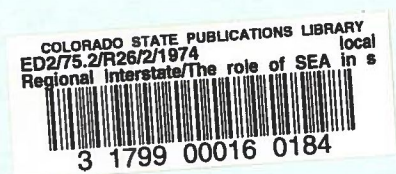


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THE ROLE OF THE SEA IN SERVING URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS



**Calvin M. Frazier, Commissioner
Colorado Department of Education
Denver, 1974**

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THE ROLE OF THE SEA IN SERVING URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

There is probably as much "dynamic tension" between urban school districts and their state education agencies as between any other two types of educational organizations. On the one hand, state education agencies have responsibility for administering statewide policies geared to the "average" school district. On the other hand, large urban districts are coping with a wide diversity of problems that are in many ways not like those of the majority of school districts in a state.

Both organizations have one overarching goal--"better" formal schooling. Yet, there are numerous occasions where the specific objectives and activities of urban LEA's are in conflict with SEA's and vice versa.

The four presentations included in this report are by people who work in urban LEA's and SEA's. They are especially sensitive to problems which exist between the two types of organizations and particularly cogent in their recommendations for improving relations between them.

Paul Briggs, "Administering a Large City School District," traces the evolution of the urban school district and points out the range of problems that are more intense in urban settings.

George Garver, "Developing SEA Relationships with Large City School Districts--LEA Viewpoint," picks up the urban scenario created by Briggs and deals explicitly with the concomitant problems that LEA's and SEA's face together. According to Garver, many SEA-SEA relations problems are inadvertent and clearly avoidable with conscious efforts on both sides.

Jim Morgan, "Developing SEA Relationships with Large School Districts--SEA Viewpoint," is an ideal counterpoint to Garver. He portrays the kinds of things that an SEA can do to assist urban districts despite constraints imposed by other state and federal agencies.

Martin Essex, "How State Education Agencies Can Aid Large Districts," explains some of the changes the Ohio SEA has made to improve the working relationship with urban LEA's. He concludes with a call for educational statesmanship.

Taken as a group, the presentations represent keen awareness of the problems, experience in dealing with the problems, and cautious optimism about the ability of SEA's to work closely and positively with urban LEA's on the problems of urban education. There is clearly much more work to do to improve relationships between the two types of education agencies. However, much has been done, and the results indicate that continued effort is clearly "worth it."

ADMINISTERING A LARGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Paul Briggs
Superintendent of Schools
Cleveland, Ohio

The American public school is being asked to do some things today that it was never designed originally to do. That is particularly true of our high schools. There are two functions that the American public high school was not designed to perform that we are insisting that it perform today, and rightly so. One is the matter of educating all of the youth of our nation. The American public high school was not designed with that in mind. No one in his wildest imagination thought that the American public high school was supposed to serve all children. It was like an exclusive, small prep school organization only for those who were heading for college. All you have to do is look at the statistics. In the year 1900 in this country about 4 percent of the high school age students finished high school. In other words, there was a 96 percent dropout rate in America in 1900. And it wasn't until the depression years of the '30's that we started graduating one-third of our high school age youths. And it wasn't until World War II that 50 percent of high school age youths finished high school. It hasn't been until recently that we have gotten the figure up around 80 percent. The dropout rate in public schools is the lowest today that it has ever been. No one has discovered it and people are not writing about it. It is too high, but the American public high school today is being asked to do a task that it was not designed for. That's why we have to have some changes and perhaps the maximum changes that are having to be made are coming in our urban centers because there is where we are facing our greatest crisis.

This is why those organizations that were early established to accredit and to look at high schools are obsolete and archaic. The accrediting associations were designed primarily for colleges and universities, and I'm not sure that if we follow to the letter the criteria of our accrediting associations for our secondary schools that we could today say that we had quality education. I think the time has come to shake loose from the shackles of the accrediting associations. We have a much broader objective today--the use of the school as a break to get disadvantaged youth out of trouble and into the mainstream. This includes using the school as a means of getting individuals employable and employed. Any high school that does not devote a large portion of its time to these kinds of objectives is merely attempting to be an exclusive prep school. That high school is in trouble, or should be.

