



CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION-
PUBLIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

**THE CHANGING CONTEXT
OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION**

SPEAKER:

ARTHUR LEVINE

**PRESIDENT
TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

MARCH 22, 2006

Luncheon Series

ABOUT CEI-PEA

The Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association (CEI-PEA) is a New York-based nonprofit organization that creates successful public schools and educational programs. Our staff of experienced leaders in public education provides hands-on support to improve the skills of teachers and school leaders, increase parent involvement, and channel cultural and academic enrichment programs into schools. The benefits of this hands-on support are multiplied through a network of more than 220 public schools in New York as well as work in other major urban school systems across the country and around the world. We operate in cooperation with, but independently of, public school systems, providing private citizens the opportunity to make wise investments in the public schools.

ABOUT THE LUNCHEON SERIES

CEI-PEA's luncheon series provides one of the only forums in which the full range of stakeholders—parents, principals, teachers, policy makers, leaders of nonprofit organizations, funders, newspaper reporters—are able to meet and discuss critical issues affecting public education. Topics of the luncheons range from educational research on innovative instructional models, to analyses of educational policies, to practitioner models for effective school leadership.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Bob Isaacson, Executive Director of CUNY TV, for broadcasting the CEI-PEA luncheons to the public. CUNY TV's educational, cultural and public affairs programming is an invaluable resource for our city, and we are proud to be a part of it.

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NOTE FROM THE CEI-PEA PRESIDENT

Twelve years ago, Teachers College gained a great educational leader when Arthur Levine took over as president. In the years that followed, he shook up the city's top education school and pushed for new and better connections between Teachers College and the New York City public schools. He is firmly and genuinely committed to solving one of the most critical issues in public education today: making it equitable at all levels.

On March 22, 2006, the Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association (CEI-PEA) hosted President Levine as the speaker at our luncheon series. He gave an impassioned, yet practical, speech about the changes that public education has undergone over the past century and what changes need to be made if public education is to continue to serve its purpose of serving all children. He took us back to the neighborhood where he grew up in the South Bronx to paint a picture of the sea change that has taken place in neighborhoods all around the country—a sea change that produces a bleak outlook for young people unless we address it directly by altering our educational systems and strategies.

What follows is an edited transcript of President Levine's remarks. We did our best to maintain the passion of both his speech and the challenging questions posed by members of the audience. I hope that you will take from this transcript the same thing I took from the luncheon: we must engage in loud debate about public education, and then we must turn to dialogue so that we can come to effective and sound solutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sy Fliegel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S" and "F".

Sy Fliegel

INTRODUCTION

Sy Fliegel: Welcome. It's my pleasure today to introduce Arthur Levine. I first heard about Arthur Levine from George O'Neill—George O'Neill is a member of our board; he's a very fine gentleman and he's a very quiet guy. One day he said to me, "Do you know who Art Levine is?" I said, "Of course...not." [Laughter.] This was 13 years ago. He said, "I want you to meet Art Levine. He's a great fellow and a great educational leader." And George was right.

"He is an extraordinary leader, a remarkably successful educational innovator, and a bold, thought-provoking scholar."

*- Nancy Weiss Malkiel
Woodrow Wilson
National Fellowship Foundation*

So the other day I got a letter from the chair of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Nancy Weiss Malkiel. Now, I don't know anything by myself—I just listen to what other people tell me, and this is what she said about Dr. Levine: "He is an extraordinary leader, a remarkably successful educational innovator, and a bold, thought-provoking scholar." Simply put, "He believes, as we do, that education is the vehicle for changing the world. In recent years, his work has focused on increasing access to higher education and improving equity in the schools. His passion and expertise are just the right match for Woodrow Wilson's work in secondary university partnerships." Dr. Malkiel also says, "He will soon join Woodrow Wilson in the summer of 2006." And my first reaction was, I hope he doesn't because it would be a loss for New York City.

You have his bio in the materials we gave you, and it's an impressive one—and that's only a biographical sketch. I don't believe in reading a person's bio, though I always take a look at it. His awards are very impressive, as is the number of books he has written. The one that caught my eye was, *Why Innovation Fails*, after all, this is the Center for Educational Innovation. Either we have to change our name, or you have to write another book, my friend. [Laughter.]

When Arthur came to Teachers College twelve years ago, it was a cottage industry. That means everyone was in business for themselves. I have two stories about Arthur's first days at Teachers College. One I'm positive is true and the other one I'm telling you I'm not really sure, but it came from a reliable source who said he was there when it happened.

