

## Successful Schools

A few years ago, a Chicago elementary school was a teacher's nightmare. Less than 1 percent of the pupils could read; undisciplined students roamed about and played ball in the halls, drank liquor, gambled, and damaged the school. Within a period of five years the school had six principals. Teacher morale was understandably at low ebb.

### Minority Success

Even though still a ghetto school where 90 percent of the students' families are on relief or other assistance, now all windows have glass, litter cannot be found, children do not roam the halls, pupils read, and teachers look forward to teaching. The change: Alice Blair. A former black teacher with 17 years' experience with inner-city children, plus another three years as an assistant principal. She took charge of Manierre Elementary School and dramatically altered it.

Blair revealed the secret of her success: "The teachers have very high expectations," she said. "I have demanded, and I don't want teachers on the staff who don't have those kind of expectations for the success of these children either in the behavior of the youngsters or in the academic achievement of the children. If I don't glean from the interview that they feel that black children can succeed, and that they have a contribution to make to that success, then I don't want them" The assistant principal is white, and the staff is 60 percent white and 40 percent black. Alice Blair made a special effort to secure black male teachers so that children from welfare families would get to know successful black male adults.

At her first staff meeting she told teachers she believed in some very simple ideas. "One of them is that all children can learn; and all black children can learn. I knew from experience, what worked with black ghetto kids, and I showed my staff members how to make success possible for children who rarely experience success." Blair noted, "Black inner-city children from welfare families have a special need for security. They can't expect stability and security from home, so it must come from school. It is important for children to be able to anticipate what happens next in school and we follow routines religiously." This plan proved very successful.

"My children in school now compare to white and middle class black

schools in terms of achievement,” Blair said. Subjected to a heavy phonics approach to reading, all children at primary level read successfully. The reading problem now is with low achievers who enter from other Chicago schools. Blair has these lagging children held back until they meet the reading grade; she insists that they attend summer school. Children with severe reading problems create most school problems, she found, but now that children experience reading success, there is little need for discipline. Once order is achieved, new children learn good behavior from others. When children enter this disciplined environment and misbehave, correction is immediately administered.

Parental cooperation is important in a successful school. At Manierre when children fail to do their homework, parents are immediately notified. Parents of preschool children meet daily to study child development. One parent-teacher conference achieved a 100 percent turnout.

Alice Blair recognizes that blacks suffer much from permissiveness. Schools do not insist that children learn how to work. Blair related this incident: “When I was an assistant principal in an integrated setting in Michigan City, Indiana, where the school population was only about 11 percent black, I discovered that there was much more leeway given to black youngsters when black youngsters broke the rules. When I became the assistant principal, for at least a year, there was quite a disturbance in the community because I demanded from black youngsters that they had to meet the same standards that the white youngsters in that school had to meet.” Then Blair analyzed the situation: “By saying that they could not meet them, you were saying they were inferior.” And added, “I have demanded of them.” She does not want sympathetic teachers to feel sorry for these children because they are poor and black and cannot do any better.

*The American School Board Journal* noted about Blair:

Don’t mistake her modesty for timidity. Blair’s favorite motto is posted in the school’s main office: “If God had believed in permissiveness, He would have given us the Ten Suggestions.” Students know that their principal suspends rule breakers without hesitation, and teachers are familiar with the story of Blair’s first day on the job—when she asked the school’s secretary where 25 of the school’s teachers were. “Don’t worry,” the secretary assured her,” the teachers generally come in a little late around here.”

“Not any more they don’t,” Blair said as she picked up the telephone to request 25 substitute teachers from the city’s central personnel office.

I interviewed Alice Blair. When I questioned her about the permissive philosophy of the school system, she said, “Not to control. It just leaves control to some agency of our society. We don’t control them in the schools; then the police will have them. We cannot excuse ourselves because parents don’t control them. We have a responsibility for five hours of the day, and we must not only control them but educate them.” But to “control them, we have to have order first. There is no way you can teach in disorder and permissiveness.” She cleverly analyzed that permissiveness is an “abandonment of our responsibility.” Because of her success, Blair has been advanced to the district superintendency.<sup>1</sup>

### **Achieving and Nonachieving Schools**

Daniel Klepak, director of the New York State Office of Education Performance Review, conducted a study on the reasons for the wide discrepancy in reading achievement in two predominantly black elementary schools. Both schools had situations and problems mirroring the poverty of their environment. However, the successful school had an efficient, achievement-oriented principal with an experienced teaching staff; the underachieving school was deficient in such leadership.

