

To: David Mathews
From: Robbie McClintock *Robbie*
Subject: "Initiatives in Education"
Date: September 17, 1976

Here are some thoughts in response to your memorandum to the President on "Initiatives in Education." As I have worked on what started out as a very preliminary response, a fairly comprehensive scheme for implementing the initiatives you suggest began to occur to me, and I thought it best to let that scheme unfold without too much attention to costs and technical difficulties--if the over-all scheme seems attractive, there will be occasion later to agonize over costs and difficulties. For convenience, I have cast the discussion largely with reference to public elementary and secondary education, but should the incentives be actually developed, I think they should be framed to apply to all accredited non-profit educational institutions, public and private, pre-school through college.

In the complex web of life, the areas you deal with are integrally connected, but hitherto in policy they have been largely divorced from one another. Finding a way to act on them all, in concert through a unified effort, is necessary if the public is to perceive the principles upon which your concern is based; without that your steps toward implementation will be perceived as a potpurri of discrete efforts. Link them all in a single proposal, one that clearly has a common theme, a central purpose and principle of action, and then your concerns will emerge clearly into public view.

Your fourth section seems to be the key to the first section: to have a new emphasis on quality with a special concern for basic skills, there needs to be more education and less bureaucracy. Educational bureaucracies thrive on elaboration of the peripheral curriculum and the extra-curriculum, and elaboration of these detracts from the basics, from careful attention to quality in the fundamentals.

Your steps in the fourth section may not be sufficient, however, to achieve the debureaucratization of education. They will certainly help, particularly with respect to higher education, but the steps seem to assume that bureaucracy in education has come into being primarily through induction from the governmental grant and regulation procedures now in force. To be sure, such induction has occurred.

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Massively. But the process may have deeper causes, particularly in elementary and secondary schooling, where the internal structures of incentives may create a steady impetus from within toward the elaboration of educational bureaucracies.

Less education and more bureaucracy may have come to pass because teaching, among educators, has too little prestige. In the career patterns that are in force, teaching is basically not rewarded except through the intrinsic rewards that it has for the exceptional. Too many of those with talent and ambition working in the schools come before long to want to leave the classroom, to get into the administration, for there they can get more prestige and better salaries. As long as this urge to leave teaching and enter administration dominates in the ethos of professional educators, school administrations will tend to expand, to bureaucratize, to elaborate the periphery of the curriculum. This tendency might be reversed through some well designed incentive programs, ones that rewarded school districts that concentrated on teaching the fundamentals well. Such programs could easily be drawn to fit the federal role that you suggest. Three possibilities occur to me.

1) Instructional Budget Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for school districts to increase the proportion of their total budgets devoted to instruction in the core curriculum. The procedure might be for the federal government to grant a school district a small percentage of its total budget provided the proportion of its budget for instruction in the core curriculum to its total budget exceeded a certain standard percentage. A further incentive might be to make the amount granted increase as the ratio of the instructional to total budget increases. For instance, using arbitrary figures, an instructional to total budget ratio of 1:2 might get a 1% grant, 1.1 : 2 might get 1.1%, 1.2 : 2 might get 1.2%, and so on.

2) Teacher-Administrator Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for school districts to require their administrators to preserve a commitment to teaching. The procedure might be for the federal government to reward school districts that maintained requirements that all administrators devoted at least, say, 25% of their time to classroom teaching.

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The reward might be in the form of a grant, equal to a small percentage of the district's total budget, to be used at the district's discretion for improving the quality of teaching in basic education.

3) Teacher Performance Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for school instructional and professional staffs to seek together to improve the results of the school program as measured through national testing programs. The procedure might be for the federal government to pay performance bonuses to the instructional and professional staffs of schools whose pupils in a particular year showed significant improvement over the previous year in their grade point averages. Such a bonus might be one per cent of annual salary for each per cent of improvement over the previous year. To encourage cooperation within the school, however, the bonus should be based on the performance of the whole school and paid to the staff of the entire school.

Your second section on the relation of education and work suggests a parallel strategy. There is already a vast amount of work related education or training going on within the American workplace, and a system of incentives might be created, designed to expand the basic education and general education components in job training and to establish links between economic and educational institutions. As with the school related incentives, the basic effort in this would be to combat an established ethos that works to a certain degree against good education in fundamentals. As things stand, economic incentives working on private and public employers tend to narrow job-training programs so that they concentrate on the particular skills which the trainee will need to perform adequately in the immediate future. In the long run, however, employers might benefit by investing in the basic education of their employees, and some do so, finding it better to have, not only adequately trained employees, but well-educated ones. Such investment in basic education has, unfortunately, a less immediate pay-off than does job-training, and most employers, profit and non-profit, cannot afford to educate workers in more than their immediate job skills. Incentives might be used to try to shift the economics of this situation.

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4) Work Education Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for employers to develop, in cooperation with local educational institutions, a significant basic education and general education component in their employee training programs. The procedure might be to use tax credits for profit-making institutions and direct payments for non-profit institutions to reward employee education programs in which 40% or more of the participants time was devoted to basic education or general education curricula that were designed, in cooperation with local educational institutions, to make effective pedagogical use of the work setting for basic and general education. Exactly how such tax credits and direct payments might work is a technical matter that would need careful study.

