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ABSTRACT

This report is a summary of deliberations and strategy development at a forum focussed on the problems of youth at risk of not making a successful transition from school to adulthood. Twenty work groups came up with three priorities in dealing with the problems of at-risk youth: (1) address a child's education, social, health, and other needs together, rather than individually; (2) administrators, parents, teachers, and students must begin to solve problems cooperatively during the child's early years; and (3) curriculum and instructional approaches must be directed at helping all children succeed, including students who have different backgrounds and strengths. Suggested approaches to these problems varied, but adequate funding was seen as one requirement for any successful recommendation. Excerpts from 21 major speeches are included. Speakers included leaders in government, business, education, and labor. Several students who had been at risk of dropping out of school offered insight into the positive and negative elements of their educational systems. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, and a North Carolina schools superintendent described educational problems and programs in their states. Author Jonathan Kozol and Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman linked U.S. education problems to poverty issues. Several federal officials discussed the changing demands for U.S. educational systems. National Education Association President Mary Hartwood Futrell discussed possible roles of administrators and business leaders in the dropout problem. Corporate officials offered ideas regarding the roles of technology and innovative programs in education. This document details five areas for helping at-risk students: early intervention, parental involvement, one-on-one mentoring, school restructuring, and interagency collaboration. (TES)

Securing Our Future: The Report of the National Forum for Youth At-Risk

YOUTH AT RISK

SECURING OUR FUTURE:

A REPORT OF THE

NATIONAL FORUM FOR YOUTH AT RISK

Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, Colorado 80295

September 1988

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The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide interstate compact formed in 1965. The primary purpose of the commission is to help governors, state legislators, state education officials and others develop policies to improve the quality of education at all levels. Forty-eight states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are members. The ECS central offices are at 1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colorado 80295. The Washington office is in the Hall of the States, 444 North Capitol Street, Suite 248, Washington, D.C. 20001.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is the most recent in an Education Commission of the States (ECS) series focusing on the problems of youth at risk of not successfully making the transition to adulthood -- the dropout, the underachiever and far too many others of our young people who end up disconnected from school and society. This paper summarizes the deliberation of the National Forum for Youth At Risk, which was held on December 10-12, 1987, in Washington, D. C. The Forum was co-sponsored by the Education Commission of the States and the Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC).

The National Forum for Youth At Risk received generous contributions from the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO), Carnegie Corporation of New York, Control Data Corporation, Eastman Kodak Company, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, IMEC membership, National Education Association and United States Department of Labor.

The forum was endorsed by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, American Association of School Administrators, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, Council of Chief State School Officers, Institute for Educational Leadership, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, National School Boards Association and State Higher Education Executive Offices.

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STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State Capitol
Little Rock 72201

Bill Clinton
Governor

One of the major problems facing America today is the growing number of young people at risk of not making a successful transition from being students to being productive citizens in an increasingly complex society. Although the report, A Nation At Risk, energized a national movement for educational excellence, there remains a need to include the youth-at-risk population in our deliberations to improve education.

To address this concern, as 1986-87 chairman of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), I convened a National Forum on Youth At Risk, co-sponsored by ECS and the Interstate Migrant Education Council, in Washington, D.C., December 10-12, 1987. The purpose of the forum was to examine existing state and national policies and to develop approaches to enable all youth to make the transition to adulthood successfully. This forum was a logical vehicle to follow up on recommendations of the National Governors' Association's report, Making America Work.

States were invited to send a team of delegates representing education, politics, business, health and human services, and government perspectives to participate in a collaborative effort to develop specific state strategies for serving at-risk youth. Nearly 600 attendees representing 48 states and territories responded to this nationwide call.

The forum was the first stage in an unprecedented alliance to bring leaders from local, state and federal government, business and industry, and other national organizations together in a national effort to reverse the growing number of young people at risk of school failure.

The attached report is a summary of our deliberations, including the development of policy options and strategies to prevent youth from dropping out of school and out of mainstream society and to assist them in maximizing their potential to become productive citizens.

We recommend this report to you as you struggle to find ways to meet the needs of at-risk youth. No one problem will adequately address this issue; dedication, hard work and a concerted effort will be required of all of us.

It is important to economic security for our nation to achieve educational excellence and equity simultaneously. I hope that you will find this report beneficial to your work.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton
Governor of Arkansas

INTRODUCTION

Why a National Forum on Youth At Risk? Statistics paint an alarming picture of today's young people.

- One in five American children lives in poverty (nearly half of black children).
- Seven in 10 drop out of school in some U.S. cities.
- One in 10 teenage girls becomes pregnant.
- U.S. teens rank No. 1 in the world for drug abuse.

As many as 30% of the nation's youth are thought to be "at risk" in some way -- at risk of failing to get the education and skills they need to become productive adults, adults who will be personally happy and successful and who will contribute to the nation's future.

Concern over the nation's future competitiveness is the major factor motivating interest in at-risk youth. And that future depends largely on the quality of the work force. Growth of the labor force is expected to slow dramatically during the rest of this century. An increasing proportion of the new entrants will be young men and women, many of color, from disadvantaged backgrounds -- those disproportionately poor, under-educated and under-trained individuals in whom the nation traditionally has failed to invest its time and dollars.

The National Forum on Youth At Risk brought together 600 influential, concerned policy makers -- 17 chief state school officers, educators, elected officials and health and welfare personnel from both the federal and state governments, and representatives of the business community. They met to examine how they and others like them can help this generation of young people succeed, how they can begin a state-by-state movement toward solution of the problems that threaten the futures of too many of the nation's young. It is time to stop talking about the problem and do something about it, they said.

The first step toward doing this is for educators and policy makers to realize that all kids can learn, said David Hornbeck, former head of the Council of Chief State School Officers and Maryland state school superintendent. "If you don't believe that, then it's all over; we might as well go home. If you do, you can go on to the next principle, one that says that what each student learns ought to include common curriculum, not one that is 'dumbed down' for poor kids, but one that is challenging for all manner of youngsters. And if you believe that principle, I present you the third -- that in this nation we know how to reach all of our youngsters. Don't misunderstand -- it's no easy task by any means, but neither is it a mysterious one. We know how to do it."

O. Bradford Butler, former Proctor and Gamble board chairman and vice president of the Committee for Economic Development (CED), added, "You don't have to have a heart to take care of disadvantaged children; all you need is a head. the right kind of investment, from conception to age 5, will pay back every dollar we spend at least four for one, plus interest, plus inflation. I don't know of a factory anybody can build that will give that kind of return on the investment. It is the solution to every problem that faces this country."

THE STUDENTS' STORIES

"I don't want to be considered a generation that has failed my country, when I know that I was probably put here to make it better."

One would think from the ou burst of applause, the cheers, the standing ovation, that A'bert Brewster -- an 8th grader from the District of Columbia -- had just been nominated his party's candidate for president. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, who chaired the National Forum, said he would spend the rest of his political life looking over his shoulder for the likes of Brewster and the four other "at-risk" young people joining him for a panel discussion on "Making a Difference in Young Lives."

"If we get an unorganized, confused generation leading this country, it will lead to turmoil," said Brewster. My generation has been neglected because of all the problems that sprung up in (previous) generations. But if we can get our act together, we can make it better and solve all these other problems."

One way to help at-risk youth like Albert Brewster "get his act together" is through programs that focus on the "whole child," forum participants stressed. This means incorporating health, juvenile services, human services, education and other services in policy development and at all levels of education.

What Went Wrong -- What Worked

"I dropped out because I felt there was nothing there for me," Osmunda Larson, a 17-year-old GED candidate from Minnesota, said of her high school experience. "[The teachers] made the subject matter seem boring. They didn't introduce it in a cultured or interesting way. It seemed like you were there to waste 18 years of your life. It seemed like it was just a place to be for that amount of time, to socialize, and to get about one-fourth of the education you need in the United States. I didn't want that in my life -- I wanted 100%."

Larson found the outside world had little room for her either. She enrolled in a correspondence school, which she described as nothing but a diploma mill, which even misspelled her name on the diploma.

"So, I enrolled in 70001 Training and Employment Institute (a private, non-profit public service company serving youth through a competency-based program of remedial education, pre-employment training and motivational activities). That was the best thing that has ever happened to me. It offered me a pre-employment program, a positive attitude class and a GED program." What was different about 70001? "They sit down with you, they talk to you like an adult, as a person . . . I thought I had a positive attitude when I went in there -- when I got out, I really did."

How could Larson's public high school have helped? Forum participants noted that in some cases existing state regulations and statutes may have to be changed to serve such students better. For example, more flexible school models have worked with at-risk students, as have programs that give them extra attention and something to do. Keeping schools open on weekends and in the evenings may provide the flexibility needed to offer at-risk youth individual tutoring or counseling services. Individualized education plans like those designed for handicapped children may find the "fit" the at-risk youth needs with his or her school.

Another student, Darryl Gallishaw, now in a management and engineering course of study at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, recalled having serious doubts about whether he would ever graduate from high school. The intense supervision and tutelage, provided by mentors with the I Have A Dream Foundation, "helped push that doubt out of my mind," he said.

Gallishaw was one of 53 sixth-grade students who, in June 1981, heard millionaire philanthropist Eugene Lang promise them a fully paid college education if they went on to finish high school. Gallishaw was one who made Lang pay up and has since helped Lang establish similar programs across the country.

"People are caught in a cycle of poverty," said Arnulfo Ortiz, the youngest of eight children who lived from infancy in a series of migrant labor camps. "The problem is how to get out of it, how to take advantage of opportunities when you don't really realize the opportunity is there. When you are confronted with things that are strange to you, you don't really know if you are capable of moving on to a better job, to a better school. You don't really know what good grades mean, what you can accomplish with that. You don't have the expectations. You have no role models. You have no opportunity. You are just caught in the cycle."

Bringing education, health and other services together under a coordinated plan, such as an interagency council, was one recommendation to help stop the cycle. Such an umbrella group, participants said, can ensure that public agencies provide a continuum of care from prenatal to institutional.

As a high school student in Eagle Pass, Texas, Ortiz was lucky when a counselor approached him about a migrant education program.

Counseling Offered a Chance

"I was afforded the opportunity to go to college. I was given counseling and tutoring to give me a chance to be successful in college. And I was able to take advantage of that," he said, adding that most migrant youths, because of their circumstances, don't trust such institutions.

Now 30 and an attorney in San Antonio, Ortiz talked about the stigma that he felt growing up in a migrant community. "It's different, being part of the migrant stream. You're wearing second-hand clothes, and you're being fed by the school or with coupons, and you're just a second-class citizen. It's tough growing up and having to carry that with you."

The most upbeat story came from Khalid Brathwaite, who delivered a glowing report on teachers and fellow students at Washington, D.C.'s Jefferson Junior High, where he is a 7th grader. He eagerly described classroom and schoolwide activities where the use of the mind is front and center.

"Education must be encouraged, and that's what they do at Jefferson," he said.

COMPREHENSIVENESS IS THE KEY

"We're not going to solve this problem unless we take a comprehensive approach to it, and that's what the groups I saw were trying to do."

Bill Kirby, Texas' commissioner of education, summed up the efforts of forum participants who were assigned to one of 20 work groups and asked to list priorities, recommendations and strategies to help at-risk youth.

Many of the groups combined categories or recommendations, a step in the right direction, according to Kirby, "because what policy makers have to do is to resist the temptation to say we can only do two or three."

Not surprisingly, a tabulation of work group priorities paralleled those of the National Governors' Association, the Committee for Economic Development, the Council of Chief State School Officers and other recent reports.

Same Priorities But Different Approaches

Asked what areas are most important in dealing with the problems of at-risk youth, work groups listed three top priorities.

- **The whole-child approach** -- A child's education, social, health and other needs must be addressed together, rather than individually by different organizations or agencies. Funding incentives and greater flexibility in the use of funds were recommended to spark more cooperation among the various entities providing youth services. In addition, pupil-service teams at all levels in the schools should be appointed to review each child's needs and link with community agencies for services, participants recommended. Such teams would include counselors, teachers, social workers, psychologists and administrators.

- **Early identification and intervention** -- Solving the problems of at-risk youth must begin in the early years; high school is too late. Administrators, teachers, parents, students and community and social service agencies should share decision making along the way.

- **School structure** -- Curriculum and instructional approaches must be directed at helping all children succeed. This means school staff must be knowledgeable about how to work with students who have different backgrounds and different strengths. Mentoring, by both staff and other students, works in many cases. Teachers can be identified to work specifically with youth at risk, for example, or secondary students can be assigned to particular teachers much like they are in elementary school to augment the relationship between students and teachers.

Although the work groups were able to reach a consensus on what issues they think are most important, they differed on the best approaches, as have groups and individuals involved in studying the question of how to help at-risk children.

As O. Bradford Butler, former Proctor and Gamble board chairman and vice chairman of the CED, said: "We (CED) concluded with 89 recommendations for very specific programmatic changes. But the single best investment we could recommend to the people of the United

States, for the future of our nation and our economy, is one year of high-quality, preschool nurturing for every disadvantaged 3-year-old in America."

Butler added that parents must also be trained in how to be better parents. "Where parents do not provid the needed early development for their child, because they can't or won't, we must be prepared, as a society, to provide that in our own self-interest."

More than one forum work group ranked funding low on their priority list but noted that adequate funding is a requirement for any recommendation to work. Without money, any effort "is doomed to failure," they said, echoing a CED report.

Similarly, literacy and graduation, although last on the priority lists, were not viewed as unimportant. "My group," said Jack Schaeffer, California director of migrant education, "did not consider funding and literacy in terms of priorities. We believe all strategies depend on funding and are directed toward literacy and graduation."

Participants in several other work groups noted that a "whole-child approach" would not be comprehensive without early identification and intervention, parental involvement or a different approach to school curriculum. However, some strategies such as early intervention, can be undertaken without a "whole-child" approach, they said.

