
Twenty Years After *A Nation at Risk*: Reconciling Grand Designs and Down-Home Rights in Education

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It may strike Governor Quie and his friends as slightly weird that I want to launch this discussion of Al's significance in the field of education by talking about a Catholic social doctrine known as *subsidiarity*. Al is many things, which means he could fairly be described as a small-c catholic—i.e. comprehensive and universal—but you may find it improbable for a Jew to open a discussion of an Evangelical Lutheran by relating him to a concept

that's best known among big-C Catholics.

In this case, I think it's kosher, so to speak. The doctrine of subsidiarity teaches that the entities nearest to a social challenge should do their best to meet it before resorting to larger or more distant groups for help. In other words, the smallest, nearest unit within society that can tackle a problem should shoulder responsibility for doing so. You don't hoist things higher up the

organizational ladder unless you absolutely must. Where this gets complicated, naturally, is where people disagree about who should make which decision, or what is good enough, or what happens when some of those at a lower level are coping well with the challenge but others at the same level are not. Does it then ascend the ladder? Where does it stop?

We face such dilemmas in education all the time. At least five levels of the American social order have a say about how children get educated. Parents and family. Teachers and principal. The local community, school board, and school system. The state. And that big old government in Washington, D.C. Indeed, that's the simple version, the five-layer cake. It grows more complicated in real-world situations where, for example, county supervisors second-guess the school board, where a church gets involved with a school's education policies, where there's a regional superintendent, etc. But we don't have all week, so let's stick to the five levels I mentioned. We can call them family, school, district, state, and Washington.

It's hard to apply the doctrine of subsidiarity to so messy a scene because reasonable people sincerely disagree about which level should be responsible for what in education. That's why we've ended up with so elaborate and, some say, dysfunctional, system of education governance in America. Instead of a layer cake, picture a marble cake five layers tall. Any slice you might cut from it would make you dizzy to look at.

I want to suggest, though, that one lens through which we can reasonably view Al Quie's approach to education these past eighty years is that of a person trying to apply the doctrine of subsidiarity to that multi-tiered marble cake. Putting it differently, Al has patiently and assiduously tried to rebake the cake with neater layers and less marbling by sorting out in a more rational and efficient way—one that involves the idea of subsidiarity even if Al might not express it in those terms—the various responsibilities for educating children and making decisions about schooling.

He has sought to assign to the family those education responsibilities that it can most appropriately and successfully fulfill. He has done the same at the school, district, state and even the federal levels. That he hasn't always gotten his way has much to do with the fact that everyone else also has their preferred ways of sorting out education responsibilities and sometimes those other ways command more votes. But Al has persevered.

Consider, for example, how he has staunchly advocated giving parents both the responsibility and the right to get their children the best possible education at schools of their own choosing, at the same time as—here's the other end of the subsidiarity spectrum—he has also had a profound influence on federal education policy. Consider all the things he has done to improve Minnesota's handling of education at the state level and yet, while governor of this state, he also served as a key member of the famous national commission

that—twenty years ago last month, when Al was a mere stripling of fifty-nine years—issued the influential report we know as *A Nation at Risk*.

Al Quie, you see, is one of those people who can hold several complicated ideas in his head at once, understand the tensions and complementarities among them, and improve upon all of them. He can not only walk and chew gum at the same time, he can also whistle, juggle, hug a kid, encourage a prisoner, and perhaps murmur a prayer, all the while walking and chewing gum. He's quite a guy. And of course that's why I'm here, and you're here, to honor him.

Returning to education and subsidiarity, let's identify the underlying tension here, between what economists would term the private interest in education and the public interest. That's what leads us into conflicts between private and public control of schooling, between local and national, between viewing education as a family affair and as a vast society-wide undertaking.

