

HGSE Alumni Meeting, Washington DC, January 18, 1984

It is a difficult task to select from everything going on at the Ed School those things that will be of interest to you, coming from as you do from different generations in the life of the Ed School and from many different working perspectives in the world of education.

Thus I am going to keep my remarks brief -- more to give you time to think of questions you would like to raise or comments or observations than to inform you comprehensively of the scope of activities at the Ed School. Let me start with broad brush strokes to paint the dimensions of what is going on this year.

Everyone, I am sure, knows that we have a new dean who is in her second year at the helm. As you here in Washington would know better than anyone else, when there is a change in administrations, there is bound to be somewhat more than the average amount of change in the organization.

Dean Graham set forth a three-point agenda in her inaugural speech to the school. Specifically she hoped the Ed School would do these three things:

1. Participate in rigorous and informed debate about the

role of education in society.

2. Engage in the kind of research that will be useful to educational practice.
3. ~~Concentrate on~~ ^{Increase our} understanding and improving institutions whose primary business is education.

In short, Dean Graham sees the fundamental mission of the Ed School to direct teaching, research, and service toward improvement of the schools.

I am going to use Dean Graham's three-point agenda as a framework for talking about a variety of activities. Whatever else we may be accomplishing, we are certainly engaging in conversation and debate about the role of education in society. It is, of course, a time in history when everyone -- from presidential candidates to governors to CEO's to school principals to university presidents -- are talking about what the schools should or should not be doing. At latest count, there were some thirty separate reports, all purporting to say something about improving the schools. At the Ed School, we have had a steady troop of authors of commission and study reports speaking to faculty and students -- Ernie Boyer, Diane Ravitch, Ted Sizer, and Milton Goldberg, staff director of "A Nation at Risk," and others. These visitors have spoken to sizable audiences in 100 Longfellow and those sessions have certainly

addressed goal #1 -- "to stimulate informed and rigorous debate." The sessions have been well attended by students and faculty alike, and there has been spirited discussion about both the ways the problems of the schools have been analyzed and the proposed solutions. In addition, many of the faculty, including the Dean, have been quite prominent on panels and platforms throughout the nation as we grapple with this question of improving education nationally. The question itself has given education a place of high visibility, and Harvard is pretty much in the lead on this issue.

I am pleased to say that it is not only the Ed School, but Harvard University is taking leadership. Derek Bok has taken the position that leading research universities have an obligation to the schools, and to this end he and the president of Stanford, Donald Kennedy, convened a group of their colleagues early this fall to talk about what research universities might do to support their schools of education and more broadly to aid the schools throughout the nation. In attendance were representatives from Columbia, the University of Chicago, the University of Wisconsin, the American Association of Universities, the University of Michigan, and the University of California. President Bok has also made the improvement of the schools a major theme in his addresses to various audiences, starting with his commencement address last June. After praising some of the new programs of the Ed School, he concluded that there is great opportunity and great responsibility in education to serve the public need and he

expressed the hope that Harvard would do its fair share.

So there is plenty of talk about the Ed School these days, but I don't suppose the Ed School has ever wanted for good talkers.

Let us move on then to some action that speaks to points 2 and 3 of the Dean's agenda. Putting research into practice has never been especially easy for educators. It consists of two phases, 1) doing the kind of research that will inform practice, and 2) communicating and working with practioners to implement the research findings.

The Principals' Center arose, several years ago, out of research findings that reported that the key ingredient in unusually effective schools is an effective principal. One way of putting that finding to work to improve the schools is to help principals do their jobs better. There are now about 500 school leaders who belong to the Harvard Principals' Center and 1600 more who receive the newsletter or other printed materials. Part of the mission of the Principals' Center is to translate research findings into practice and to provide a forum for principals to talk together about problems and solutions.

Another action program that speaks directly to problems in education is the new one-year program designed to convert mathematicians and scientists currently employed in industry into

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high school teachers. Six such mid-career changers have completed a summer and a semester of study at Harvard and are now doing their internships in the local high schools.

Finally, I am sure that most of you are aware of the new 7.7 million dollar five-year grant from NIE to establish an Educational Technology Center. The center is really a broad-based consortium of organizations, including four public school systems, ETS, WGBH, ^{children} Education Television Workshop, and others. The overall goal is to set up the sort of two-way communication through which research findings can improve practice and practioners' observations and concerns can be translated into researchable questions. The three major goals of the Educational Technology Center are as follows:

1. To conduct research on the application of computers to the teaching of math, science, and computer courses.
2. To consider the potential of new and combined technologies for future applications in the schools.
3. To serve as a network, linking together people who have questions with those who have some possible answers, i.e., to serve as a resource of information about the applications of technology in education.

Those are what I would call the formal and public agenda of

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the Ed School this year. There are other things that you may wonder about that can best be talked about within the family of students, teachers, and alums rather than written for public consumption. Those are questions having to do with the "flavor" of life at the Ed School in 1984. On this question, of course, everyone has his or her own perceptions, but my perception is that morale among faculty and students is very high. Diversity of people and ideas continues to make Harvard a very stimulating place, and students comment on that almost immediately upon arriving upon the campus. There are the continuing complaints about things that many of you will recognize such as the Gutman elevator, the decisions made by the COD, and library hours, but on the whole both faculty and students find Harvard enjoyable, stimulating, and the collegial comradeship that has characterized the Ed School continues to exist.