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Report to the Governor

THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION
ON EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

November, 1984

THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Wendell R. Anderson
N. Bud Grossman

November 8, 1984

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Dear Governor Perpich,

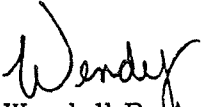
Enclosed is the final report of the Governor's Commission on Education for Economic Growth which you appointed to study the recommendations for improving education presented in the report "Action for Excellence". Our response recognizes that in Minnesota the quality of education has been high, and notes where specific recommendations from "Action for Excellence" are already being addressed. We go on to make recommendations of our own where we feel the system and experience of education in Minnesota can be improved. Our aim is to encourage continued excellence.


We want to recognize the many innovative and progressive programs Minnesotans have developed and implemented. A specific aim of our group is to encourage business, parents, communities and individuals to increase their involvement in Minnesota's schools. Wide participation in the schools will serve to strengthen and improve what we believe is a truly good education system. Governor Perpich, in using the information provided by groups such as this one to plan for the future, you are in a position to move Minnesota's education system from good to great.

Each member of this commission deserves commendation for the work done over the past year. Their dedication and commitment have been exemplary. Long hours were devoted to meetings and more time yet spent in study and discussion of the issues raised. Their concern and care in addressing the topic and task were evident throughout and are reflected in the recommendations presented here. We continue our support for the many efforts at work to promote quality education in the State of Minnesota.

It has been a gratifying and valuable experience to act as co-chairs of this group. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and the state in this timely and important area.

For the commission,


Wendell R. Anderson


N. Bud Grossman

Report to the Governor

THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION
ON EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

November, 1984

INTRODUCTION:

The Governor's Commission on Education for Economic Growth was given the charge to review the state of education from kindergarten through high school in Minnesota. The task was most timely, and the subject of great importance. The commission concludes its work with the strong sense that Minnesota has a quality public school system. It understands, at the same time, that this system must be constantly improved to meet new demands and enormous societal changes. Unlike various national studies, the commission does not find Minnesota's schools to be "at risk". It finds, rather, our schools at a turning point where the most thoughtful decisions must be made for the future: thoughtful of the curricular direction the schools should be urged to take; thoughtful of how current and future funds shall be assigned; thoughtful in expectations of student performance; and thoughtful of the quality of the schools' instructional and administrative staff and the roles they are expected to play.

It is the consensus of the commission that Minnesota's system of strong, locally controlled schools has served the state and, more importantly, our students well. In its recommendations it points out those strengths and seeks to identify areas where the schools can be improved further. As in most efforts to study, the commission found that the observer learns as much as the observed. In its work it was informed by the testimony and experience of teachers, administrators, parents, concerned citizens, academics, state officers, and business people. No doors seemed to be closed in the attempt to learn about Minnesota's schools. For this we are grateful.

The commission, comprised of volunteers from diverse segments of life in Minnesota, was profoundly impressed with the dedication and effort at all levels of the public schools - dedication to giving students the opportunity for the greatest intellectual stimulation possible using the time, finances, and competences available today.

Our report lauds these efforts while offering suggestions to meet students' future needs. Fortunately in Minnesota we are not standing at the brink of disaster; rather, we are about to cross new bridges to the future.

BACKGROUND:

In November of 1983, Governor Rudy Perpich appointed a 20-member group to study the national report on education, "Action for Excellence". His charge to the commission was to study the report and submit recommendations to improve education in the State of Minnesota.

The commission's co-chairmen, N. Bud Grossman and Wendell R. Anderson, immediately created a steering committee to guide its work. Five members joined the co-chairs to form the steering committee. Shortly thereafter a part-time staff person was hired to assist in the commission's work.

The steering committee determined that the work of the group would best be accomplished through dividing the members into five subcommittees to study various areas of the report "Action for Excellence". Each of the subcommittees was chaired by a commission member and acted independently of the other groups under its own chairperson.

Numerous hours were devoted to meetings and discussion of the various issues involved in education today. The discussions were sometimes long, often loud, and always thought-provoking. Each of the five subcommittees formulated its individual work plan and schedule of meetings or testimony and identified resource people who provided testimony and further information on topics of importance.

By study of various programs and materials, along with testimony from experts and concerned groups, each subcommittee formulated its proposals for consideration by the full commission. The commission accepted the sense of the reports while making suggestions for refining them. Guided by the full membership's views, the subcommittees revised their texts.

This method was used to engage the entire commission in the numerous issues and solicit ideas and suggestions from each member. It allowed individual members to concentrate their efforts within the context of their subcommittee work without eliminating opportunity for contributing to the work of other subcommittees. This process was followed a total of four times and each time the recommendations were narrowed and refined by the full commission. The recommendations that follow are a synthesis of the final reports issued by each subcommittee.