On the one hand, there is nothing more private, more intimate, more local, and less of anybody else's business than rearing one's own children, including, of course, their education. That's the proper work of parents and family, perhaps also of neighborhood, village, and church. Arguably, it's the most important private act one ever engages in, imparting to your child your own beliefs, values, and special knowledge and striving to shape that child into the kind of person you dream she will become. Moreover, children's tangible life prospects are

much enhanced by their acquisition of a solid education, which has enormous bearing on their income, their status, their employability, their peer group, their chances of finding a suitable mate, etc. Thus children have a huge private stake in this activity but, since they are too young and naïve to fully appreciate that or know what to do about it, good parents assume this responsibility as their own.

That was just one hand. I still have another. On the other hand, we know that every society from the most primitive tribe to the most sophisticated nation-state has established means for inducting its young into its essential knowledge, skills, traditions, mores, ground rules, values, and practices. It's in every society's interest to assure that all its members acquire those things before they reach the age of full participation. No society can long endure if those entering it are ignorant of the rules of the road, if they don't know to drive on the right, if they don't tell the truth, if they refuse to obey the laws, etc. Chaos would break out. Hence all societies devise ways of educating their young. We also know that societies grow more prosperous when their children are well educated. Their culture is more robust. Their civic life works better. Their crime and welfare and child-abuse rates are lower. And much more. Thus we encounter the public interest in providing everybody with an education at the same time as we acknowledge a clear private interest.

Reconciling this tension is much of what education policy and politics are about. That's certainly so in America,

where every state has written into its constitution an obligation to educate its citizens. In Minnesota, for example, section 1 of Article 13 says this: "The stability of a republican form of government (that's "republican" with a small "r") depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state."

A "thorough and efficient system of public schools" indeed. There's the public interest in education at work. Yet the United States Supreme Court also tells us that, while the state may establish such a system and may also require children to attend school, it may not require them to attend government-operated schools. That's because the court also recognized the private interest in education, and vouchsafed the parent's right to select the child's school. This happened in 1925 when the Supreme Court decided *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*. "The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this union repose," ruled the justices, "excludes any general power of the state to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only."

We begin to see why this topic is interesting and convoluted. The people of a state, via their constitution, task the legislature with establishing a thorough and efficient system of public schools. The legislature mandates that children between certain ages must

attend school. That's the public interest at work. But there can be many kinds of schools, not only those established by the state, and the parent has a right to decide which one his child will attend. Or, for that matter, may educate his children at home. Thus the private interest comes into play and it, too, is recognized by government.

Tension often follows. The familiar political disagreements over school choice, for example, rest atop serious differences of opinion about who can safely be trusted with which decisions. Last week at Stanford, I was reminded once again that many ed school professors firmly believe that parents cannot be counted upon to make responsible decisions about their children's schooling—that they will self-segregate or will choose schools because of convenience, peer group, or extracurricular offerings rather than academic prowess and community interests. At the same time, I meet people, many of them on the political right but some well over on the left, who insist that the state has no business prescribing academic standards or giving tests based on them.

Consider, too, the conflicts that can erupt between a family-centered version of education and the government-mandated kind. Suppose parents believe children should learn to turn the other cheek when criticized or attacked; yet the family dwells in a martial society that believes in severe punishments and swift retributions? Who decides which approach the children will learn? Or, if they learn about both, whose job is it—if anybody's—to tell them which is preferable? Or sup-

pose—here’s a more plausible example—that parents don’t think sex education is any of the school’s business but the state health curriculum requires that all schools teach it. Who decides what happens to Amy and Jamie over at the Franklin Middle School? Suppose parents want an Afro-centric education for their children but the legislature has mandated multiculturalism? Suppose they want multi-culturalism but the district has embraced Core Knowledge? Who decides? Public or private? Government or parent?

Believe it or not, I have oversimplified the picture by pretending that there are just two options, state and family. Now add local control and the notion that one’s city or town should elect a school board to make many of these decisions. Add the federal government and the notion that Uncle Sam should use his money and leverage to make errant states and districts do right by poor kids, disabled kids, kids who haven’t learned enough American history or kids enrolled in failing schools, even if the district or parents don’t see it that way at all. Who decides what?