When Arthur got to Teachers College, he had a retreat for the entire faculty and staff where they discussed what has been going on at Teachers Col-

lege and where they should be going. They spent two days meeting and then they reconvened for a closing seminar. And the first gentleman who got up—a faculty member—expressed the view that Teachers College has been a cottage industry and has functioned that way for the last 50 years and it was time to change. Another professor raised his hand and grudgingly said, “Let’s give it a chance.” That’s what he came into. The worst place to come into is a place that feels they are so successful that they don’t have to do anything.

Dr. Malkiel from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation also remarked on the changes that Arthur Levine has been able to effect during his presidency: “Dr. Levine is a nationally-known advocate for access to excellence in education... He reorganized the academic departments, strengthened and expanded the faculty, [and] enhanced the prestige and visibility of the Board of Trustees.” By the way, I never thought of doing that. My board would be very happy if I took that as one of my goals. [Laughter.] “[He] significantly upgraded the physical infrastructure, led a capital campaign that raised more than \$155 million, and chartered a new mission for the college, focused on educational equity.” So he’s done good work there.

The second story tells you more about him, I think, and this I know is true. When he first came to Teachers College, the then-mayor of the City of New York met with him to discuss the state of public education in the city. Then-mayor said to Arthur, “What’s wrong with the New York City public school system?” Arthur thought for about three seconds and said, “You are, Mr. Mayor.” [Laughter.] That was the end of their relationship. [Laughter.] But it just goes to show you can do well without a lot of political support. And Arthur certainly has done well, and the fact that he’s getting the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to concentrate on high school teachers—because the fellowship always concentrated on college professors—is a remarkable accomplishment, and we expect to see some great things from a very courageous, outspoken Dr. Arthur Levine.

[Applause.]

GUEST SPEAKER

Arthur Levine: Thank you, Sy. That letter from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation was fundraising and I'm hoping for a gift from you. [Laughter.]

I always hate it when the introduction is better than my speech. [Laughter.]

In this group, there are three Teachers College Trustees: Joyce Cohen, John Klingenstein, and Laurie Tisch. I'm glad you could come. And I want to thank Sy. Sy, you've done incredible things in this city, not simply in the more than two hundred schools that you've worked with, but also setting a policy agenda for New York. I don't know many people who have had a larger impact on our schools than you have. [Applause.]

Having said that, I want to do something very indulgent today. What I want to do is reflect on the condition of education in New York and the country, after twelve years as president of Teachers College. Let me start by telling you a story.

I've been doing a study of the boy who lives in the bedroom of the house where I grew up in the South Bronx. Carlos and two of his friends have been keeping a diary for the last five years or so. The neighborhood is very different from the neighborhood I grew up in. People in my neighborhood were white; they were more likely to come from Eastern Europe than anywhere else. Today, the neighborhood is predominantly Hispanic and Black and most of the population comes from the Dominican Republic. This is a district in which family income is lower, not in real dollars, just lower than when I lived there. It's a neighborhood in which unemployment is up considerably, and in which single parent families have risen dramatically. It's a neighborhood in which high school graduation rates are up slightly from the time that I lived there; however, the nation's graduation rates are nearly twice as high. It's a neighborhood in which violence seems omni-present. The three boys have been to more funerals than weddings.

One day, it was open school night, and I went with Carlos's dad. I asked his dad, "What do you want for Carlos?" And he said, "I want him to be a gentleman." And we went to school and we sat down with the teacher, and he asked the teacher, "Is Carlos a gentleman?" The teacher said, "Yes, he never gives me any trouble." His dad got up to leave, and I said, "Let's ask one more question. How is Carlos doing in school?" And the teacher said, "Let me see. Ah, he's failing four out of five subjects." And his dad said to

me, "But he's a gentleman. The teacher said, 'He never gives me any trouble'."

I went to visit the principal of that school and she said, "You know, all the schools around us are SURR schools, but every year we miss the cut-off by a tiny amount. I'm so proud."

I went to the prom. Middle-school proms are a big deal in a lot of poor neighborhoods, and the reason is because most of the kids are never going to have a high school prom. They are never going to graduate. So I went to the middle school prom, which is as big as any prom I've ever seen in my life. The people were really dressed up, and there was a banner and a theme, and the theme was, "No Dream Too Small." No dream too small. I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't figure out how it was wrong. It took me two days. [Laughter.] Whoever told any of us that no dream was too small?

