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SPECIAL MESSAGE ON EDUCATION



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STATE OF MINNESOTA

Presented By
GOVERNOR ALBERT H. QUIE

To The
SEVENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE

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MARCH 15, 1979



ALBERT H. QUIE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MINNESOTA
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To the Members of the 71st Legislature:

As you know, education is one of the highest priorities for my administration during my first term of office. I feel it is appropriate, therefore, to share with you the major elements of my approach to the state support of education.

In the sections concerning primary and secondary education, I have made specific proposals for programs which meet particular needs. In the sections concerning post-secondary education, I have focused on issues which concern all systems and which need to be considered carefully during the next four years.

I trust this message will serve as a catalyst for discussion of the issues at hand. Someone has said that it is the responsibility of the Governor to present to the people the unfinished business of the state. This message is one step in what I perceive will be a continuing effort to focus on the unfinished business in education.

I look forward to working with you in accepting the challenge of the education agenda for the 1980's.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Al Quie".

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Education: an Agenda for the 1980's

The decade of the 70's which began with the final stages of expansionist exuberance, closes with the people reflecting a deep concern for restraint -- fiscal, social and ethical. For education, the early years of the 80's will see us seeking to reconcile the effects of these two legacies.

My budget message set forth the framework for my immediate priorities in education in Minnesota. I wish here to share with you my long range interests and to present an agenda for the passage to the next era of educational evolution.

I emphasize once again that I do not claim to have a monopoly on educational wisdom. Only through extensive discussion and debate can we--the people of the state, the Legislature and the Executive Branch--arrive at the best possible balance of fiscal responsibility, needed programs and necessary services.

THE SETTING

Minnesota is an exciting state in which to live and work. It has been in the past and will continue to be so in the future. Why? Among the characteristics

-- our economy which has been transformed from an almost exclusive reliance on agriculture, milling, mining and forest products to an integrated economy, is interlaced with "brain power"

and new technology. Our people often have made the transition from farm to profession in one generation without destroying the fabric of the agricultural sector;

-- our unemployment rate, which hovers between three and four percent, is evidence of an unusually employable and talented workforce;

-- our record of imprisonment per thousand is among the lowest in the nation; and

-- our concern for our beautiful environment has made the state a leader in developing mechanisms for preservation and prudent development.

Each of these characteristics stems in large part from the basic commitment to maintaining an educational system of high quality. The retention and enhancement of that commitment is one of my highest priorities. In so doing, we continue to improve the quality of life for individuals as well as enhance the climate for a strong economy and to move further along toward the resolution of social problems and injustice.

A STATEMENT FOR EDUCATION

The task before us is the translation of a commitment into concrete programs and services for the 1980's. We know that the economy is strong and will yield continuing state revenues. We also know that the people are no longer tolerant of unrestrained

expenditure. The prudent balancing of these two factors will provide the path to those programs.

The temptation in times of austerity is to reduce in the most obvious places and to hope that the outcome will not be too disruptive. I prefer to resist that temptation by developing a statement against which policy can be developed and decisions measured.

To this end, I set forth my own views as the starting point for the development of this statement. I believe:

-- that every child and citizen should have access to educational opportunity. In a state as large and diverse economically as Minnesota, and with significant delegation of responsibilities to local discretion, equality of total program probably is impossible to assure. What the state should provide, however, is equality of access to a basic educational program of high quality.

-- that every child, adolescent and adult seeking opportunities for learning should be viewed as having unique needs. The state should encourage the maintenance of systems which are responsive to variations in talent and ability, should encourage diversity of educational styles, and should encourage the development of opportunities for persons of all ages to continue to enrich their existence through learning throughout their lives.

-- that despite present economic pressures, we cannot lose sight of the goal to continuously improve the quality of education. We will have to make difficult choices among competing priorities. The focus of these choices, however, must remain the quality of programs and services. It also may mean that we will have to consider new levels of cooperation and coordination if opportunities of high quality are to be available.

-- that learning is not the sole domain of the educator. There should be a partnership among educators, parents, the community, and agencies of government which mutually take responsibility for the provision and guidance of educational programs.

