

EDUCATION:  
A PUBLIC ROLE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

PRESENTED TO THE  
NEW YORK TEACHER  
BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

REMARKS BY  
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BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

LAST NOVEMBER, ON THE EVE OF THE REAGAN-GORBACHOV  
SUMMIT MEETING, I SAW A CARTOON IN WHICH THE  
TWO WORLD LEADERS WERE SHOWN STANDING AT  
OPPOSITE EDGES OF TWO CLIFFS, A VERY WIDE  
AND VERY DEEP CHASM SEPARATED THEM. THE  
DRAWING HAD THREE PANELS,

IN THE FIRST, PRESIDENT REAGAN SHOUTED TO  
SECRETARY GORBACHOV, "MR, SECRETARY, FOR THE SAKE  
OF ALL HUMANITY WE MUST WORK MORE CLOSELY  
TOGETHER."

IN THE SECOND, MR. GORBACHOV RESPONDS,  
"ABSOLUTELY, MR. PRESIDENT, I CAN THINK OF  
NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT,"

IN THE THIRD, MR, REAGAN LOOKS DOWN INTO THE ENORMOUS CHASM THAT SEPARATES THEM AND REPLIES, "MR. SECRETARY, I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE THE FIRST STEP."

LIKE PRESIDENT REAGAN AND SECRETARY GORBACHOV, ALL OF US HAVE TAKEN A FIRST STEP TODAY, AND LIKE THOSE TWO MEN, WE SEEM TO HAVE SURVIVED, THE GULF, IF ANY THAT DIVIDES THOSE OF US ASSOCIATED WITH BUSINESS AND THOSE OF YOU ASSOCIATED WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS NEITHER AS WIDE NOR AS DEEP AS IT MIGHT SOME TIME APPEAR.

LET ME BEGIN BY CONGRATULATING THE METROPOLITAN  
LIFE FOUNDATION AND THE COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER, THIS  
MEETING, AND THE FOUR ADDITIONAL "TEACHER-  
BUSINESS

ROUNDTABLES" THAT WILL BE HELD DURING THE  
NEXT YEAR AND A HALF, ARE HELPING TO CHANGE  
THE WAY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOOK. AT EACH OTHER,

THEY ARE REMINDERS THAT WE ARE NOT JUST A  
PLURALISTIC SOCIETY; WE ARE AN  
INTERDEPENDENT

SOCIETY,  NO SOCIETY, NO MATTER HOW  
STRONG

OR SECURE IT FEELS AT A GIVEN MOMENT,

CAN SURVIVE IF ITS MAJOR INSTITUTIONS,

INCLUDING CORPORATIONS AND PUBLIC

SCHOOLS, HAVE NO CONTACT WITH EACH

OTHER, IF ITS PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK IN

ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER AND FAIL TO

SEE THE COMMON GOALS THEY SHARE,

## BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

A DECADE AGO, THIS MEETING PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED,

BACK THEN, YOU MAY RECALL, CORPORATIONS AND

PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAD LITTLE CONTACT WITH EACH

OTHER, A CORPORATIONS WERE INVOLVED IN

EDUCATION, BUT IT WAS HIGHER EDUCATION, THE

PUBLIC

SCHOOLS WERE NOT OUR CONCERN, BUT

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, IN THE MIDST OF

THE NATIONAL CONCERN ABOUT PUBLIC

EDUCATION, OUR ECONOMY

AND OUR CITIES, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

GRADUALLY BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT IT DID IN FACT

HAVE AN IMPORTANT STAKE IN THE FUTURE OF

PUBLIC EDUCATION,

## BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THE GROWTH OF SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IS A TESTAMENT TO THAT CHANGE, RECORDS ARE NOT VERY COMPLETE, BUT THERE MUST BE AT LEAST SEVERAL HUNDRED

CORPORATIONS INVOLVED IN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS, AND THE NUMBER CONTINUES TO GROW, AND AS THEY GROW OUR OVERALL COMMITMENT DEEPENS AND OUR

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED BECOMES MORE SOPHISTICATED,

