.

Unhappily, we have a long way to go in the United States before we can relax our efforts on behalf of handicapped children. More than five million American children are so handicapped as to require special educational services--yet fewer than half of these children now receive them. According to the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, only half of our Nation's 22,000 school districts are equipped to offer any kind of special instruction to mentally retarded children. We are not yet free of the notion that the most that can be done for such children is to make them comfortable, to insulate them from physical, psychological, and mental strain.

This is a well-intended but nonetheless misdirected form of compassion. In essence, it robs handicapped children and adults of their humanity, relegating them to a social-welfare hothouse where they are supposed to vegetate without aim, without desire, and without any dignity except that which we choose to confer on them. None of us would conceive comfort and the absence of pain as much of a plan for a human life; we believe that it is not comfort but accomplishment which gives life its satisfaction, its taste, its bite. Only recently have we begun to understand that handicapped people share the same cravings; only recently have we begun to act on our realization that handicapped children are lost only if we elect to lose them.

This realization is itself a substantial measure of progress, and we can point to other signs of advance in the treatment of the handicapped. It is useful to recall the pessimism that enveloped the handicapped child and his parents only two or three decades ago. Then parents were almost invariably urged to institutionalize their mentally retarded children.

Deaf and blind children had nowhere to go for care and education except to large "homes" far away from the ones into which they were born. Crippled and multiply handicapped children were kept at home, sentenced by our society's ignorance and neglect to a life-long infancy. The schools showed little or no interest in the absence of these children from the classrooms, and educators joined other citizens in devising all sorts of fanciful arguments for segregating handicapped children from "normal" children. It was argued that they would be hurt physically or damaged psychologically; that handicapped children cannot learn; worst of all, that special attention to their learning problems would interfere with the educational progress of normal children.

All of these arguments have been destroyed. We know that handicapped children can learn. Knowledge, research, and experimentation have freed us from the prejudice and fear that prevented us from giving these children their rightful chance to become adults.

In recent years, the Federal government has taken a hand in this effort. Because the Federal role as well as the Federal investment in all aspects of education have expanded so sharply in recent years, we are still feeling our way, trying with the States and localities to determine how Washington can help without overstepping its mandate.

And in those years, we have come up with a couple of general principles to guide the Federal effort. One is that the Federal government should provide special help on educational problems that are common to all regions of the country, problem-areas where we are obviously lagging in providing

excellent public education--the schooling of children from low-income families, for instance, and the education of the handicapped.

Another principle is that we must focus Federal aid where it will make a difference. Less than 10 percent of the educational dollar being spent in the United States today comes from Washington. These tax funds can vanish without a trace unless we channel them into areas where other educational bodies either do not or cannot. Mindful of Mark Twain's description of the Platte River--"six miles wide and six inches deep"--we are trying to soak a little bit of territory rather than just moisten a much larger expanse.

This latter principle, comprising equal parts of intelligent public policy and fiscal horse-sense, forces us to examine closely such imposing tasks as the education of the handicapped so that we can set priorities for Federal investment. As an aid to this analysis, the Office of Education established a new Bureau of Education for the Handicapped early in 1967. This enabled us to draw together all of our various research, training, and service programs into one place, as well as provided the Office with a corps of experts who could advise us on long-range planning and program development for the education of the handicapped. What I have to say from here on in pretty much represents their views on the needed focus for Federal education dollars on behalf of the handicapped.

The first area of focus is research and the refinement of our techniques for discovering and developing new knowledge about educating handicapped children. Until recently, the transfer of educational knowledge and techniques consisted in large part of a simple apprenticeship

process, by which a neophyte teacher watched a master teacher perform. Though this still seems to me one of the best, though least effectively used methods of training teachers, it has its disadvantages: though the master teacher will pass on the best of what he knows, he is also likely to pass on outdated notions that are particularly harmful with disadvantaged or handicapped children. It is only by accident, good luck, or the intervention of a genius that new ideas seep through the apprenticeship process--and good luck is no way to run an educational system.

Research has transformed almost every complex human endeavor, making advances in the state of the art a matter of continual refinement and evaluation, rather than of happenstance. Research can help us define problems more effectively, measure progress, and identify priorities of need. Our previous neglect of the handicapped makes it imperative that we embark on a major effort to consolidate and refine our present knowledge. The recent report of the newly formed National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children made research--"a comprehensive examination of program needs for handicapped children"--its first recommendation.