-- that most educational decisions can best be made at the level at which the greatest amount of information is available and the broadest range of discussion can be conducted. For elementary and secondary schools, local school boards have the best opportunity to understand the specific characteristics of their situations and should continue to assume responsibility for the operation of their districts. This also means that institutions of higher education should be afforded the maximum degree of autonomy for academic programs. In return, this delegation of responsibility to the local levels imposes important responsibilities to be sensitive to the expressed needs of the larger community,

and to avoid unnecessary duplication of programs or inconsequential efforts which waste the resources of the public treasury and erode public confidence and good will.

-- that the state is enriched by a judicious balance between the public and private sectors at all levels. The state should continue to support the programs which have provided access to the private sector and adapt them to changing conditions.

-- that we must continually examine, through processes of planning, evaluation and review, what it is we are doing if we are to determine how to improve quality within budgetary constraints. The evaluation mechanisms already provided for at all levels of education -- Planning, Evaluation and ~~Review~~ and other programs in the public schools, the reallocation efforts in the post-secondary institutions -- should be encouraged and continually refined.

These beliefs form the backdrop against which I have viewed the progress of education over the past decade. Minnesota has developed a good system of education over the years, but we must not be lulled into a false sense of security if we are to be prepared to face the future.

Performance by high school graduates is a subject of much discussion. I am dismayed by the reports of college

faculty and business leaders that high school graduates increasingly are coming to them with communications and computational skills which are less than adequate for average success in their fields. The waste in human time, effort and financial resources represented by these reports compels me to seek alternative solutions.

PRIMARY GRADE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

From experience as a parent and reports of teachers over the years, I believe that the most important point at which the child's interest and enthusiasm for learning can be captured is in the primary grades. Research indicates that the primary grades benefit most directly from a concentration of resources. Common sense tells us that unusual efforts made in this period of the child's life will have "pay-offs" as the child progresses up the educational ladder, both for the child and for the institution trying to serve that individual's needs.

I have proposed that Minnesota take advantage of an unusual situation created by two trends: on the one hand, primary enrollment will decline over the next five years while on the other hand, the population will remain stable. With a strong economy as our base, for the next several years we can continue to fund education at the present level in constant dollars, thus yielding more dollars

per child. I propose to devote those resources to improvement of the quality of instruction, particularly in the basic skills, so that each child can have a greater assurance of receiving a strong foundation for his or her educational career.

The keystone of the proposal is the provision of resources to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio. The average ratio statewide for kindergarten through third grade is 24 to 1, which means that there are many schools in which the ratio is much higher. I have recommended this ratio be reduced by increasing the pupil weighting formula in kindergarten from the present .5 to .6 and in grades one through three from 1.0 to 1.2. This improvement of the ratio will provide resources which should be used imaginatively by the local school districts to meet the objectives of improving the quality of instruction. What works well in one district may not be appropriate in another.

I am proposing that the program be initiated in two stages: the first year of the biennium to be utilized as a demonstration year involving a minimum of 25 school districts selected across the state to represent the widest possible combinations of conditions, and the second year to provide statewide application for those districts choosing to participate. An on-going evaluation component should be included in the implementation for the first year so that improvements can be made prior to full implementation. The methodologies necessary to provide individualized instruction and parent-teacher communications are known. The purpose of the

the demonstration year, therefore, is to provide experience in the techniques of implementation.

I emphasize that I am not proposing a mandated class size, nor do I propose any "magic number" for funding. Within reasonable limits, the specification of class size should remain as flexible as possible to take advantage of or to recognize the conditions created by a particular mix of people. Recent research evidence presented by Glass and Smith, which examined data spanning half a century, found that on the average, student achievement increases as class size decreases, especially when class size drops below 20 pupils per class. The optimal ratio, however, is a function of pupil characteristics, subject matter taught, teaching quality, etc., all highly specific to each classroom.

For the reduction of the teacher-pupil ratio, I am recommending \$10,200,000 for FY80, and \$43,150,000 for FY81.