The *New York Times* editorialized, “Conditions in the successful school were actually inferior to those of the failing one: it was more crowded, had more pupils per teacher, and its children came from families with even lower incomes. . . . Mr. Klepak’s conclusions—that good leadership, experienced, well planned teaching and faith in the children’s capacity are crucial—are hardly revolutionary. What renders them significant is the chronic reluctance of school systems to take a hard and self-critical look at the success and failure of their own strategies.”<sup>2</sup>

Americans have traditionally believed that schools make a difference in students’ achievement. However, some studies have found reasons elsewhere: James Coleman ascribed achievement to family background; Arthur Jensen, primarily to heredity and race; and Christopher Jencks, mainly to luck. Certainly these studies contain elements of truth. Nevertheless, George Weber, former associate director of the *Council for Basic Education*, developed the hypothesis that in several American inner-city public schools children were successful in learning to read. He

received a grant from the Victoria Foundation and discovered four such schools: P.S. 129 and P.S. 11 in New York City, Woodland School in Kansas City, and Ann Street School in Los Angeles. He wanted to find some common factors for their success. Weber came to these conclusions: “Their success shows that the failure in beginning reading typical of inner city schools is the fault not of the children or their background—but of the schools. None of the successes were achieved overnight; they required from three to nine years. The factors that seem to account for the success of the four schools are strong leadership, high expectations, good atmosphere, strong emphasis on reading, additional reading personnel, use of phonics, individualization, and careful evaluation of pupil progress.”

Concerning the level of discipline in these schools, Weber notes, “The good atmosphere of these schools is hard to describe. And yet it is difficult to escape the conviction that the order, sense of purpose, relative quiet, and pleasure in learning of these schools play a role in their achievements. Disorder, noise, tension, and confusion are found in many inner-city schools at the elementary level. I have been in schools where such conditions prevail, but, overall, the four successful schools were quite different.”<sup>3</sup>

Ronald Edmonds, researcher for the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has identified five factors similar to George Weber’s for successful schools: emphasis on basic skills, standardized testing, orderly environment, authoritative leadership, and high expectations of students by teachers.<sup>4</sup>

When students in grades 2 through 11 were tested in Baltimore public schools in 1978, their average score in reading was 20.2 months behind the national norms and in math, 17.4 months. Four years later, the reading lag was 5.7 months and math 0.3 month. What happened? Columnist William Raspberry reports, “The heart of the program is simple enough: tough standards and tender concern.”

Baltimore superintendent John L. Crew tells the story: “We had our people write learning expectancies in reading, writing and math for each grade, so that each teacher would know exactly what was expected. . . . We made it a matter of policy that every child would have homework. Then we began placing our children according to their test results. Students who scored less than 40 percent on the reading proficiency test, for example, were assigned a reading clinician in addition to their regular language arts program.”

An example of his tender love and tough standards, which caused the

remarkable change, is Crew's introduction of a reading-through drama program so that poor readers could act out plays. However, in midyear Crew dismissed three principals.

"A lot of the things I'm doing now," he says in explaining how these changes could be made, particularly among blacks, "I couldn't have done in the 1960s, even though I'm black myself.

In the '60s, everything was develop-at-your-own-rate, whole-child, progressive education and 'relevancy.' We were wrapped up in educational innovation and decentralization and a lot of political issues, with really no defined goals and objectives. As educators, we are learning that you must have structure and objectives, or your program simply won't work."<sup>5</sup>

### **Compensatory Programs**

Educators and governmental leaders have tried to help minorities to achieve. *U.S. News & World Report* tells how "large expenditures by all levels of government have gone into 'compensatory' programs at schools in low-income areas to help upgrade scholastic achievement and to narrow the disparities between blacks and whites, and between poor and middle-class youngsters.

"So far, however, test scores have not shown that a significant improvement results from programs of this sort."<sup>6</sup>

Why do programs like Head Start, Follow Through, and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act show such small gains? It is like carefully growing flowers in a hothouse, then placing them in an unattended garden. Children cannot have an initial successful training program and then be placed in an unsupervised and undisciplined environment.