Placing research so high on one's list of priorities is in harmony with the Federal agenda for education. Through our Bureau of Research, the Office of Education has financed nine R & D centers throughout the country, each focusing on a single aspect of educational research. OE grants have also established 20 regional education laboratories, each a union of schools, colleges, universities, and State education departments collaborating to put the results of educational research to work. A year ago, we established a National Laboratory in Early Childhood Education,

an association of seven higher educational institutions investigating problems such as the learning assets and liabilities of Mexican-American youngsters, and the effects of home environment on the scholastic performance of low- and middle-income children. George Peabody College is one of these seven institutions; now that the facilities and staff of the John F. Kennedy Center have been added to its resources, we expect that this lively crew here in Nashville will contribute mightily to a revolution in education of the handicapped--a rejection of the status quo that is long overdue.

A second focal point for Federal funds which serve the handicapped is making sure that research gets out of the laboratories and libraries, and into the hands and heads of practitioners. Though reliable information on this point is scarce, I have heard that it takes about three years for a new medical discovery to gain widespread acceptance. The lag in education has been much greater--more on the order of 20 years; educators have not made nearly as much progress in disseminating research on learning as the doctors have made with research on saving lives.

In a civilized society, education is in a sense as much a matter of life-saving as is medicine; the spiritual death of despair brought on by continuing poverty or unemployment may not be as dramatic as literal death by disease or catastrophe, but it can be quite as fatal to an individual or a society. In his State of the Union message, President Johnson pointed out that for all our wealth, our technological and medical sophistication, the United States ranks behind 13 other nations in its demonstrated ability to keep infants alive for their first year of life.

This performance is more shameful because we know as much as any other country about pre-natal and post-natal care; what we lack is a system for applying our knowledge, and a determination to use that system, no matter what it costs.

The same holds true for education. We know much more about educating mentally retarded children than we are now using. And though, in contrast to infant mortality, we do not know how many human lives we have wasted through irrelevant education, we are not going to pause now while we count. We are too busy developing systems for transmitting educational research into the classrooms.

One of these systems is being developed by the Bureau of the Handicapped within the Office of Education. The Bureau is forming a national network of 14 Instructional Materials Centers, designed to make the latest in instructional materials readily available to the special education teacher. These Centers, scattered throughout the country, are now collecting materials and developing distribution systems to speed innovation from laboratory to classroom. The Nashville area is served by the Center established at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

This rapid dissemination of materials is probably more important in the field of special education than in any other, for in other problem-areas--education of the disadvantaged, for example, or of Spanish-speaking children--a highly competent, devoted teacher can go a long way toward making up the weaknesses of a curriculum or the irrelevance of a textbook. But mentally retarded children genuinely need learning materials that

differ in kind, not degree, from those offered in the regular classroom. Too often they use texts that are simply watered-down versions of regular materials.

We need to do better, to devise programs that are not ill-fitting hand-me-downs, but special materials designed for the special needs of the children they are supposed to serve. The National Science Foundation in its adventures with curriculum development has taught us how difficult it is to develop special materials, how expensive and time-consuming the process is. Yet nothing is more crucial to our goal of aiding the handicapped toward self-sufficiency than well-designed curricular programs effectively disseminated and adequately presented by qualified and well-trained staff.

"Well-trained staff" brings up the third focal point of the Federal investment in education for the handicapped. When we still held to the philosophy that handicapped children should be cared for, but could not be taught anything, we also accepted the notion that any good heart and pair of willing hands could assume the task. Our new philosophy that each handicapped child should be helped to develop his abilities to the utmost calls for professional skill to supplement special curricula.

The need for trained teachers of the handicapped is extraordinary, largely because we have done so little about meeting that need until recent years. More than 70,000 trained professionals are now at work in the field of special education. My associates and I take considerable pride in the fact that in the last three years the Office of Education

has provided more than 30,000 traineeships and fellowships to enable teachers to pursue part- and full-time study in educating the handicapped. Here again, we can point to some progress. But if we analyze the needs of the five million handicapped American children, we see the gap between supply and demand: 250,000 more professionals in this field.

It's easy, of course, to regard the word "more" as a solution to problems in any line of endeavor. Rather than simply parroting this demand in a time when we have increasing calls on all our resources, we are trying to take a new look at the ways in which we can use our limited manpower pool to best advantage.

This means looking at the use of subprofessionals in many different capacities, experimenting with the adaptation of team-teaching to special education, and deliberately training research workers in the education of the handicapped so we don't have to depend on chance to attract the people we need. Perhaps most important of all, it means giving the regular classroom teacher some minimal training so that at the very least, he will recognize a handicapped child early enough to refer the youngster for diagnosis and special educational treatment.

In the last few years, we have begun paying attention to those youngsters whose backgrounds impede learning. Most children get an educational headstart from their homes, gaining through experience and daily observation a familiarity with such objects as books, and such activities as reading and writing.