The second thing that we are being asked to do today is to deal with the social and economic problems of our people. The classroom is being asked to do more than deal with basic education. The classroom has become the frontier in the social problems that we are trying to deal with. I find it very difficult to go to the literature and find anything that is

really helpful in designing urban education programs that are effective. It's been a sad situation for most urban school districts and most administrators in those positions. There was a time when we had very few who understood our problems or understood the position that we were in. I find that that is rapidly changing. I would generalize by saying that if you want to take a real look-see at what may be ahead for other school systems--non-urban school systems--take a look at the problems of urban America today. We are not in control of the social problems of this country. We are not in control of the movements that are demanding reform and change and new programs in public education.

The American public school classroom is now being asked to deal with social and economic problems that are new to us. Those of us who happen to find ourselves at that vulnerable and strategic position also have no background or experience to call on. Now, what are some of the unique problems of an urban school system that we have to deal with? I think perhaps these common problems can be identified across this nation in most of the urban centers. One is the concentration of poverty.

Poverty primarily is concentrated now in the hearts of our cities. The Cleveland Public Schools in Ohio have 7 percent of the total enrollment of the state. We also have one-third of all the welfare children in the state in that school system. In a five-year period, the number of welfare children has increased from 30,000 to 60,000. If you visited our school system with me this morning you would find six schools where 97 percent come from welfare homes. Ninety-seven percent from welfare homes! So those children have never seen a member of their family come home from his employment bringing a check. The only money they have seen is a government check. The kind of poverty that exists in the inner cities of most of our great metropolitan areas is hard to comprehend. The terror that is in the hearts of the people that have been isolated in these areas is a terror that should not be in the heart of any individual living in America.

The public school had better deal with those problems. What do you do? Indications of the problem include a high incidence of tardiness and absenteeism. The old remedy if you had absenteeism was to hire truant officers. But our truant officers haven't been too effective and they never were. A truant officer never goes out and really apprehends a good live kid. They get away from truant officers. They never bring in a good one. The ones they do bring in are not in the mood for education. We could spend our money on truant officers if we had truancy.

If, however, you visit our school system this morning in Cleveland you'd find something different. We put our money in food. Probably 35,000 children had a breakfast this morning before school. Food is essential to life. Why don't we use it in public education? We took the school with the highest incidence of poverty. In one month that school which also had the highest truancy of any of our elementary schools moved ahead of 21 schools in attendance rates. We took a little sampling of the teachers' feelings about their kids at the end of one month of breakfasts, and we found out that those teachers in that school all of a

sudden felt quite differently about their youngsters. Why? Because the kids felt differently about their school and about their teachers. I got the biggest surprise in my life, because ours was a strongly unionized town, when the teachers of that school said, "We want to have breakfast with the children ourselves. You don't have to pay somebody else to come in and have breakfast with the children. We want to eat breakfast with them." There was a new kind of relationship started between the teacher and the student. My guess would be that we did more to improve reading by feeding than we would have by doubling the amount of time we would have spent on reading in that school. The school house, the classroom, and the teacher became an agent to deliver something that is essential to life.

What are some of the other problems that a school system must address itself to in urban society today? I think one is skill development. Poor people cannot leave the city. The housing patterns of the federal government are such that housing for the poor nationally is pretty much concentrated in the cities and not in the suburbs. And you cannot leave unless you can find housing. So who leaves? The affluent leave. Who has to stay? The poor. Therefore, the cities are finding an ever increasing concentration of the poor. Unemployment is a problem of our cities. Unemployability is a problem. If this is the case, who has a greater responsibility than the people in the school district to see to it that this generation of youngsters are prepared with job skills and technical skills that lead to employment. But we can't stop at the level of preparing individuals for jobs. A job training program has to be identified with every school, not just a few schools. Of our 7,000 graduates last fall, 45 percent of them were prepared for employment in Cleveland, and over a five-year period we have placed 96 percent of our graduates who want to work. This includes the ones who weren't quite prepared but wanted to work. When we went back and took a look at what happened two years after, we found that 90 percent of them are still working and one-half of them have had a promotion in a two-year period.

However, we have to set up our own machinery for them; and we have to establish the kinds of relationships of business and industry so that minority people will be given job opportunities. If the job market is closed to minorities, we have no opportunity to get out of the problem that we have. The schoolhouse had better address itself to the matter of preparing youth for jobs and seeing that they get placed on jobs. This is our responsibility.

Another great problem that has faced this nation and particularly our cities is a matter of racial isolation. This is one that we have struggled with. We've bungled to a great extent because we have not known what to do. We've had a lot of people who have brought the solutions to us. I usually find, however, that those who bring solutions to my desk are individuals who do not have the problem. It's surprising the beautiful solutions I get from suburbia about how we are to run the inner city schools.