Yes, it’s a puzzling picture. Subsidiarity is surely right in principle to hold that decisions should be made and actions taken at the lowest level that can handle them. Yet when it comes to education, Americans just plain don’t agree which level that should be. We didn’t leave it to Topeka’s board of education back in 1954 to decide how to handle the education of black children. We didn’t leave it to states in 1965 to do justice to disadvantaged kids or, in

1975, to kids with disabilities. Washington stepped in big time. Nor is Minnesota leaving it to Bemidji and Minnetonka to set minimal academic standards for their students—and if it did the federal government would slap it on the wrist for violating the requirements of No Child Left Behind. At the same time, however, we also have charter schools, created under state law, that say, in effect, nobody outside our school has the right to tell us what to teach or how to teach it. We have private schools that can employ whomever they like to teach Jamie and Amy and that are typically immune from state tests and accountability systems, even from the long arm of No Child Left Behind. And we have parents educating their children at home according to their own lights.

Now back to Al Quie, who has worked within every layer of this marble cake. He has, of course, been a parent and grandparent, so he knows that level well. He attended grade school in Nerstrand and high school in Northfield before going to St. Olaf College, so he’s been on the receiving end of public education and private higher education. For three years, he worked as clerk to the District 43 school board, so he’s got direct experience with local education governance. He was a state policy maker during three years in the Minnesota Senate and four as governor. And he spent two decades in Washington, serving, so far as I know, for that entire time on what was then called the House Education and Labor Committee. When I first met Al, he was its ranking Republican and a force to be

reckoned with in federal education policy circles. Those were the years when LBJ's "great society" education programs were enacted, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is the ancestor of today's No Child Left Behind legislation; the Head Start program; the Higher Education Act; and, a few years later, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as IDEA, in the shaping of which congressman Albert Harold Quie played a key role.

On top of all that, Secretary Terrell Bell appointed Governor Quie to the National Commission on Excellence in Education, whose celebrated 1983 report launched us on the path of standards-based education reform that remains the main path today at both the federal level and in the states.

As best I can make out, Al is one of the few people in America with significant experience at major levels of education policymaking. That gives him an unparalleled appreciation for the conflicts that arise in a multi-layered system, for the difficulty of applying the principle of subsidiarity—or any tidy formula—to this complex system; for the ways that one level of policy making can frustrate the designs of another; and also—looking on the bright side—for the ways that this Rube Goldberg apparatus enables a complex country to pursue a number of ends in a lot of different modes at the same time without surrendering all hope of unity or consistency.

Before finishing, I will try to apply that thought to what many judge to be today's big struggle between standards-

based and choice-based education reform, and will comment further on No Child Left Behind and the challenges it poses to subsidiarity. But allow me to circle there by way of ***A Nation at Risk***.

Much ink has been spilled over this famous report. One can still get into a big fight with some educators by saying that its authors were right to use strong language to explain what ailed American education, what needed to change, and why this was urgent. The short version is that our kids were not learning enough and this mediocrity posed a threat to our future as a nation.

One clear outcome of that report and the furor it engendered was a nationwide consciousness raising about the centrality of education results, especially as denominated in student achievement. A second clear outcome was the shift of focus from the education challenges that had preoccupied us in the 1960s and '70s (fairness, access, adequacy of services, equality of opportunity, etc.) to the big emphases of the past two decades: educational achievement, school effectiveness, and judging kids, schools and school systems not by what goes into them or how hard they're trying but by what they're actually accomplishing.

