THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

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I am honored to have an opportunity to speak to you this morning. I am also a bit humbled by this invitation. Much of what I know about education, social justice, and inclusion has been taught to me by the members of this organization --- through your writing, your teaching, your advocacy, and through your modeling. I was asked to speak to you about the possible future of education. I concluded, however, that I had to speak instead about the possible futures of education. The future is not certain and it is the actions that we take that will determine the future in which our children and we will live. I speak of the children that are members of our families as well as the children for whom we have the responsibility to educate. As Carl Sandburg said, "There is only one child in the world and that child's name is All children."

I agree with the noted anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who said, "We are now at a point where we must educate our children in what no one knew yesterday and prepare our schools for what no one knows yet." In thinking about the future, I had to think about the present and I had to reflect on the past because as educational historian Frank Rippa, tells us, "There is a considerable advantage in trying to understand the current situation through a

historical perspective." Blakenship and Lilly also remind us that, " Through practically all of the history of civilization, education has been for the elite and educational practices have reflected an elitist orientation." But, yet there have always been visionaries, including many of the members of this organization, whose thinking was ahead of their time and place in history.

Nearly five hundred years ago, Comenius, the founder of Charles University, the second oldest university in Europe, had a vision about education. Comenius stated, "Education should be available, not just to one man or a few or even to many men, but to all people together as well as to each separately, young and old, rich and poor, irrespective of birth, men and women, in short, everyone whose fate it is to have been born a human being."

In preparing for this keynote, I thought about the challenges that face teachers as they enter the first century of the new millennium. I also thought about the challenges that faced teachers 100 years ago as they entered the 20th century. Tomorrow's teachers face the same challenges that a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse faced at the turn of the last century. The challenge remains the same -- how to reach out to students who span the spectrum of learning readiness, personal interest, culturally shaped ways of seeing and speaking and who have had various experiences in the world. Although as we enter this century we have greater diversity within our schools in terms of culture, language, and perception of ability, gifts, and talents than we did at the start of the last century, the basic challenge does remains the same. Gerlach reminds educators, "Our task is to provide an education for the kinds of kids we have, not the kinds of kids we used to have, want to have, or the kids that exist in our dreams."

Please think about the following questions. "What is the dream that we have for our students? What are the desired goals or outcomes of education?

What are the skills, competencies, talents, attributes, and dispositions that our students are going to need to lead quality lives in the future?" I'd like you to reflect on these questions for a moment and then to turn to someone who is sitting near you and share the skills, competencies, talents, and attributes that you identified.

For over a decade, my colleague and wife, Jacque Thousand, and I have been asking hundreds of thousands of people to identify the goals or outcomes of education that are important to them. We have been impressed with the similarity of responses from respondents in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Asia, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, and Micronesia. Wherever we ask the question, people identify the same kinds of desired goals or outcomes. Their responses can be represented by the "Circle of Courage" visual borrowed from the Native American culture, the Lakota in particular. The Lakota wanted to create courageous youth by instilling within them four characteristics --belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.

I believe everything that <u>you</u> identified, as goals of education will fall into one of those four categories. When you identify outcomes such as the ability to get along with others, to form relationships, feel good about yourself, and be part of a community, you are speaking of <u>belonging.</u> When you identify outcomes such as reaching one's potential, developing mastery and competence, being a well-rounded individual, you are speaking of <u>mastery</u>. When you identify outcomes such as the ability to be a lifelong learner, to be flexible, to be a risk taker, and to have a choice in where you live, work, recreate, and with whom you associate, you speak of <u>independence.</u> When you identify outcomes such as being a caring member of society, socially responsible, giving something back to one's community, valuing of diversity, empathy and

caring, you are speaking of <u>generosity</u>. The Lakota purposely represent all four of these concepts in a circle, a medicine wheel, to remind us that if one or more of these components are missing the circle will collapse and we will not achieve the future that we want for our children.

We must assure that all of these outcomes are equally emphasized and valued within our educational system. Society, due to political convenience and economic consideration, oftentimes emphasizes mastery and independence at the cost and expense of belonging and generosity. There is, however, a danger to any society that over-emphasizes academics at the cost or expense of social and life skills. That danger is clearly articulated in a letter written to teachers by Haim Ginott: "Dear teacher, I am the survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes have seen what no man should witness -- gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So I am suspicious of education. My request is to help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane."

