

As I go about my work, I am frequently reminded of conversations with the late educator Paul Ylvisaker and of his deep, abiding concern that future generations were being condemned to lives without hope, without possibility. He spoke movingly of a generation “increasingly immigrant and minority, a generation altogether too precious to waste.” ■ To squander the potential of any generation would be shortsighted at best,

BY WENDY D. PURIEFOY
PRESIDENT
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but to do so today, considering the tools and the knowledge we have at hand, is morally reprehensible and socially irresponsible. Imagine the alienation of those who reach adulthood only to realize the chances that were denied, the opportunities missed, the possibilities for a rich and full life taken away by a system of education that considers some children expendable. The consequences for those children, their families, their communities—and for us as a nation—are simply not acceptable.

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WE NEED A “Leave No Adolescent Behind”

COMMITMENT

BY RICHARD W. RILEY

Richard W. Riley served as US secretary of education from 1993 to 2001, under former president Clinton, and as governor of South Carolina from 1979 to 1987. He is a member of the National Advisory Board of the Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit dedicated to helping at-risk middle and high school students achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life. Information on the new Alliance report, “Every Child a Graduate,” can be found at www.all4ed.org.



The last two decades have seen steady and heartening progress in public education. The American people—responding to widespread concern that public schools were not preparing our children for the global economy of the 21st century—supported increased investment in early childhood education, backed rigorous academic standards in all subject areas, and adopted new measures of accountability to back up those standards. The bipartisan support given to *No Child Left Behind* is the culmination of almost 20 years of sustained effort to transform American education.

While *No Child Left Behind* provides a strong framework for helping children in the early grades, our nation still needs a comprehensive strategy to address the literacy problems and learning gaps of students in middle school and high school.

Today, one-quarter of our nation’s middle and high school students—6 million children in all—are in danger of dropping out of school or graduating unprepared for the basic demands of college or the workplace. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, more than 1 million high school seniors have difficulty doing basic math, and more than 700,000 high school seniors have significant difficulty reading.

These students are being left behind in large part because the extra support routinely provided to students in elementary school all but vanishes in middle and high school. Only 15 percent of the \$11 billion that the federal government targets to disadvantaged students goes to those in secondary schools, even though 33 percent of all low-income students are enrolled in secondary schools.

As a result, less than three-quarters of our nation’s eighth graders complete high school in five years, and the rate is much worse for urban minority students. Indeed, in some of our cities, less than half of all students walk down the aisle on graduation day. In effect, our middle and high schools have become social sorting machines, tagging some young people successful and labeling others unable to learn.

We know from personal experience that the middle and high school years can be a challenging rite of passage into adulthood, even for the best-prepared students. Typically, a seventh grader leaves behind a small elementary school and is thrust into a bigger, sometimes very impersonal world. That quick jump can overwhelm students with below-average skills. Those who do not receive intensive help to bring them up to grade level, particularly in reading, all too easily lose confidence and motivation. In truth, the reading gap is at the very heart of the achievement gap, diminishing a child’s ability to compete and prosper in a knowledge-driven economy.

Students who drop out or fail to go to college have significantly lower lifetime incomes than those who stay in school and earn higher degrees. A low-income student with a college degree—an achievement that only 6 percent of children from families with incomes under \$25,000 can currently claim—will have approximately a million dollars more in lifetime earnings than a high school dropout.

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· [president's message] ·

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Our democracy needs an educated, productive citizenry, yet far too many children in this country still do not get the education they need to prosper in a knowledge-driven economy. And far too many achievement gaps still keep these children from realizing their full potential.

Education has long been the liberator of human potential. Yet the convictions embedded in today's standards-based reform—that all children can achieve at high levels; that human potential is fluid, not fixed; that every child deserves to participate fully in our society; that all children have the capacity to influence and shape the world around them—are revolutionary.

In casting off outdated ideas about human potential, we stand at an important crossroads in the pace of human progress. We must make sure the new, revolutionary ideas reach fruition by closing the achievement gaps, not just for the sake of the children involved, but for the health of our nation as a whole.

It would be the greatest hubris on our part to somehow conclude we won't be needing the contributions of these children. With an economy weakened by recession and corporate scandal, a worldwide threat of terrorism, the ever-present possibility of future wars, and the scourge of seemingly implacable disease, surely it is clear that we will need the contribution of each and every one of our citizens as we confront these challenges.

Some progress has been made in closing the achievement gaps that keep children from developing the potential to participate fully in our democracy. Closing these gaps has been the work and the goal of every single member of our network since the first local education fund came into existence almost two decades ago. But closing achievement gaps has to be everyone's work. This issue of *Connections* explores the roles that all Americans—lawmakers, advocates, business leaders, other citizens—can and must play in making quality education a reality for every child.

Former US secretary of education Richard Riley looks at the needs of middle and high school students and calls for a comprehensive national strategy on reading proficiency to keep students on the path to college and successful careers. Civil rights activist Bob Moses defines algebra as the essential literacy requirement in the postindustrial age and sets a goal to get 90 percent of all students into high-level math and science courses. Maryland lawmaker Pete Rawlings, New York attorney Michael Rebell, and grassroots campaign director Donna Cooper describe the huge obstacle fiscal inequity presents to high achievement. William Novelli, CEO of AARP, emphasizes the important role older Americans can play in educating our youth, and Title 1 advocate Phyllis McClure discusses how *No Child Left Behind* can help communities identify and remedy performance gaps in their schools.

We've learned so much about the technical aspects of learning in the past two decades, thanks to the hard work of local education funds in communities across this country, to innovative research by school reform and advocacy organizations, to visionary support from funders, and to inspired leadership from dedicated superintendents and educators. We now know what it takes to help children learn: qualified teachers, supportive learning environments, resources, high expectations linked to standards, and fair diagnostic assessment.

Ultimately, however, the quality of education delivered in our public schools is up to us. There is no substitute for, no power greater than, the force of public will. If we as a people insist on quality public education for all children, then all children will receive quality public education. If we persist in the misbegotten notion that quality in public education is someone else's responsibility, we will waste the precious potential of generations to come.

Wendy D. Puriefoy

Wendy D. Puriefoy
President, Public Education Network

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Above: Wendy D. Puriefoy



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"LEAVE NO ADOLESCENT BEHIND" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Poor education also translates into poor citizenship. In the 2000 presidential election, only 33 percent of adults without high school diplomas voted, whereas 49 percent of high school graduates and 70 percent of college graduates exercised their right to vote.