That much is clear and praiseworthy. Would that it were matched by bona fide gains on the achievement front. But it isn't. I'm a member, in fact I'm chairman, of a group based at Stanford's Hoover Institution called the Koret Task Force on K-12 education, which recently made a thorough appraisal of what has and hasn't happened by way of

education change in America in the twenty years since *A Nation at Risk*. (You can find our report on line at the Hoover website. The title is *Our Schools & Our Future: Are We Still at Risk?*)

We were underwhelmed by what we found. Yes, there was the needed consciousness raising that I mentioned, and the needed refocusing of attention from inputs to results. And yes, a lot of states and communities have earnestly tried to set matters right, as have federal policy makers. We've had a plethora of reforms of every sort and have spent vast sums on them. But we don't have a heck of a lot to show for it by way of improved outcomes. Test scores are flat. Graduation rates are down a little. Our performance on international assessments is mediocre—and gets worse the longer kids are in school.

Why so many earnest efforts yet so little achievement? Our task force concluded that the Excellence Commission's members—forgive me this part, Al—were a tad naïve about some realities of the American education system. They seemed to think that astute analysis and sound advice would lead to change, as if the system were eager to reform but lacked direction. That turned out not to be so. The system didn't want to change and still doesn't. It's full of adult interest groups with lobbyists—and those groups vowed to protect their interests long after the Excellence Commission detonated its report and went home. The system also turns out to be firmly in the grip of what E. D. Hirsch calls the education “thoughtworld,” essentially a bunch of

bad ideas promulgated and enforced by ed school faculties and professional peer pressure. Moreover, the commission underestimated the complacency of the great American middle class with respect to its own schools, the suburban propensity to assume that education problems mean somebody else's schools and children need to change.

In retrospect, therefore, *A Nation at Risk* had a huge impact on how we think about education but less impact on how we organize and run that system and the results coming out of it.

What to do going forward? What will the next twenty years bring? It could be good news, if we are smart about the two big reform ideas now stalking the land. Both come from outside the traditional education system. Neither trusts the system to do the right thing on its own. Neither settles for advice and exhortation. Both seek to put heavy pressure on the system from outside. One relies on state standards, tests, and accountability systems, backstopped by a set of federal rules as codified in the No Child Left Behind Act. Call it standards-based reform. Think of it as “trusting the state.” The other relies on competition, diversity, and choice. Call it market-driven reform. Think of it as “trusting the consumers,” both to move their kids into better schools and, by competing with the traditional system, to force it to change its ways.

Both reform ideas have considerable traction. Both take innumerable forms. Both also turn out to be hard to get right, however, and neither has

fully proven itself. Each has plenty of enemies and dissenters. (Just look at this state's struggles over academic standards and school choice.) A lot of people would have you believe that the two approaches are mutually exclusive, but I don't see it that way. In my view, they reinforce each other. Note, for example, that standards-based reform is far better at identifying troubled schools than at fixing them. What, then, to do with the kids stuck in troubled schools that we're not sure how to repair? How about sending them to other schools, better schools, schools of their choice? In that way, choice-based reform can buttress standards-based reform. It works the other way, too. We need a viable marketplace if choice-based reform is to function well and one of the requisites of such a marketplace is well-informed consumers who can make sound choices among the available education offerings. How better to compare schools than by looking at objective test scores reported by the state in relation to uniform academic standards? In this way, I believe, standards-based reform brings a necessary ingredient to market-driven reform.

I could give more examples. My point is that we need not choose sides in this struggle. We can embrace both strategies. We should want them both. And taken together, I believe they embody a viable version of subsidiarity. The state is probably the appropriate layer to set academic standards. But individual schools and parents are the right ones to make crucial decisions about where a child will attend school and what happens to her there.

Uncle Sam isn't helping much, however, as he takes command of standards-based reform, seeks to standardize that strategy across a big and diverse country, and sucks up much of the available education reform oxygen and money.