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Findings and Recommendations

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

DEVELOP - AND PUT INTO EFFECT AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE - STATE
PLANS FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM
KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 12

- *Led by the governor, each state should develop a state plan for education and economic growth.*
- *Each governor should appoint a broadly inclusive state task force on education for economic growth.*
- *Each school district should develop its own plan for improving education.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

The State of Minnesota is using a number of task forces and groups to study education and help in planning for the future. This commission is one of many voluntary efforts to assist in the planning efforts of the Minnesota Department of Education and the state's law makers. A state commission on the future of higher education was appointed in 1983 and has concluded its study with recommendations that will help Minnesota meet its education needs. Commissioner of Education Ruth E. Randall created task forces to study feasibility, implementation and development of learner outcomes; individual education plans, homework, higher-level thinking skills, graduation requirements, achievement tests, and Board of Education rules, penalties and incentives. These task forces used Minnesota Department of Education staff and approximately 160 educators in the state to develop recommendations in each of these areas. Again, the results will be used when formulating policy and direction for the state. A large number of groups are presently involved in the study of education issues and are actively working to improve education in the state.

It is evident that education has high priority in the state. This commission supports and encourages these efforts to improve education.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

CREATE BROADER AND MORE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION IN THE STATES AND COMMUNITIES OF THE NATION

- *Business leaders, labor leaders, and members of the professions should become more active in education.*
- *Business leaders should establish partnerships with schools.*
- *Governors, legislators, chief state school officers, state and local boards of education, and leaders in higher education should establish partnerships of their own that further education efforts.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

We have learned that many of these suggestions are being implemented throughout the state. In the past year Governor Perpich appointed commissions to study various aspects of education in Minnesota, and created an Education and Cultural Affairs subcabinet. Commissioner of Education Ruth E. Randall has created forums for school superintendents to discuss trends and policy issues affecting education, and others for members of professional education associations. Already in place is the joint Legislative Commission on Public Education. The Minnesota Alliance for Science, funded by the Bush Foundation, was established in 1983 to develop a long-term plan to improve learning in K-12 math and science, and develop partnerships to further improve instruction. In addition, the Minnesota Business Partnership, a group of chief executive officers of over 60 major businesses, has dedicated considerable financial and staff resources to conduct a study of K-12 education in the state. This commission acknowledges and commends these many efforts to improve the education provided to our state's youth, while recognizing we have named only a few of the numerous projects.

In addition to efforts made at the state level, there are a number of local partnerships between schools and private groups or business for promoting effective management; development of basic skills, higher order skills, and affective skills; staff development; and life-long learning. These programs show that a deep reservoir of interest in and support for education exists in most communities of this state. We recognize the need for wide participation in considering educational issues and helping the schools at every level and call for partnerships that successfully use the experience, abilities, and resources available in Minnesota communities.

This commission is highly supportive of partnerships and challenges businesses in the state to be leaders in forming cooperative efforts that improve education.

TO FOSTER BUSINESS/EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

CREATION OF A PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND ENCOURAGE STRATEGIES THAT ASSURE BUSINESS/EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS BECOME ACCESSIBLE TO EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT IN MINNESOTA. This plan should be developed by business representatives working in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Education.

Comment

The commission supports the efforts of the Minnesota Department of Education in working to facilitate partnerships and collaborative efforts in the state. We recognize the great benefit in involving members of the local community and businesses in the school system. In partnership efforts observed by the commission, both parties gained substantially by their association. The number of partnership efforts currently operating is indicative of the need for and success of such programs. To foster and aid in the effort, business leaders working with the Minnesota Department of Education should identify potential business partners for each of the state's 435 school districts.

The plan whose creation is recommended would help bring together managers from school districts and businesses and develop the relationships needed to create local partnerships. We hope that pairing business with the Minnesota Department of Education to prepare this plan for dissemination throughout the state will serve as an example of yet another successful partnership.

The commission further recommends that:

PRIVATE BUSINESSES FORMALLY IDENTIFY THE SCHOOL(S) AND/OR DISTRICT(S) WITH WHICH THEY WILL ACTIVELY SEEK A PARTNERSHIP. Responsibility to establish, monitor, and report on a continuing basis should be assigned by each business to an appropriate manager.

Comment

Business has many resources to offer to local schools and stands to gain substantially by its involvement with them. The benefits include: better student understanding of the role business plays, greater regard from the citizens of the community it serves, and ability to influence the kind of knowledge and skills potential employees will bring to the workplace. The expertise business has in areas of planning, budgeting, and effective management techniques are examples of skills that could assist local schools and their managers while benefitting the business community through improved use of the schools' financial, staff and other resources. Possible partnerships include programs that involve sharing of resources, training facilities, and equipment. These partnership programs should be designed to meet specific local school or business needs.

The commission further recommends:

FORMATION OF "PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEES" AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL TO MONITOR AND PROMOTE BUSINESS/EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL SCHOOLS. EACH SCHOOL SHOULD PROVIDE INFORMATION ON ITS PROGRAMS TO OTHER SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS WHERE THEY MIGHT PROVE HELPFUL. FURTHER, THESE ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE PROMOTED AND RECOGNIZED THROUGHOUT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Comment

This type of partnership provides a link between local businesses and members of the community. A committee that activates these groups could work effectively to support the local schools and develop business/education partnerships. "Partnership Committees" would help establish a network to share information and expertise gained through efforts to establish partnership programs.

The commission further recommends that:

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES BE ESTABLISHED TO AID LOCAL SCHOOLS IN PLANNING AND MONITORING POLICY AND OPERATIONS.

Comment

We believe business has an opportunity to promote community involvement at the school level through local business associations. Various local business associations, such as Chambers of Commerce or Rotary Clubs, could become leaders by developing the concept and promoting use of community advisory committees in the schools. This method would encourage community involvement and establish ongoing support and involvement by local business without requiring one or several businesses to carry the project alone.