Certain compensatory programs *have* managed to be successful, and *Educational Leadership* presents the results of the Metropolitan Applied Research Corporation in a report to the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity of the U.S. Senate:

An analysis of successful "compensatory" or "educational enrichment" programs reveals that these programs are "successful" only when they succeed in imposing upon a particular school and classroom the pattern of essential ingredients of an effective educational program—systematic and specifically defined sequentially developed curricula; high expectations for the students, and acceptance of them as individuals who can perform in terms

of high standards; effective teaching and diligent supervision; and regular evaluation and reinforcement of strengths.<sup>7</sup>

According to this report, the few successful programs were conducted in exactly opposite manner to the progressive approach that is so prevalent in today's education. Such programs of supervised education are beneficial to *all* races, not just minorities.

### **Gifted Children**

An article titled "Advanced School Goes Back to Traditional Teaching Methods," appeared in *Today's Child* back in 1961: where "an elementary school whose pupils' intelligence quotients average out to 150-plus has announced a radical change in its approach to the education of intellectually gifted children. Next September students attending Hunter College Elementary School, where chief entrance requirement is a minimum I.Q. of 130, will find less 'democracy' in the classroom and more protein in the academic diet, less emphasis on 'enrichment' and more stress on mastering academic subject matter.

"Among other drastic changes-to-come will be a return to letter grades—A, B, C, D and F—after years of progress reports. . . 'There has been too much misinterpretation of 'democratic' procedures in the classroom,' says Dr. L. T. Camp, school principal. 'Educators haven't used good judgment in working with children's expressed interests and needs. Intellectually gifted children are still kids and need a firm hand to instruct and guide them.'"<sup>8</sup>

Seventeen years later I interviewed Dr. Stanley Seidman, principal of Hunter College Elementary School. When shown the report of the Metropolitan Applied Research Corporation on successful compensatory programs, he agreed with that approach. In teaching these highly gifted children, he said, the staff philosophy is "individualization with direction and guidance."

### **Fundamental Schools**

James K. Wellington, manager of organizational development for the Arizona Public Service Company, spoke at Arizona State University "A Look at the Fundamental School Concept." Fundamental schools, he says, are increasingly being adopted in cities across America:

I wrote to several individuals who were deeply involved with

the fundamental concept within their community. The response was excellent and I would like to share this response with you.

I can say at the outset that in each one of the schools that I wrote to, and from those who responded, the fundamental school has been a success and improvement has been definite and measurable. . . . Fred Hechinger, a longtime education editor of the *New York Times*, writes of his experiences in investigating the fundamental school in Palo Alto. When Hechinger first learned that a basically liberal community such as Palo Alto had concluded that it was desirable to establish a structured traditional alternative, he was skeptical. He fretted that Palo Alto citizens had accepted the idea that education “can be good only if it tastes like bitter medicine.”

But after visiting Palo Alto’s more structured alternative school, Hechinger concluded that “disenchantment with the latest neoprogressive wave can lead to a rational, rather than reactionary, search for conservative answers.” At Palo Alto’s basic education alternative school, Hechinger noticed an “air of courtesy” and a “low noise level.” Children, he said, seemed less frantic and appeared relaxed rather than regimented or submissive. And parents seemed pleased, partially because reports on student work in progress, but not grades, were sent home every Friday, augmented by quarterly report cards which were graded.

Wellington describes the high success of pupils in various fundamental schools and the overwhelming parental support for these schools. He then states, “So, you can see that I am a believer in the fundamental concept because of the excellent record that has been achieved by those schools and by those states who have gone to the basics, or the fundamental concept.”<sup>9</sup>

John Marshall Fundamental School, K-8, opened in Pasadena in September 1973, and grades 9-12 was added the following year. The school emphasizes discipline, respect, and patriotism; mastery of basics with reading instruction based on phonics; homework for all levels; and the development of creative abilities. Their guidelines states: “Under no circumstances will vandalism, violence, destructive acts, intimidation, extortion, harassment, malicious disturbances, or any flagrant disregard for law and order be tolerated, condoned, or excused.” To enforce these goals they use: “loss of privileges, detention, special tasks, corporal

punishment in and out of school, suspension, adjustment transfer, withdrawal from school and expulsion.” Teachers are expected to maintain complete control at all times.

The high school division has a Planned Program of Study that is divided into 12 majors: Art, Business Education, Communications, Consumer Education and Homemaking, Engineering and Technology Education, English, Foreign Language, General Education, Mathematics, Music, Science, and Social Science. Students can choose a vocational or professional goal that will prepare them to enter an occupation, advanced studies at a junior college or technical school, or a four-year college or university.