I have never been as ambivalent about a piece of public policy as about No Child Left Behind. I was enthusiastic about the president's original proposal as set forth just two days after he moved into the White House. It proposed three reform engines to haul the education train up a steep incline toward excellence. The first engine was standards, tests, and accountability, a blend of what Governor Bush and his predecessors did in Texas and what Bill Clinton did at the federal level with his Goals 2000 program. The second was serious flexibility for states—Bush called this proposal “charter states”—that conferred on interested states wide-ranging freedom to spend their federal education dollars as they saw fit in return for demonstrable gains in student performance. (You can see the parallel with charter schools.) The third was a decent amount of market-style reform, mostly centered on the kind of exit-voucher program that Jeb Bush has put into place in Florida, such that a kid can exit a chronically failing school and take the money to the public, charter, or private school of his choice.

Taken together, I thought, those three engines might actually succeed in hauling that long, sluggish train uphill. Congress, however, promptly derailed two of the engines—small, unworkable vestiges are what remain

of state flexibility and parent choice—and enacted only the standards and testing regimen. But that’s what almost every state was already trying to do for itself and there is reason to fear that a uniform, federally mandated version will cause a lot of needless friction and very possibly trigger some unintended and unwanted side effects.

By expressing such anxieties, I have managed to get myself thoroughly unloved by the White House, which seems to deal with its enemies more astutely than with friendly critics. But that’s another topic. The point I want to make here is that No Child Left Behind may not work as intended; it may lull people into a false confidence that Uncle Sam is solving the education system; it may foster cynicism about the possibility of reform itself; and, by misapplying the principle of subsidiarity, it may even impede other sorts of education reforms from gaining traction in states, communities, and individual schools.

I think I know what would have happened if federal policy makers had been wise enough to consult Al Quie before going down this particular path. In his gracious, straightforward, plain-spoken way, I think Al would have counseled them to examine several different paths. And not to vest too much of the decision-making along the banks of the Potomac. Instead, he would say, trust people more, people in communities, people in statehouses, people around their own kitchen tables.

And that, in the end, is what we would be wise to learn from Al Quie and his extraordinary record of com-

mitment, steadfastness, clear thinking, and hard work on behalf of our children, the improvement of their schools, and the proper ordering of the system in which they operate.

Thank you, governor, and happy birthday.

Following Dr. Finn’s speech, Governor Quie offered brief remarks and then both took audience questions.

Governor Quie’s Remarks

Checker, the reason I’ve liked you all these years is that you’re the one person in education who keeps telling the emperor he has no clothes. That has to be said all the way up the layers that we’re speaking about. As I listened to Checker, two words struck me. One was subsidiarity—and I know no one missed that one. But I was probably the only one who reacted to the other one. Checker said that those who wrote *A Nation at Risk* were naïve. I’d add two other words to that description. I think we were **arrogant** and we were **inarticulate**.

The concern that I have is in the layers you described. I think we’ve pretty well lost the creativity we developed in the expansion of government in the 1930s. I didn’t think too much of it in the 1930s because my dad was an ardent Republican and he thought one of the worst people who ever came across the horizon was Franklin Roosevelt. But the Department of Agriculture was on the cutting edge—the cooperative extension service, the county agent, were part of a federal program, but it was run by the county.

In fact, it was run by the people in the county. It had local support and local roots. But the Department of Agriculture lost that connection a long time ago and that's the tendency of governments higher than that very local level because you get to thinking that you know more than those who are at a more local unit of government. That is what I mean when I say **A Nation at Risk** commission members were arrogant. We thought we could get higher education turned around. We thought we could attract something better than the lower quarter of the class to go into teaching. We thought that people would catch this idea of standards.

But the most important thing we have lost is the impact of the family on education. That's the greater part. I'll tell you quickly a Margaret Mead story. I'm not a follower of Margaret Mead, but this one really impressed me. She talked about a young child in a bucket seat. The child couldn't sit up straight, he kept slumping over. The child's father—who the child had only seen once, right after his birth—walked into the room without saying a word and the child sat up straight. Margaret Mead said there's something between parents and a child that is beyond that which we can describe.

