

AN EVENING IN HONOR OF JERRY HUME

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS MANY YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE
TOWARD ADVANCING EDUCATION REFORM



ADDRESS BY THE GUEST OF HONOR,
JERRY HUME



CO-SPONSORED BY
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MY THANKS TO YOU FOR COMING – for the joy of your presence. We are honored and the school reform movement benefits from your understanding and support.

I have come to believe the following about education reform:

1. Money equals power in the school reform equation. Who controls the flow of money will determine what reforms take place.
2. Education reform will not come from within the educational establishment – it must be imposed from without.
3. The essential ingredients for school reform are to provide parents with choice via vouchers and to impose accountability on the schools for student results, as measured against standards.
4. School reform is necessary for the future success of this country and for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

Education reform is a political process – it is tied to political power as represented by money and votes. The inner cities, where the schools are worst, don't have money and don't vote. Therefore, the areas where education reform is most needed are only marginally involved in the political process.

However, the status quo has been successfully challenged, both by the Supreme Court decision last June involving vouchers in Cleveland and in the November 2002 elections. In November voucher candidates won over voucher opponents in Florida and South Carolina.

The winds of change are blowing.

I became involved in the education reform movement because of my kids. It is a story that continues.

In 1972 I was asked to join a group of San Franciscans who ultimately became the founders of San Francisco University High School, a private coeducational high school which my children could attend, enabling them to remain in San Francisco.

San Francisco University High School worked well and the kids were well educated – they got into the best colleges through out the United States. The school had an excellent educational environment, excelled in sports, had a good arts department, and had a major community service commitment.

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University High was education that worked.

In the late 1970s I was asked to join the education task force of the California Business Roundtable. Education was one of the major initiatives of the Roundtable.

Paul Hazen, former CEO of Wells Fargo, announced one day that Wells Fargo had just lowered the educational requirements for its tellers from a high-school graduate who could pass an eighth-grade reading and math test to a high-school graduate who could pass a seventh-grade reading and math test. This was because there were not enough high-school graduates in California that could pass an eighth-grade test.

So California was giving high school diplomas to students who could not pass an eighth-grade reading and math test.

That was a surprise. Something was happening with education that promised a very bad future for this country.

My remarks this evening are reflections of my experiences over the last 30 plus years. It has been a fascinating journey.

I have come to believe that accountability and vouchers are the keys to education reform.

Accountability is holding the educators responsible for student learning – holding educators responsible for students acquiring the skills and knowledge at every grade level to be successful in life. Accountability is seeing that no child is left behind.

The measurement of educational performance has been the biggest success in education reform over the last 20 years.

I was a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, the organization that publishes NAEP – the nation's report card. It provides state-by-state results for reading, math, science, geography, history, and so forth.

NAEP's poor results have provided reformers and, more important, politicians with the information to criticize outcomes in public education. And outcomes are how education reform must be measured.

Money, class size, teacher salaries, and facilities are not what needs to be measured. Student accomplishment is what needs to be measured. Everything has to be evaluated against outcomes – what the students know and what they can do.

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I was a board member when NAEP went from norm-referenced tests to criterion-referenced tests, and from district results to state-by-state results. It wasn't easy, but it happened.

It made all the difference in the world. With criterion-referenced tests a different method of looking at test results was established. Test results were evaluated against an outside series of benchmarks, by the standards of Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

Progress in scores from Basic to Advanced indicated increasing levels of mastery of subject matter. Of course, we had another standard which meant failure to master subject matter – Below Basic. We were not able to call failure by its name, so we called it “below basic.”

The NAEP has caused educational change to occur. A classic example is California's reading results.

When I was on the California State Board of Education the NAEP reading scores indicated that California's reading scores placed it second to last in the nation. The scores also showed that 26 percent of California's students read at the Below Basic level.