If the Circle of Courage goals are indeed the desired goals of education, then every single thing we do in education should be evaluated in terms of whether or not it leads to the desired outcomes of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The curriculum, instruction, assessment, discipline, staffing patterns, and the places where we choose to educate our children should be assessed in terms of their ability to facilitate Circle of Courage outcomes.

<u>Belonging</u> is an essential component of every theory of motivation of which I am aware. Norman Kunc has encouraged many of us to revisit

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow taught us that once you belong, you develop a positive self-esteem. Then you begin to achieve, and then, and only then, can you become a self-actualized human being. Norman reminds us that historical exclusionary responses to diversity oftentimes have denied children, youth, and adults of belonging because we have inverted Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Every time you say to a person, "You need to go some place else because you look different, walk different, talk different, act different, or learn different," you are saying to them, "You cannot belong until you achieve," thus inverting Maslow's Hierarchy. This inversion of Maslow's Hierarchy creates a powerful Catch 22 because we cannot achieve until we belong.

We also have ample evidence that many special and general education practices have robbed students of mastery. Let us reflect for a moment on the basic premise of special education that resulted in the development of a continuum of placements. The premise was "students with [disabilities] were going to benefit from a unique body of knowledge, from smaller classes staffed by specially trained teachers who used specialized materials." That was what we believed when the federal legislation guaranteeing students with disabilities the right to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment was enacted in 1975. But in a review of the efficacy studies, conducted from the mid to late 80's, Lipsky and Gartner concluded, "There is no compelling body of evidence demonstrating that segregated special education programs have significant benefit for students." In the mid 90's, Baker, Wang, and Walberg conducted three meta-analyses, across every disability category, to compare the achievement of children with disabilities educated with typical children to the achievement of students with disabilities who were educated in resource rooms, special classes, and special schools. The research revealed that "special needs students educated in general education environments did

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better both academically and socially than comparable students in noninclusive settings."

Frequently, people identify productivity, employment, as an indicator of independence. A national longitudinal study revealed that more than 40% of the graduates of special education are unemployed one year after high school. In contrast, studies have shown that students who are included have a higher rate of post-secondary employment than those who are educated in more restrictive environments do.

When I started to think about productivity from a futuristic perspective, it became clear to me that being a productive member of society would extend beyond one's work. What kind of work is going to exist in the future? Consider that 80% of the employees of McDonalds will be replaced by robotics. The labor-intensive work of the garment industry has moved to developing nations because of cheaper labor; and, machines are predicted to replace those workers as well. We live in a world of over six billion people, many of whom will have less or no work. Maybe in the future, we will have the foresight to view generosity, community service, giving something back to one's community, and caring for children and the elderly as strong indicators of productivity.

I must admit that I am troubled when I visit some so-called "inclusive schools". I am troubled by the lack of opportunity for many children who do not have English as a primary language, children who are identified as disabled, and children who are considered at-risk to give back, to be generous contributing members of their community. As Dr. King reminds us, "Anybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don't need a college degree to serve. You only need a heart filled with grace and a soul generated by love." I would add that you also need the opportunity to be generous. We must recognize the gifts in

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every child, assist them in developing their competence, and give them opportunities to be generous.

Five hundred years ago, Comenius said, "In spite of all of our efforts, they remain basically the same." He was speaking of the school reform efforts of his day. Seymour Sarason, speaking of the school reform efforts of our day noted that, "Systems change is not for the conceptually or interpersonally fainthearted." If we want to create positive futures for our children, we must demonstrate the conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills necessary to confront the five reasons why schools have been so intractable.

The first reason for the intractability of schools is inadequate teacher preparation. The solution to inadequate teacher preparation lies within a triangle of responsibility comprised of preservice, inservice, and personal dimensions. We have to examine our pre-service education in light of the fact that a large number of teachers who will soon be entering our profession and our nation's classrooms are increasingly more diverse. Are we adequately preparing new teachers to successfully inherit diverse classrooms and to meaningfully relate to and motivate all of their students?

We also have to deal with in-service issues. I don't wish to be depressing, but the half-life of an educator's work life is now estimated to be five years. We know in the year 2000 only half of what we will need to know in 2005 to do our jobs. This requires intensive on-going quality staff development, for personnel working in our nation's schools to keep pace with change. Finally, those of us working in education must assume personal responsibility for becoming what we want our students to be – life-long learners. Our working conditions in education have changed. If we are going to call ourselves professionals, than we must continually acquire the skills to do the jobs we are paid to do.