The one thing we did not know at the National Commission on Excellence in Education was how to talk about teaching morality and ethics in school. How do we build character? Finally we had no recommendations on how to make things happen.

We need to move away from elementary schools that look like facto-

ries. School should be located where parents congregate with other parents in the daytime so that the child goes to school with the parent. We conducted a poll that asked parents if they would volunteer to help in the school; 73 percent said they would. We talked to employers; 68 percent said they would permit parents to take a break during the working day to be with their kids. Just imagine what would happen if we committed ourselves to our kids and our society.

We have to change our whole society so the basic part of that layer cake—the family—is automatically involved in the education system, whether they know they should be or not. There are people all over this state and this country who know that the family should be involved: homeschoolers. Parents—some of whom did not even go to college—have done an outstanding job because of that love they have and commitment they make to their children. The children move into high school ready to go. Some children have been homeschooled all the way through high school, finished early, and demonstrated academic prowess greater than the other kids when they go to college. Now, if we could only recognize that in this country. We need individuals like Checker who are willing to say it doesn't work the old way.

Questions and Answers

John Cairns: I'd like to hear your thoughts about teacher quality, teacher certification, and charter schools.

Chester Finn: I don't know enough about Minnesota charter law to know how it currently works with respect to certification of teachers in charter schools. Do they have to be certified today?

John Cairns: They do, except for a small portion of the staff, which can be community experts. The dilemma is that highly qualified seems to be the same as certified and that's not a good deal for most charter schools, I think not for most public schools.

Chester Finn: The interplay between charter schools and the No Child Left Behind Act on about six different issues is going to prove extremely complicated and contentious. The No Child Left Behind Act fundamentally arises out of the belief that the layer cake will work, that the state should make the districts behave and the districts will make the schools behave. So what happens in situations where a charter school that was authorized by a college or by the Volunteers of America or by some other entity that is neither the state department of education nor the district? All kinds of friction are about to erupt on standards, on testing, and on teachers.

The U.S. Department of Education is trying heroically to steer between Scylla and Charybdis. The regulations they have drafted for the implementation of No Child Left Behind in charter schools attempt to make some special provisions for the highly qualified teacher bit. Essentially, they're trying to defer to state law in their

handling of charter schools. But, there's a fundamental conflict in the making between the notion of letting schools be free and regulating schools to death. I think there's going to be trouble.

Rich Wilson: Could both of you share your thoughts on classroom size in K-12 and resources required to achieve excellence?

Governor Quie: It's not a silver bullet. If teachers do a lousy job in a big class, they're going to do a lousy job in a small class. But overall, you can be more impersonal if you have a larger number of people to work with. When you have smaller classes, you have to commit yourself and you get into the heart of the individuals. It's just one of the things I tried to do here in Minnesota, but other things are extremely important, as well.

Chester Finn: As far as regular classrooms, the research, as I read it, is inconclusive. The efforts by states to impose sudden statewide class size reduction laws have led to the most amazing array of unintended consequences, including the sucking of experienced teachers out of inner city schools and into suburbs where jobs suddenly became available. The sudden employment of people with no training whatsoever because they needed warm bodies to fill these classrooms and a slower rate of increase in teacher salaries, causing people who might be better at the job to be even less likely to want to come into it. All sorts of very strange things have happened. In California, they suddenly needed 30,000

new teachers to comply with their class-size-reduction law. Let me just finally note that a lot of those countries that are beating the pants off us in international assessments have class sizes of forty and fifty and sixty kids.

Wayne Field: How do you get rid of the teachers unions so we have less featherbedding?