It is time to build on our investment and success in the early school years and make a first-class commitment to secondary education. It makes no sense to make major investments to start children on the path to success and then give up on them as they grow older.

Ultimately, America cannot maintain its position as the world's strongest economy, or its leading democracy, if we continue to give second-class attention to the needs of our middle and high school students.

The good news is that we know what it takes to help students master essential skills and channel their youthful energy toward lifelong success. There are hundreds of excellent public secondary schools and we can draw on the key elements that they share: quality teachers and principals, smaller learning environments, after-school and summer tutoring programs, engaging curricula, academic planning and support systems, and, above all, an emphasis on building reading proficiency. To implement these best practices at the secondary level on a national scale, we must exercise the same energy and commitment we have devoted to the early grades.

Strong reading skills are the foundation of success across the curriculum in upper grades, yet many low-income ninth graders read only at fifth- or sixth-grade levels. Even college-bound high school graduates struggle when it comes to reading, with some 40 percent of all four-year college students taking remedial courses in reading.

Research shows that students who receive intensive, focused literacy instruction and tutoring graduate from high school and attend college in far greater numbers than those who do not. Unfortunately, very few middle or high schools have a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy or even a reading specialist available to support students and train teachers. We need more reading specialists in our middle and high schools, and we need to make the investment to put them there.

Research also demonstrates a clear connection between quality teaching and student success. Unfortunately, many fine teachers and principals, especially those in low-performing urban schools, leave their professions due to low pay, lack of institutional support, and limited opportunities for professional growth. To reverse this trend, we need supports and incentives—such as tax credits for veteran teachers, loan forgiveness for recent college graduates, and grants for current college students—for those who accept the challenge of teaching in schools serving students at the greatest risk of failure. We also need additional federal investment in professional development programs targeted at teachers and principals who work in these schools.

Smaller school size is another critical factor in helping low-performing adolescents succeed. Research shows that smaller learning communities—whether in smaller

school buildings, schools within schools, or in some other form—enhance student outcomes by allowing teachers to offer personalized assistance. The federal government should extend the reach of its Smaller Learning Communities program to an additional 5,100 Title I-eligible secondary schools.

Finally, all students should have a customized education plan, facilitated by an academic counselor and/or intervention specialist, that spells out exactly what they need to do during their high school years to achieve their college and career objectives. For some, the best path to college or a good job might entail access to extra learning opportunities such as tutoring, mentoring, and after-school enrichment programs. We need to increase investment in programs such as GEAR UP and TRIO that have strong records of helping disadvantaged youth get on the path to college and/or other postsecondary training.

Such investments pay for themselves. Every dollar spent on students today will be returned many times over in economic growth, in increased tax revenues, and through reduced spending on unemployment, criminal justice, and social welfare programs. According to one Department of Education report, our national gross domestic product would expand by nearly \$500 billion annually if our literacy rate were equal to that of Sweden.

Ultimately, America cannot maintain its position as the world's strongest economy, or its leading democracy, if we continue to give second-class attention to the needs of our middle and high school students. After World War II, muscle power mattered as much as brainpower. A student could leave high school as early as the 10th grade and still make a decent living and

support a family. But those times are over, and the old factory model of education is completely out of date.

In this age of technology, information, and globalization, we need every one of our young people achieving at high standards and participating in what Alan Greenspan calls “the economy of ideas.” America’s secondary schools need to serve a higher purpose than just helping students get through. It will take new thinking, and new investment, to fulfill our national pledge to leave no child—and none of our adolescents—behind. ■

Boston Plan for Excellence in Public Schools, Public Education Foundation (Chattanooga-Hamilton County, TN), and **Houston Annenberg Challenge** are leading participants in *Schools for a New Society*. This \$60 million, multiyear effort is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to transform the high school experience for more than 140,000 students in more than 100 schools. **New Visions for Public Schools** is administering *The New Century High Schools Consortium for New York City*, an innovative partnership to redesign large, comprehensive high schools that serve approximately 76,000 students. It is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Open Society Institute. The **Fund for Educational Excellence** is using a \$20.75 million grant from a consortium of foundations to redesign Baltimore’s high schools into small learning communities and create new innovation high schools featuring small, supportive structures; effective, accountable instruction and leadership; and academic rigor. Seattle’s **Alliance for Education** received a five-year \$25.9 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 42% of which will be used by Seattle’s high schools to develop strategies to increase the academic achievement of all students. The Alliance also received a \$250,000 public engagement grant from the Gates Foundation to educate the community about the importance of small high schools.



FACTORIZING ALGEBRA INTO Student Achievement

AN INTERVIEW WITH CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST BOB MOSES

In the 1960s, Robert P. Moses was at the center of the civil rights movement, promoting black voter registration in the South. Among other roles, he served as Mississippi Field Secretary for

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Q: You argue that algebra is the gateway to higher learning. Why is proficiency in algebra so important?

A: The shift from the industrial age to the computer age requires quantitative literacy. It requires the ability to interpret, handle, and decode information imbedded with quantitative relationships, reading lessons from the Brinkler to understand abstract symbolic relationships. We jump from simple numbers to abstract math when we study algebra. So algebra becomes a literacy requirement in a way that it was not in an industrial economy. In an industrial economy, reading and writing were essential skills. Today, quantitative literacy is essential.

Q: American students are world leaders in math and reading proficiency in fourth grade. But by eighth grade they fall to the middle of the pack, and by the senior year they rank near the bottom. How can projects like yours reverse this trend?

A: Part of the problem is that we don't require our elementary school teachers to be fully qualified in math and science. That was okay during the industrial age, but we can't get away with that anymore because we have scaled up the required knowledge base. That means we need teachers who are not only qualified in language and the arts but in math and science as well.

We also need to expand the scope of experiential learning. If you take a look at the history of American education, experiential learning was successfully implemented in the early grades at the turn of the 20th century. But it has not taken hold in the upper grades, and that has handicapped us as far as math and science are concerned.

If we really want to raise performance for all kids so that 90 percent take higher-level math and science courses, then we need to take a new look at pedagogy. We have to demystify the abstract, symbolic language of math and science and demonstrate its real-world applications.

One way we have tried to demystify algebra is by introducing the concept of "feature talk." We show students that algebra lets us talk about things in a more sophisticated way. It lets us talk about not just objects, but important features of those objects. It lets us talk about not just a car, but the velocity of a car. It lets us demonstrate that the language of algebra is not difficult, just different from everyday language. Algebra, like everyday speech, is a conceptual language. With new pedagogy, it could become a common language for everyone.