I am deeply concerned. Of the three boys, two are actually going to graduate from high school, and the other has been shot and killed by the police.

After twelve years, I will leave the presidency of Teachers College more pessimistic about the condition of education than I was when I arrived. However, let me make a very important distinction: I'm not pessimistic that there are no solutions to the problems we face; I'm positive there are solutions. What I am pessimistic about is our willingness to implement them

Let me talk about some of the things I see happening, and then let's just open this up. I think there are five or six reasons that we ought to be concerned. One is the priority of education on the national agenda is going to decrease, and what's going to drive that are demographics. The baby boomers put education on the map. We make up almost 60% of the electorate. If we can agree on anything, it's national policy, because we can't be ignored. And we agreed on education, but a lot of our children are through school age, and what we're more concerned about now is our parents, who are older, who are ill, who need help, who are taking a lot of our time. And what we're going to ask for is elder care, social security and health care. And that's also self-serving because in a few years we will be joining them in retirement. When that happens, we are going to see education fall. We saw it between the 2000 and 2004 elections. In national polls in 2000, education was number one. In the 2004 election, it was number five, and I think it's going to keep dropping.

What also is troubling to me is that after more than twenty years of the school-reform movement, we are still yet to turn around any urban school

system in America. What I also fear is that our children, our inner-city children, will get left behind. They come from families in which parents vote at a lower rate. They come from families that haven't organized or taken to the streets or said, "I will not send my child to a school that's far worse than other children are being sent to." What that means is they haven't used charter schools as a weapon, saying "If you don't fix my local school, there will be a charter here next Thursday." It means the population can be safely overlooked, and all we need to do is rub our hands and say, "That's too bad."

"The rhetoric on education reform these days is white hot... There's no middle ground; there is no room for compromise, and we're in a position in which research is following policy, rather than policy following research."

I'm also worried about the politicization of education. The rhetoric on education reform these days is white hot. We have conservatives and liberals talking at each other over a chasm. There's no middle ground; there is no room for compromise, and we're in a position in which research is following policy, rather than policy following research. That's a terrible, terrible state to be in.

What we're battling over is: Do we keep public education public or do we move to privatization? Do we teach whole language reading, or do we teach phonics reading? Do we do English as a second language, or English only? Social promotion, no social promotion? The problem with these positions is that the kids are getting left out. We're not asking what works with kids. We're not asking what's effective. We're not asking how to improve their achievement and their graduation rates. The research is ignored, marshaled by champions for any one of these issues when it agrees with what they are saying, ignored or criticized when it doesn't. I'm frightened about that. I'm frightened that we are seeing a triumph of ideology over education.

Another issue of concern to me is the perennial quest for silver bullets. "Aha! We have the answer to what will solve the problems of our schools. It's charter schools." But the evidence isn't clear on whether charter schools are better or worse than the schools we have. "It's vouchers!" But the evidence isn't clear on whether vouchers are better or worse than what we have. It's all conflicting.

And the fact of the matter is, all of this stuff is beginning to merge. Take the difference between public and private schools. In my neighborhood, we have a Catholic school. I don't think there is a single Catholic in that school. What I do know is that they have a lot of Black students from my neighbor-

hood in that school. I'm positive they have more Muslims than they do Catholics attending. In contrast, there is a school in Westchester, the Scarsdale School system, in which you are required to pay somewhere between one and two million dollars to attend the schools—because that's what it costs to buy a house there. Tell me which one is public and which one is private? I think those distinctions are going to melt as time goes by.

What's also true as far as I can see, and a cause of concern for me, is that the schools aren't working or fitting as well as they once did. Not because it's their fault. The whole world changed. Everything changed. We changed economically, we changed demographically, we changed technologically, we changed globally. And in terms of our economy, we moved from an industrial to an information economy. Education became the engine driving that economy, and what it meant was low-end jobs disappeared; they went abroad. Except in the service industry where you can't support a family by flipping burgers. And higher education jobs increased.

The number of skills, or the level of skill and knowledge required today for a teacher is higher than it's ever been. The expectations of what students will achieve are higher than they have ever been. We've also made a revolutionary change, which isn't being talked about. The fact of the matter is, industrial societies focus on process. We want to make sure everybody goes through the same process, and we built our school systems that way. Five year olds start school and go for twelve years or thirteen years. They take five major subjects, they go for 180 days, and they go for a period of time per class that was created by the Carnegie Foundation in 1908. The same model is used for all kids.