Those groups focusing on school structure argued that schools cannot be restructured without looking at alternative programs, without carefully rethinking school curriculum and instructional approaches, without serious work on improving staff preparation. They can, however, improve on existing models without embracing a restructured schools concept, they said.

Dewayne Matthews, executive director of the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education, called school structure "the root cause of other problems." He told his group that after teaching kindergarten for three years, he was appointed director of a children's home and found himself dealing with the school district from the parent's side.

"After I had become a 'parent,' I had to go back into the same schools where I had taught, to visit with the children's teachers, to visit with some of the people I had worked with," he said. "I was instantly intimidated. There were people I had worked with side-by-side for three years, and I didn't want to go into their classrooms. It was a remarkable experience. I began to understand why I had had such a difficult time getting parents to come in and visit me when I was a teacher."

Forum participants recommended that schools emphasize to parents their children's good as well as bad behaviors to make the parents feel better about the school and take the initiative in increasing opportunities for parents to be involved. They also noted that parents need to work with their children at home and should be involved in their children's education throughout their child's life, not just during the early years.

Matthews added that he thinks there are some structural reasons for many parents' reluctance to take part fully in their children's school life. "There's something about the way schools are organized, the way schools are managed," he said. "A school restructuring effort must deeply involve parents, even in the most wealthy district. It seems that when parents drop their kids off at school, it's as if they are dropping them off at the end of the earth. Schools and communities exist in parallel universes -- separate and side-by-side. Why is that?"

While there was widespread agreement among work-group participants that school structure is a policy issue that needs to be addressed, "there was considerable difficulty in understanding exactly what school restructuring meant," Kirby noted. "In most instances, it meant changing attitudes, and that has to do with seeing that the schools are broader . . . that we have to look at comprehensive services, and so we're going to have to open up the schools."

Florida State Representative Elizabeth Metcalf made a similar observation on the whole-child approach. "It would come as no surprise to any of us that a majority of the groups were saying that what we need to do is look at the whole child. The thing that I think might be somewhat of a surprise is that each of us seems to look at this in a little different way."

Some, she said, view "the whole child as the child in relation to his or her family, some as the child in relation to the school, some in relation to the community. I think we also need to look at the health of the child and at the child and his or her environment, because I don't know that many of us mentioned the fact the we need a receptive, receiving, warm, comfortable environment for the children that we serve. We take that for granted."

A New Vision

Stanford University professor, Michael W. Kirst, also an observer of the work-group sessions, said participants appeared to be advocating "a new vision of what I would call a child-resource policy. This was a group who came up with an idea that we need to reach beyond any of the existing agencies. Forming interagency councils of middle-level executives in state or local government won't get us anywhere. There has to be a forceful statement that this is a top priority, that we have to go in a new direction, that we have to put agencies -- public and private -- together in ways that we never have before. Jamming all the programs together in the same agencies -- super-agencies of the state government -- isn't the answer."

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAID

Forum participants and speakers brought a variety of viewpoints on both the problems and the solutions for helping youth at risk grow into productive adults. Excerpts from the major speeches follow.

O. Bradford Butler, Retired Chairman of the Board, Proctor & Gamble Company

The Committee for Economic Development started five years ago to study public education. We came to the conclusion that the best single investment we could recommend to the people of the United States, for the future of our nation and our economy, was one year of high-quality, preschool nurturing for every disadvantaged 3-year-old child in America.

We concluded that no investment we could make would have a higher economic return or a higher social return than that investment in early childhood intervention. And notice I said "nurturing." I didn't say, "pre-kindergarten," because what's needed with these 3-year-olds cannot be described as an earlier grade of school.

It is a program that demands that the child feel loved and needed, and nurtured; because, unfortunately, in our society today, not even the middle-class children are getting much nurturing. But the disadvantaged, unfortunately, are getting virtually none, and as a society, we cannot allow that to happen.

We concluded in our study that most of the high school dropouts drop out in first grade. They are legally required to attend school, if the truant officer can catch them, until they are 16, in most states. But they don't ever join school. They don't drop out of school -- they never drop in. Why don't they drop in? Because they hate it. Why do they hate it? Because they're failures. Who likes to fail? Who likes to lose? Nobody.

These children come into first grade in a situation analogous to a strong, quick, athletic, capable, 200-pound brute of a young man who has never seen a football, never been taught to block or tackle, never been taught how to get an opponent off balance, how to fake -- never been taught any of the skills of playing football, and he is thrown into a game with the Chicago Bears. I guarantee you that within five minutes, he will learn to hate football. He won't ever want to play that game again as long as he lives, because people he knows that are not as good as he is will beat up on him all day long.

And many of these disadvantaged children have had no nurturing, no preparation for school -- the Department of Education publishes a book that says, "the most important thing you can do for your child in preparing for school is read to him or her." What about the child whose parents are illiterate? How does that child get the most important single academic preparation for school?

We believe, after that first three years of study, that while much can be done to dramatically improve the outcome of public schooling for those 75% of children who stay in our schools and are able to gain something from the schools as they presently stand, that the reform movement which has swept the country for the last three years simply doesn't touch, in any significant way, the truly disadvantaged child.

Now, I'm not talking about black children or Hispanic children, or poor children, necessarily; I'm talking about children -- whatever their color, whatever their economic background -- whose parents and/or guardians are incapable or uninterested in giving that child the development that is required from conception to age 5, in nutrition, in nurturing, in teaching.

We must train parents to be better parents, as is being done in the Parents as Teachers Program in St. Louis, and in programs like New Futures. But we must stand ready, as a society -- where parents do not provide the needed, early development for their child, because they can't or won't -- to provide that in our own self-interest.

Taking care of disadvantaged children is the solution to our trade deficit. We cannot eliminate our trade deficit until we have more capable workers in the United States. In fact, if we stay on the track that we are on, American companies are going to increase the trade deficit because they will have to go overseas to locate their manufacturing facilities because that is where the competent work force will be, and they will simply add to the deficit.

It is the solution to our national defense. Battle groups are wonderful, but they aren't worth much without high quality, capable people to operate them. How does a sailor who can't read the sign that says, "Beware of the jet blast," operate a computer-controlled torpedo tube? It is essential to our national defense, to the solution of our trade deficit, to the solution of our budget deficit and to the prosperity of American business. Even if individual companies can locate their manufacturing facilities overseas, American companies will not be prosperous in a poverty-ridden society.

And for the generation who is unburdened with the cost of war, in both human and economic terms, shouldn't we accept during this period of peace and prosperity the responsibility to solve this piece of the problem? To do those things with every child who is born in this country this year, to start before birth to ensure that every child will, in truth, have a real opportunity to participate in all the wonders that are the United States of America?

Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas

Youth at risk may be the major educational and social item on the American agenda for the next few years.

By 1995, the Labor Department says we'll have a labor shortage. That's good news for those of us who live in states ravaged by high unemployment rates in the 1980s. But when you look behind that appealing prospect, you see that unless we do something dramatic to improve our ability to develop the potential of our people, we could have a labor shortage and, right alongside it, continued high pockets of structural unemployment, because we will have so many people who still won't be able to function in the world that we're living in.

One message that needs to go out across this country to every person, regardless of race or political party or philosophy or region, is that we no longer have a single solitary child to waste.

Whether you are in direct contact with at-risk children or not, whether you have any or not, it is perfectly clear that your interest, your future, your children's future is bound up

in what happens to them, because people are the most important factor in the economy, the society of any advanced country in the world today. And, frankly, we're doing the worst job of any of the countries with whom we compete in developing the capacity of our children.

We have higher rates of poverty among young children. We have higher rates of school dropouts. We have higher rates of drug abuse. We have greater problems all across the spectrum than the Germans, the Japanese, the Scandinavians and many, many other countries.

We want to maintain a higher standard of living. We want to maintain the prospect of growth. We have proved in the last five years that we're willing to raise taxes in hard times and invest it in the schools to make them better, to have the students there learn more. But we have still given altogether too little attention to the at-risk population.

In our studies, one of the things that we have been very disturbed about is how isolated efforts are in dealing with at-risk children. The school people are working on their own. The state department of education has its own initiative. The state health department has an initiative. The human services, the child and family services people have initiatives. Very often, the people don't talk to each other.

In Arkansas, we have established a subcabinet dealing with the barriers to human development. All these agencies meet on a regular basis and work with each other. Representatives of our task force meet with them and they work with each other. The one thing that we hope to get out of this conference is the idea that in every state there has to be a collaborative effort on this problem, that no single governmental agency can deal with this issue alone, that every state must put together a team for working on the issue back home.

The second idea is that every state must have a concentrated, aggressive strategy to get parents involved in the future of their at-risk children; no matter how poor they are, no matter how uneducated they are, no matter how hopeless it seems, because the results of those hard efforts are so impressive where they have been made.

There's a little town where we took a team to start one of our HIPPY projects, our Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, that we imported from Israel. Four or five American cities and our state are working on this program. We have a thousand kids in 10 school districts working with their mothers in preschool years, 15 to 20 minutes a day, five days a week, 30 weeks a year for two years, to prepare the children for kindergarten.

Our little team went into this town which had been devastated by the farm crisis and by factory closings. The people, within an hour, were absolutely weeping because it was the first good thing that had happened to them in 10 years. Mothers were being given a chance to be good parents to their children, and to give the children a way out of the devastation they were living in.

The one thing that ought to be encouraging to all of you who have been working on this for years is that now this is a part of the conventional wisdom of America. For the first time, I can go and give a speech to the Boston Chamber of Commerce or the National Alliance of Business, or the executive board of the United Way, the same speech I give to the NAACP and the Urban League, and all those very different people have the same reaction.

People have figured out that we are all in this together. That is an astonishing political advance in the last few years, and one that you ought to be heartened by -- many of you in this room who have worked on these problems for your whole careers.

The question is, now, can we take this very broad-based political consensus and translate it into concrete action that really gets something done? I think we can. But I don't think it's going to be easy. I think there will be a lot of false starts and some failures.

If you believe in the team approach, if you believe in the collaborative possibilities of what we can do, if you believe that we can get more parents involved, if you believe it's worth the time and effort, then one thing I would plead with you to do is to go home and ask the press and the public who support what you're doing to encourage a climate of experimentation which, inevitably, will involve some failure.

We have got to be willing to try some things that don't work; otherwise, we won't know what does work. We're going to have to take some chances, because the whole future of this country is riding on it.

Michael Dukakis, Governor of Massachusetts

One challenge for all of us is to make sure that we organize ourselves in a way that can make this whole thing work. If we're serious about bringing down the barriers to opportunity for our people, especially young people, it's incumbent on governors and those who work with us to put together a management team and a management structure that will end the division and bureaucratic overlapping and make things happen.

We've been able to do this in Massachusetts. In 1987, we made "Bringing Down the Barriers to Opportunity" the central theme of what we were doing. We invited mayors, local officials, representatives of the business community, the nonprofit community, the education communities and our unions to a major conference at the state capitol. It was the beginning of the process to turn things around.

We then went out into each region of the state and had, in effect, regional conferences doing the same thing, attracting 500, 600, 700 people every time. I also brought the mayors into the state capitol, sat them down and said, "Look, folks, we've been working together on community and economic development. We've been deeply involved in the 'hardware' of growth. Now I want to work with you to create the capacity at the local level, especially in the major cities where so many of these problems reside, for every municipal executive to take the human resources side of his or her job just as seriously as the community and economic development side."

That was a new notion for mayors. Yes, they were going into their schools, but the idea that mayors had to get serious about teenage pregnancy, dropouts, drug and alcohol abuse, adult illiteracy and welfare mothers was quite new. Over the course of the year, however, we have pretty well agreed that these are important responsibilities for the community, the mayor, the city council, local officials, the business community, labor community and educational community.

We've also provided some grants and assistance through the state municipal association to help municipal chief executives to create small, but important, offices of human resources,

just as they created offices of community and economic development. We have tried to provide some resources for them to hire human resource directors and do as good a job of bringing down the barriers to opportunity as they have been doing over the past 10 to 12 years on the "hardware" of development -- bricks and mortar, industrial parks, etc.

And it's working. It's working because leadership at the state level went to municipal officials, local business, labor and education leaders and said, "Look, we're going to do this together, and we will take responsibility for making sure the state agencies -- education, human services, welfare, public health, employment security -- work with you at the local level.

Why all this attention to the municipal chief executive? Because in my experience, if he or she isn't leading at the local level, it's very tough to make things happen. We can provide support, assistance and resources, but it is the mayor or manager in a particular community who has the responsibility to pull activities together and make things happen.

In some of our communities, we are seeing some very significant strides. One, for example, cut its dropout rate by one-third in three years, using a combination of work and study at the high-school level and going into the middle and junior high schools to try and identify at-risk kids early.

Some of you may have heard about the Boston Compact; there are similar efforts around the country. But if somebody had said to me 10 or 15 years ago that the Boston business community, at its own expense, would be involved in a program which guarantees every high school graduate in the city a job or a college education, I would have questioned their sanity. Yet it has happened.

Why? For one think, the business community is a good deal more progressive than it might have been 10 or 20 years ago. Secondly, most businesspeople understand that unless they are able to hire well-trained, well-motivated, well-educated, well-skilled people, they themselves are going to have problems.

Marian Wright Edelman, President,
Children's Defense Fund

We must save our children, if we are going to save ourselves and our nation's future. The survival and quality of our children, our youth and our families are the single most important determinant of the quality of our national future.

Yet when we look toward the year 2000, let us look at our young people now who are 4 and 5 year olds and who are going to be our workers, our soldiers, our leaders, our potential students of higher education in the year 2000. One in four of them is poor. One in five of them is at risk of becoming a teen parent. One in six is growing up without any health insurance or in a family where no parent has a job.

One in seven of them is at risk of dropping out of school, and one in two of them has a mother in the labor force, but only a small minority have quality, affordable child care. No moral or sensible nation can dare write off such a significant portion of its human assets.