Q: You focus specifically on algebra and specifically on middle school students. What elements of your model can be extended to other subjects and other grade levels?

A: It's clear experiential learning can be applied to other disciplines—experiential learning actually got off the ground with John Dewey and Jean Piaget back in the early 20th century. Math is the last frontier for this approach to learning. There's been no tradition in this country for that approach to math pedagogy, even at the university level, so it's hard to get off the ground. But it can be done. Lynn Moss, a teacher at Brinkley Middle School in Jackson, Mississippi, was so rejuvenated by her Algebra Project training that she got her whole team involved in using experiential learning methods and then spent a summer working on an interdisciplinary curriculum. They ended up reformulating the sixth-grade curriculum around the experiential learning process and "feature talk."

As for applying lessons from the Algebra Project to secondary education, I've spent the last six years looking at high schools. We just received National Science Foundation funding to develop new materials for the ninth grade so that we can link the first two years of high school mathematics with a pre-engineering curriculum in a way that demonstrates the engineering applications of what the students are learning.

Q: Graphing calculators play a key role in the Algebra Project curriculum. How important is technology to the teaching and learning process? And what can be done to make technology accessible in places like rural Mississippi as well?

A: We don't give technology enough emphasis. A graphing calculator engages today's young people in a way no textbook can. They've grown up in a culture of machines, videos, and games, so a graphing calculator fits right into their culture and their pattern of learning. You play to their strength and curiosity when you use technology to drive teaching.

Technology also helps overcome gaps in reading proficiency. In the old days, with textbooks, a ninth-grade student with fourth-grade reading proficiency would not have been able to do algebra. But a graphing calculator can help these students get around and overcome language illiteracy. If they punch stuff into a calculator and see it on a screen, they can write about it and talk about it.

Students clearly take to technology, so the issue is finding funds to get graphing calculators into the schools. And we also have to train teachers to use them as teaching tools so that they become the drivers in the learning process. Right now most of the teachers using graphing calculators teach honors courses and have the highest qualifications in math. The key is to help teachers in mainstream classrooms, those not as qualified in math, to learn how to work graphing calculators into their classrooms.

Q: The Algebra Project uses culture to engage African-American students in math. What makes culture an effective learning tool, and how could your model expand to engage students of all cultures?

A: We really play on culture. We look around and see what features of the local environment, such as subway trips, can be used as jumping-off points for important mathematical concepts. That's one of the things

we have been studying in relation to the NSF funding we received. As experiential learning spreads, people are looking at what's around them to see how it can be "mathematized." You have to have people who know math, know culture, and want to bring them together.

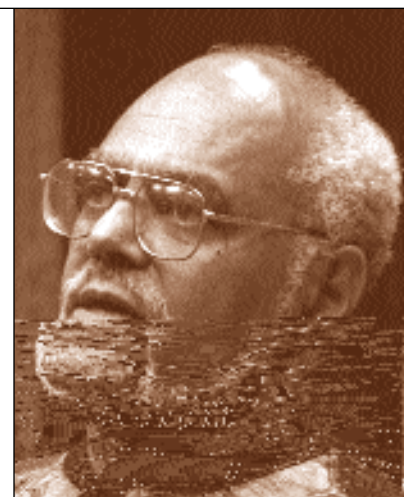
Q: As a curriculum design program, the Algebra Project tries to learn from students while teaching them. What have you learned about effective ways to teach math and use experiential learning?

A: We have a project that brings graduates of the Algebra Project back into the classroom when they reach their early twenties. These graduates can do things because they're "cool." They make it cool to stand up in front of a class, and they keep looking for ways to make learning fun. It's enlightening and informative to see them add to the games we play and put a different spin on them. We really can't achieve excellence in education if we don't get help from the targeted populations in figuring out how to do that.

Q: What role can effective math teaching play in raising results for historically underserved youth, and what are the keys to getting initiatives such as yours up and running?

A: The big obstacle in this country is what I call the legacy of sharecropper education. I think the recent New York City case on school funding brings this issue out into the open, as does the Supreme Court ruling on vouchers. After the Civil War, schools for sharecropper families were set up so that people would have the skills to do a certain basic kind of work but not enough knowledge to break out of the system. And that system expanded after World War II as sharecroppers and their children moved around the country. In his 1961 book, *Slums and Suburbs*, James Bryant Conant described the inequities in the American education system as a caste system, and what the Supreme Court decision on vouchers tells me is that the country still supports the principle of sharecropper schools.

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Above: Bob Moses



· [making it happen] ·

NCLB: An Advocate's Dream, A COMMUNITY'S CHALLENGE

BY PHYLLIS MCCLURE

Phyllis McClure is a consultant specializing in the effective use of Title I funds. Ms. McClure spent 24 years with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, where she monitored federal enforcement of Title I requirements. She continues to work for educational and civil rights organizations and foundations and for school districts.

With the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), watchdog groups, community organizations, and parents now have unparalleled access to crucial information about student achievement.

Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, all public schools, public school districts, states, and the District of Columbia must produce annual reports—in a language and format parents can readily understand—on student proficiency in math and reading, on school accountability, and on qualified personnel in the classrooms.

These NCLB reporting mandates rest on faith in a simple premise: Given concise, understandable information, the public will mobilize to make sure all children receive a quality public education.

STUDENT PROFICIENCY

School report cards have been around for many years. But NCLB ups the ante by requiring districts and states to produce report cards that include data on student performance, disaggregated by subgroup, and on the adequate yearly progress of schools.

Subgroup data—disaggregated by racial/ethnic group, gender, income, English proficiency, migrant status, and disability—expose achievement gaps previously masked by averaging school test scores and reveal where special efforts must be taken so that all students reach proficiency in reading and math. By disclosing subgroup performance at the district and state levels, disaggregated test data reveal which schools are getting better results, thus providing information that can be used to replicate successful practice throughout the system.

District report cards will help education advocates learn how their districts stack up, where gaps exist, and which districts are worth emulating. State report cards, which must include comparative information on students and teachers, can also serve as the annual state reports to the secretary of education required by NCLB. Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, states will be held publicly accountable for student performance and will

be required to inform Congress about the progress they are making in implementing the law.

HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

Since the 1994 reauthorization of Title I, adequate yearly progress (AYP) has been the benchmark for Title I school performance. Under NCLB, a school is not making AYP if either students overall or students in any one of four subgroups—racial/ethnic, income, English proficiency, disabled—have not made sufficient progress for at least two consecutive years. Previously, the reasons why a school failed to achieve AYP, and the subsequent consequences for students and teachers, were little understood by the school community. This will now change, thanks to NCLB reporting requirements.

Before a school can be designated as failing to achieve AYP, school officials, parents, and the public must be notified and local officials must be given an opportunity for a hearing within 45 days. School officials must issue a public statement identifying the school, the percentage of low-income pupils, the amount of federal school improvement funds the school will receive, and the services those funds will provide. Parents must be notified about what the identification means; what the school, the district, and the state are doing to address the problems; and what parents can do to help. If a school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, parents must be given options for public school choice or after-school tutoring.

Entire school districts can also be identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. If this occurs, parents of children in every school in the district must receive notice of why the action was taken and what they can do to help upgrade the quality of education in the public school system. The state ultimately determines the steps to be taken to rectify the causes of poor achievement in identified districts.

QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS

NCLB sets forth unprecedented requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals, along with reporting requirements that facilitate monitoring of state and

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Achieving Excellence

BY PHILIP M. CONDIT

Our nation's history was shaped by an industrial revolution, a period of great disruption in the lives of our ancestors. The move from an agrarian, rural, small economy to an urban, industrial, large economy took a long time but eventually, and inevitably, social structures and people's lives changed.

Now, we're in the midst of an information revolution that will shape our country for the foreseeable future. Like its industrial predecessor, the information revolution is disruptive and is making us rethink how we organize our institutions and how we live our lives. The critical difference today is that change happens at the speed at which information is processed by a silicon chip.

Technology has fundamentally transformed every aspect of business and continues to do so with every new advance. The laptop I carry today has more computing power than the biggest computer at Boeing when I joined the company in 1965. Whereas once I had to be in my office to attend meetings, now I can participate in videoconferences while I'm on an airplane.

At Boeing, our people are our competitive advantage, and the educational capacity of our workforce is critical. We've invested heavily in a lifelong learning program, which allows tens of thousands of our employees to go back to college, and in a leadership center that every one of our managers attends. But we are not paying for employees to learn to read well or to master basic algebra and geometry. Simply put, without strong academic preparation, a person couldn't get a job at Boeing in the first place.

For this reason, our company—and the entire nation—depends on our public schools to help the next generation of engineers, scientists, and technicians take the first steps toward becoming a worldclass workforce. For more than a decade, business leaders have partnered with leaders in government and education to tackle the core problems that undermine our ability to raise student achievement. We have been at the forefront of the movement to raise academic standards so that *all* students—not just the brightest or most advantaged—reach higher levels of performance.

If we look back at the model of the industrial factory, there were two sets of expectations for the knowledge

and skills workers brought to the job: one for managers and designers, and one for those on the assembly line. This model falls short in the information age. Boeing and other companies need people with great math, science, reading, and communication skills, as well as a desire to constantly expand their horizons. This is just as true for assembly line workers as it is for top executives.

The only way we can maintain leadership in the global aerospace industry is with people who are always learning and always prepared to do so. Too often in the past, academic expectations had more to do with a child's background than with talent or capacity to learn. Like the factory model, these expectations must be discarded. Young people from historically underserved backgrounds make up an ever-increasing share of our workforce; they are the next generation of Boeing employees.

People will change jobs three or more times in their lifetime; this frequently stated statistic, reflecting the dynamic of change in the information age, means acquiring new skills and knowledge many times during a career. But as workers learn, they must be able to draw on a solid core of knowledge and skills as the foundation for that learning. They must be well grounded in math and science, able to read and comprehend complex text, and capable of writing clearly and cogently.

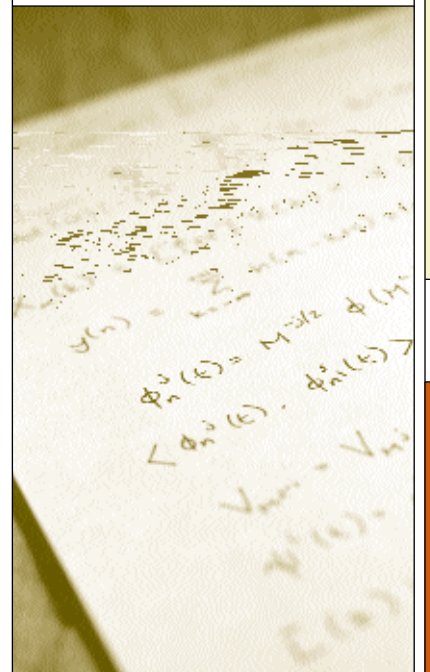
This is why business leaders are promoting the notion of a common set of rich, challenging academic standards for all schools and for all students. Too often, we've seen students who are not even prepared to train for the kinds of rewarding jobs we have available. Our companies can't succeed that way, and our country won't succeed that way.

Setting standards is not enough, however, to ensure that all students reach higher levels of achievement. In the private sector, we've seen how measuring results and attaching consequences to them lead to improved performance. That's why business leaders have pushed for states to test students based on standards and to hold schools and students accountable

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Above: Philip M. Condit



[conversations]

Setting New Standards FOR FISCAL EQUITY

A CONVERSATION WITH DONNA COOPER, PETE RAWLINGS, AND MICHAEL REBELL

With 46 states facing budget deficits this year, the question of how to provide adequate resources and equitable funding to students in all communities remains at the forefront of the education debate.

To advance the debate, PEN initiated a conversation with Donna Cooper, campaign director for the grassroots coalition Good Schools Pennsylvania and adjunct faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Center of Government; Howard P. (Pete) Rawlings, a longtime member of the Maryland House of Delegates, chair of the Appropriations Committee, and teacher of mathematics at Baltimore City Community College; and Michael A. Rebell, the executive director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity who serves as co-counsel for plaintiffs in *CFE v. State of New York*, a major challenge to the constitutionality of New York's educational finance system. The following are excerpts from that discussion.