It is wrong as wrong can be when in this nation we design a society that has isolated any group--mandatory isolation. We are seeing some interesting court cases, but I'm not sure that the courts see their way out of this one yet. I read a decision recently where the federal district court took a look at a certain school district in this country and said, "Yes, we find the racial isolation of minority students. We find severe racial isolation. We find those schools serving that city--certain schools in that city--almost totally segregated; but we find no action on the part of the Board of Education that caused the segregation or the isolation. We do find that the housing pattern maintained by the city, the state, and the federal government to have been to blame for this isolation. We find the School Board not guilty of causing this kind of isolation. However, we do find that School Board guilty in another respect. In the area of the doable. It has not done the things that it could have done, particularly in the area of staffing. A school board and school administration have the power to hire, and when school boards have not hired minorities, that school board is guilty of some kind of segregation." We'd better take a look at our staff, whether it be the state departments of education or the city school systems and the suburban and rural school systems.

I think we've been too timid about taking proper action. We took action nine years ago in Cleveland and now you ought to see our administrative staff. Forty percent of our principals are black. Of the five assistant superintendents, two are black. There isn't a single subject matter without black supervision.

I am not impressed when I hear my suburban superintendents say to me, "Well, we are looking and just as soon as we can find a good black teacher we will hire one." But we have nearly 3,000 black teachers on our staff in Cleveland, and several of them are the greatest I have seen. So I say to my superintendents in suburbia, "We will help you recruit from our staff." And I say to black members of our staff, "If you will get a sense of mission and accept a job in an all white school system, I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you. If it doesn't work out you come back and I'll give you a promotion." Well, racial isolation is something we've got to look after. Something that is doable now is the staffing, the upward mobility, and also the proper placement.

Another great problem that bothers us in our cities is the ugly environment of the inner city. No child should be raised in the ugliness that exists in most of the inner cities, particularly those of our large northern metropolitan areas, with rubble, with rats, and with garbage. With an unresponsive city government and with people forgetting the needs of those who have been relegated not by their own wishes to this kind of isolation. The schools have got to do something about this. Here's where we have to build our most beautiful schools. If there is any place where we ought to place emphasis on beauty and architecture it ought to be in the schools of the inner city. As I finish one more year, we will have spent \$226,000,000 on the schools. \$226,000,000. Where did we put the first one? We put it right in the ugliest neighborhood-- Martin Luther King High School. It will rival anything in the United States in being probably the ugliest and worst neighborhood. And that was a school

that a few years ago the principal would call me and say, "Please, if you have any idea of dropping in for a visit, don't. I don't think you'd be safe." The student body was angry. It was upset in an area of high crime around the school. Today if you want to get a lift, walk into that building and talk to those students. We've pulled the guards out, and there isn't a single mark inside or outside the building. The lowest incidence of vandalism in our city is in our inner city where we have our new building. This is where they were bombing them and burning them and destroying them five years ago. We have beautiful courtyards maintained by the students. For the first time students are planting flowers this time of the year. I notice now that they are putting in the bulbs for next spring. We have elementary schools where all the classrooms open up on a great mammoth three-story courtyard that is domed, air conditioned in the summer, heated in the winter, with growing trees in the courtyard. It is a place for little children, and a place for parents in the neighborhood. The school has become the symbol of being friendly to children and friendly to the people of the neighborhood. This year we have said to our faculty, "The money we are saving this year in pulling our armed guards, we are going to turn back to the schools as a fund for faculty purchasing supplies that they may put a priority on that we don't use in the system."

I see a great change in the last two years. The action has been on the streets in the past. The action is moving off the streets today. That phase of the revolution is almost over. The big action in the days ahead and for at least the next five years is, I think, going to be in the courts and not on the streets as the courts become the conscience of this nation; as the courts tell us what school districts can join what school districts. The courts are going to decide what you can do with students. This is an era of student rights. Dress codes have gone. A principal can no longer make a decision to suspend a student. Due process is something new. We are not the authorities that we were.

Reform in these areas I have discussed is going to take leadership, understand, and cooperation. It requires a teamwork approach between the State Department of Public Instruction and the City Superintendent's Office.