What we have is a common process and variable outcomes. Information societies don't do that. What they say is, "What we care about are outcomes. We don't care how we get there. Do whatever you want to get there. That's what matters." And so what we did was, we set outcome standards state by state and we put in place tests of widely varying quality to measure whether students were actually achieving those outcomes. And we talked about accountability. The revolution is a focus on learning over teaching. The student over the teacher. Those changes are dramatic, and we're not talking about the level of change involved.

Demographically, I was shocked to realize that one out of every 280 Americans is a student in the New York public schools. That's an extraordinary number to me. What's happened to this city and the country is that the population of Whites is decreasing, and the populations of Blacks and His-

panics are increasing. We are at the highest level of immigration that we've seen since the start of the 20th century. And the fastest growing groups have been the least successful academically.

Learning disabilities are ballooning, or at least their diagnosis is. And our population is moving. We've moved from the cities to the suburbs, we've moved from the North to the South and the West. The result is that "red states" now make up a majority of the country's population, and America is a majority suburban country.

Globalization. My parents, after I was born, gave me a 1939 atlas. I was born after World War II. It was useless. I just gave that atlas to my 19-year-old daughter—it's correct again. We are seeing dramatic changes in this globe. I realized at some point that I visited four countries that don't exist anymore. But the more important point is we are inextricably intertwined as you all know. Who would have guessed that our jobs, what's available and for whom, would be affected by what went on in Bangalore? Who would have guessed that our stock market would be rocked by what Venezuela does with oil? Who would have guessed that our currency would fluctuate if Brazil didn't pay its debt?

We are in a world that we never imagined being in and technology dominates our lives. I looked around my house as I was writing this. At first I thought of ATM's, then I realized we had a microwave, then we went to iPods and DVD players, VCRs, computers, email, CDs, digital cameras. My grandmother was born before the airplane was invented, and my children were born after men landed on the moon. The future is going to belong to the technologically literate.

So what do all these changes mean? It means the whole world is different. It means that every social institution is out of step with the times. Hospitals, media, schools, education schools, government. And all of them need to be remade to fit a society in motion. They aren't responsible for the changes.

I really didn't get invited back to the mayor's office, but part of the conversation we had before my meeting ended was that the mayor said that the schools were doing a terrible job and he was going to set up a voucher program. And I said, "Do it. Pick a district and try it, but do it as an experiment, and see whether it works and makes any difference." And he said, "You know, you people are doing a rotten job and the schools are doing a terrible job." And I said, "With all due respect, you're in the same place we are. Like schools, people think government used to be better. The quality of people we got on the jobs were stronger. They cared about what the public wanted

and needed. And we don't have that now. Like you, what we're saying is, 'We don't want to invest more money in government. In fact, we want to cut it.' What we're saying is, 'We don't want to participate, and we're not voting. And some children are going to charter schools and they are going to private schools'." And what I said was, "You know, you don't like unions, and we don't like political parties. And finally, what you want is an end of tenure, and we want term limits. And beyond that, you're saying it might be good if a business person headed the schools. We want that same person in your job." [Laughter.] Despite all the elucidation I may have applied, I still didn't get invited back. [Laughter.]

Under these circumstances, we need to invent a new model of schooling. It's not going to happen next month, it's not going to happen next year or the year after. We're heading to it. It's several decades off, but in essence what's happening is the model's going to break and special education is going to break it.

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What is going to happen can be seen in Greenwich, Connecticut where 19.8% of the kids have been diagnosed with learning disabilities. Now, that would either make Greenwich the most attractive place in the country for people with learning disabilities, or what it would say is that parents are affluent and they have the capacity to test their children. We don't have a name for kids who learn differently. The only label we can give them is learning disabled. And what they're doing in Greenwich is finding those differences and having kids learn. And the problem for Greenwich is that every student who is diagnosed as learning disabled needs an Individualized Education Plan. The federal government requires it. That means that Greenwich now has 80% of its students that it's moving along as a batch, and 20% they have to educate individually. You know they are going to test more kids in Greenwich and that 20% is going to be 30%, and that 30% is going to be 40% as tests get more and more sophisticated. Greenwich can't afford to offer two school systems, one individualized and one group. And I think that's going to break schools as we know them.