CONNECTIONS: *Many see standards as a means to reveal and remedy funding inequities that put students from underserved communities at a profound disadvantage. Are standards, assessment, and accountability goals feasible without fiscal equity?*

DEL. RAWLINGS: It's a chicken/egg proposition. Without standards, assessment, and accountability, it's very difficult to convince people to provide additional money. People don't want to dump money down a hole; they want to know it's going to have an impact. One reason we were able to pass a funding formula in Maryland is that we had taken steps to reform Baltimore City schools. An audit of Baltimore City's district management revealed some devastating results, along with some very clear recommendations for improvement that we implemented. And people could see the progress. They could see a heightened level of accountability in improved test scores and in an effective school reconstitution process.

MR. REBELL: The connection between standards-based reform and fiscal equity can be traced back to the 1989 National Education Summit, which came up with the idea of goals and standards and encouraged states to move in that direction. About the same time, there was a dramatic shift in fiscal equity litigation. Plaintiffs were finding themselves on the losing end of the stick. And not because the courts were unsympathetic; indeed, many courts recognized that children with the greatest needs were receiving the fewest resources. But the question of how to address the inequity was a major challenge. Standards-based reform gave judges clear guidelines for assessing whether kids were receiving what they needed for an adequate education. Language in most state constitutions guarantees all children "a sound, basic education," or words to that effect. But those words were just abstractions before standards were introduced. Now courts can step in and ask, "Are kids receiving an adequate education or not?"

MS. COOPER: The standards movement lets us define a common ground so that children in poor rural or urban schools get the resources they need to perform at levels comparable to students in wealthy suburban dis-

tricts. Ultimately, however, it is less an issue of equity than one of adequacy because children in some schools will need additional resources beyond those that meet the definition of equity in spending across districts.

CONNECTIONS: *You bring up an interesting shift in the school funding debate: Is the issue "equity" in funding or "adequacy" of resources? Is this semantics, or does it reflect a real change in the politics of school finance reform?*

MS. COOPER: It's important not to lose track of equity because that's what grabs at the heartstrings. That a kid can go to school and receive only a third of the funding a kid in some other school receives is a very compelling argument. But equity can backfire. In California, equity rulings caused funding to level off, leaving less for everyone instead of more for all. We've learned from those mistakes. We've learned to be more sophisticated about what we ask for. We've learned we need to be clear that we are seeking not just a system with more money, but a system that holds itself accountable and understands that accountability is what will inspire people to once again believe in public education.

DEL. RAWLINGS: You can make a much stronger case for adequacy than you can for equity. After all, you can have an equitable system of funding and still not have adequate funding to provide every child a quality public education. Adequacy requires you to look at education at the classroom and school levels; equity discussions are far less targeted at what we need to do to produce results.

MR. REBELL: Adequacy means that instead of focusing on whether all children in a state receive the same dollar allocation, we are asking whether all children are receiving the basic education mandated by the state constitution. Adequacy has great implications for the solutions we pursue. If the aim is equity, in the sense that all kids receive the same dollars, courts can take money from wealthy districts and give it to poorer districts or cap increases in rich districts and say you can't spend anymore until poor districts catch up.

Well, needless to say, that leads to a blood bath of political confrontation. But if you look at things from an adequacy perspective, you're saying the issue is not whether some kids are getting more but whether poor kids are getting enough. In New York State, that approach allows us to put affluent suburbs at ease by saying, "Look, we're not playing Robin Hood. We're not looking to take something away from you. We're looking to level up for everyone, not level down for some." That strategy allows us to build coalitions, to approach people in wealthy districts and say, "We're no threat to you, so take a look at your civic responsibility, at the ethics of this. Don't you have a responsibility to give kids in the inner city and in rural areas more of the same opportunity your kids are getting?" When you approach the dialogue in those terms, you get a very different response.

CONNECTIONS: *It used to be the courts could be counted on to advance civil rights and address inequities in education, but recent court decisions have caused many to question that view. How important are the courts in ensuring equal opportunity in education?*

MR. REBELL: Courts have played a key role since *Brown v. Board of Education*, and I have no doubt that fiscal equity cases have propelled the adequate funding movement forward. Studies show these cases lead to increases in education funding and force the political system to deal with the issue. Judges aren't education experts. But they are experts in knowing what it takes to motivate other branches of government to do what they should be doing. Many state constitutions say the legislature is responsible for establishing a system of free common schools in which all students are educated. Unfortunately, many legislatures haven't carried out that function, so the courts have to step in and pressure them to do so. If you leave the courts out of your reform strategies, you're missing out on the guidance they can offer and the compulsion they can apply to make sure the job is done right.

DEL. RAWLINGS: If legislatures would take more ownership and responsibility, school finance could progress without the courts breathing down our backs. It all depends on legislative leadership. In Maryland, the top

political leaders are strong supporters of public education. The courts, however, are valuable in periods of recession when things start slipping back to the old ways, with big disparities between low-performing schools and suburban schools. But it serves everyone's interests to negotiate school funding issues in the legislature instead of having a judicial hammer overhead.

MS. COOPER: I actually feel very liberated that the Pennsylvania court decided not to consider the school finance issue. Advocacy strategy can become hostage to a legal timetable...it can be years by the time a case is heard and appealed. Or we could be in a situation like Ohio where the court has ruled three times but the legislature still hasn't acted. It would be great to have a ruling that says every child must have equal opportunity in public education, but we need to move faster. We can't sit back and wait for a court to make a decision, to be the arbiter. The people have to make the case for fiscal equity; they are the ones who must be the moral arbiters. The lack of a court decision empowers community advocates to be much more active and much clearer about their positions. We'd have much less passion and momentum if there were a case winding through the courts.

CONNECTIONS: *The funding gap is often framed in raw dollar amounts. For example, there may be a \$5,000 gap in per-student expenditures between a suburban school and one in the inner city. What does this gap mean in qualitative terms?*

MS. COOPER: In Pennsylvania, the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest districts can be \$10,000 per kid per classroom. What does that mean in real life? Well, every principal in the Swarthmore school district is a former Philadelphia principal who was offered at least \$20,000 more to work in that suburban district. Administrators have to make decisions just like everyone else about providing for their families and sending their kids through college. The funding gap creates a grossly inequitable marketplace for the highest quality teachers and principals. The districts that need these talented people the most are the least able to afford them.

Below: Donna Cooper



Below: Pete Rawlings



Below: Michael Rebell



[conversations]

"FISCAL EQUITY" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

MR. REBELL: It's pretty clear that a qualified teacher is the single most important factor in the quality of a child's education. And \$5,000 can make the difference between having a qualified teacher and scraping the bottom of the barrel. In New York City, 14 percent of our teachers are uncertified, compared to 2 or 3 percent in the rest of the state, and 31 percent flunked the basic state certification exam at least once—some, many times—before finally passing. This is directly related to the fact that the average salary in New York City is 25 percent less than teachers get in the surrounding suburbs. Obviously, the most marketable people are going to the suburbs.