The commission further recommends that:

MINNESOTA BUSINESSES PROMOTE THEIR EMPLOYEES' INVOLVEMENT WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS.

Comment

We believe that without the participation of employees in business/community partnerships with the schools, these efforts will not succeed. Those employees who serve as volunteers on school boards or in the classroom, or in any other capacity, should be recognized by their employers in performance appraisals, company publications, and by other appropriate means. Each company in the state should at least investigate the feasibility of released time for these activities, either when initiated by the employee or done in response to a program designed by the company.

The commission further recommends:

FORMATION OF A STATE LEVEL BUSINESS/EDUCATION
ALLIANCE TO PROMOTE QUALITY AND COST-EFFECTIVE
EDUCATION.

Comment

This alliance would pair leaders of the business and education communities to address and act on statewide education issues. Senior business and education leaders from the state who are recognized for their dedication to quality and cost-effective education should head the alliance. A fine example of such a grouping is Minnesota Wellspring, a coalition of farm, labor, business and education representatives who serve to affect education policy in the state.

The alliance of business and education we envision would serve to further partnership efforts by aiding "partnership committees" or other cooperative programs. As part of its mission, the alliance might also issue a publication describing ongoing activities and summarizing business/education partnership activities at the district or local levels; act as a clearinghouse for communicating local and district initiatives; sponsor independent studies and evaluations of K-12 education; and sponsor conferences and seminars on education policy issues.

The commission proposes that such an alliance be funded through a private foundation jointly controlled by business and education leaders, and supported through voluntary contributions. The format described would serve to encourage active involvement by the business community in the study and establishment of state education policies. An endeavor of this type, where the intent is to share and benefit by the experience, expertise, and concern of leaders from business and education, would assist in formulating education policy for the state.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

MARSHALL THE RESOURCES WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR IMPROVING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

- *School systems should enrich academic programs and improve management to make the best possible use of resources.*
- *States and communities should invest more financial, human and institutional resources in education.*
- *The federal government should continue to support education.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

It would be difficult to disagree with a recommendation to enrich academic programs and improve management of the schools. However, we feel the essence of the recommendation is contained in the last few words, "to make the best possible use of resources". The commitment Minnesota has made to providing quality education is evident in the dollars allocated to that task. In 1982 Minnesota spent 122% of the U.S. average for education. This is a \$572.77 per capita expenditure in the state versus \$468.34 in the U.S. Minnesota has long invested a major part of its fiscal resources in education. While we believe expanded funding levels will be needed, the immediate necessity is to continue wise use of these resources and careful planning for future needs. In cases where additional funds would be needed to implement recommendations by the commission, no proposals are made for specific programs or methods. We do not specify periods of time by which to implement the ideas presented. It is the intent of this group simply to express its view on important directions or concepts pertinent to Minnesota's education in the future. We know our resources must be used wisely and plans carefully formulated to meet future needs.

The commission encourages better use of current dollars and resources, including the skills and involvement of members of the local community - business, labor, parents, non-parent taxpayers, and others - to improve education in neighborhood schools. We offer recommendations requiring significant time and financial resources to implement and believe they should be considered when developing plans for the future.

We agree with findings in "Action for Excellence" that responsibility for providing education must not be left to the states alone. The federal government's resources must back local commitment to quality education for all of the nation's youths.

The commission formulated a single recommendation that addresses concerns found in this section of "Action for Excellence". The group is convinced that funding for some areas of education is adequate, and feels that all additional funds provided must be carefully designated and used selectively.

TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

THAT ADDITIONAL MONIES SHOULD BE OFFERED BY THE STATE FOR USE IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS LOCAL NEEDS.

Comment

Research and development are essential for planning, coordinating, and organizing change. By making funds available to local schools on a consistent and ongoing basis, the state assures opportunity for planned evolution in education to meet the needs of a changing society and workplace. The diversity of districts and schools within the state argues against a central research unit. For most effective study and change, the process of research and planning should occur at the local level.

Though it is possible that local communities might generate a portion of the necessary funds, and we would encourage that effort, the commission recommends the state take a leading role in funding and stimulating research and development at the local school level. The talents and skills of the teaching and administrative staff would be used to increase the effectiveness of individual schools, where these efforts could result in additional courses, enriched curricula, or other opportunities.

Minnesota's Council on Quality Education (CQE) currently provides funding in the form of grants for these locally initiated concepts or programs. This work is to be commended and should continue, but additional research and development are necessary. Such work should not be left to those fortunate few schools or districts who gain funding through CQE; the opportunity should be available to every school and district. Funds should be allocated and used according to the needs and priorities established by each school - with the input and assistance of its local community, business, and other resources. Some of the areas that may benefit by the funding are curriculum review, professional growth opportunities for education professionals, or use of technology in the classroom and office by teachers and administrators. In all cases evaluation of these local initiatives should be made by those participating in the project or program with others involved where appropriate.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

EXPRESS A NEW AND HIGHER REGARD FOR TEACHERS

- States and local school districts - with full participation of teachers - should dramatically improve methods for recruiting, training, and paying teachers.
- States should create "career ladders" for teachers.
- States, communities, the media and business should devise new ways to honor teachers.