What I expect we'll be seeing in the years ahead is outcomes based schools, individualized instruction to students in such a way that the role of teacher will be diagnostician, prescription giver, and assessor. And we'll move students sometimes in groups, and sometimes individually, sometimes in teacher-led simulations, sometimes using computers that are tied to software geared specifically to children's learning.

If I were picking one more issue, it would be this for pessimism: it's that New York State still hasn't paid for the fiscal equity decision. And I'm also troubled by the fact that the City has no serious plan for how to spend that money. I chaired the City Council commission on how that funding should be used. I co-chaired it with David Jones. There are things we can and should do and the point I want to make is this: I don't believe in throwing money at problems, particularly if it's my money. But we know what works. What's different for children in my old neighborhood versus the child in Scarsdale? What do my kids need? They need to start school earlier. They're coming with severe disadvantages. Let's give them preschools at ages 3 and 4. Make it universally available to children in need. Second, the children in my neighborhood—not all, but many—are being asked to do things that people who come from far richer backgrounds are able to do in 180 days. Give us some more time. Extend the school year, extend the school day. What's also true about the children in my neighborhood is that it would benefit them to have smaller classes in the early grades—not all grades, the early grades. And later, they should have smaller classes in subjects like math and science. Finally, for the children in my neighborhood, they deserve the best teachers we can provide because of how great the difference is from where they are and the goals they are expected to achieve to graduate. But that's not what we are doing. They're receiving some of the poorest teachers.

Every one of the items I just mentioned, I'm not asking to throw money at them. I'm asking us to invest in them. We know they work. We have \$5.6 billion, or whatever number is ultimately decided between the state and the fiscal equity suit, that will be coming into the school system year after year after year. If we don't invest in this fashion, we are going to waste it. And we should be advocates for that kind of investment.

We also should have lab schools in which we try out ideas and see whether they work before we impose them on the system. We should have lab districts in which we try ideas out and then determine what did and didn't work, rather than imposing it on the entire system.

I began by saying I'm more pessimistic than when I arrived, but what I want to say in closing is I'm more optimistic about the ability for us to change this if we wish to. We have the tools and we have the capacity to improve our schools and the lives of our children. Thank you all very much.

[Applause].

QUESTION & ANSWER

John Brademas: I want to congratulate you on a splendid talk. A few words of background, and you'll understand the prejudices I inflict upon you. I'm the son of a Greek immigrant father, and an Indiana public school teacher mother, and I had the privilege of studying at Harvard and Oxford, two great universities. And then I went to the Congress of the United States, where I served for a number of years with the young man on my left, Herman Badillo, on the House Committee on Education. I served with six presidents: Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Kennedy, Johnson—and Sam Rayburn would have said, "Under none." [Laughter.] And therefore took part in writing the Elementary-Secondary Education Act, Head Start, and the PELL Grants. I'm the author of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the law that created the National Institute for Education, and a lot of other education legislation, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1981, after I was defeated in Northern Indiana, I was invited to become president of New York University, in which position I served for 11 years, and am now President Emeritus. A couple of years ago, I was elected to the New York State Board of Regents. Herman, I thought I was through with elections, but apparently not. [Laughter.] And I've spent all weekend in Albany.

What I did when I came here 25 years ago was make a number of speeches because Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States, and he was attacking funds for education, and I did not hesitate to speak out attacking those budget cuts. First, I had helped write the laws whose budgets he was attacking. Second, I was leading a university, and third, I thought it was against the national interest. And here we are now, all these years later. And if you look at the budgets being proposed by the sitting President of the United States, we are back where we started, with a \$13 billion cut in college student aid, with a call for elimination of a number of programs in the fields of education, the arts, the humanities, and libraries. And I have been struck by the relative absence of voices speaking out against those cuts.

I am distressed because if we believe that education is central to the future of this society, we have to speak. Now I see that the junior senator from Wisconsin is calling for a censure of President Bush, and I'm not—I'm the former majority whip of the House of representatives, so I've been in politics for a long time—I'm not clear that censure would be the best and most effective way to respond to the sitting President of the United States. I think

the most effective response is elections. Now I haven't made a partisan speech for a long time. As a matter of fact, as I said to somebody earlier, in 1975 when I decided to write the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, I turned to the senior Republican on my committee, Al Quie of Minnesota, for whom I had great respect, and said, "Al, what witnesses do you want to hear?" I didn't have to do that. And when we got in to the mark-up session, I said, "What do you need?" So we were united, and we wrote that bill together. We had unanimous reports in the sub-committee and full-committee. And I could recite other forms of legislation a generation ago where Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill cooperated very closely. It's a different system in the nation's capitol right now. And one I find profoundly troubling, not because I'm a Democrat, but I am also a citizen. So I think that as you look at the panorama of education issues that Arthur Levine has addressed, I think that we have to look at a fundamental challenge in the American Democracy, and that's elections. If you want more of the same, keep the arrangements we have. If you don't, you better think of making some changes.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time. [Laughter.]