Each major has subdivisions in which students can choose their field of specialty. For example, under the major of Business Education the electives are Accounting, Data Processing, General Business, Clerical and Secretarial. After deciding their majors, students take the required subjects and choose electives.<sup>10</sup>

In 1970 the Pasadena Unified School District had forced busing; as a consequence, school achievement rapidly declined to an all-time low. Many students left the schools, thereby creating a situation in which integration would never be achieved. When a new board was elected in 1973, forced busing was terminated for voluntary integration. In the same year,

John Marshall Fundamental School was organized. Leaders of teachers' organizations, various progressive educators, and others favoring forced busing put up a desperate struggle to destroy the fundamental school and foil attempts to implement an academic accounting system. The new school board hoped its efforts would reverse the trend of academic failure; opponents eagerly looked for signs of failure.

After five years, the downward trend in school achievement was reversed, and the elimination of forced busing stemmed white flight. To the chagrin of fundamental school opponents, the school is now voluntarily integrated and reflects the racial and socioeconomic makeup of the entire district. Parents were not opposed to integration when assured that their children would receive a quality education in a peaceful environment.

Richard Vetterli, Ph.D., author of *Storming the Citadel: The Fundamental Revolution Against Progressive Education*, in writing about John Marshall Fundamental School says, “John Hardy, black educator and trustee of the Pasadena School Board, campaigned for election to this



post in 1975 on a platform of opposition to forced busing and progressive education. It is his contention that what black children—and all school children for that matter—need is not compensatory education gimmicks or artificial forced integration schemes but fundamental education.”

### **Progressive vs. Fundamental Schools**

For Pasadena’s minority children progressive education, Vetterli says, has been “tragic.” When children end “kindergarten there is a distinct difference between black and white students when compared to the national norm.” The gap progressively widens between black and white children until “by the eighth grade Pasadena’s black students are, in effect, 3.5 years behind their fellow white students in reading, over 4 years behind in language, and over 3 years behind in mathematics.” When these students reach twelfth grade, the gap becomes even wider. “Court mandated forced busing has placed students in the same classroom who may differ in academic competence as much as 4 to 6 years. This problem is not peculiar to the Pasadena Unified School District, for across the nation similar and worse conditions can be documented.”

However, at Marshall Fundamental School black students showed amazing ability on the Cooperative Primary Test scores. “The reading and language norms for the first, second and third grade classes at Marshall,” says Vetterli, “where the students are over 40% black, topped the national norm in every class in each of the three grades.” He tells how “in first grade mathematics at Marshall, 75% of the students scored above the national norm. In first grade reading, approximately 78% of all students scored above the national norm.” Similar results were achieved at Sierra Mesa Fundamental School, where 42 percent of students are black; in grade 1 they scored in reading and math 83 percent and 76 percent respectively above the national norm. Vetterli then adds an important fact: These high scores are achieved because black students, representing more than 40 percent of the students, make a “significant contribution to the high test scores—unlike the district as a whole, where the large number of black students assure district test scores averaging below the national norm in most instances.”

Vetterli states how “fundamental educators in Pasadena maintain that forced integration schemes, such as forced busing, are also counterproductive. Not only has forced busing failed to improve education, integration or racial understanding, its effects have been universally negative.” Also, “fundamental education is demonstrating

what progressive education has universally failed to do, that black children can achieve academically, often spectacularly so. The Pasadena experience demonstrates that fundamental education is beneficial to all children across all levels of academic ability and socio-economic background.”

The fundamental schools in Pasadena are also “characterized by high test scores, creative achievement, respectful students, neatly dressed faculty and administration, orderly classrooms and clean campuses.” Likewise, “other district schools, such as the highly acclaimed Burbank School, which basically follows the fundamental approach, consistently achieve respectable test scores, and are characterized by high student and faculty morale.

“On the other hand, Audubon School, one of the most ‘open’ and ‘Progressive’ schools in the district, registers achievement test scores that are tragically low. Given the school’s inordinately high socio-economic status, the inordinately low test scores place Audubon at or near the ‘bottom’ of the district academically.” Dr. Vetterli then states:

Fundamental education has always been effective. Before the saturation of American education by the Dewey revolution of permissive, progressive education, fundamental education had helped to make the United States the most literate and advanced nation in history.