EACH SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP IS IMPORTANT, EACH ONE DEMONSTRATES THAT IN COMMUNITY AFTER COMMUNITY, BUSINESS IS WORKING WITH THE SCHOOLS

TO PROVIDE EXTRA ASSISTANCE, OPPORTUNITY AND SUPPORT THAT THE SCHOOLS AND THEIR STUDENTS OTHERWISE MIGHT NOT RECEIVE,

THESE PARTNERSHIPS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD FOR THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT ARE INVOLVED, BUT,  
TOO OFTEN, I THINK, ACCOUNTS OF SCHOOL BUSINESS  
PARTNERSHIPS MAGNIFY THE CORPORATE CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE SCHOOL AND UNDERVALUE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE  
SCHOOL TO THE CORPORATE PARTNER,

THREE AND A HALF YEARS AGO WHEN AMERICAN CAN  
JOINED WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR, HIGH  
SCHOOL, ALMOST EVERYONE THOUGHT IN TERMS OF  
HOW WE COULD HELP THE SCHOOL, WE WERE TOTALLY  
UNPREPARED AS A CORPORATION FOR THE IMPACT THAT  
SCHOOL HAD ON US,



. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

WE HAVE FOUND TEACHERS WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THEIR PROFESSION AND INVOLVED WITH THEIR STUDENTS, WE HAVE FOUND STUDENTS WHO ARE ABLE, INTERESTED AND AMBITIOUS, WE HAVE LEARNED ONCE AGAIN THAT WHEN YOU APPROACH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE AND RESPECT THEY RESPOND WITH CARE AND RESPECT, WE WERE REMINDED THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO GROW AND TO LEARN IF THEY ARE NOT GIVEN A FAIR AND REAL OPPORTUNITY,

PARTNERSHIPS ARE TWO-WAY STREETS AND THE BENEFITS TO THE CORPORATE PARTNER ARE NEITHER INCIDENTAL NOR MINIMAL. THEY ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN, ON A FIRSTHAND BASIS, THE PROBLEMS THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FACE DAY IN AND DAY OUT.

AND IF THERE ARE ANY BUSINESSMEN OR WOMEN  
HERE TODAY WHO HAVE NOT VISITED A PUBLIC  
SCHOOL RECENTLY, I URGE YOU TO MAKE SUCH A  
VISIT, INSPECT THE PLANT, OBSERVE WORKING  
CONDITIONS, SIT IN ON A CLASS, GET A SENSE  
OF HOW MANY DEMANDS ARE MADE ON THE TIME OF A  
TEACHER OR AN ADMINISTRATOR. SPEND AN HOUR OR  
TWO IN A TEACHER'S OFFICE - IF THERE IS ROOM  
FOR YOU, ASK SOMEONE TO EXPLAIN THE BUREAUCRATIC  
OBSTACLES YOU MUST OVERCOME TO GET EXTRA  
TEXTBOOKS OR TO START A SPECIAL PROJECT, AND  
THEN ASK YOURSELF IF YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO  
TAKE ON THAT KIND OF JOB AT A SALARY THAT MAY  
BE <sup>'7, !wAze.AOL</sup> ~~AS~~ ONE-HALF TO ONE-THIRD<sub>4</sub> OF THE ONE YOU -  
CURRENTLY ARE GETTING.



I GUARANTEE YOU THAT AFTER MAKING SUCH A VISIT, YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN REGARD PUBLIC EDUCATION AS AN ABSTRACT OR DISTANT CONCEPT - OR AN UNIMPORTANT ISSUE,

I HAVE BEEN AND REMAIN AN ADVOCATE OF PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS, I BELIEVE THEY ARE ESSENTIAL, AND I WANT TO SEE THEM CONTINUE TO GROW AND TO FLOURISH, I AM VERY PROUD OF OUR SUCCESS

STORIES SUCH AS THE JOIN-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM INITIATED BY THE NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SO VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIP.

BUT I WANT TO SPEND JUST A FEW MINUTES DISCUSSING AN ISSUE THAT IS NOT ON THE AGENDA, BUT WHICH I HOPE YOU WILL THINK ABOUT IN THE FUTURE.

BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

BASICALLY, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE EXISTING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS IN LIGHT OF THE NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOLS, IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO FEEL THAT THE NUMBERS ARE AGAINST US, LIKE MANY OF YOU, I CAN CITE EXAMPLES WHERE WITH CONSIDERABLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT WE CAN TURN AROUND ONE SCHOOL, PERHAPS EVEN A COUPLE OF HUNDRED SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND MAYBE EVEN A THOUSAND, BUT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN WHO WILL NOT BE TOUCHED BY OUR EFFORTS, WHAT ABOUT THEM?

I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT OUR SCHOOLS NEED MORE THAN WHAT ONE CORPORATION CAN PROVIDE, THEY NEED MORE THAN WHAT ALL CORPORATIONS TOGETHER CAN PROVIDE,

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE THOSE OF US INVOLVED IN THESE  
SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS NEED TO BROADEN  
OUR AREA OF CONCERN AND BEGIN FOCUSING ON ISSUES THAT  
AFFECT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A WHOLE.

THAT IS WHY I BELIEVE WE WILL NEED TO FOCUS  
INCREASINGLY ON THE POLITICAL ARENA BECAUSE THAT IS  
WHERE THE MAJOR DECISIONS ARE GOING TO BE MADE ABOUT  
THE FUNDS, PRIORITIES AND

PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE SO CRITICAL TO THE FUTURE  
OF OUR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION.

.BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

IN SUGGESTING THIS BROADER, MORE ACTIVIST AND  
PUBLIC POLICY ORIENTED EFFORT ON BEHALF OF  
PUBLIC EDUCATION, IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO  
MINIMIZE WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE PAST OR  
TO BE DISRESPECTFUL TO THE EFFORT THAT HAS GONE  
INTO THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS WE HAVE, OR THE ONES  
WE HOPE TO HAVE IN THE FUTURE, THE  
ONE-ON-ONE INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE  
MARKED OUR CURRENT EFFORTS HAVE PROVIDED US WITH  
A WINDOW ON THE WORLD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION THAT  
CAN SERVE AS A STRONG BASE AND FOUNDATION.

## .BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

OUR PARTNERSHIPS, THOUGH, WILL HAVE LITTLE  
MEANING IN THE LONG RUN IF WE ARE UNABLE TO  
AFFECT THE OVERALL CONTEXT IN WHICH PUBLIC  
EDUCATION OCCURS,

THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE EDUCATORS WILL HAVE TO  
DECIDE FOR YOURSELVES WHAT THIS MEANS. BUT KNOW  
WHAT IT MEANS FOR CORPORATE AMERICA.

. BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

IT MEANS WE CAN'T GET BY ANYMORE WITH TELLING OUR LOBBYISTS TO

PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR

EDUCATION EVERY NOW AND THEN WHILE THE SPECTER  
OF GRAMM-RUDMAN LOOMS MENACINGLY PVER FEDERAL

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*THIS WOULD BE 100%  
PROGRAMS*

FUNDS FOR EDUCATION; IT MEANS WE CAN'T JUST

SEND A CORPORATE EXECUTIVE TO WASHINGTON OR ALBANY

FOR AN OCCASIONAL GOOD WILL VISIT WITHOUT A

SPECIFIC AGENDA OR DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THROUGH. IT

MEANS, INSTEAD, THAT WE HAVE TO ORGANIZE OURSELVES

INTO AN ACTIVE, SUSTAINED SUPPORT MECHANISM ON BEHALF

OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, IT MEANS THAT WE HAVE TO

SUPPORT CANDIDATES FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE WHO SHARE OUR

VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING PUBLIC FUNDS FOR

PUBLIC EDUCATION.