Herman Badillo: I've lived in those rooms that you talked of in the Bronx and in those neighborhoods, and I've spent many decades trying to bring about standards. I've been partially successful at The City University of New York. The biggest problem I have now in the elementary and secondary school system is with Teachers College at Columbia University, because what's going on is that teachers—for example my wife, who is a school teacher in a middle school in New York City, is told that because of an arrangement that has been made with Teachers College where they've taken over certain districts, she cannot teach what she's taught for many years: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, Shakespeare. The only lessons that can be given are ten minute segments, but no classics at all. And to me, that is a disastrous course. They all point to Teachers College as the cause of it. [Tentative Applause.]

Levine: God, wouldn't you rather have the truth? [Laughter.] I think that it's not fair to make accusations that are based on I have no idea what. However, I do not hold that against you. You were my borough president, so—

Badillo: I did not make an accusation at all...

Levine: Yes you did make an accusation. No education school in the United States would ban the classics that are being talked about, and we don't run any school districts. So, unless your wife is a graduate of Teachers Col-

lege, we don't have any impact on her. Thank you. [Tentative Applause.]

Eugene Lang: You know, I think it would be a great help to the process if people who waste their time in Congress spend a little more time working with children and getting to know them and their families and really address the problem where it starts. It's very easy to blame the school system. Very easy. And it's very easy to be smart and have wise solutions, which is a practical matter. But will those solutions have the opportunity to be proven out? The fact is, any system you have depends on children who want to go to school and who go to school because they want to learn. What condition is that? It's the circumstances in which they live, the parental support that they get. One of the big tragedies of our system, whatever the causes may be, is the fact that teachers are there to teach; unfortunately, they are not also engaged to be parents and policemen.

It seems to me you can talk about all the systems you want in Congress and talk about all the money you're smart enough to be able to get for any particular advantage, but the fact of the matter is that if you're dealing with a very human problem, it cannot be dealt with by legislation alone. Speaking from my own experience—which as many of you know has been quite extensive working in the trenches with the kids we're talking about—the people we have to start thinking of is ourselves. We hold in our hands, if we really want to do something about it, the opportunity to be able to make sure that we have children who want to go to school and who recognize the fact that education is a passport to opportunity. But, there's no conversation about that here when we are talking about schools. We're talking about money, and we're talking about wise ideas that may be generated in Congress, and frankly, to me, that is not constructive. I think we ought to have the opportunity to understand the underlying facts and also to recognize that we as citizens are here not only because we pay taxes, but because we as citizens have something that we owe to our neighbors. We can make life better for all of us and make this country a true democracy where people grow up and feel they are part of the political process and not being manipulated by the political process.

I'm not quite sure what my conclusion will be because if I get to the point, I'll occupy the rest of this afternoon. [Laughter.] But it's really very discouraging, it's very discouraging, to hear two Congressmen—former Congressmen—get up and talk about education with a narrow vision that we just heard here today.

Brademas: As my colleague and I have been attacked, perhaps you'll allow us to respond...

Fliegel: You can beat them up when you walk outside. The two of you can jump on him and beat him to the ground. But let's get a question.

Chuck Cahn: Arthur, we have a lot of really talented and dedicated teachers and principals. How do we get more and better?

Levine: The more and better question has a lot of different answers. There are many pieces to it. I'm just finishing a study of America's education schools. It's a big, big study. We surveyed all the deans. We surveyed thousands of faculty, thousands of principals, thousands of alumni. We did case studies of 30 of them. We cut up all kinds of data in all kinds of ways. We looked at student achievement and what teacher aspects were associated with it, in terms of training and all those kinds of things.