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

Minnesota has taken a lead in recognizing the importance of quality teachers. Minnesota school districts are beginning to establish, through the collective bargaining process, procedures for identifying and rewarding outstanding teachers. The Minnesota Department of Education has designated 1984 as the "year of the school", and a statewide campaign has been designed to disseminate information about successes in Minnesota schools that includes a focus on the good job most teachers are doing. Another organization, The Academic Excellence Foundation, was created by the legislature in 1983 to promote academic excellence. Among its programs may be recognition for teachers doing an outstanding job. The Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Education, which was created and supported by business, recognizes and rewards excellent teachers in the metropolitan Twin Cities area.

TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR TEACHING AND TEACHERS, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

SALARY INCREASES FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS TO REFLECT INCOME LEVELS OF OTHER JOBS OR PROFESSIONS REQUIRING SIMILAR EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RESPONSIBILITY LEVELS.

Comment

While members of the commission recognize that pay is only one of the problems affecting teachers, they believe that competitive pay will increase the morale of these professionals and also improve the public image of the profession. Salary increases are likely to draw talented students to teacher education, and may encourage others considering career changes to enter the field.

The commission further recommends that:

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS DEVELOP DIFFERENTIATED CAREER PATHS OR PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS THAT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR ADDITIONAL STATUS, RESPONSIBILITY, PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING, AND INCREASED PAY LEVELS.

Comment

Many teachers believe that in order to earn more money they must leave teaching, and that to participate in decision making they must become administrators or principals. Means must be developed to keep teachers from leaving teaching in order to advance professionally and receive adequate pay. Through the introduction of differentiated teaching roles school boards can give teachers responsibility for mentoring new teachers, and participation in curriculum review, planning and research, performance reviews, and other administrative aspects of school management. Redefining roles can allow for the best use of talent and encourage professional growth and diversity. Studies show that schools that involve staff in making the decisions that affect them and their classrooms are more productive, innovative, and effective. We view this as a positive step and support efforts to develop variable roles for teachers.

Diversifying job descriptions must be accompanied by altered pay schedules. Salary must be tied to individual career programs. Pay levels should relate to job responsibilities, years of service, education, performance on task and other factors determined jointly by teachers and local school boards through collective bargaining. We recommend such programs be implemented in districts throughout the state.

The commission further recommends:

**THE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS UNDER
THE SUPERVISION OF TEACHERS TO FURTHER THE OBJECTIVE
OF QUALITY EDUCATION FOR EACH OF MINNESOTA'S
STUDENTS.**

Comment

The classroom has become a difficult place in which to teach. Interruptions from the loudspeaker, a myriad of clerical details, growing class sizes, and demands for parenting distract the teacher from teaching and disrupt the learning environment. Parents, retirees, or employees on released time, who work for a specified period each week or month under the supervision of the classroom teacher, can provide additional opportunities for students to interact with adults, and relieve the teacher of clerical or administrative functions, thus freeing the teacher to exercise his or her teaching skills.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

MAKE THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE MORE INTENSE AND MORE PRODUCTIVE

- *State and school systems should establish firm, explicit, and demanding requirements concerning discipline, attendance, homework, grades, and other essentials of effective schooling.*
- *States and school systems should strengthen the public school curriculum.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

Once again we find that Minnesota is already at work on the concerns identified in this section of "Action for Excellence". We find numerous examples of areas that have been or are being addressed in this state. The area of discipline was addressed in 1982 legislation that requires all Minnesota school districts to write, adopt and disseminate a discipline policy. To aid in the process, the Minnesota Department of Education staff prepared guidelines for district use. In 1983 the legislature requested a study on homework and the Minnesota Department of Education was again directed to prepare guidelines for local districts to use in establishing homework policies.

Legislation was enacted in 1984 that will allow districts to extend the school year beginning in 1985. The focus of this extension is intended to be for academic programs, including basic skills, programs for the gifted, and remedial courses. In addition, the legislation provides a program development component which will include curriculum development, alternative delivery systems, parent and community involvement, and in-service training for teachers. Added to these changes by the legislature, the State Board of Education has put in force rules for K-12 that increase the number of program offerings Minnesota's 435 school districts must make available for all students. These rules are effective for the 1985-86 school year. This rule change substantially increases the number of course offerings in the areas of communication, mathematics, and social studies, among others, that must be available to all students. These courses will be available, but the students will not be required to take them. Information technology and computer applications are other areas of learning that will also be available for students in grades 10-12.

This Commission recommends that requirements for attendance, grades, and other essentials be determined by each school and these policies appropriately enforced. The commission members have determined emphasis should be placed in four subject areas: mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts, consistent with the findings and recommendations in "Action for Excellence".

IN ORDER TO MAKE EACH STUDENT'S ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE MORE INTENSE AND PRODUCTIVE, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

FOCUSED AND SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AT BOTH THE
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS TO EMPHASIZE
LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, LANGUAGE ARTS, AND
SOCIAL STUDIES.