DEVELOPING SEA RELATIONSHIPS WITH LARGE CITY SCHOOL

DISTRICTS - LEA VIEWPOINT

George Garver
General Superintendent
Houston Public Schools
Houston, Texas

Secretary Volpe made a statement that I think is a classic. He said, "This country only makes progress when it's in the act of backing away from a crisis." Think about it. This country only makes progress when it's backing away from a crisis. We have some crises today--problems that have never existed before. And maybe this is the catalyst we need to reevaluate where we're at and where we're going, and what we want to do concerning the schools of our nation. I have a basic point, though, that I have to share with you because I think it overrides all other issues, particularly as I look at the urban scene. The major problem that confronts the major cities of this nation is the fact that we have been unsuccessful in our attempts to educate poverty kids. We've been unable to unlock the hearts and minds of that category of youngsters and allow that category of children to have the same degree of success in the public schools that middle and upper social-economic class children have had historically. That problem is one that is creating more dilemmas for our nation in terms of today and the future than any other issue I can think of. The national and state governments have put additional resources into educational programs all across this nation; and, yet, we have not been able to show that, empirically and demographically, poverty kids are in fact having any greater degree of success as a category than they had before the institution of these problems. Until we come to grips with that basic social-economic issue we will not truly succeed. So poverty, not race, is the issue and it's standing in the way. Somehow, we've not been able to find ways of intervening to break that poverty cycle and give those children a chance to develop to the potential they have by birth.

In terms of the historical perspective, much has already been said about the rural domination and the legislative processes that had been basically prejudicial in favor of the smaller districts. I won't add to that at this point. I do think there's another point that has to be seen and isolated. The large school districts traditionally are not really loved--they're feared. I think that this is an issue that we've got to hit head-on. Too often, we in the large districts have stood off by ourselves and said, "We're omnipotent, get away from us. We've got all the answers, all the resources." We tend to equate some degree of status by size. Somehow, the larger the better. I don't know how we ever got caught up in that dilemma in this nation, but it's true of school districts. As a result, our large districts are not really loved. There's a suspicion of size and I think in our society we have a basic premise that

mistrusts large governmental units. The larger the unit, perhaps the more likely that people will mistrust or suspect its motives. I think today, at a time when we could find the urban-suburban people working together to deal with the metropolitan problems, we're finding a great polarization where the urban guys are pulling together in one small group and the suburban boys are going together in their own route. They're so darn fearful that somehow our black children may get outside our boundaries and into their all-white schools and they're bound and determined that they're going to see to it that their interests are protected and they're very suspicious of us. We have not done a very good of allaying their fears. So, I think this whole perspective of historical connotations has to be seen in light of the basis of power. Who's going to dominate? Who's going to make these decisions? Who's going to be high man on the totem pole?

I think it's time that we--every one of us--constantly reevaluate one basic premise. Schools in this nation exist for one reason only, and that's for children. They don't exist to give us jobs. They don't exist for the benefit of teachers. They exist for children. Historically, parents got together and said there were certain things they could no longer do in the home and were going to organize an entity called schools. They put the children in them and taxed themselves to support them. I think parents have a right to have a direct voice in what's going on in those schools, and I think we have to constantly remember we're not here to protect our power or our influence. We're here to find some answers for just how we might better serve the children that are in our district, whether large or small.

Most state legislatures have done the typical state agency a gross disservice by setting a very high level of expectation, not funding them, and not giving them the services or the resources to meet those expectations that they've delegated to them. And I've yet to see a state where the adequate resources have been put into the state offices where those people would have a ghost of a chance to do the job that they need to have done in terms of state agencies. Because of this and other reasons, state agencies typically don't have any real concept of what's going on in the large districts. There are some utterly unique variables in size that the agency people, unless they've lived with them, don't readily recognize. I myself didn't realize this until I became part of a larger unit.

These things have to be seen to realize that you're not dealing with a typical school district. For example, we have one high school in our city where one-third of the youngsters attending that school are eighteen or older. We're running an adult institution, and we apply adolescent rules and wonder why the lid blows. In another high school we estimate that about thirty percent of the high school girls attending that school have children of their own--some married, some not. You have another whole set of dynamics when you begin to talk about a delivery system of educational services for that clientele. There's a whole set of dynamics that goes on that state agency people have got to be tuned in to or you are merely going to compound the problem. I think this has been

part of what has gotten in the way of some close SEA-LEA cooperation in the past. A crude example: The other day a form came across my desk that I had to sign and my signature had to be notarized. Now I don't mind signing my name once, but this required 450 signatures and every one notarized! Last year I put a stamp on them and sent them back. This year I called and said, "You know, is there any reason why I've got to sign every one of those blasted forms? There's two hours of time involved in that." They talked about it and said, "Well, why don't you try signing the first page, the last page, and numbering them and we'll see if we can get it through." I guess this is a great concession to the fact that there was a certain set of dynamics required by the agency that in no way reflected on the needs of that system itself.