Before I go to those, let me talk about why teachers are leaving the profession. Part of it is money. They are not entering the profession, and they are leaving the profession because of salaries. The American Federation of Teachers puts out a study every year, and they regularly find that the salaries of teachers are among the lowest that college graduates get as real jobs, and that the longer you are in the profession, the greater the disparity between salaries, and those of comparable professionals with comparable degrees. So what happens is that a lot of people aren't choosing this as the field they want to go into. In studies of groups of students at elite education schools, I asked them, "What are you doing here?" and the answer was: "My family didn't want me to come. My friends didn't want me to come, my professors told me not to come."

When I first got to Teachers College, I sat down with an alumnus who was teaching maybe third grade, and he loved it. He'd gone to Brown as an undergraduate, and now had finished with us, and he said, "I don't know how much longer I can stick with this. The problem for me is that I went back to my Brown reunion and they are all making more money than me. And they all have higher status jobs. My parents call every weekend and say it's great that I've had this experience, but it's time I got on with my career. And I go to parties and I meet these great women, and we're having a terrific conversation, and they turn to me and ask, 'So, what are you doing?' and I tell them and they suddenly remember their glass needs to be refilled." So long as we have these kinds of salary and status disparities, we are going to have a hard time attracting the best and the brightest to teaching and

getting them to stay. Forty-seven percent leave within the first five years. And a large part of that is working conditions. And if we could change those two things, we would have more and we would have better.

The most interesting thing perhaps that came out of our study is that we looked at 2,000 certified teachers who had gone to education schools for the most part, and we asked, "What factor has the greatest connection with student achievement?" The answer was longevity. If we could stop teachers from leaving by improving job conditions, we would have both more and better teachers. Education schools should be focusing on professional development in addition to preparation.

David Bloomfield: I want to ask about this mastery learning/mastery teaching idea that you have that education will become more individualized because of special education. I think what special education has done mostly is to voucherize American education, in some ways in favor of middle and upper-middle class students to go to private schools. What can we do institutionally in our cities to make education more individualized for students rather than in the Greenwiches of the world?

Levine: What I am going to end up telling you is that I think we can make marginal differences in terms of individualization. If we reduce class size we'll do more of that. But I'm talking about marginal changes, and the model I described before is a fundamental change. And that change can't occur until two things occur. One is that we need more brain research to understand how children learn and children develop. And then we need software development that responds to differences in learning styles and meets the way each child learns. Once we have that capacity we can then focus on outcomes. We can diagnose a child and say, "Ah, we see how you learn. This is it. And so for this morning you're working with Mrs. Brown, and this afternoon you are going to be with the bluebirds, and for later in the afternoon, you are going to be working with our software programs that will meet your need in this area." We would end up advancing children as they master material, rather than grade by grade, which would eliminate the need for either social promotion or not social promotion. You would move under mastery. But that is a while off. And so when we talk about individualization now, we're going to see more individualization in private schools and we're going to see more in affluent districts.

Roy Goodman: If I may, I'd like to just reflect upon an experience that I had which may lead to three questions. First, I thank you for a most lucid presentation. It's exceptional and you are certainly one of the great educators of

our time and we are grateful for your contribution. The things that I'd like to stress are the following: I once took a trip up to the poorer section of our city and I dropped in unannounced on a middle school in which I found some extraordinary conditions. The principal was available to me at that time and I took a walk around the school with him and he said, "This is an interesting place." And I said, "How are you doing on your arrangements for getting kids into good colleges?" He said, "We're sending a lot of kids to ivy league schools." I said, "What accounts for your success?" He said, "There are basically three things: We try very hard to deal with the fact that many of our kids come from homes without parents, so we try to provide a surrogate parenting arrangement to help our youngsters. Secondly, we try to eliminate the disruptive kids from our classrooms as best we can, and third we focus on subject matter that we think will stimulate the kids and be of interest to them."

Essentially what he had done was to assign a special teacher to each group. Each class had determined disruptive youngsters and had them taken them out of the classroom so that class size was no longer relevant. Indeed, it was a factor that was eliminated completely because as class size didn't matter as long as you had no disruptive kids in the picture. So my first question, Arthur, is whether you can find a way to eliminate disruptors in the legal framework the city provides? Secondly, is there anything you can do to provide parental guidance for kids who have no parents? It seems like an odd question, but I think it's basic—it goes right to the heart of many of the difficulties in the schools. And third, is there any way of selecting subject matter within the curriculum which is both instructive but at the same time is of interest to youngsters and causes them to be stimulated by the instruction? I hope I made those three questions clear. It seems to me that apart from any subject matter discussion, they are vitally important to the outcome of our efforts to reform education.