DEL. RAWLINGS: Equity advocates often argue that low performance is a direct result of poor resources, but it's more complicated than that. I once visited the basement of a Baltimore school and what I saw there was a nightmare: a locked cage with reams of yellowing paper, piles of unused textbooks, and stacks of new computers and printers still in their boxes. A great principal, even a good one, would never have allowed that to happen. A lot depends on the quality of the teacher in each classroom, but a lot also depends on the quality of the principal and the administrators. Baltimore City moved from 16th or 17th in per-pupil expenditures to one of the top five in the state. Our investments in class size reduction, teacher salaries, and early childhood education have made a real difference in raising the city's test scores to the point where our first graders now score above the national average in reading.

CONNECTIONS: *Some researchers and critics assert that money is not the key to raising student achievement. They frequently invoke failures of Title I, characterizing it as \$100 billion spent with no visible results. What evidence is there that equalized funding does make a difference?*

MR. REBELL: There's mixed data on Title I, but I don't accept the allegation that Title I spending is a total failure. A recent Rand Corporation study cites instances where significant increases in Title I spending in the 1970s are linked to dramatic increases in student performance. The bottom line is that money

well spent will make a difference; money thrown at problems will not. It comes down to accountability, making sure increased funding gets spent the right way. When you look at things like New York City's "reading recovery" program—an expensive, labor-intensive program with one-on-one reading and other assistance for kids in the early grades—the results are absolutely dramatic. That program takes kids in the lowest 20th percentile of the reading scale, and within one year 80 percent of them are reading above grade level. Money makes a difference—common sense tells you that. Which is why exponents of the view that money doesn't matter are not winning court cases. Judges aren't fools. They say, "If money doesn't make a difference, then why are all the rich districts fighting to hang onto theirs?"

MS. COOPER: Radnor—one of the wealthiest communities in Pennsylvania—spends almost \$15,000 for every kid in their public school system. Why? Because they don't want class size to exceed 17 in the lower grades, they want a pre-K program for children whose families can't afford pre-K, they want a variety of AP courses, and they want their children to have the best teachers and the best administrators. Clearly, they think money matters. It's only when it comes to poor districts that people say money doesn't matter. Lancaster City School District got \$200 million to reduce class size, establish a kindergarten, create better linkages between early childhood daycare centers and the school district, update their reading curriculum, and add tutoring for kids who were falling behind. As a result, the 56 percent of second graders reading at grade level rose to 88 percent. However, that funding was temporary. So, unless Pennsylvania comes up with a new funding system, Lancaster will be right back to the system it had before, and performance levels will decline because children won't get the early learning experiences they need to succeed.

CONNECTIONS: *Campaigns for equitable funding are often characterized as city vs. suburb. Describe the fiscal equity political landscape and what must be done to convince middle-class parents that balanced funding formulas are a win-win proposition?*

MS. COOPER: In reviewing state assessment data, we find that, on average, 30 percent of suburban students are not passing state tests. So the issue of adequacy of resources and accountability is not an urban vs. suburban issue—it's a fundamental system issue. The system has to deliver for every kid if we're going to survive as a democratic society that provides a decent quality of life. Parents don't see this as just an urban problem. People are very concerned that city kids are not getting a quality education, but plenty of parents in rural communities send their kids to private schools because they are concerned about the quality of education in public schools. So in Pennsylvania, at least, it's not an urban vs. suburban issue.

DEL. RAWLINGS: Most legislators understand that if we don't educate our youngsters now, we are going to have a bigger problem later on. So they support clear proposals to improve city schools. But the bottom line to getting approval for more equitable funding is a compromise that allows everyone to go back to their constituents and say, "We have received increased funding for your kids."

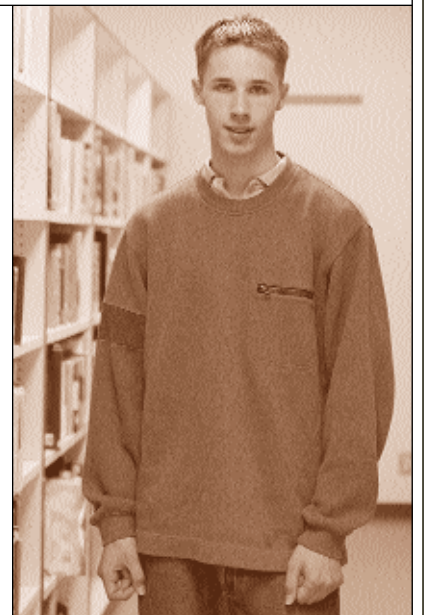
MR. REBELL: We have to avoid the Robin Hood rhetoric of past equity cases, especially if the reform impetus comes from an urban area, with the potential for an upstate/downstate confrontation. You've got to build coalitions to have lasting reform. We have very consciously done that in New York and we've been quite successful. You've got to get everyone who is committed to education on the same bandwagon, saying let's increase the pie. We're not going to threaten affluent areas and take things away from them. We're just going to make sure more of the increase goes to the kids who are most needy. It's an appeal to conscience, to a sense of fairness. And most people respond positively when you frame it that way.

CONNECTIONS: *This year, 46 states face serious budget deficits. Given balanced budget requirements, we can expect deep cuts in services over the next several years. What's the prognosis for fiscal equity in this environment, and what accounts for Maryland's decision to adopt an equitable funding formula despite the spending crunch?*

MR. REBELL: The prognosis is not as rosy as it was a few years ago. But we've got to keep things in perspective. Fiscal equity litigation has been around for 30 years. Our entrenched system of school finance dates back to the 19th century and must be reformed for the needs of the 21st century. It's important to recognize how inequitable and inadequate the current systems are, and start building new models of funding and accountability. With a model in place, you have a mechanism for estimating the cost of providing an adequate education for all kids. And once you've implemented a new finance system, you have a pretty good notion of what's required and you can deal with the political realities. If times are tough, phase it in over time. The critical thing is to educate the public, to build the public and political will for moving in the right direction, and to make sure money, as it becomes available, is used equitably, not to bolster failing systems of the past.

DEL. RAWLINGS: Most states have constitutional amendments that require support for public schools. Maryland has one of the highest per capita incomes in the country, and it's among the highest in educational performance as well. When people have high expectations and a political environment that supports public schools, they will make a concerted effort to fund the public educational system first in austere budget climates.