To ignore these facts is to jeopardize our nation's future and undermine the competitiveness and productivity of our economy in the 21st century. This is particularly

true, now, when we have a shrinking population of young people. By 1995, 18- to 24-year-old youths will constitute only 18% of our working age population. One in three of these potential workers -- which we will need to support our aging population -- is a minority worker. So that as the number of young workers steadily declines, business and industry, and all of us, will have to depend upon potential workers who must be productive, but who are today disproportionately poor, minority, under-educated and under-trained, and are those in whom we have traditionally failed to invest.

I think that the principal challenge of the next American decade is the protection of our children, every single one of them, from death by arms, want and neglect. Between now and the year 2000, the nation must mount a carefully conceived comprehensive human-investment effort. For all of our young people, in order to overcome the debilitating effects of decades of poverty, racial discrimination, neglect, an eroding employment and wage base for families, we have got to get back, somehow, to a concept of a decent family wage. We have got to reverse the direction of the eighties which have seen budget and tax thefts from the weak by the military and the wealthy.

We must begin to try to build a consensus to ensure that every child has basic health, nutrition and early childhood services, and thus has the capacity and opportunity to learn and to develop strong basic skills.

For the level of a young person's basic academic skills has a powerful effect upon his or her prospects for future achievement, for teenage pregnancy, welfare dependency and eventual self-sufficiency.

Young people who by 18 have the weakest reading and math skills when compared to those with above-average basic skills, are eight times more likely to have children out of wedlock, seven times more likely to drop out of school before graduation and four times more likely to be out of work, out of school and on public assistance.

Growing up in a poor family dramatically increases a young person's chances of ending up with weak basic skills. Nearly half of all poor youths have reading and math skills that place them in the bottom fifth of the basic-skills distribution. More than three-fourths of all poor youths have below average basic skills.

The two single biggest predictors of who is going to become a teen parent are poverty and basic skills level.

Young women between 16 and 19, with below-average basic skills, who live in a poor family, whether they are white, black or Hispanic, have almost identical teen child-bearing rates. Those young women are almost six times more likely to have children than young women with above-average basic skills residing in non-poor households.

If we as a nation are serious, as we must be, about preventing teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, welfare dependency and unemployment and bolstering national productivity and competitiveness, we've got to invest now in building the basic skills of all of our children.

One of the rewarding things that has begun to occur is the growing recognition among the business community and among educators that building strong basic skills does not start when a child enters the schoolhouse door.

It starts before they are born with adequate prenatal care. The second thing I'd like to just focus on for a moment is the importance not only of ensuring a healthy early childhood but the importance of continuing that health care.

No middle-class parent would think of choosing for our children, for example, between health care, food, housing, decent day care and decent education, yet our policies continue to say, "Which of these things would you like to choose for poor children or for children at risk?"

Similarly, no middle-class parent would t_ to do the right thing for his or her children when they are infants and when they are under 5 years old, and then forget about them when they begin school. And so one of the things that we have got to insist on is a continuum of services that follow children from birth through the age when they can begin to grow up and work and get into higher education, and form healthy families.

One place we can all begin to talk together and work together, to begin to break the cycle of poverty, is in preventing teenage pregnancy, because again, we have got to find ways of preventing poverty.

Because that must be our ultimate concern, and because teenage pregnancy is such a contributor to child and family poverty, I would like to see leaders focusing in on that in a comprehensive way as one way of trying to begin to build a stronger foundation for the future.

While one in five of all of our children is poor, one out of two children in a female-headed household is poor. If that household is headed by a mother under 25, three out of four of those children are poor. Even when teen pregnancy results in marriage -- as it increasingly does not now in our modern society -- young two-parent families are almost three times as likely to be poor as those with parents 25 to 44 years of age.

Teen mothers tend to be that very group of people who are most vulnerable to long-term welfare dependency because they are very likely to drop out of school.

Teen pregnancy is the largest reason why girls drop out of school. In terms of just budget issues, teen pregnancy adds about $1.3 billion to taxpayer costs each year.

If we're serious about prevention and about producing healthy children, teen pregnancy is a place to begin. What are the remedies? I think there are several, because, again, these problems are soluble, although they are not soluble overnight.

They are not soluble with no investment of resources. It is going to take a lot of energy, a lot of time, a collaborative approach, with educators pulling their weight and forming linkages with health, social services and child-care officials.

But I think that the core of our strategy has to be providing positive life options for every child. All of our children need more family-life education and sexuality information, and we should be helping parents, churches and synagogues provide that. We should be doing it thoughtfully and well, and developmentally appropriately, in our schools.

At CDF, we think the best contraceptive is hope. I would hope that as we begin to approach teenage pregnancy, we will focus again on building strong academic skills, on jobs and work experience, on ways of making young people feel valued and building their self-

esteem through nonacademic routes to success, through community service, through recreation. And I cannot stress, too importantly, the importance of recreation.

These kids don't have anything to do in our communities on the weekends, the afternoons and the summers. We've got to begin to keep these schools open and make them community institutions.

The other two pieces that we have to have in our strategy on teenage pregnancy is comprehensive adolescent health services, in and out of schools, in housing projects. Everywhere, our teens are gross under-utilizers of health services. And lastly, we're going to have to create a national climate that begins to affirm the importance of delaying pregnancy, that begins to say to boys that they are as responsible for preventing pregnancy as girls.

We have got to stop the hypocrisy that I think underlies the current problem of teenagers. Our teenagers are doing what we do and not what we tell them to do. We tell our boys to score, we tell our girls to stay chaste, we tell our kids to somehow act as if sex doesn't exist, and yet we laud the Jessica Langes and the Mick Jaggers.

This country has got to come to grips with the message it wants to transmit to its children and then provide a better example. Two-thirds of all out-of-wedlock births in our nation each year are to adult women, not to teens, but we have got to create a climate of expectations about family commitments and work with them in making our young people feel important -- giving them the hope and the opportunity to form strong families with jobs that they can support them with.

William D. Ford, Member,
U.S. House of Representatives

Whenever you get into a discussion with a broad title like "children at risk," there is a danger that it encompasses so many perspectives and so many facets that people adopt the philosophy that American farmers have always adopted about the weather -- it could be a problem, it has been a problem, but there's not much you can do about it.

Discussions as broad as "children at risk" come down to that same phenomenon. All of us are able to identify specific symptoms of the problems and elements of the problem, and everybody has a slightly different idea about what the most important symptoms of the problem are, but we tend to say there is very little that can be done about it.

The federal government's involvement in education has been very, very checkered, and in modern history it's been very bad, indeed. Everybody takes pride in having something to do with the G.I. Bill. But it wasn't motivated by a great federal idea. It was an accidental offshoot of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act whose purpose was to avoid overcrowding the job market.

We can fool ourselves very easily by looking at how far we've come; things aren't getting better, they're getting tougher. They're getting better in a statistical sense, but the chances of success for the future are looking more and more dismal all the time.

The whole country is rejoicing because our president and the general secretary of the Social Union signed a treaty saying that, some time in the future, they will remove less than 4%

of the joint arsenals of atomic weapons that the two countries hold. Less than 4%. And if the whole world is hanging on that as an improvement, if they're willing to take as an omen that we can do better in the future, we should apply the same thinking to education.

When we get a 25% or 50% improvement in education, we educators shouldn't be satisfied that that's enough. But we ought to take some heart from what's going on, the euphoria, that if even 4% in that area of threat to children -- the threat of nuclear annihilation -- can produce this kind of result, imagine what we could do with a little bit of the same kind of resources in education.

Mary Hatwood Futrell, President,
National Education Association

There is a very critical issue dealing with at-risk children that I believe we must address, and that is the system itself -- the way we deliver education to the young people, the way we assign them to receive education in our schools.

I am talking specifically about the system called tracking. I believe that it's high time for us to review and to revise that system. We borrowed it from the military and what we need to say is that our children are not soldiers, they're children. We need to come up with a better way to address the different learning needs of our young people, to provide for the diversification we have, but to make sure each and every last one receives a quality education.

I submit to you that the system has been abused and misused. Too many of our economically disadvantaged and our minority kids are in the lower tracks, and many of them are becoming discouraged. They feel that they cannot be successful, so therefore, many of them drop out of school.

Secondly, the whole issue of class size is extremely critical as we talk about how we do help young people succeed in school. When I talk to dropouts, ask them, "What one thing would you change, if you could change something in the school?" They all say, "We would change the size of the classes because we felt lost. We felt there was no one who cared about us. The teacher didn't have a chance to help us because the classes were so large."

I believe that we do need to do a better job of preparing teachers to work with the diverse student population we are receiving, especially those who have learning deficiencies, and help teachers diagnose those problems very early. Then we must design programs to help them address those learning deficiencies, so that the young people, at an early age, will have a much better chance of succeeding in school.

We also need to work more closely with teachers and parents to raise expectations. I was a teacher who worked with potential dropouts -- I had the honor of doing that. I call it an honor because I found those children really anxious to learn. They wanted to be successful, they wanted to get a good education, but in too many instances they had been convinced they could not learn. They had been convinced that they could not succeed.

I appreciate the support provided by the business community, but one of the things that I hear from parents quite often is the difficulty they face trying to become involved. I am very interested in my children. "I am very interested in their education. But I cannot afford to lose a half-day's pay, and if I take off to go to the school, then I am docked a

half-day's pay." If we could work with the business community to set up flex time, so that parents will not be penalized for going to the school to talk to the teachers about their child or their children, that will encourage parents to become much more involved, and it will also say to them that "my employer is extremely interested in my family, and my child getting a good education."

William Goodling, Member,
U.S. House of Representatives

In the last few years, we've had a lot of talk about how terrible our education system is, and I don't necessarily buy that. I think we make a mistake when we castigate our education system, and we don't really differentiate between the problems that exist.

You are the people who are going to turn it around. We talk about 26-60 million functional illiterates. I am told in the 1990s, in all probability, you will have to be able to read, comprehend and write on a 12th-grade level to be functionally literate. That's a real challenge, and one we don't take lightly in the U.S. Congress. Our colleagues who don't sit on the Education and Labor Committee also want to be players in doing something to make sure that children at risk have an equal opportunity for a good education.
That's what I think the federal responsibility is when we talk about education. An equal opportunity for all people to have a good education, no matter who they are, where they are, what their name is, what their color may be.

We included Even Start in our reauthorization program, including a set-aside for the youngsters most at risk in this country -- the migrant children. This program is basically a program to work with parents and preschool children -- parents at risk, certainly, and children at risk. It is our hope that through grants to the states, they will be able to do some of the things that states like Missouri are doing.

Second, we put in a component for dropouts. We realize the serious problem that exists, and we want to do whatever we can from the federal level to help those of you who are working with that problem every day to do a better job.

We also indicated that we would do a better job of targeting so the money we are providing gets to those most at risk. We also tried to reward those Chapter 1 programs that are doing an outstanding job and disseminate the kind of things they are doing to others.

If a difference isn't made, our lifestyle is gone, and we become just another one of those great civilizations that came, that didn't last in greatness 200 years and fell by the wayside. That is what could happen but won't because of your efforts.

David Hornbeck, Former President,
Council of Chief State School Officers

A natural question that's being asked in various quarters is why are the chief education officers of the 50 states placing such emphasis on children and youth at risk of school failure, and why now?

One reason, of course, is the human or the ethical one; millions of America's children who are failed in many ways by society, including the schools, face a lifetime of grinding and

debilitating poverty and its accompaniments. Sheer decency should be sufficient motivation for us to do what is necessary to reach these youngsters.

Regretfully, the evidence is abundant that the decency and compassion for one's fellow human beings is not sufficient to provoke the imagination, the will, the resources to do the tough job of providing the kinds of initiatives that result in young people who are all independent, productive citizens. And, thus, we are forced to turn again, as too often we are, to the motivating forces of self-interest. Demographic and economic circumstances provide the unambiguous imperative that we equip all of America's citizens to work smarter.

As the Carnegie Forum persuasively argued last year, the decline in the number of youth is such that we no longer have the luxury of economically disposable human beings. We need the gifted; we need the poor; we need the middle class and the white with whom schools have been quite successful; we need the black and brown youngsters whom we have failed in disproportionate numbers; we need those youngsters who come to us speaking a first language other than English. Our challenge is to succeed with all these young people. That's the commitment reflected in the statement of the Council of Chief State School Officers. That statement flows from three fundamental premises that you have to believe in order to proceed along the way.

The first of those is that all kids can learn. If you don't believe that, then it's all over. If you do, you can go on to the next principle, one that says that what each student learns ought to include common curriculum, not one that is "dumbed down" for poor kids, but one that is challenging for all manner of youngsters. And, if you believe that principle, I present you the third -- that in this nation we know how to reach all of our youngsters. It's no easy task by any means, but neither is it a mysterious one. And thus our premises: all kids can learn; what they learn ought to be commonly challenging. And finally, we know how to do it.

The council's statement calls for the enactment of regulations and/or statutes in each state that guarantee for children and youth at risk of school failure the educational and related health and social services that are reasonably calculated to result in high school graduation.

In making this statement, the chiefs expressed their willingness, even enthusiasm, for accepting the schools' share of the responsibility for reaching all of the nation's children. We recognize that any successful strategy will include the school as the centerpiece, but it is clear that the school cannot do the job alone, and, thus, the statement calls upon the state, not just the state education agency, to stand behind the guarantees.

We call for a guarantee of enrollment in a school that demonstrates substantial and sustained student progress. No student should bear the burden of having to stay in a school that doesn't move, one that just sits there year after year after year, not only not achieving the measure of success that you and I would wish for our child, but not even moving methodically, measurably, demonstrably en route to that point.

We call for guarantees of enrollment in a school with appropriately certified staff. And we call for a guarantee of enrollment in a school with systematically designed and delivered instruction of demonstrable effectiveness, and adequate numbers of up-to-date materials. People say that's the norm. But it's not in some classrooms. Some kids take home ditto sheets, if they take home anything at all, for homework day after day.