Levine: Can we go back to the earlier debate? [Laughter.]

Roy Goodman is one of those people, one of those very few people who's been a hero to me, a man I admire and care about deeply. And I would go so far as to say I would enthusiastically vote for him, and I'm a Democrat, so that's as big an endorsement as I can make.

Roy, you've asked me some very hard questions, and I haven't got answers to all of them. In terms of curriculum, we have to do that. I'm not talking about dumbing-down the curriculum. I'm talking about building a curriculum that excites and builds enthusiasm. Dan Rose has done it as an extracurricular activity. What he's done is he's managed to create chess

programs that involve children in schooling and build skills. We can do the same thing in other areas of the curriculum. It's a matter of re-thinking how we do what we do.

On the issue of disruptive students, I don't have an answer for you. Maybe other people in the room do. The issue is: I don't know one teacher who, if you ask what would make teaching better, doesn't list removing disruptive students as either the first or second answer they give. At the moment, there are limits as to what's possible and what one can do. It's one of the reasons that some private schools and some Catholic schools are able to effect high-achieving scores beyond what one would expect for similar populations in some cases. They have control over who is sitting in their classrooms. And we need to find something to do with those children. And again, I'm not talking about de-schooling, but they can't hold back other children. And we have to find a way to educate those children.

And the last one was parents. There's a lot that's been done with parents. It's one of the hardest issues I know. Look at Carlos's dad who loves his son, who is there all the time. He is a box cutter, and leaves work at 4:00 and goes back at 8:00 so he's with Carlos all that time. And that dad, no matter how long we talked—and this is probably a failing on my part—I couldn't convince him that being a gentleman was not enough. I couldn't do it. And it's essential. When I lived in that neighborhood, there was a super highway out. There were examples all around me, how people were successful who had gone to school and had done well as a consequence of having done that. Today there are none. There are none. The doctor who lived in my working class neighborhood is gone. The lawyer, he's gone. The accountant, he's gone. The most successful people in my old neighborhood are gang-leaders and drug-dealers. So, capturing parents is critical. There have been efforts that have succeeded around the country and critical mass is essential here. Rater than grabbing a parent here, there and the other place, if we can grab a group of parents in a neighborhood, we can make a huge, huge difference.

[Applause.]

Fliegel: I want to thank Arthur Levine for a very, very interesting and thoughtful presentation. I want to thank our combatants for making things interesting. And I want to thank you all for coming. Have a pleasant day.

[Applause.]

system in America. What I also fear is that our children, our inner-city children, will get left behind. They come from families in which parents vote at a lower rate. They come from families that haven't organized or taken to the streets or said, "I will not send my child to a school that's far worse than other children are being sent to." What that means is they haven't used charter schools as a weapon, saying "If you don't fix my local school, there will be a charter here next Thursday." It means the population can be safely overlooked, and all we need to do is rub our hands and say, "That's too bad."

"The rhetoric on education reform these days is white hot... There's no middle ground; there is no room for compromise, and we're in a position in which research is following policy, rather than policy following research."

I'm also worried about the politicization of education. The rhetoric on education reform these days is white hot. We have conservatives and liberals talking at each other over a chasm. There's no middle ground; there is no room for compromise, and we're in a position in which research is following policy, rather than policy following research. That's a terrible, terrible state to be in.

What we're battling over is: Do we keep public education public or do we move to privatization? Do we teach whole language reading, or do we teach phonics reading? Do we do English as a second language, or English only? Social promotion, no social promotion? The problem with these positions is that the kids are getting left out. We're not asking what works with kids. We're not asking what's effective. We're not asking how to improve their achievement and their graduation rates. The research is ignored, marshaled by champions for any one of these issues when it agrees with what they are saying, ignored or criticized when it doesn't. I'm frightened about that. I'm frightened that we are seeing a triumph of ideology over education.

Another issue of concern to me is the perennial quest for silver bullets. "Aha! We have the answer to what will solve the problems of our schools. It's charter schools." But the evidence isn't clear on whether charter schools are better or worse than the schools we have. "It's vouchers!" But the evidence isn't clear on whether vouchers are better or worse than what we have. It's all conflicting.

And the fact of the matter is, all of this stuff is beginning to merge. Take the difference between public and private schools. In my neighborhood, we have a Catholic school. I don't think there is a single Catholic in that school. What I do know is that they have a lot of Black students from my neighbor-

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