MS. COOPER: I've worked in government for 20 years, and I've seen budget deficits used for political ends. Deficits serve the interests of people who don't want to invest in public education. We currently have one of the largest federal budget deficits in 15 to 20 years, but nobody's suggesting we shouldn't make significant investments in homeland security. A healthy educational system is the best homeland security we can have. If we're going to persevere, we have to think about investment over the long term. We have to think about how much we need to ensure our future and start from that premise. ■



Mobile Area Education Foundation in Alabama mounted a successful grassroots campaign, *2001 Vote Yes*, to increase local school taxes—the first increase in local funding approved by voters in 40 years. In North Carolina, **Durham Public Education Network** served as fiscal agent for a multimillion-dollar local bond referendum that raised \$51 million for schools. **Cleveland Initiative for Education** played a key role in getting a \$350 million capital-improvement referendum passed; the referendum leverages an additional \$500 million from state and local sources to improve facilities in Cleveland's public schools.

· [viewpoint] ·

"ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Philip M. Condit is chairman and CEO of The Boeing Company, the world's largest aerospace company, and serves as co-vice chairman of Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan, nonprofit organization founded by the nation's governors and corporate leaders to help states raise academic standards and improve their schools. He is co-chair of The Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers committed to improving public policy in such areas as education and the workforce, and a member of the board of directors of The Chicago Public Education Fund.

for reaching standards. Tests can show us where extra time and extra resources need to be spent to close learning gaps. The accountability provisions attached to test results help us ensure that students are not stuck in poorly performing schools and that high-performing students and schools are rewarded.

These ideas became the "law of the land" last year with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which requires states to set challenging standards, give high-quality tests aligned to their standards, measure and report the progress of all students, and hold failing schools accountable. Most states have been working on these reforms for many years, and the new law gives them considerable leeway to move ahead. We must now ensure that the standards are high, that the tests measure accurately and completely, and that the accountability is firm and fair.

However, the new law is just a starting point. Making standards and accountability the bedrock of our public education system may be the easiest part. Ensuring that students reach the standards we set is the greater challenge, the real test of our resolve, and, ultimately, of our success. This means teachers who are fully prepared to help students achieve at new levels and who are fully equipped with the necessary classroom tools. This means school leaders who can mine the test results to determine what's working and what's not. This means giving students a real chance to reach the standards, even if that involves additional time before, during, or after school or additional help from tutors. In this way, equity will go hand in hand with our high expectations.

The course we've set to improve schools by using high standards is undeniably a difficult one. Already—as abstract notions of standards and accountability begin to play out in real schools for actual students, teachers, and parents—some people want to abandon the reforms.

Even when the record in some states makes it clear the situation is temporary, the pain experienced when students initially fail to reach standards cannot be minimized. That pain, however, must not be used as an excuse for expecting less. Expecting less does not serve us well in the information age for, in the end, accountability is unavoidable. For many years, accountability has been lurking in the shadows, visible only when a student does not make it in first-year college classes, or cannot pass a reading or math test given by a prospective employer. This "invisible" accountability, while no less painful, provides no impetus for improvement because it is far less public. In contrast, highly visible stakes create pressure to provide what it takes for students to reach high standards.

Those of us who care about our schools and our students cannot give in to fears about accountability. High expectations, and tests to measure our performance against them, are not the problem with our schools. Neither are they solutions to those problems in and of themselves. They are, however, essential tools for targeting resources and public attention so that we provide all children with a first-class education and a legitimate opportunity to take part in the American dream. ■

[Q + A]

"ALGEBRA" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

People are going to have to rise up and demand that we undo this legacy if we are ever going to move beyond it. My experience in Mississippi during the civil rights movement taught me that this is more complicated than changing state institutions or laws.

Q: In your career as a civil rights activist, you sought to empower the poor and disenfranchised with the right to vote. Now you are trying to empower poor children with skills for success. What is the connection between civil rights and quality education?

A: I used organizing techniques for political access, and the right to vote was our main tool. We worked the demand side, trying to get sharecroppers to demand their right to vote and represent themselves—not just letting advocates like us represent them. Today, we're trying to use math literacy as an organizing tool for economic and educational access but, again, staying focused on the demand side. We are working with young people, trying to get students, teachers, and parents to make demands.

To raise this demand, we need to show them why math literacy is important. Once they figure this out, they see their schools from a different perspective. They begin to make more demands on their institutions, particularly when they see something is not being offered. It's an evolutionary process.

Q: The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires states to implement rigorous academic standards and annual assessments in reading and math. How will these new requirements affect the Algebra Project, and what can teachers do to balance innovation with compliance to standards?

A: Unfortunately, the emphasis tends to shift to getting kids ready for an exam. But with a really strong teacher, and a strong administrator, the emphasis stays on what students need to learn. Once they've learned it, then we can talk about how to use that information to get ready for exams. We're going to watch and see how testing factors in, because if all you're doing is getting kids ready for exams, the time will come when they need to apply knowledge and they won't be able to do that because all their attention was focused on passing an exam.

Q: How important is quality teaching to student learning and to closing achievement gaps?

A: Absolutely critical. This country is not going to be able to move forward until it decides that being a teacher is as important as being a lawyer. We really have to put the necessary resources into a professional corps of teachers, and we have to honor teaching as a worthy pursuit. ■



San Francisco Education Fund's Math and Science Collaborative is working with middle school teachers to close the achievement gap in math and science for 4,500 African-American and Latino students, and students lacking proficiency in English. **Los Angeles Educational Partnership** launched the *+PLUS+ Urban Mathematics Collaborative* to help more than 600 teachers gain new knowledge and skills in mathematics.