Disadvantaged children--the sons and daughters of poorly educated, low-income parents--rarely have this kind of exposure, and such Federal

programs as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 are aimed at making up for that cultural deprivation. The interest that Title I has aroused has made us familiar with the inner-city ghetto, with the pattern of fatherless families, with all the assaults on motivation and the human spirit that stem from poverty. But we do not know how many of these families, struggling to maintain a marginal existence, also have a mentally retarded, deaf, or blind child. For these families, a handicapped child often becomes the last straw in their fight for social integrity, self-respect, and survival. Their children--and their parents--are twice handicapped.

The recent report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders had this to say about the special problem of handicapped children in low-income areas:

> In disadvantaged areas, the neighborhood school concept tends to concentrate a relatively high proportion of emotionally disturbed and other problem children in the schools. Disadvantaged neighborhoods have the greatest need for health personnel, supplementary instructors and counselors to assist with family problems, provide extra instruction to lagging students and deal with the many serious mental and physical health deficiencies that occur so often in poverty areas.
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> These conditions, which make effective teaching vastly more difficult, reinforce negative teacher attitudes. A 1963 survey of Chicago public schools showed that the condition creating the highest amount of dissatisfaction among teachers was lack of adequate provision for the treatment of maladjusted, retarded, and disturbed pupils. About 79 percent of elementary

school teachers and 67 percent of high school teachers named this item as a key factor. The need of professional support for teachers in dealing with these extraordinary problems is seldom, if ever, met.

Although special schools or classes are available for emotionally disturbed and mentally handicapped children, many pupils requiring such help remain in regular classes because of negligence, red tape, or unavailability of clinical staff.

Much the same might be said of handicapped children born to families living in impoverished rural areas. Here, scattered population and declining economy make it almost impossible for local education agencies to provide any special education services for handicapped children. Judging from our reports, only about one in five handicapped children living in predominantly agricultural areas receives any special treatment.

What we need, then, is a kind of Title I for children who are handicapped in the physical or mental sense, and in addition culturally deprived. We have the beginnings of such a program in our Educational Resource Centers, which will provide both evaluation and diagnosis for teachers in urban and rural ghetto areas.

But we still have far to go in counteracting the environments that can add to the problems of handicapped children. Because of the relationship between quality education and family income, the United States has often made the least effort where the greatest effort was indicated. Redressing this imbalance represents the fourth focal point for Federal aid to the education of the handicapped.

The fifth and last is the need for considering the proper physical environment for special education. We know that the design of a school, the placement of its classrooms, and the flexibility of its spatial arrangements help determine the nature of an educational program. We have not yet, however, considered the implications of this fact in planning programs for the handicapped. Very often handicapped children are placed in the same type of environment as that designed for the average youngster. There is no provision for special lighting, for small-group work, for the operation of special equipment--for sound-treated classrooms for deaf children, for the quiet, tranquil environments needed to instruct emotionally disturbed or brain-injured youngsters. We must ask ourselves, as we design governmental or private programs for handicapped children, what special architectural environments need to be created to supplement the other materials of learning.

Since that completes our list of Federal priorities, it seems a propitious moment to repeat a statement that has become something of a tradition for occasions such as this: Washinton cannot do the job alone!

It is clear that the States must make a greater contribution to the education of the handicapped. The additional help, it seems to me, might well take the categorical form initiated by the Federal Government to concentrate available resources in the areas of greatest need.

But however our priorities are assigned, they would seem incapable of realization were it not for the spirit of cooperation between public and private agencies exemplified in the John F. Kennedy Center. The

Federal government has contributed funds through the Mental Retardation Facilities Act, one of the last major bills President Kennedy signed, and one that was very close to his heart. These funds, signifying a national commitment, were supplemented by money from a private philanthropic organization--the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., Foundation--and by commitments from a private college, George Peabody.

I hope that this pattern of cooperation will stimulate analogous efforts elsewhere, for neither the private nor the public sector by itself can do the job that needs to be done.

But if this job of educating handicapped children is to be accomplished, what we need above all is a realization of precisely what it is that we are setting out to do. We must realize that it is neither magnanimous, nor worthy of special notice. In providing first quality education for handicapped children, we are merely fulfilling our pledge that every American youngster shall receive as much education as he needs to give him a fair crack at a full life.

After decades of ignoring the contradictions between our words and our deeds, the United States is now about the business of achieving equality of educational opportunity. We are resolved that every one of our children will have the opportunity to become all that he is capable of becoming--all of them, not just the white ones, not just those from fortunate families, not just those born into educated homes. We have decided that our black children, our poor children, our Indian and our Spanish-speaking children will have that same chance.

And today, in dedicating the John F. Kennedy Center, we affirm that this pledge of educational opportunity includes handicapped children as well. The mentally retarded, the deaf, the blind, the brain-injured--these are American children, too, and they must have the American chance. They must have the American hope--and they will get it.

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