We call for a guarantee of enrollment in a school with safe and functional facilities and for a parent and early childhood development program, beginning ideally for children, at age 3, but no later than 4. And in certain circumstances, we ask for an individual written guide for teaching and learning, developed in conjunction with not only the student but the parents -- and a program of participation for families as partners in this venture.

Robert Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor,
U.S. Department of Labor

The quality and quantity of our work force will become a major issue as the job market tightens. It is of some major concern to every one of us, and to the political leaders of our countries and our states, when the unemployment rate in the state of New Jersey drops to 3.8% or 3.9%, but the indigenous population of Newark isn't working; when businesses are leaving in droves from the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania corridor for lack of a trained work force, but the population in that central city and in some rural areas isn't working.

It is a concern in Massachusetts, in New England in general, when the economy and the unemployment rates have done as well as they have, but the major thrust today is to import immigrant workers for the tourist industry and for many other industries, for lack of a trained work force. Meanwhile, in Boston, the indigenous population is not participating.

An education system that nationally produces 28% dropout rates or 50% in Boston is unacceptable in those kinds of environments. In Detroit, we graduate 33.5% of the students that come through the system, in Chicago 43.5% and New York 56%.

It doesn't seem to me that the nation can stay competitive on a quality or quantity basis if those kinds of issues persist. If the overall graduation process results in 40% of our graduates leaving, reading below the 9th-grade level, it's difficult to put them in a high-tech world.

If, in New Jersey, as the governor announced, 80% of high-school graduates are not fully prepared for the jobs they will walk into, our system is not responding.

Our second-chance systems don't respond either. For 20 years, we have argued about the costs that we invest in the Job Training Partnership Act, Job Corps, vocational education and everyplace else, as a second-chance system, but you can't take an 18 year old that's failed throughout the system, and for $2,000 a year fix the problem.

The issues that confront you and me, and the governors and legislatures of this country come right down to the heart of our system, and what it means to us in order to participate in the American dream.

The demands that'll be put on you, and us, in the next few months, deal with four major areas. You've heard it today. We've heard it throughout this conference. We're going to hear it more.

First, better accountability. No longer is education a process issue. It is an issue of accountability to graduate at successful levels, the majority and totality of the work-force population that come through there.

Second. Education in this process is no longer a singular issue. It's a comprehensive view. It deals with the expectations that students have as they come through the process, in terms of what's at the end of the process.

If I don't expect to be able to get a job, and to participate in society's benefits, I don't do real well staying in a classroom, listening to reading, writing and arithmetic.

If the family structure and values and support systems are not there, it cannot be left to the school system and a teacher to solve it. If value systems don't exist and aren't supported, we can't expect it to occur some place in a benign workplace.

Third, targeting. We're going to hear the word more and more. Today, 70% of Chapter I funds go to children in the 1st through 8th grades. What happens to the 13, 14, 15 year olds, where the major shift in learning and remedial access begins to take place, if, in fact, that's the dividing point at which we either see a successful student begin to move up through the system or drop out?

We're not making our investments at that point within the system, either in the main-line school system or in the subsidiary support systems that deal with those issues. It's at that very point that we've withdrawn the support needed to deal with keeping those people successfully in the system.

We know in this country where the disadvantaged, at-risk, major populations are. Our political system in the Congress -- and in the state legislatures -- has been unwilling to accept responsibility for moving resources to where those issues are. They are not in rural Wyoming. They're in Detroit and Boston and other labor markets. They're in indigenous cities where black populations have suffered.

And until we begin, as a society, to recognize that we know what the issue is, where it is and how to deal with it, and then begin to put the resources where that problem is, it will be difficult, if not nigh impossible, to solve it.

Lastly, flexibility. The school systems for a number of years have suffered under rigorous and tight controls against theoretical processes. Until we begin to loosen up those constraints on teacher certification and on school structures, to allow creativity to exist and to grow and to allow each community to form a process to begin to deal with these issues, we will not be able to reach beyond the parameters that we have already set.

This is not an issue of bad teachers. It's not an issue of failure of teachers. It's not an issue of failure of the school system per se. It is an issue of the society having begun to change because our demographics have changed, our work places are changing, our people's needs are changing, and we now must change the processes that we are a part of to meet that greater expectation.

Jonathan Kozol, Author

I spent a recent Christmas in New York City visiting with mothers and children in an unimaginable human warehouse called a welfare hotel. There were almost 1,900 homeless people in one squalid building, 1,400 children and 500 parents, many of whom could scarcely read a word.

I was there again not long ago. One mother asked me if I would read to her something she had just received from Bellevue Hospital, which she didn't understand. I read it to her. It told her that her baby had been lead poisoned by the building in which the city placed her.

I met another mother who was weeping, moaning would be more precise, because after eight months of pregnancy, her child was born blind. They were homeless at the time she was pregnant. She had worked since she was 17. She wasn't lazy. She wasn't crazy. She wasn't a drug addict or an alcoholic. She was poor. She was evicted from her home in which she had been living doubled up with someone else.

Fifty percent of the homeless families in New York City were previously doubled up or tripled up in overcrowded homes with other families. This woman was one of them. For the entire eight months of her pregnancy, she lived in one of the most dangerous and lead-infested homeless shelters in New York. As a result, she was hungry often. More to the point, she was given no prenatal care.

Although we usually talk about teenagers at conferences like this, infants who are poor and hungry, whose mothers lack prenatal care, are very much at risk as well. Many will never live to be teenagers.

This little boy was alive, but blind, deaf and brain-damaged. He weighed only four pounds at birth and lived only eight months. During those months his mother lived in eight or 10 different shelters. Doctors asked the city to provide her with a permanent home, but the city was unable to offer her a home or safe shelter.

The rent allowance for a welfare family of three people in New York is $244 a month. The lowest rent starts around $350.

Unable to work because of her baby, unable to rent even a cold-water flat within a burned-out building, this woman lived in the subways and the shelters with her baby in the cold of winter in New York. She couldn't get her child Medicaid. She couldn't get WIC, the nutrition money for women and infants. As many of you know, 50% of those in need of WIC do not receive it.

The baby had epilepsy. It had seizures. She had to pay for his medicine out of her food allowance. When the baby died, it was buried in New York's Potter's Field, the public burial ground.

Just as we conceal the poor, the homeless, or attempt to deny their existence, we conceal their children when they die. Potter's Field is not in New York City, where it might disturb us by proximity, but on an island in Long Island Sound. It's part of the prison colony.

The dead children of poor people are buried by prison inmates. Their bodies are brought there from the hospital morgues in wooden boxes, stacked three deep and two across. No ceremony memorializes their existence. Parents can't attend their burial. It's just as well. It wouldn't be consoling.

Why did I speak tonight of homeless children?

Because the title of this conference, though apt, is a trifle antiseptic. Youth at risk is a sanitized term. It doesn't carry much effect, much emotion. Devastated children would be

closer to the truth in many cases. Youth at risk implies a possible danger in the future. But we don't live in the future. And it is the present sorrows we need to face.

Second, I speak of this because there is a tendency at conferences like these to lose sight of the human price and the human texture of the discussion and find ourselves entrapped in endless arguments about the data and the numbers. I hope that we can overcome this inclination.

To paraphrase the worlds of Harold Washington, the later mayor of Chicago, if even 10 or 200 children are ill-treated in America, that is sufficient cause for indignation. When hundreds of thousands of children are so treated, it is cause for more than indignation, but for shame.

Whatever the numbers offered by the people working with the poor, these numbers a priori are assumed to be too high. To the extent that people are in pain, it must be they themselves who are to blame. If they are illiterate, they must be lazy. If they have no homes, they must be crazy. If they are not lazy and not crazy, they must be recent immigrants to the United States. And it is implied that they are exceptional and therefore need not give us pause.

Then, there is always a study pushed through which inevitably comes up with much lower numbers than those that have previously been accepted by major universities. It would make sense if there were a disagreement on the numbers, and it would make sense that oftentimes the government's numbers would be lower than those of us who work in the field. But it is remarkable in the present administration how, every time there is a question that pertains to human justice, the numbers summoned up are always lower.

I realize we live in a time of scarce resources, and concern for the budget deficit is important. But it is agonizing when I get asked, "Can you really solve problems by throwing money at them?" I always wish, just once for one day we could try an experiment. We would throw money at the Pentagon and allocate money to people who work with children of the poor.

John Mudd, Massachusetts
Undersecretary of Human Services

Most, if not all of us, recognize as we try to deal with some of the most troubled children and families, whether they're homeless, pregnant teens, victims of child abuse, school dropouts, substance abusers, that we can't solve the problem alone. Certainly, the Human Services Agency can't.

In Massachusetts, the executive Office Of Human Services is an umbrella agency over 16 operating agencies, which range from a newly formed $3.5 million Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to a $2.5 million Department of Public Welfare. We have a number of agencies that are particularly concerned with children, including the Department of Social Services and its concern with child abuse and day care, the Department of Mental Health, Department of Mental Retardation and a very unusual internal state advocacy organization, a new Office for Children.

But there is no simple Human Services entity in any local community. There are 15 or 20 different entities. When Governor Dukakis began to go around the state talking about how

we could involve local officials and how we could deal with the problems of breaking down the barriers to opportunity for our citizens, mayors didn't know what human services were, what agencies there were, even though they were spending $15 to $20 million a year in their communities.

School superintendents and other agencies also had no real sense of what human services were. So to be involved in a project like Commonwealth Futures, we had to get our own human services act in order and to coordinate ourselves before we could coordinate with others.

What we did was form a Children's Policy Group, chaired by the secretary of human services, but involving the commissioners of all the various operating agencies that are concerned with children and the commissioner of education.

But we also had to attack the problem in the communities. Most of our agencies operated through their own separate field systems. Many had 40 separate area offices operating all across the state. We decided to form area administrators' committees, which would include the area directors from social services or mental health or mental retardation or youth services and so on, to get our own people together. Then we could speak with some coherence and coordination with local school superintendents, mayors, with Private Industry Council chairs, in trying to devise the Commonwealth Futures program.

What difference has this made for the kids we're concerned about? The first, obviously, is simply breaking down the bureaucratic barriers of isolation and insulation and ignorance about each other that pervades bureaucratic systems.

Most people didn't know about us unless there was some catastrophic case of child abuse or some other crisis in their communities. Our contact with schools was often simply fighting over who is going to split the payments for residential placements for special-need kids. We had to get beyond that kind of approach if we were going to deal with the sorts of problems that Commonwealth Futures was addressing.

Through Futures, we're beginning to see some of the fruits of this new cooperation, some kind of common identification and assessment of kids who are getting into trouble, both in school and outside, the development of individual service plans that cross over agency boundaries and responsibilities.

As part of a series of initiatives, the Office of Human Services has a $1.2 million pregnant and unmarried teen challenge fund to finance projects the broad community supports in targeted areas throughout the state. Our agencies have targeted day-care programs, and teen mothers are involved in the projects whether through the Department of Social Services or the Employment and Training Program. Although we've placed over 40,000 welfare recipients into jobs, we're beginning to face the problem of more difficult populations, and we've targeted pregnant teens as a special population that we're going to focus on with employment and training efforts.

Human services agencies have contracted for outreach staff to work with young people enrolled through Futures and special school projects. We take the responsibility for getting to the families, making sure the kids get to school and working with the families after school. These are preliminary indications of some of the kinds of cooperative actions which we can expect to become more extensive and significant in the future.

We'd be less than honest if we didn't recognize the resistance and reluctance of many of our staff and many of the educators to working together, but through Futures, the effort has not only begun to chip away at these bureaucratic barriers, but with the involvement of local mayors and jobs training officials, is laying the groundwork for much more important projects in the future.

It's important to realize we're not going to handle these problems with new, little add-on programs. We have to change the basic systems and the way we operate so that we can use the full resources of the human services agencies, the schools, the job-training authorities and local governments to bear on dealing with the problems of at-risk youth.

A. Craig Phillips, Superintendent of Public Instruction, North Carolina

In North Carolina's 1983-85 general assembly, a most significant set of steps took place. Our general assembly took a full, new look under the pressure of reform and under the pressure of our Education for Economic Growth Task Force, passed legislation directing the North Carolina State Board of Education to develop a Basic Education Program.

The state board of education adopted a Basic Education Program to be fully implemented in an eight-year span of time. By 1993, the target is an expenditure of roughly $1.5 billion more than current expenditures right now.

The most important thing is what the legislature wrote into the law. This was unprecedented for us. The legislature said, "It is our intention to fully fund the basic education programs of North Carolina by 1993."

What are the pieces of it? A full dropout prevention program geared with standards, with commitments, with process, with the issues and the options. Our state board of education has made a part of its commitment to reduce the dropout rate by 50%.

Beginning with the 1987-88 school year -- a dropout referral system was required of all school systems. Although it's pretty technical in its description, it says to the local school system: put out your hand and hold on to that youngster, some way or other, and don't let him or her go, but find another alternative. And it lays out the alternatives.

It does require of the 140 school systems that they not simply close the book and say -- "too bad." We get a little bit of grousing about that in a way, but in its simplest terms, it just says, hang on, don't let them go. You've got to find a way to hang on.

The other features in our Basic Education Program are a new standard course of study, a set of guides that are the most refined we've ever had in our state, that say what is it that we want kids to have a chance to learn? What are the skills? At what level do they fall?

It is specific at different levels with specific disciplines. We have under way a preschool screening program beginning with 15 pilot programs with $400,000 spent in 1981. In 1988, there will be 19 programs with a target set by the general assembly of close to $2 million to provide for full preschool screening, our first step in looking more specifically at youngsters entering the school program.

Next, a tremendous increase in student services personnel. We will have over 5,000 new positions in 1993 that will go to local school systems. Again, remember that our state provides most of the resources. This includes counselors, psychologists, therapists and others at the discretion of local systems. Promotion and retention standards tied to summer school have been provided by our general assembly. This past year we have served 20,000 youngsters, paid for by the State of North Carolina, who are kids who did not meet promotion standards at the beginning, in grades 3, 6 and 8. We doubled the number from 20,000 to 40,000 this past summer.