Merely reducing the teacher-pupil ratio does not provide a guarantee of improvement of the quality of instruction. The teaching skills required for larger classes do not necessarily transfer to smaller classes and many teachers may not have had the opportunity to develop skills related to individualizing educational experiences. I propose resources for the professional development of elementary teachers and administrators to ensure that the maximum benefit can be derived from the lower ratio.

For inservice training for teachers and administrators, I recommend \$1,412,400 for FY80 and \$6,536,200 for FY81.

I also firmly believe that parents can be powerful partners in the education of young children. I have never met a parent who did not want the best possible education for his child. From my own experience and the reports of several successful programs already in operation around the state, such as that in Montevideo, I am convinced that closer communication between parents and teachers in the context of the home results in improved understanding of the child's educational development.

My purpose in emphasizing the home as a place to advance this communication is to emphasize that for the young child, learning is not confined to a specific time and place. The budding mind absorbs ideas and skills throughout its waking hours. Parents, as guardians of a significant portion of the child's time, thus become partners in the guardianship of the child's learning. The home is a learning environment. The teacher can better understand the influence of a particular home situation on the educational development of the child if they have some common ground for that understanding.

It may not be possible for this interaction to always occur in the home. Fears have been expressed that many parents do not wish to have the school invade the home. I am not proposing that teachers become social workers. What I am proposing is that teachers have an opportunity to return to one of the time honored traditions of their profession, the tradition of knowing their students as whole persons. The fact that fear exists about this

aspect of my proposal provides ample evidence to me of the need for the program. I remain convinced, however, that the objective of seeking ways for parents and teachers to work together for the planning and reinforcement of the child's total educational experience is attainable.

For improving parent-teacher communication, I recommend \$1,027,206 in FY80 and \$4,240,000 in FY81 to be used to fund an additional five days salary per teacher.

A final element in my proposal is the provision for additional instructional materials which reinforce the opportunities for more individual attention.

For the purpose of purchasing materials and technical assistance, I propose \$1,300,000 for FY80 and \$2,530,000 for FY81.

How these four elements are implemented in a single school district should be tailored to that district's unique needs. My proposed legislation does not provide prescriptive language for implementation. What it does provide is a framework within which school districts can retain a strong commitment to the quality of foundation skills, even in the context of declining resources.

I will charge the State Department of Education with the responsibility to carefully evaluate the progress of the program, and in particular the demonstration experience. They also will make recommendations to the Legislature and to me concerning the broader implementation during the second year of the biennium.

The additional resources created by this proposal will not be available for uses other than those intended. The experience of past administrations in providing additional funds compels me to make this clear. Adequate safeguards which will not be burdensome but which will protect the objectives of the program will be instituted.

SPARSITY AID

The combination of declining enrollment and low density enrollment is creating significant funding problems for a number of the outstate school districts. I am proposing an approach which will take into account the high costs of transportation in areas which must transport pupils long distances to provide basic programs.

I recommend an appropriation of \$1,500,000 for each year of the biennium for sparsity aid.

OTHER ISSUES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

While I have chosen to focus attention on the improvement of instruction in the primary grades, I also am mindful that there are other issues which must not be lost from sight if we are to maintain our commitment to access to educational opportunity.

The relationship between ethnic or cultural identity and education has long been a concern to Minnesotans. It is this search for ways of maintaining uniqueness which has contributed greatly to our rich diversity of culture. While this is a long

standing tradition, the struggle continues within minority groups to find ways of accommodating their needs to the demands for integration into the larger society. If true equal social and economic opportunity for minorities is to occur, education must become the vehicle for the development of both cultural awareness and the skills and knowledge of the majority culture. I strongly encourage the efforts of those who have pioneered in developing alternative educational paths such as alternative schools for Indian children or curriculum units on black culture, to meet particular needs. I will request the State Department of Education to develop proposals for the next biennium related to the particular education problems of minorities which are not already being met by existing federal and state legislation.