Comment

It is clear that many individual courses are created by the school or school district to meet the needs of the local community. It is essential, however, that the state determine a minimal core of knowledge and require it mastered by every student. To prepare better for the workplace and changing world, we believe concentration in the four core areas identified will benefit Minnesota and its students. A concentrated effort by this state through its Minnesota Department of Education to define the needs in these four areas and provide guidance and testing materials to schools will create consistency throughout the state in the knowledge gained by all students. This knowledge requirement also creates a basis for testing and comparison which will serve as an aid to schools and educators in evaluating methods, course content, and progress. By creating a core of knowledge that is consistent throughout the state, the local schools and districts will be better able to determine and address needs specific to the students or area.

The commission makes the following recommendations for elementary and secondary education in the state:

IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

1. We believe specific time allocations should be mandated for mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. Currently the amount of time spent on these classes is based primarily on recommendations to schools by the Department of Education. We believe that these courses are too important to simply suggest the amount of time to be spent studying; the state should mandate such amounts. For mandating time spent in each course area, the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Education appear reasonable and should be followed. The exception is that the amount of time recommended for science studies should be increased.
2. We believe scholarships, grants, and funds for in-service training should be made available to teachers to foster renewed interest and updated skills in the area of science education.
3. We believe school districts should be encouraged to offer foreign language instruction at the elementary level by providing financial assistance for programs that meet curricular priorities or guidelines established by the state. This financial assistance should be provided by the state or solicited from the local community and businesses.
4. We believe current statewide programs and grants for technology used in classroom instruction should be continued.

5. We believe current school district programs that design and use learner outcome programs as the primary gauge to determine whether students should be promoted in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies courses should be expanded. These programs should include plans for students whose achievements are below the required learner outcome levels.
6. We believe class size in grades K-3 should not exceed 20 students per teacher.

IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

1. We believe curriculum requirements should be upgraded in the areas of mathematics, science, and language arts as follows:

SCIENCE: Increase requirements at the junior high school level to 360 hours (the current requirement for language arts, mathematics, and social studies).

Increase requirements in three year senior high schools from zero to two years; in four year senior high schools, from one year to three years.

MATHEMATICS: Increase requirements in three year senior high schools from zero to two years; in four year senior high schools from one year to three years.

LANGUAGE ARTS: Require that a minimum of 120 credit hours in a course meeting the language arts requirement contain work primarily in composition or written communication. Optimal class size is no more than 20 students per teacher.

2. We also believe that foreign language classes, now available in all secondary schools, should be strongly encouraged for college-bound students.
3. We believe specific learner outcomes should be developed for each course offering in secondary schools by the local school district. These learner outcome programs should include special learning opportunities and assistance for students who do not achieve the expected results.
4. We believe appropriate computer science courses should be provided for students at the secondary school level.
5. We believe increased use of essays and oral presentations in all classes will encourage continued development of writing and oral communication skills.
6. We believe the state should offer increased funding to support teachers who prepare, revise, and analyze curricula. The aim of increased funding is to assist or improve the Plan, Evaluate, Review (PER) process required by the Minnesota Department of Education.

7. We believe review of curricula in language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies should occur on a rotating basis and often enough to assure that these courses are current and effective.

In conclusion, the commission supports improvements in the learning environment that provide teachers with the resources, time, and incentives to structure innovative learning experiences; and provide students with the resources, time, and incentives, as individuals and members of a class, to gain competence and mastery in basic skill areas.

The commission further recommends that:

A "CODE OF CONDUCT" BE DEVELOPED BY EACH SCHOOL WITH THE AID OF PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, TO CLEARLY DEFINE EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE STANDARDS, ACCEPTABLE ABSENCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, AND HOMEWORK STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS.

Comment

Publication of a "code of conduct" at each school will serve to improve communication with students and parents by clearly articulating the standards of the school and teachers. We expect that policies will be established and agreed upon by representatives of the school administration, teachers, and school community. The intent of this "code of conduct" is not only to establish consistent guidelines, but to link administration and teachers in its enforcement. Teachers should expect full support from the administration when policies are enforced appropriately.

The commission further recommends that:

THE CURRENT SCHOOL DAY AND YEAR BE MAINTAINED WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT INCREASE.

Comment

Throughout "Action for Excellence" there is pressure to increase - in terms of financial, human, and all other resources - and now the state has made provisions for extension of the school year. This commission believes that time and resources now available should be utilized effectively before any increases in the length of the school day or year are considered. This determination, however, can only be made by the individual schools after local needs are assessed.

The commission further recommends:

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT OR CREATE A MEANINGFUL ROLE FOR PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN.

Comment

This recommendation is intended to encourage improved communication and efforts on the part of the school and its managers to involve parents and others in the schooling process. Ways to improve communication between parents and teachers regarding student performance might include: numerous conferences and written evaluations, allocation of teacher time to prepare adequately for conferences, and flexible scheduling of parent/teacher conference times. The advantages we see from involving parents in the schools are increased participation in their children's learning, additional support for and aid to the school system, and resources to help those students who need it. Many schools have devoted a great deal of time and energy to programs that support this concept and have been rewarded for their efforts by increased adult involvement. This is yet another method to build bridges within the community to support education. We encourage school Parent/Teacher/Student Associations to increase efforts in parent recruitment, involvement and recognition.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