The second reason for the intractability of schools is inappropriate organizational structures, policies, practices and procedures. Organizational structures must be examined to determine whether or not they facilitate or erect barriers to the attainment of the Circle of Courage outcomes. Think about the basic overall structure of schooling today compared to when you went to school. How much have schools changed? In how many places do the same organizational characteristics that existed when we were students still exist?

Many of our schools still are preparing our students to go out and inherit an agrarian society or attain jobs on an assembly line rather than preparing them to live in a globally complex, interdependent world. Many of our schools assess success based solely upon oral and written efficiency and literacy in English, ignoring our history as a multilingual nation and a global economy. All the way back to 1664, when New Amsterdam, Manhattan Island passed from the Dutch to the English, 18 different languages were spoken.

A decade ago Benjamin reminded us, "The future will arrive ahead of schedule." What's going to help us get to the future we desire? The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the first time requires that children with disabilities must have access to the general curriculum. We must utilize the principle of universal design to guarantee universal access to three dimensions of curriculum -- content, process, and product. All students must have access to the content and we must assure that that content emphasizes belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. There must be universal access to the processes of learning - helping students make sense out of what it is that they are learning. And, there must be universal access to the products of education -- how students demonstrate what they have learned and how we meaningfully and authentically assess their progress.

There are many promising practices from general education, special education, and multicultural and bilingual education that can facilitate universal access to the general curriculum. We must hold ourselves accountable for quality implementation of these practices so that as Ian Pumpian says, "we have good examples of good practices rather than bad examples of a good practice"

A third reason often cited for the intractability of schools is inadequate attention to the <u>culture</u> of schooling. Michael Fullan, a guru of systems change, reminds us that true school reform is not about this innovation or that innovation but rather a culture change. Changing the culture of schools is essential because as David Rothsteder **(spelling?)** notes, the prevalent culture of schooling is "consumed with who doesn't belong, rather than making sure everyone does belong." Further, as Grant Wiggins reminds us, "We will not successfully restructure schools to be effective until we stop seeing diversity in our students as a problem."

To create the culture we desire, we need to operate out of <u>assumptions and beliefs</u> that will facilitate the attainment of the Circle of Courage outcomes. What kinds of assumptions and beliefs will lead us to the attainment of the Circle of Courage outcomes? In accordance with Anne Donnellan's "Criteria of the Least Dangerous Assumption" we must assure that every child is viewed as competent and our foremost responsibilities are to cause no harm to that child and instead, help that child fulfill his or her need to belong. We must assume all behaviors are an attempt to communicate and become more skilled at understanding the communicative intent of behavior and in the facilitation of communication. We must believe in families and work with and for them rather than blaming them for their troubles. Finally, we must believe

creativity and collaborative teaming are essential to the formulation of personalized responses to the needs of children. According to Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, "Our duty is to proceed as if limits to our ability do not exist [because] we are collaborators in creation"

. What kind of a culture would exist in schools if we had a Student Bill of Rights guaranteeing that every student would receive a) effective instruction, b) personalized accommodations, and c) a motivating school climate? Many people are concerned with student rule violating behavior. What percentage of rule violating behavior would disappear if these student rights were guaranteed?

There is a strong connection between culture and curriculum. We must examine our curriculum to be sure that the concept and practice of "care" (a desired cultural foundation) is visible. Nel Noddings instructs us that, "all children must learn to care for other human beings and all must find an ultimate concern in some center of care; care for self, intimate others, associates, acquaintances, distant others, for animals, for plants, the physical environment, objects, instruments, for ideas."

Some people may view words such as care and belonging as "soft" words, incompatible with "hard" words such as curriculum. I'd ask those critics to review the quote I just read from Nel Noddings and challenge them to identify an area of curriculum that isn't represented through care. We can simultaneously teach children to care while they learn other important curricular principles, concepts, and facts. Think how much more meaningful and relevant our student's learning would be if they understood the connection between what they were learning and the concept of care.