Did the success of the fundamental school bring a revolution to the educational system at Pasadena? Listen to what Vetterli says: “Ironically, while many school district officials from far and near come to Pasadena to visit the fundamental schools and learn their methods, causing fundamental education to spread to other areas and school districts, forced-busing and progressive-education militants in our city have ‘moved heaven and earth’ in an attempt to destroy the fundamental schools. This effort to destroy the fundamental school program has been through court action, telephone threats to parents who enroll their children in fundamental education, to published falsehoods concerning the methodology of fundamental education.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Investigation of Schools by the Federal Government**

One of the strongest indictments concerning the serious erosion of educational excellence has come from the federal government.

Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell commissioned an 18-member panel to “examine the American educational system and to recommend reforms.” The commission “based its findings on papers commissioned from a variety of experts; existing studies of education; letters from those volunteering their opinions about needed reforms; descriptions of notable educational programs; and testimony at eight meetings, six public hearings, two panel discussions, a symposium, and a series of meetings around the country.” Following are excerpts of their findings:

**An Open Letter to the American People  
A Nation at Risk:  
The Imperative for Educational Reform**

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments.

History is not kind to idlers. The time is long past when America’s destiny was assured simply by an abundance of natural resources and inexhaustible human enthusiasm, and by our relative isolation from the malignant problems of older civilizations. The world is indeed one global village. We live among determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors. We compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops. America’s position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer.

Our concern, however, goes well beyond matters such as industry and commerce. It also includes the intellectual, moral,

and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society.

International comparisons of student achievement, completed a decade ago, reveal that on 19 academic tests American students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized nations, were last seven times.

Some 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension.

About 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent.

Many 17-year-olds do not possess the "higher order" intellectual skills we should expect of them. Nearly 40 percent cannot draw inferences from written material; only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay; and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.

There was a steady decline in science-achievement scores of U.S. 17-year-olds as measured by national assessments of science in 1969, 1973, and 1977. Between 1975 and 1980, remedial mathematics courses in public four-year colleges increased by 72 percent and now constitute one-quarter of all mathematics courses taught in those institutions.

The Department of the Navy, for example, reported to the Commission that one-quarter of its recent recruits cannot read at the ninth-grade level, the minimum needed simply to understand written safety instructions. Without remedial work they cannot even begin, much less complete, the sophisticated training essential in much of the modern military.

Paul Copperman has drawn a sobering conclusion. Until now, he has noted:

*Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.*

In contrast to the ideal of the learning society, however, we find that for too many people education means doing the minimum work necessary for the moment, then coasting through life on

what they have learned in its first quarter. But this should not surprise us because we tend to express our educational standards and expectations largely in terms of “minimum requirements.” And where there should be a coherent continuum of learning, we have none, but instead an often incoherent, outdated, patchwork quilt.

We conclude that declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted.

Secondary-school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses. Students have migrated from vocational and college-preparatory programs to “general-track” courses in large numbers. The proportion of students taking a general program of study has increased from 12 percent in 1964 to 42 percent in 1979.

The amount of homework for high-school seniors has decreased (two-thirds report less than one hour a night) and grades have risen as average student achievement has been declining.

In many other industrialized nations, courses in mathematics (other than arithmetic or general mathematics), biology, chemistry, physics, and geography start in grade 6 and are required of *all* students. The time spent on these subjects, based on class hours, is about three times that spent by even the most science-oriented U.S. students, i.e., those who select four years of science and mathematics in secondary school.

In England and other industrialized countries, it is not unusual for academic high-school students to spend eight hours a day at school, 220 days per year. In the United States, by contrast, the typical school day lasts six hours and the school year is 180 days.

In most schools, the teaching of study skills is haphazard and unplanned. Consequently, many students complete high school and enter college without disciplined and systematic study habits.

Our recommendations are based on the beliefs that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, that a solid high-school education is within the reach

of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with the skills required for new careers and for citizenship.

We *recommend* that state and local high-school graduation requirements be strengthened and that, at a *minimum, all* students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics by taking the following curriculum during their four years of high school: (a) four years of English; (b) three years of mathematics; (c) three years of science; (d) three years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, two years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended in addition to those taken earlier.

We *recommend* that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations, for academic performance and student conduct, and that four-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission. This will help students do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment.