I was assigned to a reading task force to try and figure out why 26 percent of California's students were reading Below Basic and only 2 percent were reading at the advanced level. Apparently California's reading skills had slipped, but that scrutiny would not have happened without the NAEP report, its focus on standards, and the state specific data. This evaluation of children's performance vs. standards is a key component of the new federal initiative “No Child Left Behind.” It measures children's reading and math skills against a grade-level standard and focuses on outcomes. It shows what the child has learned. And this outside evaluation against standards is essential to understanding progress in learning.

For California NAEP was an outside source looking at reading results. And California, which prided itself on its schools, was embarrassed.

Why had reading scores plummeted in California? In the early 1980s the state had switched from phonics to whole language as the method of reading instruction. Teachers were actually prohibited from using phonics. Whole language was not based on research – it was a fad – and yet it was prescribed for the children of California. The fact that it did not work was especially damaging to many of the state's less privileged children.

I remember testifying at a state senate hearing in Sacramento on the problems with teaching reading in California and the need to have phonics as the basis for reading instruction.

Everything has to be evaluated against outcomes – what the students know and what they can do.

At that same hearing the dean of the schools of education of the state university system, when questioned as to why teachers were teaching whole language and not phonics when they knew whole language didn't work, replied, "I'll tell you why they teach whole language and not phonics. Teaching whole language is fun; teaching phonics is work."

California teachers were having fun – and the kids were failing to read. Our students were being deprived of the keys to the kingdom because the teaching establishment wasn't held accountable for results. There was no sanction for failing the children.

So what happened on the reading front in California?

The reading task force, over the objections of the Department of Education and the teachers, mandated that reading be taught based on phonics. It was required that phonics be taught in the schools and in the state college system's schools of education.

Last month I asked Lance Izumi of the Pacific Research Institute what has happened. He said they are still teaching whole language because there is no incentive for the teachers to switch to phonics.

To still teach whole language is wrong. It is indicative of a system that doesn't care whether the children learn to read or not. Reading is a key to unlock the doors to the future. If one doesn't know how to read well, one is relegated to second-class citizenship, forever.

To me this was a terrible system that had lost all legitimacy and must be changed so that it would be held accountable for results. That experience made me believe that the government-funded monopoly school system would not reform itself from within. We had tried with the reform of reading and it had not worked. The system was impervious to change.

The educational system had to be reformed from without.

I had a series of other experiences that reinforced my belief that the schools would not change from within but must be reformed from without the school system.

In the 1980s I had the pleasure of visiting The Rooftop School in San Francisco. Rooftop ranked as one of the best middle schools in the city, and its principal invited me to visit.

"Nancy, what are your major problems?" I asked. "Jerry, I'm going to spend \$30,000 this year, equivalent to what I pay a teacher in a year, getting rid of a teacher that the district and the unions have forced me to take. It will take me about a year and the problem is that

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the teacher will not leave the system but will be recycled to another school in San Francisco,” she replied.

The education system has a name for this recycling – “the dance of the lemons.” Bad teachers are moved from school to school, frequently winding up in the worst schools where, because of tenure, they stay until retirement, perhaps as long as 20 or 30 years.

The dance of the lemons, recycled lousy teachers, 20 to 30 years of bad teaching – this system didn’t care about the children it was supposed to be educating. It cared about protecting itself.

Compton School District in Los Angeles typifies the worst of the worst in California. Compton was taken over by the state, run by the Department of Education from Sacramento, and yet Compton remained the same. The kids still failed, the schools were still filthy and unsafe, and a majority of the students never graduated. Nothing seemed to have an impact on Compton. In 20 years of school reform, no lasting method of improving poorly performing school districts has worked. How do you change a system that is not held accountable for results?

Also in the 1980s I was invited to speak at the Fortune Education Summit, where Marshall Loeb, the publisher of Fortune, was one of the keynote speakers. Marshall outlined the efforts that businesses were undertaking to help reform the education system and, in essence, he said that we are making no progress. He explained the education system is not providing an educated population that can work in an increasingly sophisticated workplace. In fact, the workforce is less well educated now than it was 20 years ago.