We also must examine our curriculum in terms of social justice and its function as a catalyst for positive change. Freire reminds us that "Any

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curriculum that ignores racism, sexism, the exploitation of the workers and other forms of oppression inhibits the expansion of consciousness, blocks our creativity, decreases social action for change and supports the status quo of oppression."   The creation and maintenance of school cultures which welcome, value, and support the diverse academic and social learning of all students in shared environments and experiences for the purpose of attaining the goals of education necessitates changing the status quo.

Our effort to change the culture of schooling will be enhanced, if we in the inclusive school movement joined forces with other progressive movements such as Critical Pedagogy and Democratic Schooling. We have much to learn from re-visiting the teaching of pioneers in progressive school and social movements, such as Maria Montessori, Paolo Freire, and John Dewey. For example, Apple and Bean describe the implications of Dewey's notions of democratic schooling by noting that "Those involved in democratic schooling see themselves as participants in a community of learning. By their very nature these communities are diverse and that diversity is prized, not viewed as a problem.   Such communities include people who reflect differences in age, culture, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class, aspiration, and abilities. These differences enrich the community and the range of views it might consider.   Separating people of any age on the basis of these differences or using labels to stereotype them simply creates divisions and status systems that detract from the democratic nature of the community and the dignity of the individual against whom such practices work so harshly. While the community prizes diversity it also has a sense of shared purpose. The common good is an essential feature of democracy and for this reason the community of learners in a democratic school is marked by an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration rather than competition."

I'd like to make one final point about culture. If we are serious about creating a culture that will lead our children and youth to the attainment of the Circle of Courage outcomes, we also must commit to creating a school culture that will lead the <u>adults</u> to these outcomes as well. We need to answer some important questions. In what ways can we create a greater sense of belonging among the people who work and learn in our schools? In what ways can we help the adult as well as the student members of the school community to achieve greater mastery and confidence? In what ways can we encourage the student and adult members of the school community to be independent, critical thinkers, problem solvers, risk takers and generous, contributing, collaborating members of their school community?

The fourth reason for the intractability of schools is that we have been busy perfecting a model that has allowed us to discard all evidence that what we're doing isn't working. In essence we say to students, "You do not learn the way that I teach, so go away." Let's take a moment to examine the current situation:

1. . 2% of our nation's students are being home schooled

2. 25% of our nation's children are enrolled in some form of alternative school (e.g. charter schools, magnet schools)

3. 50% of our nation's children are not full-time placed in general education classrooms. They are part- to full-time placed in special, bilingual, multicultural, gifted, vocational, and at-risk educational programs

We need to ask ourselves, 'Where is the disability. Is it in the student or is it in the system that we have created and maintained?" Disability is a social construct that changes from one to the next culture and across time. World Health Organization data reveals that the proportion of children within a society identified as disabled increases in proportion to that society's level of

"development." Wouldn't you think that a more developed society would be better equipped to embrace diversity and view people as "differently abled" versus as disabled?

We must be cognizant of the fact that reform initiatives create disability. For example, when the Soviets launched the Sputnik satellite, the United States responded with major school reform initiatives, emphasizing math and science education. One of the consequences of this action was a large increase in the number of students identified as having a learning disability. In the mid-80's, in response to economic competition from Japan, reports such as A Nation at Risk sparked major reform initiatives in our nation's schools. The result this time was not only an increase in the number of people labeled disabled but also an increase in the number of categories or types of disability.

Today, the focus of school reform is on standards. Is there anyone sitting in this audience who doubts that this too will lead to an increase in the number of students perceived as disabled? We can be big on standards, have high expectations for our students, but we must be short on standardization. One of the defining characteristics of a bureaucracy is a lack of personalization. But the Student Bill of Rights we spoke of earlier calls for personalized accommodations as does the process for developing individualized educational programs (IEPs) to facilitate the learning of students identified as eligible for special education.

To create the future we want for our children necessitates that we guard against political sloganeering and simple solutions to complex problems. To assume that the solution to the problems facing education in this country will be remedied by simply creating higher standards is like saying the solution to world hunger will be remedied by increasing nutritional standards alone. Slogans such as, "all students will come to school prepared to learn" are naive

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and miss the point. Students already do come to school prepared to learn; Unfortunately, educators oftentimes are ill prepared to teach, motivate, and relate to their students.

The fifth and final reason why schools have been so intractable is that many of us who would like to lead others into change are naïve and/or cowardly. We are naïve because we do not understand the change process. We are naïve because we want immediate change despite the fact that true system change requires a minimum of 5 to 7 years. We are cowardly because many of us are unwilling or unprepared to confront the cognitive dissonance, emotional turmoil, and resistance that accompany complex change initiatives.