Another example: I can remember two years ago when the State Transportation auditing team came on the very first day of school to audit last year's transportation routes. We haul 20,000 children to school. We have another 20,000 eligible for transportation that we can't haul. Every fall that 20,000 want a new explanation as to why they're not on the bus, and all heck breaks loose on the opening day of school. Every man in our department in the supervisory category was holding the hands of the state agency people, helping them audit last year's records on the opening day of school! You know, there's no reason for that. I might say that when this was brought to their attention, they responded beautifully. They've been very receptive, but I think these are the kinds of small illustrations that create problems, and the list could go on and on.

One of the other issues that has gotten in the way of close cooperation has been the fact that the states themselves, perhaps through the agencies, did not distribute state resources in an equitable way. We're not getting our share of the state resources. The seven large districts in Texas have 25 percent of the population. However, we have only 18 percent of the Special Education units and only 17 percent of the Vocational Education units. Add to that fact that those seven large districts have 46 percent of the black population of the State of Texas in them and a very large proportion of the disadvantaged children. So I think I could argue strongly that not only should we have our fair share of those state resources, but that we, in fact, could demonstrate by need additional units above and beyond what a typical district in the state might be receiving.

I think there are some other issues we fail to look at, at least as far as the southern states. Many of the problems we're struggling with are not of our doing. They are state issues that were generated by the state, and then we educators were left with the process of solving them. Dual school systems were the law of the state. We had to run two separate school systems—one for blacks, one for whites. The law of the land came along and said, "No." And where is the state in this? I don't know; I've yet to see. We're dismantling the dual system by ourselves. The LEA's are bearing the full brunt of state action in terms of the litigation of pulling that thing together and trying to build a unitary system that serves all the kids of that system on an equitable basis.

For years in the State of Texas it was against the law even to teach Spanish in the schools. And now today we're trying to cope with the language needs of our Spanish-speaking students. The state is just beginning to help.

Still another example; We cannot even add one new course to our high school curriculum without the state approving it. That's minutia that need not get in the way of the operation. We can't even select textbooks. This is law. We must pick from five that the state predetermines we can pick from. And they've got a process. It isn't agency people that pick it; everybody and their cousin gets involved in it. When we get down to it, the needs of our system in terms of textbooks are geared to the five that the state has endorsed. A few years ago they adopted reading for grades one, two and three. They picked five series. Beautiful series. Good ones. Two years ago they picked the reading series for grades four, five and six. Five series. Only one of the five was the same as those in the primary grades. Absolutely no continuity of reading programs. I'm not a reading expert, but our people went right straight up the wall.

Where are we, though, today, in terms of the relationships between the state agency and the large city systems? First, in every state that I know of, education is a state function. The legislature literally has the complete control of the educational program of that state. As such, I would submit to you that reality is that it will remain that way, and that there is a need for a competent, efficient state agency to help administer the direction of the legislature in terms of education for that state. I have not seen any patterns developed elsewhere where they have totally relegated constitutionally to the local community. My point is that education is a state function and it probably will become more of a state function in the future, not less; and, as such, reality says that we need good agencies doing the job of helping to administer the directives of the state.

Second, in terms of that context, the typical state agency is becoming aware of the urban districts; and to pretend that there's just naive people in those state offices who couldn't care less is a misrepresentation of the facts. I think the vast majority of the state people know that there are some critical problems that need to be dealt with, but they're not quite sure how to get a handle on it. We've been very defensive about allowing them into our districts; and they've been understaffed, underpaid, without the resources, and they haven't known how to get that entry key. But, from everything I've heard and seen, the typical state agency cares a great deal about what goes on in every school district in that state, including the large districts. They would like desperately to help, and they are looking for some new lines of communication to facilitate that.

Finally, in our state the commissioner himself is an individual who is very, very concerned about all educational activities in our state. He's keenly aware of, but he is suffering with, the same dilemmas that every one of us are aware of. The commissioner is aware of countless

issues that should be dealt with but he is powerless, by himself, to single-handedly wave a wand and have all of those issues solved. You can't. It takes time. Let me draw an analogy between a large district and a small district that may fit the urban situation here. A small school district I characterize kind of like a sleek Chris Craft. When you touch the throttle it moves--it moves quickly. Sometimes a little bumpy. You can turn it around on a dime and head it back in another direction. It's a quite efficient little boat and it works well. A large district is more like the Queen Mary--kind of stately and very plush in some cases. Takes two miles to stop it and a turning basin to turn it around. It takes a heck of a time to get it to respond once you press the throttle. I think some of the agency people are coping with the same set of dynamics. They have a very real appreciation for what needs to be done, but they are powerless in many cases to work the instant miracle to bring it around.