Marshall said, “I’m worried about the impact of increasing amounts of uneducated students becoming citizens and their impact on our country’s future.” “ I’m mad. I’m mad,” he said.

Bilingual education was a major issue when I was a member of the California State Board of Education. The board was the arbiter in suits to demand district compliance with state-mandated bilingual education.

The suits gave transition data, transition from English learner to English proficient. The data indicated that the average rate of transition was less than five percent per year for English learners in bilingual programs. In other words, it would take some kids more than 20 years to transition to English proficient. Some kids would never become fluent in English or in their native language.

The dance of the lemons, recycled lousy teachers, 20 to 30 years of bad teaching – this system didn’t care about the children it was supposed to be educating. It cared about protecting itself.

I come from a bilingual family – my wife is Chilean and I speak Spanish frequently. I have attended public school bilingual Spanish classes in San Francisco and my experience has been that the quality of instruction is abysmal.

The teachers received an extra \$5,000 per year to teach bilingual courses. While I was on the Commission on Teacher Credentialing the union was promoting legislation to reduce the time that a teacher needed to qualify for a bilingual teaching certificate from one year to seven months. At the same time the union was attempting to pass a requirement that a student's time in bilingual education should be increased from a mandatory five years to a mandatory seven years. Less qualified teachers were mandated to teach students for a longer period of time. What a perverse system.

Why would the teacher unions, the California Teachers Association and the California Federation of Teachers, lobby for programs that were failing the majority of California's native Spanish speaking students? It was because as Al Shanker, then head of the American Federation of Teachers, explained, if the kids voted and paid dues we would pay attention to them, but they don't vote and they don't pay union dues. Al Shanker evaluated school reform from the standpoint of union power, controlling where the money was spent.

Hey, this wasn't warm and fuzzy for the benefit of the children. It was raw political power, irrespective of the needs of the children.

So what was needed for school reform? More money is frequently cited as the solution for our education problems.

Eric Hanushek of the Hoover Institution has summarized 20 years of studies on the impact of more money and smaller class size on student performance. His analysis reveals that more money has a negligible impact on student performance.

Washington, D.C. spends \$12,000 per student per year, more than any other district, and it has the poorest performance in the country. Spending is not correlated with student performance.

California spent more than a billion dollars a year in lowering class size in K-3. And there have been no statistically significant results that indicate lower class size improves student achievement. Teachers, of course, like smaller classes because they are less work. But in terms of improving student performance, there are no measurable results. An extra billion dollars and no improvement in student performance.

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I met Ted Koldrie, father of the charter school movement. In his speech at an Educational Commission of the States meeting, he said, “If the schools try hard to improve, and many do, nothing very good will happen to them. If they fail, nothing very bad will happen to them. The accountability system is defective. For a country serious about excellence in education, this is an absurd arrangement.”

The accountability system is defective. And for me that came to describe the public schools.

Ted was right. Nobody is held accountable when students fail to learn. For school reform to happen there must be consequences when students fail to master the skills and learning necessary for success in life. When students fail to learn, those schools and teachers who are responsible must be forced to change or to leave the system.

Ted was the force behind charter schools in California. California had some of the best charter school legislation but it has been modified and weakened. And that is how school reform legislation works in California – initial success and then a continuous erosion of change until the status quo returns.

In California if legislation is passed that the unions dislike, they work with their allies in Sacramento to weaken and ultimately nullify it. This is an ongoing battle.

Milwaukee’s voucher program has been continuously threatened by the unions and their allies. Vouchers represent the unions’ biggest threat.

When I was nominated for the State Board of Education, I was asked to come to the California Teachers Association headquarters to get acquainted. The issue foremost on their minds was would I continue to support vouchers while I was on the state board. They called it the “V” word.

Vouchers represent a change in the flow of money. Instead of going from the taxpayer, to the government, to the schools, the funding goes from the taxpayer, to the government, to the parents. Change the flow of money and you change how the funds will be spent. Change the flow of money and the unions are weakened. And this loss of power, as represented by not controlling the money, is what the unions fear most.