THERE ARE MANY PLACES TO START, SO LET ME SUGGEST

TWO,



## BUSINESS/ROUNDTABLE

ONE IS THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN OUR SOCIETY, THEY  
DESERVE BETTER SALARIES, THEY NEED BETTER  
WORKING CONDITIONS AND MUCH MORE RESPECT,  
ALL OF US GIVE LIP SERVICE TO AMERICA'S  
TEACHERS, BUT TEACHING STILL RANKS NEAR THE  
BOTTOM OF  
  
THE LIST AMONG POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS FOR  
OUR MOST ABLE COLLEGE GRADUATES, SMALL WONDER,  
THERE ARE FEW MATERIAL REWARDS FOR GOOD  
TEACHERS AND NOT MUCH PUBLIC RECOGNITION,  
EITHER, WE ARE STILL VERY MUCH IN THE SAME  
POSITION THAT ERNEST BOYER, THE FORMER U,S,  
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, DESCRIBED A FEW  
YEARS AGO WHEN HE SAID, "YOUNG LAWYERS IF THEY  
WORK HARD BECOME PARTNERS IN THE FIRM, YOUNG  
DOCTORS IF THEY WORK HARD GET A SECOND YACHT,  
YOUNG TEACHERS IF THEY WORK HARD GET OLD."

THE SECOND IS THE PROPOSAL OFFERED BY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, WILLIAM BENNETT TO PROVIDE \$600 WORTH OF VOUCHERS SO LOW-INCOME CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT DOING WELL IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOL.

ON THE SURFACE, THE BENNETT PROPOSAL SOUNDS REASONABLE ENOUGH, ALTHOUGH I AM HARD PRESSED TO THINK OF A PRIVATE SCHOOL EDUCATION THAT COSTS ONLY \$600. SECRETARY BENNETT, HOWEVER, IS NOT PROPOSING THE VOUCHERS AS AN ADDITIONAL ENTICEMENT TO HELP LOW-INCOME CHILDREN, HE PROPOSES TO FINANCE THE VOUCHERS THROUGH EXISTING PROGRAMS, IN OTHER WORDS, THE VOUCHERS ARE REALLY A STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF DISMANTLING OR REDUCING FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION.

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THE VOUCHER PROPOSAL IS IN MY ESTIMATION A MISGUIDED AND WHOLLY INAPPROPRIATE ATTEMPT TO APPLY THE FREE MARKET MODEL TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

IF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN, IT MIGHT BE BETTER ADVISED TO EVALUATE ONGOING REMEDIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND THEN PROVIDE A \$600 PER CHILD INCENTIVE FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS BASED ON THE MORE SUCCESSFUL MODELS. IF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GIVE POOR CHILDREN A BETTER CHANCE TO MAKE IT IN OUR SOCIETY IT COULD BEGIN BY MAKING AN UNEQUIVOCAL COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE ENOUGH FUNDS FOR THE HEAD START PROGRAM SUCH THAT EVERY CHILD ELIGIBLE CAN BE ENROLLED.

WHEN SO MANY YOUNG CHILDREN ARE LIVING IN  
POVERTY IT IS UNCONSCIONABLE THAT WE LET  
SUCH MAGNIFICENT PROGRAMS LANGUISH FOR  
LACK OF FUNDS,

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, SOCIETIES OFTEN HAVE  
BEEN JUDGED BY HOW WELL THEY CARE FOR  
THEIR YOUNG AND THEIR OLD, ALL THE  
EVIDENCE BEFORE US SUGGESTS THAT WE HAVE  
DONE A PRETTY GOOD JOB

OF TAKING CARE OF OUR ELDERLY IN RECENT  
YEARS. WE HAVE NOT BEEN AS DETERMINED OR AS  
SUCCESSFUL WITH RESPECT TO THE NEEDS OF OUR  
CHILDREN,

SO LET ME CONCLUDE WITH A VERSE BY  
GABRIELLA MISTRAL, A CHILEAN POET WHO

WON THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE IN  
1945, I HOPE HER WORDS CAN SERVE AS A  
GUIDE FOR OUR EFFORTS.

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THIS IS WHAT SHE WROTE,

"MANY THINGS WE NEED CAN WAIT, THE  
CHILD CANNOT.

NOW IS THE TIME HIS BONES ARE

BEING FORMED,

HIS BLOOD IS BEING MADE,

HIS MIND IS BEING DEVELOPED,

TO HIM WE CANNOT SAY, 'TOMORROW'.

HIS NAME IS 'TODAY'."

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE TIME FOR

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS NOW!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