So in summary on this point, reality is that the state education agency is probably here to stay. It's needed. There's some good people in those agencies who would like desperately to do a job. They are struggling with many of the same handicaps that we face in our own districts in terms of revitalizing their own organization so that they can be pertinent to the issues that confront each of the agencies.

Now, in terms of the future, what kinds of things might be logical in terms of the urban scene and the agencies, in terms of ways we could link up and bring about some effective change as the districts try to cope with a variety of problems that confront the urban district? This is my shopping list. You could add to it, I'm sure.

It's obvious that there is a steady shift of power from the rural to the urban scene. I think we need to capitalize on that shift of power. I think we need to find ways of getting with our legislators and helping them to understand the problems of the cities and the suburban areas so that as they sit in the legislature and deliberate on the very important matters, they are working from a body of knowledge that is reasonably current and factual. That's a difficult process. I think the agency can help considerably in this measure in terms of collection of information and making sure that the steady flow of data that the legislature needs is pumped to them as they continually look for the rationale behind various pieces of proposed legislation.

I have already mentioned the need in the terms of the poverty child. Now, let me stop here and plug the agency into that process. If the overriding concern of the urban district is how to help unlock the learning process for the poverty child, it would seem, then, that the focus of attention for every state should be that category of children. We should bring our resources--meager though they may be--to bear on that problem; to see what we can find through research; to see what we can find through all of the indepth analysis of current programs; and to see if there are not some answers forthcoming in terms of needs of this category of children. We can't write off generation after generation of children. There has to be a solution found. So I would argue very strongly that we need to take a look at why this child doesn't learn in our schools, as a category, exceptions noted.

To what extent is preschool going to help us? To what extent are remedial programs valuable? To what extent can we make vocational education an avenue to capture the hearts and minds of these children? What do we need in the way of special education? And, more importantly, what do we need in terms of bringing about some effectual change on the part of the universities to train teachers to work in the urban environment? Very few institutions in this nation are training teachers with the skills they need to work in an inner-city school. Many urban superintendents have learned that if you're going to give those teachers any help, you're going to have to do it yourself--probably through pre-service or inservice; and that should not be. Through state agencies, I believe we could find some ways of bringing about some changes in the higher educational institutions, so that there is a cadre of teachers who are skilled and culturally attuned to the needs of those youngsters, who can move into those classrooms with the bilingual skill that may be needed, with the awareness of the black and brown culture of the minority youngsters, and to help us in those classrooms. Most of our teachers that fail don't fail because they lack knowledge of subject matter. They fail because they are unable to relate effectively to the children assigned to them. Somehow we've got to take a real good look at those teacher-training programs, see how they could be made to be responsive to the needs of not just the urban scene, but all the educational environments that we serve within each of our states.

I believe that the agencies should attempt to recruit--actively recruit--personnel from the large districts so that there are a number of people in those agencies who have lived in that day-by-day operation. To do this, the legislature is going to have to take a look at salary schedules because it's pretty difficult in some cases. Our state won't even allow the federal money to be added on top of the state money so that they can subsidize salaries. They're locked into a salary schedule that's totally inadequate for the caliber of people they have and want to attract and maintain. I believe there ought to be ways that we can develop regulations that recognize the uniqueness of size.

I'm not asking for preferential treatment. I am saying that when an agency person gets on the phone and calls a school district that has 600 children and asks them a few questions, that's a totally different ball game than to call a school system that has 220,000 children and ask the same thing. It might take us six clerks and two weeks to collect the same data. It just can't be generated in the same form that a small district can generate it. And there needs to be a way that the agency can take a look at the uniqueness of size, the auditing functions, and the regulatory functions to see if there is a way in which we can work together to simplify that process.