Standardized tests of achievement (not to be confused with aptitude tests) should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another and particularly from high school to college or work. The purposes of these tests would be to: (a) certify the student's credentials; (b) identify the need for remedial intervention; and (c) identify the opportunity for advanced or accelerated work. The tests should be administered as part of a nationwide (but not federal) system of state and local standardized tests. This system should include other diagnostic procedures that assist teachers and students to evaluate student progress.

Students in high schools should be assigned far more homework than is now the case.

The burden on teachers for maintaining discipline should be reduced through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently, and by considering alternative classrooms, programs, and schools to meet the needs of continually disruptive students.

Placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid

adherence to age.

Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and to demonstrate competence in an academic discipline. Colleges and universities offering teacher-preparation programs should be judged by how well their graduates meet these criteria.

Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.

It is their America, and the America of all of us, that is at risk; it is to each of us that this imperative is addressed. It is by our willingness to take up the challenge, and our resolve to see it through, that America's place in the world will be either secured or forfeited. Americans have succeeded before and so we shall again.

A close examination of this report will reveal that the problem plaguing American education is that schools have been inundated with progressive concepts. Instead of establishing high educational standards, the commission discovered, for "too many people education means doing the minimum work necessary for the moment," and in "most schools, the teaching of study skills is haphazard and unplanned."

The commission recommends these fundamental concepts: (1) There should be achievement promotion and ability grouping; thus "placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age." (2) Students need to be challenged with higher requirements to achieve an adequate education by having stricter high school graduation standards. (3) "Students in high schools should be assigned far more homework." (4) Achievement tests "should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another." (5) Teachers should "meet high educational standards" and be held accountable. Their "salary, promotion, tenure and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system." (6) Schools should have "firm and fair codes of student conduct

that are enforced consistently.”

It was this same report that said, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.”<sup>12</sup>

Schools in crisis: training for success or failure? The answer is obvious—many students are being trained for failure. We need to reverse this trend. There is, however, a great danger. The commission made a plea for increased funding for education. Some people will see this as the major issue and insist that the cure for educational ills is an increase in federal, state, and local taxes.

*Education Week* states: “But some of those who responded to the report—including spokesmen for the nation’s two largest teachers’ organizations—said its recommendations could not be met without increased federal assistance.”<sup>13</sup> There is a definite need for increased funds to be appropriated for teachers to receive an adequate salary, for far too many are grossly underpaid. But if the government is not careful it will repeat the mistakes of the past; it will shoot money at the problems and expect this shotgun method to be the remedy. Then after a number of years it will set up a commission to investigate the results and conclude that for every program that succeeded there were others that failed. Meanwhile schools will continue to decline. Or if increased funding is not available, many persons will feel it is hopeless to try to change the failing educational system.

But money is not the cure. The cause of the disease is the permissive progressive educational policies. The remedy is simple: There must be an educational reform movement that will eliminate the progressive policies and implement the disciplined fundamental educational concepts that have been proven successful.

Within one month after the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report, another task force of 41 elected officials, corporate and labor leaders, and educators, came to this conclusion, “We have expected too little of our schools over the past two decades—and we have gotten too little. The result is that our schools are not doing an adequate job of educating for today’s requirements in the workplace, much less tomorrow’s.”

The officials of the National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, chaired by Governor James B. Hunt of North Carolina, reported: There is a “real emergency” upon us that is caused by world competition, and a “deep and lasting change” is needed in the schools.



They recommend an “action plan” for kindergarten through grade 12 should be developed by governors and state educational leaders; and that school officials should eliminate social promotion, and set “firm, explicit and demanding” requirements for homework, attendance, grades, and discipline.<sup>14</sup>

Again it can be seen that the major issue facing education today is whether educators will continue using progressive educational policies or change and implement fundamental principles. It is important that this fact be understood; otherwise the fight throughout the next decade will be over increased funding to improve the educational deficiencies instead of rooting out the progressive leaders and their policies, which have brought on this massive decline.

Successful schools are possible. Although there are those who vehemently oppose fundamental schools and their concepts, many Americans are choosing this type of school for the pragmatic reason that it is producing positive results instead of failures, as has been demonstrated in many districts around the country. Concerned individuals must be willing to face the opposition to fundamental education and incorporate these tried and proven methods in schools across America. The future of our nation depends upon the training we provide for all our children.