For a number of years, the effort to achieve equality of access to education has absorbed most of our attention, and we have made great strides in expanding the opportunities for the handicapped. While no new programs are proposed, under my administration we will continue this effort so as to achieve a full range of opportunities. At the same time, however, we must not assume that the job is done. Full financing of handicapped education does not necessarily mean that every handicapped child is adequately provided for in real terms. The Department of Education will continue to evaluate the progress of these programs.

Just as we have achieved a high level of concern for those children who have encountered physical, intellectual or emotional

barriers to educational achievement, the time has come for us to acknowledge our responsibilities toward the high potential learner, the gifted and talented. A state which does not provide special opportunities for the gifted to achieve their full potential loses significant opportunities for greatness. Minnesota is one of only 13 states which have not made a specific commitment to provision of special programs for the gifted.

For the purpose of providing opportunities for curricular enrichment, I propose \$1,200,000.

While I emphasized the importance of developing foundation skills in the primary grades, I am aware that we must seek to ensure that the current generation of secondary students does not carry a burden of shortfalls in achievement in communications and computation skills beyond the high school level. The costs in the loss of human potential and dignity through failure are too great to continue to tolerate such lapses in achievement.

I therefore propose a program for the improvement of secondary-basic skills which will serve to remediate in those areas of greatest need. I emphasize here that I do not propose the beginning of competency testing as a requirement for graduation. In time, the need for this approach should diminish as the benefits of the emphasis on such skills at the lower levels percolates through the entire educational program.

For the purposes of providing inservice training of secondary teachers in teaching basic communication and computation skills, I propose \$500,000 in FY80 and \$500,000 in FY81.

DISCRETIONARY MILL LEVY

I am concerned about the ability of school districts to provide adequate resources for programs which they deem appropriate to their situations. I also am concerned about the maintenance of a sense of mutual responsibility between school boards and their constituents.

I therefore am recommending that foundation aids be computed on the basis authorized by statute, while school boards be authorized to levy at their discretion two additional mills beginning with school year 1980-81 and thereafter for the purpose of meeting locally determined needs. This will allow local school districts which desire to enhance their own educational programs the opportunity to do so.

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSISTANCE

Non-public schools have made major contributions to the educational resources of the state in the past and will continue to do so. I therefore have recommended that the open and standing account for non-public schools be funded at the level of \$6.5 million for the biennium. The needs of this sector can best be met by

the allocation of these funds to textbooks, health services and the development of mobile units for the delivery of mandatory special education services to a neutral site thereby reducing the time wasted for pupils in travel. I also support the proposals to change the definition of textbook to that used by the United States Supreme Court.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLICY AND FINANCE

My budget message outlined my proposals for an immediate approach to the methods of financing public education. There is general agreement, however, that the time has come for a complete review of these methods in relation to the economic realities of the next decade. There also is general agreement that this review and revision should not come hurriedly or in the form of tinkering with isolated parts.

In my budget message I proposed the establishment of two commissions -- the Commission on Educational Policy and the Commission on School Finance -- to study the issues at hand and to make recommendations to me on future directions. I will be proposing legislation to create the Commission on School Finance as a continuing body. The Commission on Educational Policy will be created by Executive Order for a limited term of service. I envision these commissions as being composed of persons who have a strong sense of commitment to the improvement of Minnesota education as well as having valuable perspectives and skills. The Commissions will be structured carefully so as to be reflective

of the various constituencies concerned with policy, such as rural-urban-suburban, teacher, administrator, board member, etc. Specific charges will be developed to examine the major policy and finance issues and the inter-relationship among them. Neither commission is intended to supplant the authority invested in the State Board of Education. Rather, their purpose will be to provide me with insights and innovative alternatives to the resolution of issues.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Minnesota's goals in post-secondary education center on the concepts of access and choice. In essence, these goals are achieved when a student is able to attend any state institution of post-secondary education which will admit her or him.

Over the years, the state has appropriated monies to keep tuition low in the public sector, built a campus near all significant concentrations of population, ratified reciprocity agreements with neighboring states to expand opportunities for our citizens, established several financial aid programs for qualified and eligible students, and provided limited support mechanisms to increase access to the private sector. In combination, these actions have made Minnesota a national leader in the provision of post-secondary opportunities and placed the

state near the top in all surveys that measure state effort.