PROVIDE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

- *Boards of education and higher education institutions should cooperate with teachers and administrators on systems for measuring the effectiveness of teachers and rewarding outstanding performance.*
- *States, with full cooperation by teachers, should improve the process for certifying teachers and administrators and make it possible for qualified outsiders to serve in the schools.*
- *States should examine and tighten procedures for deciding which teachers to retain and which to dismiss.*
- *Student progress should be measured through periodic tests of general achievements and specific skills; promotion from grade to grade should be based on mastery, not age.*
- *States and communities should identify clearly the skills they expect schools to impart.*
- *Colleges and universities should raise their entrance requirements.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

The recommendations made here are being addressed in the state in a variety of ways. The 1984 legislature required each of the 435 school districts in the state to test learning in various curricular areas on a periodic basis. Each district must test in one area each year at three grade levels. Tests to be used are part of the Minnesota State Assessment Program, which is based on the model used for the National Assessment of Student Progress. A study of testing and measurement of learning was begun by the Minnesota Department of Education, legislators, and organizations representing teachers, administrators, state school boards, and parents/teachers/students. This work will be used by the governor and legislature when making decisions affecting education in the future.

Preparatory requirements and licensing of teachers are also being addressed. In 1983 the legislature and Governor Perpich directed all public post-secondary institutions to evaluate entrance requirements and make recommendations on college preparatory curricula at the high school level. These reports are being reviewed by the State University System and University of Minnesota and a common policy will be established. The 1984 legislature provided funds for a study on the teacher licensing process by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and also requested an additional study on alternative methods for licensing public school teachers. The Higher Education Coordinating Board study must include recommendations on in-service, alternative methods of teacher certification and preparation, and improving teacher education programs through such means as standardized tests. Also in place is a probationary period for new teachers extended to three years with annual written evaluations.

TO PROVIDE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION THROUGH TEACHING PROFESSIONALS, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT:

EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT DEVELOP WRITTEN JOB DESCRIPTIONS
DEFINING THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE
TEACHING PROFESSIONALS EMPLOYED THERE.

Comment

Each job should be clearly defined both for the school administration and the person performing the duties. When preparing job descriptions of the teaching staff, every effort should be made in defining their duties to stress instructional versus non-instructional tasks. Trained paraprofessionals, aides, and volunteers should be used to administer or monitor non-instructional activities. A written job description is another step in creating and maintaining a professional environment for teachers and supporting change and growth in the profession.

This recommendation complements those made earlier in the section addressing higher regard for teachers and the profession of teaching. Upgrading the teaching profession will make teaching a more interesting and acceptable career to the young who are making decisions about future career paths.

The commission further recommends that:

THE EVALUATION PROCESS CURRENTLY IN PLACE IN EVERY
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT BE UPGRADED BY INVOLVING A
COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF PARENTS, PEERS,
ADMINISTRATORS, AND OTHERS AS NEEDED OR REQUIRED WHO
INTERACT WITH THE TEACHING STAFF ON A REGULAR BASIS.

Comment

In many cases only the school principal is involved in the evaluation of professional teaching staff and sometimes evaluations are made only once a year. The commission believes that evaluation should be an ongoing process that offers opportunity for feedback, assistance, and improvement from a number of different sources. It is not only the teachers having difficulty who need these opportunities; even great teachers deserve time and attention. A committee of parents, peers, administrators, and others mutually agreed upon by the teachers and school boards through the collective bargaining process, who interact on a regular basis with the teaching staff, should provide their views to the person responsible for evaluation of the professional staff. This process uses the resources of the community and provides opportunity for increased interaction with and feedback to teachers; the committee can help by identifying minor difficulties and providing assistance before they become real problems.

The commission further recommends:

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES OR REQUIREMENTS
FOR ADMINISTRATORS ON PROPER DISCHARGE OF TEACHING
STAFF.

Comment

In cases where teachers' performance is inadequate, the commission urges supervisors first to provide appropriate and intensive assistance. However, in cases where teachers must be dismissed, it is the duty of the school district to proceed in accordance with the due process outlined in state law. We understand this procedure for dismissing teachers to be a difficult and costly one that is not often used. As we believe there is an obligation to remove ineffective teachers, training for appropriate staff in the required process is necessary to eliminate questions and thus avoid errors that defeat the effort. The commission strongly urges that the remedy provided in law for dismissal of teachers be applied as necessary and if found inadequate, be revised.

The commission further recommends:

UPGRADED ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS AT ALL COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA FOR THOSE INTENDING TO JOIN THE RANKS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSIONALS.

Comment

This commission seeks increased salaries, professionalism, and morale in the teaching ranks. As conditions and pay improve, we believe the caliber of individual entering the profession will also. The state must take a lead in upgrading standards for those who seek to teach.

The commission further recommends:

IMPLEMENTING A MEANS OF TESTING SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF TRAINING BEFORE LICENSING CANDIDATES AS TEACHERS.

Comment

As a proper closure to any training program, a test of general knowledge and skills should be administered. This testing process should be similar to that required of attorneys, physicians, accountants, or other professionals. A concrete measure of knowledge gained, if not of the ability to teach, would be provided through testing. The public understands this type of accreditation and such a program could create additional support for education efforts or funding.

The commission further recommends:

ALTERNATIVE LICENSURE THROUGH USE OF AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES WITH OTHER THAN EDUCATION DEGREES.

