

University of Minnesota
College of Education
December 6, 1957

TO: Subcommittee on Trainable Retarded of the Advisory Board on
Handicapped, Gifted and Exceptional Children

FROM: Maynard G. Reynolds

It appears to me that we need to focus our attention on two big questions facing us as members of this committee: (1) Education vs. Welfare - and relatively - Education vs. Care. (2) Should schools contract with private agencies and thus, in at least some remote way, open door to use of public education funds for private agencies?

I shall say nothing at the moment about No. 2. I do want to comment on No. 1. You will recall that Art Louis raised this question recently. Dale Harris raises a similar point.

I shall start with certain observations, opinions and assumptions and facts which I believe are relevant to this complex issue. Then I want to clarify my position.

1. There are more trainable children in number than can be taken care of in institutions.
2. These children will necessarily be in the community. Reinforcing this is a trend, irreversible at least in the short range, for many parents strongly prefer keeping children at home.
3. These children and their families need help of some kind, often urgently; I think we agree there is public responsibility somewhere to somehow chop away at as many of these needs as practicable.
4. Whatever "help" is offered can never be justified in terms of later "productivity" on the part of the trainable retarded themselves.
5. It may very well be true that "help" (of some kind) will "pay-off in remote and immeasurable ways, i.e. through improved health, etc. of parents and siblings.
6. Whatever "help" is offered will be very expensive. It is important to consider economic factors in planning but whatever plan is utilized will be expensive.
7. It is probably just as expensive to operate with no clear plan as with it. (Of course, I can only guess on this). So, what we think might be a good plan is not likely to cost anything more in public monies unless we worry about whose particular pocket the money reaches.
8. It is partly because these children fall precisely between the level of obvious "custodial" cases (requiring complete nursing, "care") and "educable level" (needing "education") that the welfare vs. education problems arise.
9. Neither welfare nor education officials are likely to be enthused about having a clearer responsibility for these children. We should expect

expressions of insecurity and some resistance from all quarters where added responsibility is suggested.

10. Neither welfare nor education can cite full patterns of precedence for their position in this field. This is just to restate the fact that never before have we fully faced this problem. Educators can say it is "car"; welfare workers can say it's "training" and argue against discontinuity of concepts of "education" and "training"; etc.
11. Following from the above, is the implication that whoever really takes responsibility for the trainable is taking on something "new, expensive and important."
12. It seems to me that in view of the above kind of things and our rather obvious uncertainty about many philosophies and practical problems we ought to think of building in some safeguards in our plans. For example:
 - (a) Legislation and policies ought to be permissive with respect formation of classes, etc..
 - (b) Plans for evaluations & further study are important.
 - (c) Plans should be flexible-and essentially be such as to call for the best thinking you can get at local levels.
 - (d) There should be no effort to press rapidly the development of any particular kind of program.
 - (e) Standards ought to be set for programs which guarantee reasonable intelligence in programming and which include obviously "bad practices" (to the extent these can be identified) in both private and public activities.
13. It seems to me one thing we ought to do is get all trainable parents in contact with the County Welfare Board staff. These are presumably the best aids to parents in planning. The plan ought to call for basic "planning" responsibility with the Welfare Boards. Contact should be binding, continuous, really "alive", etc..
14. I feel some group experience, at least for a brief period (perhaps on the average - 2 or 3 years - or, perhaps, up to average age 12 or 13) in a school-type situation should be offered. I think the trainable do make progress in simple things, at least for a year or two in the "classes". Apart from this I would argue that the "parent relief is important.
15. It can be said that "parent relief is a welfare objective and not essentially a school objective. But even if this is so, one of the means to this objective may call for a "school-type" (group) service. I'm arguing here that we look more at means than at ends - more at the doing" than the "purpose" in thinking about who does the various parts of the job.
16. The plan as outlined in the report as of now assigns clearest responsibility for planning to Welfare Boards. Schools do a "part" only. If the schools do anything, it has been recommended by the best group we can get together in the community-thru the "advisory councils" made up of health, welfare and education officials. When the

kids are in school, the school runs the program-but the Welfare Board continues to act in parent consultation and takes all responsibility when child is dropped from school.

17. Even if we believe many more of the trainable should be institutionalized, the plan outlined may be shortest, fairest, and most humane route to that goal-in view of the apparent attitudes of many parents about "trial" in school, need for further observation, etc. are important.
18. It can be argued, of course, that Welfare Boards should set up the "group" activities outside the school framework. I think this is unrealistic. They would simply be better run by school people, although in setting up the plan (see report) we've tried to adjust standards for personnel so as to not use an excessive number of highly trained people, etc. The precedent of "excess cost" aids to schools should be of help. Also to be considered, if other things are anywhere near equal, is that parents seem to prefer bringing their children to "schools". It is humane to be sensitive to this wish-if, at the same time, we've done all possible to deal honestly and fully with parents about expectancies, objectives, long-range outlook, etc.
19. It can be argued that it is unwise to give schools any added responsibility for the area-since they have so many other problems-and, since their resources are likely to be limited, they should better put their efforts into improvement of programs for normal and gifted children. I buy this except that if "group experience" is to be part of program for trainable-nobody else can do it. And, if schools don't do the job, it will be expensive anyway and require much time by educational leaders justifying their "reluctance" to do the job.

All of the above is to say that I'm strongly inclined to try to justify the report in its present form. I appreciate that many of the issues are close and they are tough and I think we need to thresh them out fully. Of course, members of the committee and of the Advisory Board always have the right to submit "minority" reports. It may be that we will have done very little that is useful unless we can reach unanimous agreement. It would be unfortunate if our level of agreement is very restricted. I believe we should work actively to clarify issues and try to bring out a unanimously supported report, but I believe we should forget about the deadline of January 15, 1958. We probably can't do it by then.

Please let me make it clear that I personally appreciate very much the raising of issues and objections to the report. It is essential that these issues be raised now and be fully explored. Our job becomes complex as these matters are aired, but also more interesting the outcomes more promising.

Sincerely,

Maynard C. Reynolds, Chairman