Your third section on the reunification of the family, community, and school lends itself to yet another variant of the incentive strategy. The problem in this area, as in work and education, is not primarily to generate effort where no effort exists, for all sorts of parental and community groups exert themselves at educating; rather, the problem is to create incentives that will lead those groups to educate with greater self-awareness, with more attention to achieving quality in the basics, and with a greater willingness to coordinate their efforts more effectively among themselves and with the schools. In this area, one should recognize that there exists a pent-up urge on local levels **to provide** the best possible educative experiences for their children and that relatively small incentives that rely to a high degree on local discretion can have very significant results. Four closely related incentives might capitalize well on this situation.

5) Local Educational Coordination Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for local school boards to take responsibility, not only for overseeing the public schools within their jurisdiction, but for further coordinating the work of those schools with all the educative resources, informal and formal, in their locality. The procedure might be for the federal government to grant a school board a small percentage of its school district's total budget provided the board annually surveyed the total educative resources available within its jurisdiction and worked out, with community

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participation, a strategy for their optimum coordination. Special attention in this strategy should be given to making the entire configuration of educative resources conduce optimally to quality education in basic skills. The funds from this grant would be for use, at the discretion of the school board, for improving those educative resources, formal or informal, that the board judged most in need of strengthening.

6) Community Involvement Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for groups, associations, and institutions, identified in the above-mentioned surveys as potentially significant informal educative resources, to cooperate with the coordination strategy of the school board. The procedure might be for the federal government to grant those groups, associations, and institutions that the school board declared cooperative an amount equal to some percentage, say 10%, of the resources (with volunteered time included in the calculation) expended in informal educative work, with the funds from the grant being used at the discretion of the grantee for the improvement of its capacity to function educatively.

7) School Outreach Incentives. The idea here would be to create incentives for schools to develop parent involvement programs. The procedure might be for the federal government to pay small annual salary bonuses to the instructional and professional staffs of schools which instituted parent auxiliary programs in all its classes.

8) Parent Involvement Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for parents to take part in the parent involvement programs in their schools. The procedure might be for the federal government to award participating parents at the end of each school year an honorarium, say \$100, to be used at the parent's discretion to provide educative experiences for their children.

Over-all, such a system of incentives would be consistent with your strategy of encouragement, not coercion. The eight incentives outlined would amount to a major federal effort, but one which, by relying largely on local and personal discretion, would be perceived as faciliatory rather than intrusive. The

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principle of incentive payments would by itself make the federal role less intrusive. Incentives are payments for doing autonomously something that another, in this case the federal government, thinks has special value. Unlike grants and contracts, incentives do not need elaborate prior agreements, and by cutting down on the necessity for such detailed agreements, incentive payments would reduce the paper morass, especially as it has come to inundate those seeking assistance. Furthermore, special concern for the poor and underprivileged could be built into a system of incentives by making the percentages on which grants and bonuses were paid higher in low income districts than in others. Although simpler to administrate than grants and contracts, incentive payments, to be workable, would nevertheless entail that someone see to it that certain standards were set and met. In this area, a significant opportunity arises for further redefining the federal role, for shifting the narrow locality by locality enforcement to the states so that the federal government can concentrate its resources on evaluating qualitatively how the broad purposes of the incentives are faring and on providing constructive criticism to the public about their educative efforts.

9) State Participation Incentives. The idea here would be to create an incentive for state governments to write the regulations implementing the eight above-mentioned incentives within their jurisdiction, consistent with the federal legislation; to determine annually whether the standards thus set had been met; and to contribute, say, 25% of the incentives to be paid. The procedure might be for the federal government to pay each state that agreed to do these things a percentage of the state's total educational budget that would give the state slightly more revenue than it would expend on the incentive programs. In effect, through this incentive the federal government would divest itself of the task of narrow enforcement locality by locality of the standards for the incentive program. This would enable the federal government to attend to high-minded evaluation and facilitation, which is far more suited to its proper role.

10) National Educational Incentive Overseers. The idea here would be for the federal government

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to substitute constructive, qualitative evaluation and facilitation for the enforcement that it would have to do were it not for 9. The procedure might be to establish for each congressional district one "educational incentive overseer" and for each state a "state educational incentive overseer." Their duties would be, at least annually, to provide their constituents with qualitative reports on the over-all educative effort, formal and informal, in their areas, with special attention first to how the incentives have improved or failed to improve basic education, and second to possibilities for making them work better. The overseers should be persons of stature from the areas they will be overseeing; they should be appointed to office by the President for four-year terms and confirmed by the Senate; their pay should be commensurate with federal district and circuit court judges; they should have a small staff, larger for the state overseers, complete visitation rights in the schools and educative agencies in their areas, and a budget adequate for printing and disseminating widely an extensive annual report. In addition to reporting on the situation and commenting on possibilities, the overseers should, when possible, work to facilitate educational initiatives within their areas.

These ten incentives might be grouped together in a Basic Education Incentive Act. Such an Act might be fairly costly; one of the first steps that should be taken if the proposal seems attractive would be to have someone versed in the arcana of budgets to cost out such a program. In doing so, I think three assumptions should be used; namely that the incentives would be funded at a token level, at a moderate level, and at a level making a substantial impact on budgets and incomes (perhaps for the first, .5 to 1%, second 4 to 8%, third 10 to 25%).

Should you think the over-all scheme to be of sufficient interest to pursue further, I would be glad to work with those who have special competencies in developing it more fully.