This is four to six weeks of a completely different kind of experience -- one to one in a lot of cases, small groups, teachers who are excited about the kind of environment in which they have a chance to do better than ever before. Our projection for the summer of 1988, is to serve grades 1 to 11, at the discretion of the local system, with $24 million of state money to pay for an extension of an educational opportunity for a whole lot of kids who have that need. We have had some amazing responses to this in terms of what's happening to kids.

There is good evidence that this summer concentrated effort and a whole different approach have expanded the achievement horizons of many kids, and these primarily are at-risk kids.

I would tell you two things. One, if something's going to happen to all kids -- and that includes kids at risk -- there's got to be a plan, there's got to be some commitment by all levels of responsibility. Although that doesn't say that dollars are the simple answer, it does take dollars and it does take all kinds of resources.

But the commitment has to be there. I happen to believe that there has to be enough direction and leadership to it, and I happen to believe that if a state board of education, with its staff, is in the position of giving that kind of leadership, then something can happen.

Raymond C. Scheppach, Executive Director,
National Governors' Association

You can't have a competitive economy in today's world when you have high school-dropout rates, high levels of illiteracy and increasing welfare dependency. By the same token, unless you have a competitive economy you cannot generate the economic growth, income and tax revenues needed to invest in dropouts and others who are at risk of failure. Therefore, you need to move both forward simultaneously to make our economy more competitive and to be able to make the investments needed to enable all of our people to be more productive.

Let's look, first, at the economic side of the equation. The United States came out of World War II in a dominant economic position. What was once, however, a predictable international marketplace has now changed. It is very interdependent, it is rapidly changing, and it is a very uncertain market.

Perhaps the most important statistic is that real wages in the United States peaked in 1973 and have declined every year since. In fact, real wages have declined 17% over the last 15 years. Workers in Germany now make 20% more than U.S. workers, and most Western European workers make more than American workers.

Why are real wages down substantially? To the extent that you can put your finger on the cause, you'd have to argue that productivity in this country, our ability to increase output per unit of labor input, is down substantially. Why? Economists have analyzed productivity over the last 100 years, and, oddly enough, the major contributing factor to productivity is not capital information or technology; it is the education, training and skill of the labor force. Productivity is down because one in seven fail to graduate from high school, one in 10 suffer from drug abuse, and 23 million people in this country are functionally illiterate.

I would argue that states really have more to do with productivity than does any other level of government, and there are three overall strategies that states can use. First, they can help create more efficient work sites, be it a mine or a farm or a factory. They can do this by fostering closer linkages between research and business, by encouraging technology, particularly the transfer of technology and by encouraging good labor-management cooperation.

The second overall strategy is that states can help develop more responsive communities. When we look at successful towns, small cities and areas, we find that the successful ones are those that have strong community leadership, even if they are located in larger areas of distress. Where the mayor, officials in local and state government, bankers and business people get together, they can do much to create a good economy.

The third, and overriding, state strategy is to help create a more productive work force. Not only is this the key to productivity, from an economic standpoint it is the area where state government has a lot of influence. State leaders can do a number of traditional things that we all talk about -- establishing better programs for scientists and engineers, helping to build better bridges between the school system and the economy so that we're training for the right types of jobs and encouraging the private sector to stop narrow skill training and get into broader training so that we can have a more adaptable labor force.

But perhaps more important, states have a strong role in bringing down the barriers to high-risk populations. This is where we can get the greatest gain in productivity over the long term.

What else do we know about state actions to help high-risk populations? The first thing we have to realize is that there is considerable interrelationship between these groups. People who drop out often were also teenagers who were pregnant or who used drugs. There is obviously a relationship between dropouts and illiteracy. Teenage pregnancy, illiteracy and drug abuse also are factors that can lead to dependency on welfare. So we need to take a holistic approach with these high-risk populations. We can't deal with one problem without also looking at the others.

The second key is prevention. We have to intervene early. The dollars have to be up front. We know from experience that treatment is far less effective than prevention. The type of prevention will obviously depend upon the age of the child. We often have to think in terms of multiple interventions. When we intervene, we must recognize the individual's needs, but also the needs of the family. We need to work with state and local community groups to find new ways of thinking about these problems.

Preschool education and choice among programs is important. We need better information, so that we can target the neediest. School staff need more professional training so they can intervene effectively. We need more incentives to get some of the best teachers to help with this problem.

Now a few final comments in terms of some across-the-board strategies that I think state governments need to consider as they move forward on both fronts -- how to make the state and the nation more competitive and how to help with these high-risk populations.

First, we do need to build a national consensus and a national awareness that we are now in a global economy. We have to think internationally, from the way we educate our children to the types of products we develop.

Second, to compete in this world, we have to invest efficiently in education, in training, in research and in infrastructure.

Third, we need to help citizens, children, employers and communities anticipate change, because we are now in a period of rapid change -- and we need to turn what may be a problem into an opportunity. There is much we can gain from this new international competitive era.

Fourth, not only do we need to anticipate change, we need to intervene early. This is true not only with high-risk populations, but also with plant closings. We've found out from successful Canadian assistance programs that by the time a plant closes, 80% of the employees can already be in new jobs -- if you intervene early. We don't do that.

Fifth, I think we must break down rigid bureaucratic structures in all institutions -- labor, management, federal government, state government. Three key words to think about are adaptability, responsiveness and flexibility. Economic development people have to talk to human resource people. We're all in this together, and we need to develop programs across the board, and we need to be able to move quickly.

Sixth, I think we have to tailor state programs to the needs of workers and at-risk populations, communities and so on. Every state is different. The types of groups that each deals with are different, so programs must be tailored to meet individual needs.

Bob Schwartz, Special Assistant to the Governor for Educational Affairs, Massachusetts

The Commonwealth Futures Project is an attempt to help 18 or 20 Massachusetts communities, mostly cities with high concentrations of poor kids, put together comprehensive communitywide strategies for helping to keep kids in school and helping those who are out of school find their way back into education, training or employment.

The project is based on three premises. We began from the premise that the problem, in terms of serving at-risk kids, was not necessarily a funding problem. That is, the issue was not lack of dollars, but rather that the dollars flow through so many different funding streams, so many different pipelines, each with its own eligibility requirements, application deadlines, sign-offs, advisory councils, etc., that the inevitable result is a collection of disparate and discrete projects or programs to attack one or another piece of the dropout issues, not a comprehensive, coherent strategy.

We have pumped about $200 million new dollars into cities with the highest concentrations of poor kids, some categorical, some just through tilting the aid formula by which state funds are distributed. And yet the problem is how to gain access to those dollars in such

a way that you can really use them to help build a comprehensive plan at the community level to attack this problem.

A second premise is that we view the dropout problem as a community problem, not simply as a school problem, requiring top-level community leadership, beginning with mayors and other local elected officials.

In each of the cities that we are working with, we require a project steering committee in which, at a minimum, the mayor, the school superintendent, the chair of the Private Industry Council and the ranking human services official from the state government participate.

A third premise is that if the state is going to ask communities to behave differently, that is, to look across the normal turf lines and really try to think comprehensively about the dropout issue, we, at the state level, must lead by example.

Hence, this project operates out of the governor's office. We have a steering committee that consists of cabinet members in human services, economic affairs, education in the communities and development. There is a work group in which these people all serve, drawn from key staff people at the agency level, who meet and work on a regular basis to troubleshoot issues or problems that arise from communities participating in the project.

On the basis of 18 months' experience, we feel the interagency strategy is clearly the most promising. We began by identifying the 23 communities that we felt had the highest concentration of at-risk kids. The governor sent a letter to the chief local elected official, the school superintendent, school board chair and Private Industry Council in each of those communities, inviting them to a meeting and asking them to bring an interagency team that would be willing to work together to develop the first crack at a communitywide plan to deal with this issue.

Our general strategy in designing this project was, after we invited the target communities, to run a competition and to begin with the five or six communities that were most committed, most ready, that already had a running start at interagency efforts.

We gave them a very short time to put together an initial program application. Work-group members reviewed the proposals, interviewed the community leadership and listened to presentations about why their community deserved to participate in the project. We initially gave them planning grants of $40,000 to $50,000 to develop a full-blown, comprehensive, multi-year plan and then some operating funds.

One community felt its major priority was to establish a central clearinghouse for information and service referral and to work with the school system to build a common database on all kids in their system.

In Boston, the planning team looked at its current array of programs, picked out the single one it felt had been most effective on a pilot basis of reducing the dropout rate in 9th grade. They then expanded it to every comprehensive high school in the city and extended it to 10th grade as well.

In every case, the communities that initiated new programs or strategies did so only after a broad-based review of existing programs and services, after identifying the holes and gaps in services and after committing their own resources alongside new resources from the state.

Al Shanker, President,
American Federation of Teachers

Restructuring is fundamental, especially for the "at-risk" issue. A lot of what I hear about restructuring isn't restructuring at all.

Restructuring does not just mean doing a lot of additional good things. It implies that, in addition to doing things that we're not now doing and which need to be done, we may be doing many things in the wrong way. It implies that we need to rethink the ways in which schools have traditionally worked, and ask ourselves whether schools are organized in such a way as to do those things that we want to do for youngsters.

I recently read a book by a British management expert. He asked a question that went something like this.

Suppose that you were in charge of some business that mainly had office workers. And suppose that you had just hired somebody and you took that person and sat him down at a desk and said, "Now, Jack, here is your desk and you're going to be working in this room, and here are 25 other people who have their desks in this room. And there's your foreman or your boss or your manager -- she's right here, and she's going to tell you what your task is. And we'd like you just to do your task, and please don't talk to any of the people at the other desks. They're busy doing their work."

And then she says: "Now I want to tell you something, though. This office is a little different. In 45 minutes you're going to hear a bell ring. We're going to ask you to leave your desk and go up two flights of stairs. All the other workers move around every 45 minutes, too. They're going to go to different rooms. You're going to have 25 different workers in your next office and we don't want you to talk to them, either.

"You're going to have a different boss there. I want you to listen to him carefully. And you're going to have a different task to do. And as a matter of fact, all day long, every 45 minutes, we're going to move you to a different desk, we're going to surround you with a different bunch of workers, and we're going to give you a different personality to relate to who's going to be your manager and give you a different task."

Well, that's exactly what we do with secondary school kids. If we view these kids as inanimate objects to be worked on, then this makes sense. This is a factory, where you're moving an object from one station to another and where people are doing things to these inanimate objects.

If you think of the kid as a worker, a different system comes to mind. Here's where I disagree that the student is a consumer. The student is a worker. Without that student working, reading, writing, listening, doing a whole bunch of other things, that student isn't going to learn anything. We can have excellent teaching and excellent books and excellent materials. This whole concept, that all you've got to do is pour stuff in from the outside and the kid is just sitting there to receive it, is all wrong, and we know it's wrong.

We've got a lot of those kids sitting, but they're not receiving, and they're often not receiving even when the stuff around them is quite good. So, what we need to do is to re-think. Is there a way of reorganizing a school so that the kids don't have to move every 45 minutes? Is there a way of organizing it so that they are able to talk to their "co-

workers" and, as a matter of fact, be helped that way? Is there a way to give students a chance to reflect, to solve meaningful problems, to get real personal help?

Another question: Have we organized schools in a way that's good for kids when we organize 1st grade, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th? Namely, a kid stays in school for a whole year, and then we say you have either been promoted this year or you have failed the whole year.

Would it help kids to learn and to be engaged if there were two semesters a year? What if there were four semesters a year? What if there were one every three or four weeks? Isn't it easier for a student not to do his work in September and October if he thinks he's got 10 months to get it all done than if he thinks he's only got three weeks to get it all done?

We say that children all learn at their own pace. We all say that -- kids are not alike and they all learn at their own pace. But we don't act as if we believe it because we have them all come into school on the same day. And the reason they have to come in at the same day is that's when the teacher starts talking. We say they all learn at different rates, but if they're going to learn, they'd better be able to listen and learn at the same rate that the teacher is presenting it, because the teacher is not going to have time to present it again for each and every child. We say one thing and we do another.

We say that kids learn in many different ways, but we don't really do it in school. John Goodlad and others found that 80% of classroom time is spent on lecturing. We say you either learn by listening to the teacher talk or you learn by reading a book, and if you don't learn in these two ways, it's too bad. We will not provide you with a videotape or with an audiotape or with a computer. We will not allow you to learn through other kids or with simulation games or with people in the community.

We say you learn in different ways, but you'd better learn in the way schools dish it out. Otherwise you're dumb, and you're not making it, and you're going to be branded. We say we're trying to help kids, and we're trying to develop their egos and their self-image, but we call on them once or twice a day to answer questions. The child who gets it wrong morning and afternoon, and tomorrow morning and tomorrow afternoon is essentially being publicly humiliated in front of all of the other kids. We only have to do that five or 10 times before the child gets absolutely turned off and becomes a dropout in his own head.

So I would hope that we will stop using the word "restructuring" as just a general term for anything that we propose, and say yes, we ought to propose a lot of things, but restructuring is different.

Restructuring means taking a look at everything that happens in a school from the child's point of view. If we do that, we will go a long way toward solving not only the dropout problem, but the problem for the kids who are still staying but are also "dropped out."

Wayne A. Stanton, Administrator,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The problem is dramatically worsening as far as we see it in Health and Human Services (HHS). It's not that kids are worse than they were, or bad, but they're not exposed to the right things or the right environment.

I think that all youth are at risk, especially those at the high-school level. We need to be concerned about the dropouts, the teenage pregnancy problem, about drugs and about the health and total environment of the kids. That's why HHS Secretary Otis Bowen formed the Family Support Administration a year-and-a-half ago.

I thought some of the discussion this morning seemed very traditional. I didn't see much about the school's need to have more change and more dynamics and to be less isolated from the community.