Della Ambrose developed, and Tim Knoster modified, a model to help us understand and implement complex change. If we want a complex change, such as the creation of schools that are both caring and effective, to occur, we need to combine <u>vision</u> with <u>skills</u>, <u>incentives</u>, <u>resources</u> and an <u>action plan</u>. Put all of these elements together and you will achieve change. If one or more of these components are missing, the result will be confusion, anxiety, resistance, frustration, or the expenditure of a lot of energy without change.

Phil Schlechty reminds us that, " One of the greatest barriers to school reform has been the lack of a clear and compelling vision." We at TASH, have a vision. It is clear. It is compelling. It is for <u>all</u> children. And, the Circle of Courage represents it. If we want to actualize our vision, we must redouble our efforts to assure that whether a child is included is no longer dependent upon geography - where that child and that child's family happen to live.

To realize our vision for our children requires that we stop being so egocentric, focusing only on what happens in the United States. We need a broader, international view. We have much to learn from other people, cultures, and nations. As I travel to and from different countries working on social justice

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and education issues, it never ceases to amaze me just how many people in other nations reference international law, policy, and covenants. I never hear that kind of discussion in the United States.

We should be referencing and celebrating documents such as the Salamanca Statement, which emerged from the 1994 United Nation's sponsored World Conference on Special Education. Ninety-two nations signed the Salamanca Statement, which in part reads, "Education for children with special educational needs should be provided within the regular education system, which has the best potential to combat discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, and build an inclusive society." TASH'S vision is shared. There is strength in numbers. We must build regional, national, and international alliances for change.

Klopf observed that, "…whatever is, is possible." Let us pause and celebrate what has been made possible thus far. We have journeyed a long distance from the day Doug Biklen challenged us by saying, "We have islands of hope. We need to create mainlands of opportunity."

And more work remains to be done. We need to gather strength and energy from that which has already been accomplished. As Carlos Castenada reminds us, "The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same."

I want to continue the celebration of the results of past efforts before we return to a discussion of the present and the future. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us. Look at these institutional pictures from Burt Blatt's, Christmas in Purgatory.

These pictures represent the vision of what people at one time thought was possible and best. That vision changed as a result of the vision, skills, incentives, resource allocation, and actions of the people who preceded us as

well as many of the people sitting here today. I would be remiss if I did not point out that, every time our vision of what was possible expanded, it was the parents and self-advocates who had that broader, greater vision long before the professionals. To go from scenes such as those depicted in <u>Christmas in Purgatory</u> to inclusive scenes like these from across the world in 25 to 30 years is indeed cause for celebration.

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Let us return to a discussion of the future of education and the struggle we will experience in the present to reach that desired future. I believe that the words of a student, Jody, written to her teacher may help to motivate us to create better futures for all students.

Teacher, parent, policy maker, community member, advocate, fellow student, can we start today to make a better future for our children?

Dr. King's words also cab give us inspiration for the struggle ahead:

"Cowardice asks the question, "Is it safe?" Expedience asks the question, "Is it political?" Vanity asks the question, "Is it popular?" But conscience asks the question, "Is it right?

And, there comes a time when one must take the position that it's neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but it must be made because conscience says that it is right!

The possible future of education is either a terrible or a wonderful thing. The future is dependent upon the actions that we take in the present. These actions are seeds, which bear many vines. The vines may lead to inclusion or exclusion. They can lead to belonging or alienation. They can lead to mastery or a continued focus upon deficits and a future filled with categories of disability and a remediation response to diversity. The vines can lead to independence

or dependence. They can lead to a world where everyone's gifts are recognized and celebrated and where all are generous or it can lead to false charity, benevolence, materialism, and selfishness.

Today as I stand here, I am optimistic about where those vines will lead and the future of education. We will continue to make progress. As Cesar Chavez noted, "Once social change begins it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read, humiliate the person who feels pride, and you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore."

Eleanor Roosevelt told us, "The future belongs to those who have a dream." Marsha Forest reminds us that "We create our tomorrows by what we dream today." It is an honor to stand before a room filled with people who have a dream and who will continue to sow their seeds well to make the future the best one the world can offer.

Thank you very much.

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