Change the flow of money and schools like Rooftop will be over subscribed and replicated. Failing schools like Compton will change or go out of business. Give parents control of the

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flow of money and they will invest it in their children's future. Change the flow of money and education reform can begin.

Vouchers are a component of educational reform. The other component is accountability. The public will be influenced by student results, which is why the "No Child Left Behind" federal legislation is so important. It will provide grade-by-grade student results in reading and math. The parents and the public will be able to evaluate results versus standards.

"No Child Left Behind" requires that all children be tested in reading and math at every grade level, and that the results be made available to parents so that they will know how well their children are doing against standards. Outcome information will be the basis for the public, and through the public the politicians, to move for change.

Change will not come easily. K-12 education is a \$400 billion taxpayer-funded monopoly in the United States. There are a lot of jobs at stake. There are the two largest unions in the United States, partially funded with tax-deductible union dues, who are major supporters of the Democratic Party. There is the education establishment – the researchers, the schools of education, the departments of education. Then there are millions of teachers whose lifestyles will be threatened.

On the other side of the equation there are the children who are poorly educated. And there is the future of this country. On this side there is the success of your children and mine, and our grandchildren.

When that change comes it will happen at the state level, state by state. It will be state legislation that changes how the money flows into the education system. It will be governors and legislators empowering parents through vouchers.

Vouchers have happened in Florida, Ohio, and Wisconsin. They happen when the dynamics change, when the unions are weakened, when reform-minded governors and legislators control the state. And change sometimes happens by executive order, as in Colorado.

In Colorado Governor Owens changed the rules for union dues' collection. By executive order Colorado will collect only union dues that are used for bargaining purposes. And in Colorado, 80 percent of dues are used for non-bargaining purposes.

This means 80 percent of the union dues will no longer be collected by the state. And I have a prediction – Colorado will likely have legislation for tax credits or vouchers this year.

It will be state legislation that changes how the money flows into the education system.

In the Florida and South Carolina elections last November, vouchers were the major issue. Republican candidates supported education choice in both states and Democratic candidates opposed choice in both.

The pro-voucher candidates won soundly in each state.

School vouchers are now a mainstream issue. Governors and legislators have made it a central issue of their campaigns and have been successful. School choice will become an increasingly national issue in the future.

In conclusion, let me summarize:

- Education can work, as University High School did.
- Public education is failing to provide students with the skills and learning necessary to be successful in today's world — Marshall Loeb.
- Remember Rooftop School and the “dance of the lemons.”
- Compton and Rooftop both get equal funding, Compton actually more, and yet Compton fails while Rooftop succeeds.
- Whole language vs. phonics – “It's fun to teach whole language.”
- The bilingual rate of transition is five percent – 20 years to transition.
- Al Shanker: “I'd pay attention to the kids if they paid voted and paid dues.”
- We have 20 years of studies showing no relationship between more money and improved student performance.
- California's billion dollar per year experiment in smaller class size has shown no difference in student performance.
- The church was never reformed from within. Education must be reformed from without.
- Reform is about who controls the flow of money.

Many in this room are reformers – I salute you. It is a battle well worth fighting. Your children and grandchildren will be the greatest beneficiaries of your efforts.

And we are going to win. Draw your line in the ground, get mad, network, and get active. Time and momentum is on our side.

Time and momentum is on our side.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN EDUCATION REFORM COUNCIL (AERC)

The American Education Reform Council is a 501(c)(3) with programs to educate opinion leaders and the public about the impact of parental school choice programs. It has played a major role in advancing the school choice movement.

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ABOUT THE PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE'S CENTER FOR SCHOOL REFORM

The Pacific Research Institute's Center for School Reform (CSR) works to restore to all parents the basic right to choose the best educational opportunities for their children. Through research and grassroots outreach, the CSR advances parental choice in education, high academic standards, charter schools, teacher quality, and school finance reform.

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