I didn't hear much about what you can do, as educators, to deal with the 20% dropout rate, to alleviate those kinds of problems. I didn't hear anything about the drug problems that permeate our schools, or delinquency.

I suggest you look at the kid's total environment, but I think schools need to be bigger and better, take up more of a young person's time, not less. There needs to be a restructuring of the school system, especially as it relates to kids in their afternoon time when many dropouts leave school.

I didn't see, this morning, a reaction to restructuring our schools and our environment. I really saw too much turfism. I saw an absence of willingness to involve business, labor, industry, all kinds of government services. And I didn't hear anything about inviting these people to participate in those times of your school day after you've completed your formal activities. The period of 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. is especially critical in what happens to young people and could be spent on educational activities.

I'm convinced that if the leadership of the school system, the school board, the principals, would ask the community to participate, they would be anxious to do it. You have to bring the people to you and to have heterogeneity in your approach of ideas and values and ethics.

If kids are exposed to more things in school, more things about their environment and their community, they'll respond favorably.

George Troy, President, Training and Education Group, Control Data Corporation

First, as a representative of the technology industry, it is imperative that I identify the primary challenge society faces as it implements technology. That challenge is, how do we avoid having a two-class society -- or put another way, those who have access to technology and those who do not.

The disparity for many children at risk is compounded by the fact that they come from home environments that cannot afford technology, and they attend schools where technology is missing. In contrast, children exposed to technology at home and in our schools have what amounts to a double advantage. Changing what happens at home stretches our ability; but, on the other hand, we determine the resources for the classroom, and top priority needs to be given to the equitable distribution of technology in our schools so all children can benefit.

My second point pertains to an at-risk population that, in my opinion, receives little attention. It is the children who live in rural isolation. These are not the kids that

people think about when the term "at risk" is used, but they are as educationally disadvantaged as those at risk in our urban schools. We run the risk of failing to provide these children with the educational tools necessary to function in modern society, but preparing people for yesterday makes us guilty of neglect.

Technology in the form of computers, interactive video, satellite broadcasting represents one of the few ways to reach those isolated from our resources. And no longer can we argue that it is technologically impossible to deliver high quality education to isolated rural settings. It is feasible. There may be distribution problems, but it is economically feasible.

A third point to consider is the role of the individual learner and his or her responsibility in the educational process. When we talk about the roles and relationships of the various partners in education, the individual learner is often left out. Schools, business, governmental agencies and individual learners all have clearly defined responsibilities.

Schools should identify the learning needs and how best to meet those needs. Business has an obligation to use its research and development of resources to create products that meet those needs. In the past, business often created products in isolation and marketed them on the basis of a perceived need. Well, that's changed. Today, pressured by global competition, American corporations are both aggressively exploring new frontiers and eagerly responding to the marketplace and the end-user.

Governmental agencies have a responsibility to create the rules or legal framework and provide the funding so that schools have the necessary resources. And the individual learner has the responsibility to take advantage of those resources.

The fourth and final point deals with the environment in general, and the need to create a learning climate that is healthy and safe for all children. We cannot expect urban schools to achieve true education reform when the impoverished and drug-invested neighborhoods where many of them located go largely ignored by the local community.

It is interesting to note that despite general indifference to the environment surrounding them, urban schools are witnessing improvement in standardized test scores, retention rates, reading readiness, reasoning and analytic capacity, motivation, attendance and self-confidence. But the environment remains an issue that has to be dealt with effectively if we are really going to accomplish much in our inner city schools.

Now how, then, should industry respond to the problem? We need to respond by taking action: participating with the educational system in the state, local and federal governments, working together to provide those creative solutions necessary to see the day when the only youth at risk will be that small group who are there at their own choosing, by not taking advantage of the opportunities that have truly been made available.

We are still pushing computer-based instruction as a critical element in education reform with investments in technologies to meet the requirements of increased teacher productivity and enhanced student achievement.

Now, we recognize that the use of technology is only one part of the educational reform process, but used effectively it can be a very important part.

Raymond Uhalde, Deputy Administrator,
U.S. Department of Labor

During the remainder of this century, we're going to experience a labor force growth that is slower than at any time since the 1930s. The number of young workers is declining both relatively and absolutely. An increasing proportion of the new entrants are going to be minority youth, from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Only 15% of the new entrants, between now and the year 2000, are going to be native, white males, whereas currently 47% of the labor force are native, white males. That is a profound difference. Almost two-thirds of the new entrants between now and 2000 will be women, and 61% of women by the year 2000 are going to be working. By the year 2000, women are going to constitute 47% of the labor force, with virtual parity in terms of share of the labor force by women in the year 2000.

With this continued feminization of the work force, we expect demands for day care, more time off from work for pregnancy, child rearing and parent care -- that is the care of older relatives. So too, we will find increased interest in part-time work, flexible work, contingent work, stay-at-home work -- a lot of changes that employers are going to have to accommodate themselves to, but also things that should be of interest to educators and planners at the state and local levels.

Nonwhites will make up about 29% of the new entrants. Minority workers, as we know, are less likely to have benefited from satisfactory schooling and training, and many will have language problems. Immigrants will represent the largest share of the increase in the population in the work force since the first world war. About 600,000 immigrants, legal and illegal, are projected to enter the U.S. each year through the balance of this century. Two-thirds of these persons, particularly in the South and the West, are going to enter the labor force. The work force is going to become older. The average age is going to rise from 35 to 39 years old by the year 2000.

All of these factors mean change for the nation, for the employers, for the workers themselves, for our youth, for state and local policy makers, for our schools and training institutions and even the military.

On the demand side, we see jobs continuing to shift from goods-producing and manufacturing to the service sector. Only about 8% of the new jobs between now and the year 2000 are going to be in manufacturing. And the share of gross national product or our output, in real terms, that will come from manufacturing is going to drop from about 21% now to under 17% by the year 2000.

This is going to put a premium on productivity gains in the service sector; and this, again, ties back to what we are talking about with at-risk youth. The productivity gains that are going to be demanded are going to be primarily in the service sector because the service sector is where the primary amount of output in our economy is going to take place. Eighty-three percent of the gross national product or output in this country is going to take place in the service-producing sector, not manufacturing.

Why is this important, to emphasize productivity in the service sector? Because productivity is the key not only to our economic growth, but also to our standard of living in this country. Since 1981, productivity growth in the manufacturing sector has exceeded 4%

annually, while productivity growth in the service sector has bumped along at about 1% or more.

Although predicting the nature of the future jobs -- that is, the content of these jobs -- is more controversial than projecting the demographics, the experts conclude that skill demands for the new jobs are generally rising. About three-fourths of the jobs available in the 1990s will require some postsecondary education.

The fastest growing jobs are going to be in the professional, technical, administrative and sales fields, requiring high levels of problem-solving skills, analytical skills, communication skills, teamwork skills.

In the study, Work Force 2000, the Labor Department tried to make some preliminary projections of the skill content of jobs and the skill attributes of the emerging labor force entrants. Of current jobs now in the economy, about 18% can be held by people with three years or less of high school education. By the year 2000, only 14% of jobs would be able to use people with that level of education.

On the other side, 30% of jobs in the year 2000 will require four years of college or more. Currently, about 22% of jobs require four years of college or more.

Currently, 9% of jobs require the lowest skill levels. In the year 2000, about 4% of the jobs will require that. Using this same combined measure of language, reasoning and math, 41% of the new jobs in the year 2000 will require the highest categories of aptitude, whereas only 24% currently require such proficiency in the jobs.

In looking at the demographics, we have come to conclude that school systems need to take more responsibility for those who don't succeed the first time around. That means both dropouts and low-literate graduates. We need to provide alternative public learning arrangements for those who haven't achieved in the traditional school settings. We need to tailor instruction to fit the needs of the students. Everybody does not succeed by the same model.

Business, the military, higher education are going to have to do more remediation of basic skills deficiencies. Despite the fact that we need to talk about redoubling our efforts to improve what's going on within the schools, let's face it -- anybody who is 18 years old and older now is not likely returning to school. And if they are low-literate or have deficiencies, dropout youth are beyond the regular system.

Last, I think we need to try to instill a true appreciation for lifelong learning and a sense of individual responsibility for continual skill upgrading and retraining.

Ben Wattenberg, Editor,
American Enterprise Institute

The real problem is: "Do we have an education problem in the United States?" And the answer is: "Sure, we do." "And should we do something about it?" And the answer is. "Of course we should." Is it getting better or worse? Well, you can measure that either quantitatively or qualitatively. Maybe we could go quantitatively first.

If you look at some of the recent materials, the high school dropout rate that we've all been hearing so much about is going down. It's been going down for 45 years. It's gone down for blacks and for whites and for men and for women. Is it a problem? Sure, it's a problem. Is it a crisis? Obviously, it's not a crisis.

Basically, the same thing is happening in college. More people are going on to college. Enrollments in nursery schools in this country from 1970 to today, went from 37% of our kids to 57% of our kids. The funding for all levels of schooling from 1960 to today, went from $25 billion to about $250 billion.

The number of foreign students studying in the United States of America in the last 15 years has gone up by 300%. We've got almost 400,000 foreign students in the United States. And they're coming to our universities for a reason. They think that's where the best schooling is in the world. And they're probably right.

This is not to say that we don't have qualitative problems in our schools, because we do. But, we have a lot of things going for us as well.

Now, why do we have the problems that we have? I think that there are a couple of things at work. We have embarked on an educational revolution in the United States that says -- and really the only country in the world where this is happening -- that every kid ought to go through high school. The dropout rate is only about 10% now. Ninety percent of our kids are going to high school.

If you measure young Americans at ages 25 to 29, what percentage of them has completed four years of high school? It's in the high 80th percentile. If you measure enrollment at age 17 or age 18, you get a lower number. Some of those kids are out of school for a year and come back. And some of the kids go into the armed services and get their GED. But, by the time they are young adults, you are talking about 90% of our kids in high school.

The biggest social welfare problem in America today is poor children. It's a disgraceful problem. And it is caused, in my judgment, by what we've all heard about, the female-headed family. The children of those families are poor.

You can build a big tent over all of that, if you say, for example, that we should starkly increase the standard tax exemption in the United States. Instead of the standard tax exemption for everyone going up from $1,080 to $2,000, suppose you made it $7,000 or $8,000 for every kid under 18. You would be providing an awful lot of money for parents of young children in this country.

There are a lot of other ways to do it, but that's a quick way. Tie that in to a package of things like subsidized day care and paid maternal leave -- mandatory, in my judgment -- and a whole lot of other things, you would be well on your way toward solving a problem and doing it in a political manner that would put together some very diverse groups in this country.

<u>Gary Wehlage, Associate Director,
National Center on Effective Secondary Schools</u>

Review of the literature indicates there are three broad "causes" or, more accurately, correlates of dropping out. The first is related to family and social background. Studies

have correlated dropping out with low socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, single-parent home, low educational attainment by parents and siblings, English not the primary language of the home, and mobility (frequent family moves).

The second set of correlates can be labeled personal problems. These cut across social class lines. They include drug/alcohol abuse, pregnancy, psychological depression and low self-esteem, physical health problems and trauma produced by death or divorce in the family.

The third set is school-related factors. These include course failure, credit deficiency, retention in grade, suspension, disciplinary difficulties and a belief that the school is hostile to or unconcerned about the student.

Obviously, any individual student is affected by only some of these "causes" and the impact is unequally distributed among individuals. Dropping out is often a complex phenomenon with both long-term and immediate or precipitating causes. Given this complexity, still it is important to note that studies show school factors to be the most powerful predictors of dropping out. School failure and disciplinary difficulties produce the highest correlations with dropping out.

There is some evidence that we now have in this country the worst of all possible worlds -- a high dropout rate and graduates who are also less than competent. While there are dangers from social promotion, it seems that policies resulting in massive suspensions, grade retentions and course failures are not the way to obtain excellence and competency. Reducing the number of students who drop out can begin with an examination of the policies and practices that now push out the at-risk student.

Once negative school policies are ameliorated, what interventions are likely to reduce the dropout rate? Almost everyone is in favor of "early intervention" as a preventative strategy. However, it is not clear what this means.

Prenatal and postnatal care could be an aspect of early intervention. Early childhood or preschool programs have been advocated by some people.

The middle school/junior high age would appear to be a crucial point at which intervention could take place. This is the time when a student develops a clear academic self-concept. This is when students begin to sort themselves into "winners" and "losers" in school. Unfortunately there is not much research on interventions for at-risk students at the middle-school level. Moreover, there are some dangers associated with such interventions. One is that some of those who are at risk will be missed in the net that is cast to catch them. There is no certainty in educators' efforts at early identification. Another danger is that some who are actually not at risk will be mislabeled and treated by the intervention. There is also a problem of creating negative labels through categorizing and special treatment.

It is at the high school age that I find the greatest number and type of interventions. The basic problem here is choosing from among a range of programs both in terms of philosophy and in the kind of strategy used. High school strategies can be divided into three levels of change required.

Level One requires minimal change in the school. The assumption here is that the school is basically sound, but there are a few students who need assistance or "fixing up" if they are

to graduate. To do this schools can prescribe additional counseling, academic remediation, attendance monitoring and possibly holding out certain rewards, such as a work release program.

This brings us to Level Two interventions. The assumption here is that the problems of at-risk students and the environment of the school are interconnected. Environmental and structural changes are needed. The most obvious examples of this kind of change are alternative schools, schools-within-schools, magnet schools and special programs involving a vocational core.

Level Three interventions call for restructuring schools in the context of a community partnership. This strategy requires some or all of the changes cutlined in Levels One and Two, but the problem of at-risk students goes beyond the school to become a community problem. Whole communities recognize and take ownership of the need to keep students in school and provide them with a worthwhile education.