Chester Finn: There are two questions that always get asked—that one and the other is class size—no matter where in America I go. One of the reasons is because they're both genuine puzzles and they have no simple answer. The teacher unions are not going to be gotten rid of. The best that can be hoped is that on one issue after another, their monopoly will be dented or cracked, they will be circumnavigated, alternatives to what they do will come up, and they will lose some political battles. That doesn't mean they won't come back and fight again and try to win those battles all over again, but they're not going to be done away with. And, yes, they are, with the exception of oblivious, complacent, or disinterested parents, the biggest problem in American education. I refer, of course, to the grip of the teacher unions on both sides of the bargaining table.

Liz Mische: If we could return to your theme of subsidiarity for a minute, barring a real revolution on behalf of universal school choice, what can those of us in this room do in the short run, not in terms of systems, but on behalf of individual children who need to be in the best programs available right now?

Chester Finn: Give money to scholarship programs that will enable them to afford to buy their way into private schools. If you want to know what you can do right now, today, here—write a check to the scholarship program so that another poor kid can go to a school of choice. The second thing you can do is to help charter schools grow and flourish so that more such options become available to kids. Neither is a solution to the problems of the system, but both offer alternatives to kids who need a better deal right this minute.

Mitch Pearlstein: By the way, the privately funded scholarship program in Minnesota is KidsFirst Scholarship Fund of Minnesota, run by our friends, Ron and Laurie Eibensteiner.

John LaPlante: With so many suburban parents thinking that everything is just Lake Wobegon, how can the cause of enhanced school choice be advanced?

Chester Finn: There are two possibilities there. One is to play to people's conscience and sense of social justice, recognizing that other kids also need a break. The second is the principle of transparency. I believe that if people knew more about the actual performance of their kid and their kid's school, in relation to some external standard and not just what the superintendent wants you to think about in the press release, they would become less complacent about the schools their kids currently attend, even in the suburbs. You can understand why the system doesn't want that kind of

transparency to occur. But if we could cause it to occur, we might have something close to a revolution, even in suburban schools. Then people might start saying, aha, I, too, need an alternative to that school in which I thought my kid was doing well but which turns out to add no value to its students because they all come from upper middle-class homes, they're all fine kids, and they're not learning a damn thing.

Governor Quie: We need to take what we've learned in all walks of life—non-profit organizations, corporations, charter schools—and build on that knowledge. People who have been in the corporate world look at the bottom line—profit. It's more difficult to measure outcomes in non-profits, but it's possible, you find ways. I recall the story of the third grade teacher who was having such difficulty focusing on what she ought to do. She came to the conclusion that the outcome she was shooting for was to prepare the children for fourth grade. That was understandable. Outcomes have to be understandable and to become a part of the way we look at everything that we do. That's what we should be expecting of schools.

Janet Nilsen: My question is twofold. If you're going to ask for teacher competency, it's relatively easy to quantify that if you're teaching junior or senior high, because you have to have subject matter competency, or you would hope they would have subject matter competency. But since so many of these problems start at the ele-

mentary school level, what are the plans or the goals or the dreams to have elementary school teachers become content-competent versus methodology-competent?

Chester Finn: The American Board project in which I am involved is developing an elementary school teacher content test. It includes English and math and social studies and science. It is not crazy. You can, even with a primary teacher, see whether they know anything about teaching reading, which is the most important thing that happens in first grade. This is not crazy to expect—if you are any kind of a fan of E. D. Hirsch and the Core Knowledge program. Core Knowledge programs start in kindergarten, but how can the kids learn from such a program if the teacher doesn't know it? How about checking in advance to see whether the teacher knows those things? We've proven in the last few minutes that this topic could go on and on. So let me just say in closing. You all are embarked upon a new and interesting era in education reform in Minnesota, as best I can make out, starting with a long-overdue overhaul of your education standards. I hope that leads to some further pioneering of the terrific work this state has done on the school choice front. I hope that's the next chapter, after you get the standards and the tests right.

Governor Quie: Go visit a successful elementary school. In a successful elementary school, you'll find kids who are poor, but they are achieving. ■