The agency has a vast amount of its resources tied up in doing nothing but auditing. If those resources could be freed up to do some of the other things that need to be done, perhaps we'd be more adequately serving the children of our state and the needs of our school systems. We desperately need help with research. Most of the research programs that are developed within and without of our district I am not particularly

enamored of. I'll go further. There's no point in generating research unless we are going to learn to act on it. And too long we've collected a body of data that tells us something about children, and then we've gone ahead and put it on the shelf and totally ignored it. And it's time we get these systems so that they do begin to act on the basis of what research tells us. Drop those programs that are ineffectual and put those resources in other areas where we think we've got a chance of being really successful. We need some good consultive help.

Problems. We don't know, right now, how to utilize or how to deploy our transportation resources adequately. We've got a lot of buses and a lot of people, but I'm convinced we're not making good use of them. We know nowhere to go in this nation to get some expertise in terms of how you deploy transportation resources in an urban environment to the optimum advantage of that system. We need help. And that's just one of countless areas where good consultive help from the state education agency could serve many districts.

Another area that could help is the area of data exchange. Constantly we need data as to what's going on in other districts. We need to be able to have this information quickly enough to act on it. Too frequently the information we receive is outdated, or it isn't really comparable; and we're comparing apples and eggs instead of apples and apples. The agency could coordinate and serve as a very valuable resource in terms of data sharing.

I've already mentioned their role as an ombudsman. Particularly when the legislature is in session, I would hope they would have the resources to be over there in that legislature, not campaigning for pieces of legislation, but constantly pointing out the impact that legislation will have on the kids of that state so that they are aware of what might transpire. For example, last year our legislature approved a Workmen's Compensation Law for public employees. We just didn't have one prior to this. To the best of my knowledge, nobody ever bothered to point out to the legislature the cost impact of this. In our own district alone, that's a \$500,000 expenditure we have to add to our budget for next year that wasn't there. That should have been costed out and the total cost to the state and to every school system should have been spelled out so that the legislature which adopted that knew that either they'd have to put more resources in to fund that new law, or that programs would be discontinued in order to pick up this new mandatory regulation that they had seemed to feel was appropriate.

Somehow, I believe the agency ought to be able to do a lot of those things. In most cases, they're right next to the capitol. And they've got all the resources in terms of data from all across the state available to them, and it would seem that they should be able in a nonpolitical way to supply this information--to have a reverse flow. Well, I think most of the other points that I've laid out here are, for the most part, quite redundant. Let me summarize, and then we go to the questions that I'm sure many of you are getting ready to pose.

In summary, it is my conviction that an adversary relationship between the urban district and the state agency is detrimental to all. It has to be a collaborative relationship. It has to be one through which there is mutual respect for the job that each plays in supplying the leadership necessary for the children of that state and those districts. We ought to find a way of developing collaborative models, not adversary models. Secondly, the agency, as far as I'm concerned, is here to stay. It is needed, and it needs to be funded appropriately. It needs the resources to help us find some answers to problems that we can't solve at this point in time. Thirdly, in my judgment, the agencies are willing to help. They are willing to help and will help if they know what it is that they can do to be of service and have the resources to do it. In the final analysis, the process of educating children is the responsibility of the public, and they have delegated to many of us unique responsibilities in that process. It is our objective to keep our eye on the child and to bring to bear all of the resources possible to see to it that we do everything possible to help each and every one of those children to receive the highest education possible. We can facilitate the achievement of that goal with a collaborative model as opposed to an adversary model.

DEVELOPING SEA RELATIONSHIPS WITH LARGE SCHOOL

DISTRICTS - SEA VIEWPOINT

Jim Morgan
Assistant Commissioner,
Urban Education
Texas Education Agency

The Texas Education Agency began to work with urban school districts out of the Office of Planning. After a year of development there, we opened the Office of Urban Education, which has been operating that way ever since.

Several points need to be made early. First, I think it would be a mistake to believe that relationships do not already exist between urban school districts and state departments of education. Certainly they do. If you'll look down through the staff of the SEA, you'll find many operational kinds of relationships where you have a federal program developer or Title I administrator, an accreditation or certification officer, who regularly or at least at times through the year calls or has some interaction with the staff members from some level in the hierarchy of the urban school district. Unfortunately, I would say that you can't build on those relationships because they've not been successful ones to begin with. They've not been successful because they have not met the need of the urban school district. All too often, the needs of the SEA and the needs of the urban district are comprehended in different ways by the top people in both of those institutions. Unless those people are brought together in some way, you fail to get the kind of communication that makes for successful undertaking.

On the other hand, there are people whom your SEA can begin to work with in the urban district. Some of them can be relieved of some of the problems they encounter once they get over some of the difficulties that they feel personally in trying to deal with large school districts.