Community ownership of the problem is the key. This emerges when community groups and institutions recognize that it is in their self-interest that young people not drop out of school. The community partnership model calls upon all of the major constituents to work together in the interests of youth. The constituents around which a partnership can be built are: mayor and city council, chamber of commerce, business and industry, the courts and law enforcement, social services, labor unions, higher education, schools, parents and young people. This kind of partnership will establish broad public ownership for community-wide solutions to the dropout problem. I see the community partnership model providing for a systemic attack on youth problems.

Recalling that the literature on dropouts indicates a broad range of interconnected causes--family background, personal problems and school factors, it is a community partnership model that is most likely to be effective in responding to the complexity of the problem.

Research at the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools provides some guidance for policy makers and practitioners on effective school interventions. First, the group labeled at-risk is very diverse. Effective programs are good at matching the diverse characteristics of at-risk students with program strategies that respond to the common problems. For example, those students who do not need remediation in academic skills do not receive it and instead are given other more appropriate instruction.

The second finding is that successful programs build a positive school environment based on close social relations between adults and students. "Social bonding" between the student and the school is fostered. Many students stated that the major difference between their previous school and the alternative is that now "teachers care about me."

A third finding concerns the restructuring of curriculum and learning activities. Some of the best programs provide us with examples of successful deviations from the traditional teacher- and textbook-dominated classroom. Several programs offered "experiential" learning. This is characterized by both classroom and field components that are interwoven. The connection of classroom and book learning to experiences outside the school can be very engaging to students.

The fourth finding concerns the restructuring of school for the empowerment of teachers. The best programs we studied are examples of "educational entrepreneurship." Each of the programs is the product of an individual or small group of educators who take an idea and

develop it. To do this, entrepreneurs must be authorized to act on their ideas and commitments. The process in which an entrepreneur develops an idea into a program creates a sense of ownership. Teacher engagement is high, and this tends to make programs successful. Teachers try hard to make things work for their students.

This is an extremely important finding because it is an anomaly in education. School systems are seemingly designed to discourage initiative by teachers and principals. Despite our national rhetoric about this being a nation of risk-takers who will be rewarded for efforts and better ideas, public education is traditionally outside this culture.

The lesson is clear. If we want educators to respond constructively to at-risk youth, two conditions must be met. One, state and local policy must authorize entrepreneurship. There must be sufficient autonomy and resources at the building and classroom levels to permit the development of local programs responding to local conditions. Second, there must be rewards for risk-taking. This can be done by identifying those with talent and inclination to serve at-risk students. Provide them with sufficient experiences, education and resources that make it possible to be effective with at-risk students. Free them from some of the constraints, both state and local, that now discourage initiative, but also require accountability of these entrepreneurs in the form of positive results with students. Reward success with more opportunity. Encourage "bottom-up" solutions to problems with "top-down" policies that legitimate experimentation and provide rewards for success.

In the long run, good programs for at-risk students will also be good programs for teachers.

Kay Whitmore, President,
Eastman Kodak Company

The need for partnership today is clear. Many of our at-risk students feel alienated from their schools, alienated from society, alienated from the future, and alienated from any sense of self-worth or any sense that anyone cares. Such a challenge demands that our focus be on the motivation to learn, rather than on the environment in which to teach.

This will require a fundamentally different approach to education. As the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching put it, we need "a new framework," not just a series of separate reforms.

The New Partnership I envision would include greater parental involvement, greater community involvement, a fundamental restructuring of our schools, greater attention to early education and a contract.

This may be the only contract that will never require a legal fee or a lawyer. It only requires a commitment on the part of parents, children and schools. Much more than a gimmick, this is being used by a Stanford University educator to encourage parental involvement and focus on the needs of students at two predominantly minority San Francisco-area elementary schools.

He has parents, children and school officials sign written contracts agreeing to fulfill certain responsibilities. Parents agree to ask the child about school each day, get the child to bed at a reasonable hour, limit television viewing and set aside time for reading. Children agree to come to school every day, do their homework and participate in the classroom. And the school agrees to keep tabs on the student's progress, keep in touch with the parents and create a stimulating school environment.

Such efforts on the surface may seem only symbolic, but anything that treats learning as a serious endeavor, encourages parental involvement and helps all parties focus on the need of the child should not be taken lightly.

In the past, families provided the basic support system for us all. Previous generations of at-risk kids faced racial discrimination and poverty, but today they also are more likely to face dislocation and separation from the family unit.

Wherever possible, elementary, middle and high schools should reach out to parents of at-risk kids and involve them in school activities. Their active interest, if not involvement, can at least provide a check . . . insuring that their child's progress is measured by skills and knowledge gained rather than by time served.

The pilot projects run by Yale's James Comer in New Haven schools can serve as a model for us all. Parental involvement at these New Haven schools goes well beyond the monthly PTA meetings many of us have grown accustomed to. Parents are encouraged to be active participants in the classroom -- indeed, some volunteer as teacher aides. There are parent-run newsletters and evening social activities.

Parent involvement often surpasses expectations. And in some cases, parents themselves have been motivated to continue their own schooling. The involvement of business leaders and others in the community is critical, especially with the increasing number of children from single-parent households. We need role models, mentors and support systems.

There are a lot of impressive and ambitious programs being tackled by business today, but more needs to be done. Prudential finances summer jobs for high schoolers who go to work in small businesses. American Express has opened "financial academies" for inner-city youth in eight cities; enrollees get instruction in economics, accounting and other topics. Coca-Cola spends $500,000 a year to attack the dropout rate at nine high schools in four cities with large minority populations.

And there have been many communitywide and statewide efforts throughout the 50 states, in part sponsored by business, to improve education and job opportunities for at-risk children. Many are based on the Boston Compact model . . . whereby a stronger relationship is created among public schools, postsecondary institutions and business . . . to foster student achievement, college placement and career readiness.

Structural change is certainly the most difficult to achieve. Egos can be bruised, authority can be threatened. But it is absolutely fundamental. Such change should be done locally and cooperatively -- but with three basic challenges in mind. One, we must prepare people for jobs. Two, we must aid students with special problems -- teen pregnancy, drugs and so on. And three, we must do our best to monitor the progress of these kids, encourage them, and demonstrate to them that there are returns on their investments of time, energy and enthusiasm.

We need to show our troubled teenagers that there is a payoff for staying in school. It means developing meaningful work experiences for these youngsters in close conjunction with their school curriculum.

Unfortunately, we lose many troubled kids before they enter high school. Too often our schools ensure a level of service, and not a level of learning. Ill-prepared and ill-equipped

to handle high school-level work, many students throw in the towel effectively before entering high school.

We need to understand the special role the pre-high school years, the middle school years, play in the lives of our children. Personal problems, small failures and a failure to acquire basic learning skills can erode self-confidence and induce an anti-school behavior.

To counter this, it is imperative that we build stronger middle schools, more sensitive to each child's developmental needs. And it is imperative that we set some goals. Most importantly, each child reaching high school age should be able to do high school-level work. In addition to clearer goals across-the-board in our high schools, middle schools and elementary schools, we need to reconsider the relationship of the school and its students to the community at large.

One approach that would go a long way to creating greater continuity in the lives of poorer families is the equivalent of one-stop shopping for social services. Make the school the focal point for a variety of community activities and social services targeted to children. Not only would this probably save money, it would revitalize the link between the school and the community.

Community involvement, however, should not mean more fingers in the education pie. We should resist additional layers of bureaucracy and we should resist program implementation from on high. What is needed is school-based planning. In order for schools to be more responsible to our children, it only stands to reason that greater autonomy and responsibility be given to classroom teachers. Efforts must be focused at the point of learning: the school, the classroom and the teacher-pupil relationship.

This is not to limit the rightful policy role of school boards, state boards, governors and legislatures. We still need them to establish expectations, provide direction and, in general, facilitate education. And we still need accountability. But implementation must be left to those who know our kids best, and know how best to educate them -- namely, the principals and the teachers.

If there is one area where we should spend more money in public education, it is in "early intervention." And I am convinced that the earliest stages of education development are where we will receive the best return on investment. If we don't solve problems here, everything else we do it likely to be stop-gap.

Due to the enormity of the challenge we face, I also encourage schools and education researchers to explore the qualitative differences in a longer school year. Japanese children go to school 240 days out of the year, Americans 180 days. How much time do our children waste in reclimbing the same learning curve? No matter what is done -- and there is much to do -- the focus should be the same. Our schools must meet the needs of their primary customers -- the students of America.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Fred M. Hechinger, President and Columnist, New York Times Company Foundation

John Ashcroft, Governor of Missouri

William Ford, Member, U.S. House of Representatives

William Goodling, Member, U.S. House of Representatives

Hechinger: If you could do one thing right away in dealing with the problems of children at risk, what would be your No. 1 priority?

Ashcroft: I think we'd continue our Parents As Teachers program in Missouri. In terms of long-term return for the next generation, I think it's the best payoff. It interrupts the inter-generational aspects of the problem most effectively.

Ford: Around 1979 we had 5.4 million children who were identified as needing special help in school, getting that through Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The consistent budget pressure to cut education dramatically has resulted in a 17% cut in adjusted dollars. We're not serving 4.9 million kids. I'd like to turn that around and go in the other direction, play catch-up and put us where we should be by now.

Goodling: I would do two things. I would find some way to get enough money to fully fund Chapter 1. Second, I'd find a way to help the governors of the states deal with what I think is probably the most pressing problem facing education at the present time, and that is the problem of where are they going to get the teachers? How are you going to get the "brightest" and "best" into the business, when you have early retirements in many states, when you have all the post-World War II graduates from teacher-education institutions who will be retiring, and you have an increase in the birth rate?

Hechinger: If you turn to the federal government, what would be your first priorities to ask for help in from Washington?

Ashcroft: I would ask for anything that could be done in Chapter 1 to increase the income going to poor children, coupled with more responsibility for their parents to do a good job. The poverty rate among kids under 5 is one in four today. If I had a magic wand, I would restore their income levels to where they were in 1973, in real dollar terms, only on condition that the parents participate in education and training exercises.

Hechinger: At the beginning of the Reagan Administration, there was a great deal of discussion about the relative value of categorical grants and broadly based block grants. Where would you go in the future in considering the difference between the two in terms of getting the maximum value for children at risk?

Ford: The only way we're going to make a difference is categorically. Who else was doing anything about migrant kids until we passed the Migrant Education Program? Who was doing anything about bilingual kids until we had a federal program? Who was doing anything except extending sympathy to handicapped kids before the federal program? Who

was doing anything about the kid identified as reading two or three years behind his peers before Title I?

Why didn't states do anything about migrant education? Because those people are not thought to have any political connection with that state. The handicapped? Let the people who have handicapped children worry about that. The kids who can't read? That's their parents' fault. There's always somebody else at the local level.

Goodling: I think a mix of categorical and block grants is very good, with the heavy part of the mix on the categorical programs. The mix is good if we can afford the mix, with some strings attached, so that we do give states and local school districts that have innovative ideas an opportunity to put those in effect and, at the same time, disseminate those so that other districts and states can capitalize.

THE NEXT STEPS

Restructuring schools may be what it takes to meet the needs of at-risk students. But exactly what does it mean when applied to the child at risk? The first step is to reforge the sense of trust between the school and the student and their parents and community. At-risk students fully believe that school personnel do not care about what is going in the lives of their students. Schools, however, must be aware because they are the institution between the young person and the gang or other anti-social activities.

The second step is to ensure that all students experience success in academics. It is not enough for schools to become the social center of the community and find ways to earn the trust of the parents and students. This step requires schools to get in sync with their students and their learning styles. It requires school professionals to use this knowledge to tailor how they present material to the individual student in his or her classroom and to rethink how they use their time throughout the school day. It means school staff must track the progress of each student on basic skills, critical thinking and motivation. In short, each teacher must become less of a presenter of material and more of a coach. If a student believes that no one in the school thinks he or she can succeed, he will vote with his feet and drop out.

The final step is to help students see a relationship between working hard in school and some future goal. Richard deLone described best the concept of a "small future."[1] There are two key components to this concept: the length of time one attaches to his or her future and the strength of the relationship between present actions and future outcomes. If a person's primary concern is immediate survival, his or her timeframe is likely to be measured in weeks and months rather than years or decades. When one's future is measured in weeks and months, formal schooling and learning in general are often not seen as very relevant. Even if one does have a future measured in years, the connection between work in school and future outcomes is eroded if the adults one associates with have high school diplomas but remain unemployed.

Discussions at the National Forum for Youth At Risk centered around five categories of consensus for helping such students. They include: early intervention, parental involvement, mentoring, school restructuring and collaboration. Although some recommendations along these lines have been mentioned earlier in this report, the following section provides further detail and selected examples to illustrate how powerful these issues are.

Early Intervention

Several different but related services are found under the umbrella of early intervention. At its core, early intervention focuses on child care, early childhood education and training for new parents on how to help their children learn. Two themes are evident in research in this area. First, an expanded view of the early years is necessary. Studies show that the prenatal period as well as the first nine years of life are crucial to successful social and educational upbringing.[2]

Second, those who come to school ill prepared quickly fall behind and are likely to stay behind. Further, the research indicates a number of steps should be taken to meet the needs of children and parents, including: adequate, day-long day care; early education

programs for 3- to -5-year-olds; and a comprehensive program of health, counseling services, social services and day care for poor families. Although these programs exist in some form in many locations, the demand for such services outstrips their availability.

Two policy approaches are gaining popularity across the states. The first is the development of state initiatives modeled after the federal Head Start program. The second is a growing interest in parent education programs. Head Start, the early childhood education program established in the 1960s, is cited by experts and policy makers alike as one of the finest examples of high-quality early childhood care and education. Numerous states, including Florida, California, New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, New Mexico and Minnesota, have implemented and refined their own programs based on the federal model.

Much is known about the impact and effectiveness of early intervention programs, but what is needed are programs to increase the number of children served and a system of governing these efforts that remains responsive to parent and community needs and works closely with the schools that serve the student once he or she finishes the program.