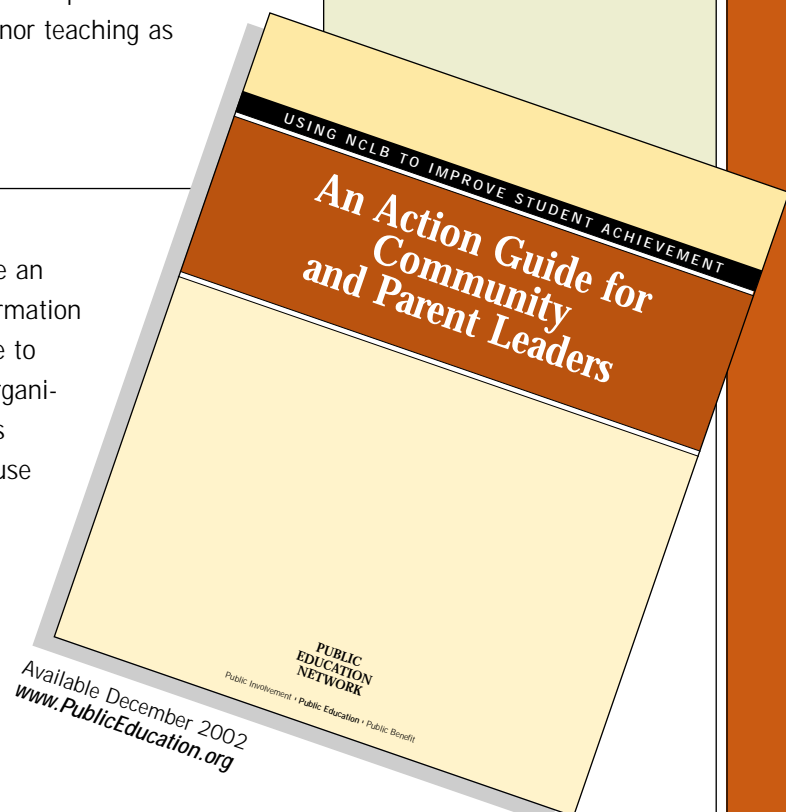
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"ADVOCATE'S DREAM" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

district compliance. All teachers of core academic subjects must meet the law's definition of "highly qualified" by the 2005–2006 school year, and states must set annual targets to reach this goal.

Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, the secretary of education must issue a report on the annual progress of every state, district, and Title I school regarding teacher qualifications. NCLB also requires that paraprofessionals who assist in instruction have at least two years of college by the 2005–2006 school year.

These new reporting requirements are an advocate's dream. But access to information is only the beginning. Advocates have to make sure parents and community organizations know they have a right to this information. And communities must use the information to ensure that every child gets a quality public education. That, after all, is the challenge and the promise of NCLB. ■



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· [end notes] ·

BILL NOVELLI ON THE LIFELONG IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

William Novelli is executive director and CEO of AARP, a membership organization for people age 50 and older. Co-founder and former president of one of the world's largest public relations agencies, he has served as president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, executive vice president of CARE, and director of advertising and creative services for the Peace Corps.

Recently I was at an event dealing with child poverty and someone came up and asked: "What are you doing here?"

I guess people don't expect to see the director of AARP at an event dealing with children. But concern for children is an integral part of AARP's history—Ethel Percy Andrus, our founder, was a teacher—and a vital part of our future.

AARP exists to bring about significant and important social change, and to do that we have to be active as advocates and active as participants. We just relaunched the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA), our precursor organization founded by Dr. Andrus, as a forum for educators over 50. And the very first thing we are going to tackle is the teacher shortage that's plaguing our schools.

My son is an elementary school teacher in St. Paul, and he's taught me a lot about the enormous challenges new teachers face in and out of the classroom. Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers are national problems of major proportions. We're looking for ways to draw on the wealth of experience of our cadre of active and recently retired teachers. The project is just in the planning stages, but we believe we're uniquely positioned to make a real difference.

We're also going to take a look at ways we can elevate the importance of education in society. Education is at the core of what we as a country are all about, and it demands a multigenerational response. Just think about the number of grandparents who are raising grandchildren today. What with people living longer and changing jobs more frequently, and technology

making the world smaller and the pace of life faster, the idea of continual, lifelong learning has never been more important. So we have to view education in a lifelong context—it's the only rational way to deal with the issues confronting education.

Some of the perceived reluctance on the part of older citizens to support public education can be tied to property taxes, which, like it or not, are still the primary source of funds for public education. And rising property taxes for people on a fixed income can be a real problem.

But that doesn't translate into a lack of concern for younger generations. Dr. Andrus believed it was our obligation to leave our children a country "far greater and grander" than the one we inherited. And we intend to live up to that obligation. We're working with organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters of America; Experience Corps in Washington, DC; the Governor's Mentoring Partnership in California; and with state programs throughout the country to recruit volunteers for tutoring, mentoring, and classroom assistance. *With Our Youth!*, an AARP program of more than 25,000 retired educators working in 1,000 communities, provides young people a continuing relationship with a caring adult, a healthy start in life, a safe place to learn and grow, a marketable skill through effective education, and an opportunity to serve their community.

"Education," William Butler Yeats once wrote, "is lighting a fire." Every child in this country deserves a chance to feel that spark. And it is the obligation of every single one of us—old, young, married, single, parents, grandparents—to see that they do. Our future as a nation depends on it. ■

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CALIFORNIA

- Alliance for Student Achievement (Los Angeles)
- Berkeley Public Education Foundation (Berkeley)
- The Galf Institute (Los Angeles)
- Los Angeles Educational Partnership (Los Angeles)
- Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute (Oakland)
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- New Haven Public Education Fund, Inc. (New Haven)
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- Stamford Public Education Foundation (Stamford)

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- In2Books
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- The Education Fund (Miami)
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- Fund for Educational Excellence (Baltimore)

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- Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools (Boston)
- The Cambridge Partnership for Public Education (Cambridge)
- Lynn Business/Education Foundation (Lynn)
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- Public Education Fund (Providence)

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- The Charleston Education Network (Charleston)
- The Education Foundation (Charleston)

- Pee Dee Education Foundation (Florence)
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Public Education Network (PEN) is a national organization of local education funds (LEFs) and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation. PEN believes public engagement is the oft-missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools.

Its mission, therefore, is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education through a national constituency of organizations and individuals. PEN and its 74 LEF members, who work in 29 states and the District of Columbia on behalf of 8.9 million children in more than 500 school districts, seek to bring the community voice into the debate on quality public education in the firm belief that an active, vocal constituency will ensure every child, in every community, a quality public education.

Each issue of *Connections* includes short, thoughtful essays and informational pieces on important topics that help build understanding about quality public education and how it can be achieved through active, vibrant citizen involvement. *Connections* focuses on effecting change—at the local, district, state, and national levels—by sharing the experiences, perspectives, and success stories of those working for quality public education. The publication has a distinct yet nonpartisan point of view; it aims to create a new dialogue about public leadership and public action, public space and how to keep it public, public responsibility for education, and the enduring value of public schools.