TUITION

In public higher education across the country today there is much discussion concerning the appropriate relationship between the state share and the student share in costs of education. On the one hand there is the "proportion of costs" approach, whereby students pay a percentage of the total cost. On the other hand, there is the approach which relates tuition to a specific dollar amount. Minnesota traditionally has used the latter approach as a basic policy.

I believe that the appropriate approach is the one which is currently used and which makes allowances for increases related to inflation. My tuition recommendation for this biennium keeps tuition at or below the rate of inflation, that is, at 7% while retaining the principle that students pay a fair proportion of the costs.

In 1977, the state adopted a policy whereby students enrolling in numbers greater than the appropriated base would have to be accommodated with temporary instructors, financed by tuition payments. Enrollment patterns since that time as well as the most recent projections amply demonstrate the wisdom of this policy. Although it has given us some time for reflection and discussion, this accommodation will not suffice as policy for the 1980's.

FINANCIAL AIDS

While tuition must rise with inflation, the provision of adequate financial aid resources continues to provide the key to the goals of access and choice. Aid programs have grown tremendously in amount and complexity in the 1970's. Today, funds drawn from Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, loans, work-study employment, Social Security and G.I. benefits, financial and honorary scholarships, etc., are available to eligible students. Aid "packages" which combine elements in differing proportions are developed according to individual needs.

This growth in aid resources is directly linked with an increase in the participation rate in post-secondary education. We must determine if we have reached all potential students or if there are gaps or classes of students who still are unable to gain access because of aid barriers while still retaining standards of eligibility. We need to determine if the current relationship between aid and self-help is optimal.

Our current financial aid program is integrated with the provision of federal dollars and therefore is dependent on federal policy. Changes in the national policy, particularly in reduction of funds, have important implications for our ability to provide the means for access and choice. We must continually

monitor federal policy in this area and coordinate state policy with it so as to ensure the continuation of this important program.

My commitment to access and choice can be seen by my current recommendation for financial aid. I have earmarked funds to expand eligibility and to increase the maximum amount of state grants and scholarships. These improvements, along with anticipated increases in federal programs and continuation of existing state programs, will increase substantially the amount of aid available to students in our colleges and universities.

For the purpose of providing financial aid, I am recommending \$20,185,400 in FY80 and \$23,151,700 in FY81. For the purpose of providing additional support for part time students, I am recommending \$375,000 in each year of the biennium.

DECLINING ENROLLMENT

Virtually all of the issues in post-secondary education are connected to projected enrollment decline in the mid-1980's to some degree. While we have become more skilled in the art of making enrollment projections, we still need answers to many questions before we can be confident we have provided adequately for the welfare of our institutions and students.

Is there a critical mass beyond which a campus cannot retrench and continue to maintain acceptable program quality? If so what is it and who will decide? If a campus reaches this point, is it in the state's interest to make the economic sacrifice to keep it open in order to ensure access and choice? Should attempts be made to expand further the programs and services designed for non-traditional students? If so, how should these offerings be financed and coordinated? Is the current funding formula adequate to support non-traditional programs in an era of enrollment decline?

The answers to these and other questions are not readily apparent. However, during my administration I will explore and seek debate on a change in funding for higher education which establishes a formula based on program costs. I see this as a means of ensuring educational quality when the period of declining enrollment arrives. This approach should provide a means of distinguishing between costs of instruction and costs of institutional operation, each of which are different. In this way we can begin to understand fully the extent of the state's responsibility and commitment to programs such as research and service, which bear no direct relationship to enrollment.

MINORITY STUDENT RETENTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While planning to meet the challenges of declining enrollment, we must also plan for increasing numbers of minority students.

Over the last 15 years many programs have been initiated to retain minority students. However, the increasing number and complexity of these programs have caused problems. The answers lie in more individualized student services and program coordination.