The interest in parent education is relatively new. Oregon, Arkansas, Minnesota and Missouri are among states with statewide parent education programs. Typical activities include asking parents to read to their children (working on their own reading skills at the same time), teaching parents how to teach reading, writing and math skills to their children, and sensitizing parents to the learning habits of their children.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is on everyone's list of practices to make schools more effective, to help families create more positive learning environments, to reduce the risk of student failure and to increase the likelihood of student success. This research shows that schools and parents who work together can make a significant difference in the academic success of students, even those from the least advantaged families. Five types of parent involvement have been identified that lead to a comprehensive school/family partnership.

- Some schools involve parents in learning about their children's health and safety, preparing their children for school and supporting schooling learning and behavior.
- Schools are obligated to communicate with parents about school programs and child progress.
- Some schools involve parents as volunteers who assist teachers, administrators and children in classrooms or in other areas of school life.
- Teachers ask parents to assist their own children at home on learning activities which are coordinated with the children's class work.
- Schools involve parents in school governance and advocacy via decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils or other committees or groups at the school, district or state level.

In the past, the emphasis has been on communicating about school programs, bringing parents in as volunteers and asking them to join the PTA. The research on the impact of schools being actively involved in the other areas -- learning how to help their children

learn and assisting them at home -- is very promising. From her studies in Maryland, researcher Joyce Epstein was able to draw several exciting conclusions.

- Teachers who involve parents in working with their children on learning activities at home were able to involve parents with all educational backgrounds, not just well-educated parents.

- When parents were involved in learning activities at home, they knew more about their children's instructional programs, received many ideas from the teacher about how to help at home, believed that the teacher wanted them to help their children and rated the teacher higher in interpersonal skills and overall teaching ability.

- Teachers tended to involve the parents in reading activities at home with their children, more than in other school subjects. And students gained more in reading achievement from fall to spring if their teachers frequently involved their parents.

- The connection between teacher practices, parent responses and student achievement in reading suggests that if teachers helped parents understand how to help their children at home in other specific school subjects, more children would improve their mastery of those subjects. This is especially true for students who need extra learning time to practice or review basic skills.

- Teacher leadership -- not parent education or marital status -- made the difference in whether parents improved their knowledge about the school and about helping their children, and whether the children improved their reading scores.[3]

Because teachers and administrators play the key roles in including or excluding parents from their children's education, policies targeting at-risk youngsters should have a component that builds teachers' and administrators' capacities to engage parents in practices that make a difference in academic success for their children.

Mentoring

Mentoring, a one-on-one relationship that encourages and guides personal growth and development in an individual, is another effective way of helping at-risk youngsters. The need to develop and maintain such programs is great. According to a recent Commonwealth Fund report, students who receive mature and caring human support are more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to become and remain employed and less likely to repeat pregnancies.

As Margaret Mahoney wrote in the fund's 1988 Annual Report, ". . . whether or not young people succeed depends in large part on individuals who help them establish values and who inspire effort. Youngsters lack and need the direct intervention in their lives of mature individuals who provide the one-on-one relationship that can reassure each child of his innate worth, instill values, guide curiosity and encourage a purposeful life."[4]

Mentoring relationships can be devoted to personal, academic skills, career development, friendship, athletic or artistic growth. For example, a recent ECS/Campus Compact survey of campus-based community service programs reveals that many institutions have active service programs designed to help at-risk youth in their community. Such programs range

from tutoring programs to coaching athletic teams. In a majority of these activities students are paired in a one-on-one relationship with youth.

These and other mentoring programs, however, must be designed to identify and reach at-risk youth to assist them in both personal and academic development. Such goals require time, commitment and training on the part of the mentor, and the support of and close collaboration with local schools, community-based and volunteer organizations and state policy makers.

The goal of such a relationship is to increase a child's motivation to stay in school by increasing his or her academic and critical-thinking skills, building self-confidence and enhancing his or her sense of what the future holds. Such relationships can be built at many levels. For example, in many middle, junior high and senior high schools, school-age mentors are working with their peers, especially in the areas of academic tutoring and suicide prevention.

At higher education institutions, college students work as mentors in a wide variety of capacities. The College Assistance Migrant Program provide numerous students with role models. Adults serve as mentors in many successful programs such as Big Brother/Big Sister, Career Beginnings (developed at Brandeis University), the "Working Coach" model of England's Grubb Institute for Behavioral Studies and the "I Have a Dream" Foundation of philanthropist Gene Lang. Whether by peers, college students or caring adults, one-on-one mentoring addresses the major need of at-risk students -- the need to build self-confidence and see the connection to a positive future.

What is needed are more volunteers to establish long-term relationships with at-risk young people. Through that relationship, each youngster can feel that the outside world wants him or her to succeed, a belief that is necessary for a youngster to establish his or her own code of social responsibility.

Policy makers can encourage this process in two ways. The first is to mount an aggressive leadership campaign that increases the number of volunteers. The second is to decide whether additional incentives should be implemented to encourage mentoring efforts.

School Restructuring

Why must schools restructure? How does restructuring benefit at-risk students? The case for restructuring has grown more compelling over the last decade. The flaws of the comprehensive high school, and the elementary and middle school/junior high structures that support it, have become increasingly clear as rapid technological, social and economic changes have occurred in this country. School restructuring challenges and changes assumptions about how schools and classrooms operate.

New ways to group students and to assess their progress through school-based management and accountability and a variety of strategies and skills to help students learn promise a more equitable education for all students. These practices are especially effective for those who are most at risk of school failure because they make student learning more interesting and give students more power to determine their own futures.

From the point of view of the working professional, the traditional schooling system often forces talented, competent teachers into narrow, compromised situations. Teaching

professionals need an environment that allows them to define and follow through on challenging assignments, to know and understand the progress of every student and to improve their understanding of the material they teach. In the vast majority of schools today such opportunities do not exist.

When one examines schools that profess to be restructured, it is clear that no two good schools are precisely alike. Their strength derives from the imagination and energy of their staffs, the communities they serve and the personalities and motivation of the students they enroll. Good schools do, however, share some common characteristics. The Coalition of Essential Schools, chaired by nationally recognized school reformer, Theodore Sizer, has identified the following nine principles as critical:

- An intellectual focus. Schools should focus on helping adolescents to learn to use their minds well.

- Simple goals. Each student should master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.

- Universal goals. Goals should apply to all students, although means to achieve them will vary according to the individual student.

- Personalization. Teaching and learning should be personalized to meet individual student needs. Principals and their staffs should be the ones to make decisions about how curriculum should be presented.

- Student-as-worker. The practical metaphor governing day-to-day life in the school should be student-as-worker and teacher-as-coach rather than deliverer of instructional services.

- Student exhibitions. High school students should be awarded a diploma only after successfully completing a final demonstration of mastery -- an exhibition.

- Attitude. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress the values of high expectations, trust, decency and fairness.

- Staff. Principals and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and specialists second.

- Budget. Student loads per teacher should be limited to 80 or fewer pupils; teachers should have substantial time for collective planning and be paid competitive salaries. This should be done with a budget that does not exceed that of traditional schools by more than 10%.

Restructured schools also may differ from traditional ones in size, placement of students into groups, goals and efforts to track student progress in such areas as critical-thinking skills and motivation to learn, as well as basic skills. Education staff and students must be allowed to shape life within their workplace. To encourage this to happen in individual sites across the country, policy makers have certain responsibilities: work to build a shared vision; organize educators in creative ways; use appropriately varied strategies for change, share leadership and responsibility; build in collaboration and flexibility, promote information that moves educational change forward and restructure with high regard for the people in the process. In addition, district, state and federal policy makers generally must

agree to provide adequate levels of technical assistance, some financial aid and regulatory waivers that may be needed by the site.

Collaboration

Those interviewed in a recent ECS survey of state policies to serve at-risk youngsters defined collaboration as an ongoing discussion between and among schools, state agencies, state and local government and community organizations to resolve a common problem. With respect to youth at risk, there is general agreement that collaboration makes sense, that it should be stimulated and encouraged. Yet it is as complicated in practice as it is elementary in theory.

Collaboration concerns relationships among people -- how organizations as well as individuals relate to one another. The experience of those running effective schools serving at-risk youth suggests that faculty in such schools are more likely to share personal motives and common goals. Also, the laying of common objectives with clear direction, set stages of implementation and measured outcomes is easier when the faculty is empowered to make decisions. This kind of situation naturally lends itself to collaborative decision making within a school.

Before effective programs can be implemented, the barriers to collaboration must be addressed. Program directors list the structure of state agencies, mindsets, time constraints, limited resources and inflexible policies among the roadblocks to collaboration. One common complaint is that agencies serving youth (for example, education, health and human services and juvenile justice) do not always offer comprehensive programs for youth at risk. This sometimes results in duplicate services or no services at all.

A recent ECS report examining collaboration, Community of Purpose, identified the pros and cons of collaboration and the reasons why it must be tried.

- Service providers often are unaware of community resources available to help them help kids.

- Programs that consider the whole child have been found to be most effective. The issue can be teen pregnancy, substance abuse or youth suicide, but the approach must be multi-dimensional.

- Collaboration involves the entire community working together to provide services or resolve problems for at-risk youth, instead of placing the burden solely on the schools.

- The momentum is maintained by leaders from every political level who have global understanding of the problem and are committed to search for solutions through systemic change.

- Collaboration encourages creativity and risk-taking and provides the diverse perspectives and approaches essential to create a positive school environment.

The authors conclude that collaboration does not mean the abdication of individual responsibility. Whether a governor, a state schools chief or district superintendent, a department head or school principal, it comes with the job. The leader who goes out on a

limb should expect to take the heat. But collaboration and the collective ownership that results from it is a formidable power against special interests.

Second, collaboration does not mean relegating leadership duties to an indecisive politburo. "I learned to appreciate the benefits of shifting control to teachers and becoming comfortable with the few knowns and the greater uncertainties that typifies renewal," said one principal. "A large part of my job is to be the chief worrier about the culture of our school that would foster these talks."

Finally, collaboration can be a force greater than the sum of its parts. Many agencies are oftentimes dealing with the same types of problems. By gathering together the different people who are working on common issues, a structure can be created to select a common goal, a common plan, a real agenda, the report says.

In many ways, encouraging collaboration may be the easiest action for policy makers to influence. In most cases, the agencies that must collaborate report directly to elected officials. Policy makers must seriously consider whether their existing patterns of oversight are consistent with their goals for agency collaboration and cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Since 1985, ECS has been a leader in calling attention to the nation's youth who are at risk not only of failing to graduate from high school, but also of graduating with an inadequate education. Too many high school graduates lack academic competencies which may render them unable to pursue additional educational experiences, to find decent jobs and generally to make successful transitions to adulthood and become productive members of society. The early concerns raised by the commission have spread from state to state as policy makers from every region ask what can be done to increase the possibilities that all youngsters succeed. The National Forum for Youth At Risk was a continuation of that original concern.

The forum identified five strategies that have a substantial impact on successful education for those students most at-risk -- early intervention, collaboration, parental involvement, mentoring and school restructuring -- and it is these that policy makers must consider if they are truly serious about providing a sound education for all students.

These ideas are not new, but they are not being implemented in many schools and communities. Current state policy and practice simply does not encourage and support these strategies in the public schools.

The first task for ECS, then, is to engage state policy makers in an effort to incorporate the five strategies in all new policies that address youth at risk. Much is known about effective components of programs for at-risk youth, but implementing these components requires a new effort to rethink how services are delivered and how resources must be redistributed to support them. Policy makers must not only be committed to the five strategies, but also understand how these strategies are addressed across youth-serving agencies and be willing to put discretionary money behind those efforts.

The second task for ECS is to challenge state policy makers to expect that all students will learn and to convince educators and the public that this is possible. For economic, social and political reasons, American society can no longer accept an education system in which the best education is given to some students and not others. The belief that not all kids can learn manifests itself in schools in many ways. For example, it is not uncommon to find students most at risk in classes with minimal curriculum content, the most inexperienced teachers and the least interesting pedagogical techniques. Convincing educators and the public that "all students will learn" will require extensive retraining for educators and nothing less than a national campaign for the public. ECS must arm state policy makers with the evidence, the political will and the policy tools needed to enable schools to serve all children effectively.

Unfortunately, even if the necessary changes in the education system occur, it is unlikely the outcome will immediately change for a large percentage of at-risk youngsters. Educators and others must work to change the thinking of the youngsters themselves. Students must be made to see they can have a rewarding future and that education is the key to securing it. Strategies such as mentoring can help students believe in the value of education, as can programs that involve the family and the community in the education process. Schools must re-earn the trust of at-risk students and their communities and become the agents of opportunity rather than separation and isolation.

NOTES

1. Richard H. de Lone, Small Futures: Children, Inequality, and the Limits of Liberal Reform (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

2. National Governor's Association Task Force on Readiness, Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education (August 1986); W. Norton Grubb, Young Children Face the States (Center for Policy Research in Education, May 1987); National Black Child Development Institute, Safeguards: Guidelines for Establishing Programs for Four-Year-Olds in the Public Schools (Washington, D.C.: National Black Child Development Institute, Inc., 1987); and Timothy Cowhick, Early Intervention Efforts, summary of the ECS Survey of State Initiatives for Youth At Risk (Denver, Colo.: Education Commission of the States, 1988).

3. Joyce L. Epstein, "Parent Involvement: State Education Agencies Should Lead the Way," Community Education Journal (July 1987); Education Commission of the States, "Drawing in the Family: Selected Readings" (Denver, Colo.: Education Commission of the States, 1987); and Barbara Lindner, Parent Involvement, a summary of the ECS Survey of State Initiatives for Youth At Risk (Denver, Colo.: Education Commission of the States, 1987).

4. Margaret E. Mahoney quoted in the "The President's Report: Mentors," the 1988 Annual Report of the Commonwealth Fund, Harkness House, 1 E. 75th Street, New York, N.Y.