Comment

The commission has in mind an experimental one-year internship program where students who have graduated from liberal arts or other programs would learn the art of teaching through "hands-on" experience in a school classroom under the tutelage of an excellent teacher. This opportunity should also be offered to those who may be changing careers. We envision an experience that increases the time spent learning to teach by teaching, which is the most effective method. It will involve better use of talented teachers by asking them to share their experience and skills with those just entering the profession. Use of new teachers with this broader knowledge base might more effectively meet the needs of a changing society, workplace, and classroom.

The commission further recommends that:

**RECERTIFICATION STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS BE UPGRADED
BY REQUIRING RENEWAL UNITS OBTAINED PRIMARILY IN THE
AREA OF LICENSURE.**

Comment

The commission does not call for a fundamental reorganization of the process by which teachers are recertified. It asks that standards be established to define the percentage or number of units allowed outside the primary area of licensure. This attention to the area of licensure is intended to ensure appropriate updating of knowledge and skills levels.

ALONG WITH ITS CONCERN FOR ASSURING QUALITY STANDARDS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION, THE COMMISSION SEEKS SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, AND RECOMMENDS:

**DEVELOPMENT OF STATEWIDE STUDENT MASTERY AND
DIAGNOSTIC/PRESCRIPTIVE TESTING PROGRAMS FOR
IMPLEMENTATION AT DISTRICT OPTION.**

Comment

Earlier we recommended that four areas of study be emphasized. As noted, they are: mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. If the state commits its energy and resources mainly to these core subjects, it should take the leading role in developing testing programs that will be used to evaluate mastery. We believe promotion from grade-to-grade should be based mainly on mastery, thus eliminating what is commonly known as "social promotion". The state also should provide means for diagnosing difficulties before they become major problems. Thus, the commission also calls for development of diagnostic/prescriptive testing programs tied to the same subject areas. Both of these testing programs will provide a statewide data base and serve as a method to determine how students, schools, districts, and the state measure against others. The two programs should be available to all districts and implemented at the option of each district.

The commission further recommends:

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A MANDATED
STATEWIDE GRADUATION QUALIFYING TEST.

Comment

The intent of this test is to demonstrate achievement of minimum skill levels in the four subject areas we have identified. The test should be consistent statewide and administered to students in every Minnesota school district.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

IMPROVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

- *Principals should be squarely in charge of educational quality.*
- *Pay for principals should relate to responsibilities and effectiveness.*
- *States should set higher standards for recruiting, training and monitoring the performance of principals.*
- *Schools should use more effective management techniques.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

Many efforts are currently under way to aid principals. For instance, the 1983 legislature provided \$3 million to underwrite research on instructional effectiveness in 26 demonstration schools during the 1983-85 school period. Principals and teachers will be provided time for in-service training opportunities during this pilot effort.

To aid school managers, Commissioner of Education Ruth E. Randall established a management assistance center within the Minnesota Department of Education that provides direct services to school districts for enrollment projections, financial projections (including fiscal management), district organization and staffing, food service operations, building operations and maintenance, pupil transportation, and participative management systems. The Commissioner also appointed a task force to plan a school management assistance center at the University of Minnesota. This group will provide a plan that focuses on helping principals use more effective management techniques and provide guidelines for recruiting and training principals and monitoring their performance.

Another program that provides training to principals is the Bush Public School Executive Fellows Program. The Minnesota Association of School Administrators began this program through a grant from the Bush Foundation. It trains selected administrators for 18 months in school management techniques.

The efforts described here to aid the school manager, its principal, are significant and timely. This commission believes there is significant confusion about the role of the principal - is this person the school administrator or the instructional leader? It found in its studies that the role of the principal is defined very differently by teachers, school board members, and parents. Some believe the principal is one or the other - instructional leader or administrator - and in some cases the principal is to be both. The situation is further complicated because of the diversity of principals, schools, and districts in the state. In order to assist in determining the role a principal should play, the commission believes that increased study and use of effective management systems is needed.

TO IMPROVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

CONTINUED OR INCREASED STUDY OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT THE LOCAL SCHOOL LEVEL AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIMENTATION WITH VARIOUS MODELS, WITH THE AIM OF INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS MANAGERS.

Comment

Minnesota's Council on Quality Education has created a task force dedicated to the study of alternative management systems in schools. The commission encourages this type of initiative and supports other opportunities for individual schools to implement progressive and innovative management systems that meet the needs of the schools and their communities. The model of management that proved most interesting to the commission was that of "effective schools", which is being used in model programs in the state. In it the principal serves as the school's leader while utilizing staff in curriculum development, decision-making, and all planning efforts.

The commission further recommends:

ADDITIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN TECHNOLOGIES APPLICABLE TO MANAGEMENT AND TEACHING ON EVERY LEVEL AT LOCAL SCHOOLS.

Comment

In the school years 1983 and 1984, more than \$6 million was appropriated to integrate technology into school curricula and improve instruction of it. The commission recognizes the promise technology holds for the future and supports these moves. However, it is important to remember that contemporary technologies should be used in school management as well as figure in the curriculum. These tools can be used to lighten the teacher's workload and make administrative staffs more effective. This is an area in which the knowledge and expertise of businesses can be shared with the schools. The private sector has developed methods and machines that handle planning, budgeting and personnel management, and use of this expertise can greatly improve the performance of the state's schools.

"ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE" CALLS ON THE STATES TO:

SERVE BETTER THOSE STUDENTS WHO ARE NOW UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED

- *States should continue to develop equitable finance measures to insure that education resources are distributed fairly.*
- *States and school systems should identify and challenge academically gifted students.*
- *States, school systems, principals, teachers, and parents should work to reduce student absences and failures to finish school.*
- *States and school systems should specifically include handicapped students in programs for education and economic growth.*

THE COMMISSION RESPONDS:

The areas of concern found in this section are being actively addressed in Minnesota. Equitable finance measures have long been a priority and the 1984 legislature allocated funds according to an equity formula designed in 1983. This new foundation aid formula provides a series of five tiers, which recognizes the cost differences and property tax base of local school districts. The tier formula will more effectively equalize revenue distribution to districts and ensure continuing educational improvement.

A study of "students with unmet needs" was recently completed by the Minnesota Department of Education. It provides recommendations for developing a statewide program that recognizes the needs of students for whom the current curriculum is inadequate. The program's recommendations will be targeted at all K-12 students in the areas of general, special, and vocational education.

Coordinators for science and mathematics sections in the Minnesota Department of Education are leading a team of teachers in developing a plan to increase participation of women and minorities in these disciplines. The plan will provide guidelines and recommendations to local districts on how to accomplish this aim.

Minnesotans can be proud that this state has the lowest rate of high school drop outs of any state in the U.S. This figure serves as further evidence of the importance we give education in this state.

TO BETTER SERVE THOSE STUDENTS WHO ARE NOW UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED IN MINNESOTA, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS:

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS IN EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES THROUGH TRAINED, INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS (WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE SOCIAL WORKERS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, PHYSICIANS, AND TEACHERS).

Comment

By early diagnosis of problems that hinder learning, the students will be helped and provided opportunities for specialized instruction or other assistance. We understand that many classroom disruptions have their root in children with undiagnosed problems. Additional attempts to identify students with learning difficulties may aid in eliminating these disruptions and thus improve the classroom environment for the teacher and entire student group.

The commission further recommends that:

PROGRAMS FOR THE GROUP OF STUDENTS DESIGNATED HANDICAPPED OR DISABLED SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

Comment

This group strongly believes no efforts to provide equal opportunity for Minnesota's students should be lessened or eliminated.

The commission further recommends:

PROGRAMS FOR THE GROUP OF STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS GIFTED OR TALENTED BE EXPANDED AND FUNDED AT A MORE SUBSTANTIAL LEVEL.

Comment

While the commission does not support diminished efforts to provide equal opportunity, it recognizes the need to nurture and challenge students found to be exceptionally bright or talented. This need not only reflects a desire to provide adequate opportunity for these students, but the need of students in our state and nation to keep pace with advancing technology and its impact on the future.

Joint ventures of the public and private sectors to develop summer enrichment programs for all students that enhance the education programs provided during the school year is one way to meet the needs of the school, communities, businesses, and individual students. As business has a significant investment in education, it seems appropriate that it pursue increased involvement in enrichment programs.

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RESOURCE MATERIALS:

A sample listing of the materials used by the full commission and its subcommittees follows:

- "Action for Excellence", Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, Education Commission of the States, June, 1983
- "Campaign for Quality", Final Report of the Task Force for Excellence in Education, State of Colorado, May, 1984
- "Goals and Recommendations for Minnesota K-12 Education as Formulated by the State Board of Education", Minnesota State Board of Education, July, 1982
- "Minnesota Dialogue on Education", Minnesota Department of Education, April, 1984
- "State of the State Address in Education: Education in the '80s in Minnesota", Dr. Ruth E. Randall, Minnesota Department of Education, February, 1984
- "The Condition of Education", Minnesota Department of Education, 1982
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- "A Comprehensive Plan for School Effectiveness", Minnesota Department of Education, February, 1984
- "The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education", United States Department of Education, May, 1984
- "Nebraska Schools: The Report of the Governor's Task Force on Excellence in Education", September, 1983
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- "Academic Preparation For College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do", The College Board, New York, 1983
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- "Financing Educational Excellence", Allan Odden, January, 1984
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- "A Study Of Schooling: Some Findings And Hypotheses", John I. Goodlad, Phi Delta Kappan, March, 1983
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- "Recent Reform Proposals For American Education", Lawrence C. Stedman and Marshall S. Smith, Contemporary Education Review, Fall, 1983
- "Effective Schools Research: Towards Useful Interpretations", Michael Cohen, National Institute of Education, July, 1981

Education Commission of the States Issuegrams:

Number:	1	Research Findings on Effective Teaching and Schools
	5	Low-Cost School Improvement
	6	Achievement in Mathematics and Science
	9	How Well Can Students Read and Write?
	11	State Programs of School Improvement
	13	Education for Economic Growth
	17	Information Society Challenges Education
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Education Commission of the States Working Papers:

"State Programs of School Improvement, 1983: A 50-State Survey"

"Survey of States' Teacher Policies"

"How to Form Business-School Partnerships"

"The Principal as Instructional Leader: How Much More Time Before We Act?"

"Increasing the Duration and Intensity of Academic Learning Time in Schools"

"Staff Development"

"Teacher Evaluation and Merit Pay"

"Improving the Environment for Learning: The Role of Educational Standards and Discipline"