Therefore, I am recommending that the legislature fund the University of Minnesota Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs at the level of \$500,000 for each year in the next biennium. This investment in our minority students will produce a model for better serving this growing student group.

Based on the retention results achieved during the coming biennium, I will ask the University for recommendations concerning the Office's permanent role in providing for the needs of minority and disadvantaged students.

HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

I have focused on the need to continue the development of opportunities for handicapped students in the public schools. As a result of this effort, a new generation is beginning to emerge from our secondary schools. They are better prepared and their expectations are greater than ever before. Post-secondary

education must meet the needs of these students if their expectations are not to be in vain.

Handicapped students who meet basic ability requirements should have opportunities for vocational and higher education. To the extent possible such education should be appropriate to each individual and it should be regarded as a right rather than as a privilege. We must develop financial aid systems which give handicapped students equal opportunities with others to enter any advanced programs for which they qualify.

Although the Congress has acted to encourage the opening of vocational education opportunities for the handicapped, there has been far less general response to the needs than is required to meet that intent. Minnesota is fortunate in having several examples of progress in this area, such as District 916 and Anoka AVTI, which have served as models for the nation, but the adoption of these approaches must be far more extensive before the state has fully delivered on its obligations.

Implementation of these programs should not be viewed as an added or special burden. Teachers who become more successful as teachers through their accomodations to the needs of handicapped students will better serve all of their students, for all students need to be understood and taught competently as individuals. In return, our institutions are enriched by the

contribution of the handicapped to its diversity.

At the University I am recommending three positions be added to coordinate handicapped services, and additional resources for an increased complement of consultants to meet the needs of the learning disabled, hearing impaired and other severely handicapped students. I have recommended the University's request for \$477,000 for the biennium.

MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

To meet the challenges of the next decade, education will have to be so managed that it is able to maintain public confidence or recapture it where it has declined. If the resources given to all of education are not managed well, the credibility necessary for educational leadership will erode.

This management also will have to recognize the realities of the broader society. Education does not exist in a vacuum but as a part of social, political and economic circumstances prevailing in a given time and place. Good management, however, is not an end in itself, to be pursued for its own sake. Only through good management can the primary goal of improving quality and of expanding services be achieved.

Through mechanisms such as the budget review of programs and regular consultation with the heads of systems and the HECB, I will continue to encourage the development of appropriate management skills.

OTHER ISSUES AND THEIR RESOLUTION

These are but some of the issues and questions in post-secondary education which must be resolved for the coming decade. There are others, such as an adequate funding base for vocational-technical institutions, compliance with federally mandated programs, reciprocity agreements, state replacement of declining federal support for special programs, the appropriate balance between the public and private sectors, etc., which are equally pressing and on which the discussion must go forward.

In line with my conviction that the most fruitful discussion of issues comes at the level at which the greatest amount of information is available, I shall charge the heads of systems and heads of institutions of post-secondary education to initiate the discussion of these issues. The Higher Education Advisory Council of the HEBCB provides an appropriate vehicle for the implementation of this charge. Similar discussions should occur within the HEBCB itself, for it is here that citizen contributions can be more clearly drawn. I shall ask both groups to prepare recommendations from which the policy framework to carry us into the next decade will emerge.

IN SUMMARY

The primary issues facing education at all levels for the next five years are known. Our task for the next four years is to resolve these issues in the context of enhancing and improving the

quality of education.

"Quality" is an elusive goal for which no specific or concrete definition exists. There is no concrete formula which will guarantee that it has been or will be attained. An easy resolution to this dilemma then, is to assume that directing more money to all programs somehow will provide that guarantee. Yet, experience in other areas of our society strongly suggests that this assumption may not be necessarily justified. We must seize the opportunity provided by current economic conditions to more sharply define our objectives and responses. We can only benefit from such review.

To re-emphasize my closing statement in my budget message, the budget recommendations which I have presented to the Legislature are only a beginning. No budget, guidelines, or special message can substitute for individual initiative and spirit. Let us look, then, at the figures and statements as a starting point for a proud people of the great state working to educate, serve and care for one another.