To implement a program of developing relationships, I think there has to be some kind of readiness in the state for it. Fifteen years ago in Texas there were a number of closed systems; and those closed systems did not admit people from the outside--namely the State Education Agency. Those people were not welcome in those districts for other than a kind of tip of a hat to them to say, "Okay, you have a job to do and be on your way." That has to be changed, but it changes slowly, I think.

Some readiness had been developed already in Texas when this urban project came along. For example, we had had already in the state a suit brought by Ft. Worth, Dallas, and Houston school districts against the State Commissioner and the State Board among others over the distribution of state funds, and I think that created some readiness. By this time, the

seven superintendents of the largest districts in Texas had formed an association of their own outside of other organizations to a large extent, to share their common problems, and see what could be done about them in the legislature and otherwise. There was an awareness on their part to seek to make things different from the way they had been. In addition to this, there was an early effort initiated by the Office of Planning to do some joint planning with metropolitan school districts. I think all of these separate kinds of undertakings or endeavors began to create a time that was right for some deliberate kinds of undertakings in our state.

Still, it took somebody to initiate it, somebody to take the first step, somebody to propel movement. For that we are indebted to Dr. Morphet as director of the ISLE Project. Dr. Morphet invited Texas and some other states to enter into a project to see what roles the SEA's could perform to serve the urban school districts. It was his injection of energy and enthusiasm that finally got that kind of ball rolling. As a consequence, Dr. Edgar, Commissioner of Education in Texas, addressed a letter to the urban superintendents. I would like to quote a couple of lines from it because of the point it illustrates. He wrote to them to ask them to serve on an advisory committee to do such a study and to permit their districts to participate in it. Here is what he said: "It becomes increasingly clear that the Texas Education Agency faces one of its greatest opportunities and challenges in the advancement of success by urban school districts in meeting the terrific loads placed upon them now and over the next decade. Consequently, I have established a special study to identify the role which the Texas Education Agency can perform in meeting this challenge." The point I think it illustrates is his commitment and his desire to see things occur. We did have positive responses from the seven superintendents. All of them agreed to go along with it and see what could be done. One question I think that occurs is one of credibility, and having the Commissioner's statement in writing is a help in establishing that first level of credibility. It says, "Are you serious about this?"

There are some related pitfalls I would like to point out. If the state department is not serious in trying to do something of this nature, it ought to say so, because the assurance that you're serious will last only if you produce. If the agency can't produce, you'd better not raise LEA expectations. The second kind of credibility question stated by LEA's is as follows: "What in the hell can the agency do for us that we can't do better for ourselves?" That's a serious question. You need a policy to reply to that kind of a question. Just a word of caution at this point. If he asks you that kind of a question, don't offer the help of your curriculum specialist in helping him to redo his curriculum. The state agency may very well have some true curriculum experts, but you won't like it to be visualized that way by the urban school superintendent. He has more of them, a greater variety, and he pays them better. He's not likely to feel that we can do him much good in the area of curriculum development with your technical assistance. That's one you can avoid.

Now, there are some ideas about what a state agency can do in general that I would like to call to your attention. For example, changing state board of education policy or agency regulations and proposing changes in state law. There is another one that I don't think is mentioned any place, but I think it is one of the most important tools that the state agency has. That is the power or the ability to convene or get people together.

You can read a lot of ideas about what can be changed without knowing whether those urban superintendents want this, that, or the other change or not. We felt that the best way to find out what needed to be changed was to ask the superintendents. So we've asked them over and over, and we played back the responses over and over. We learned a lot. That's one way you might go about it. It is the way we went about it; and, from our experience, I would commend it to you. It is true that most people who don't work in urban school districts don't know what is going on in urban school districts--the SEA doesn't. Those of us who travel to LEA's but are not there on the firing line have only a slightly better understanding than some of our compatriots in the department that stay in the department. If you want to know what is going on, you'd better talk to somebody who does in those urban districts.

After questioning urban superintendents, you can quickly see how the SEA is hanging up the urban school districts and perhaps other districts as well. I think you have to take the point of view here that it is the state education agency that has been the villain in this piece, although historically, it's been a two-way kind of thing. Both of the institutions have been contributing to the distance between the two; but for purposes of developing relationships, don't talk about whether it's the responsibility of the urban district or the state. Let's just assume it's the responsibility of the state agency and get on with it.

A good non-defensive position on that point, I think, keeps the information flowing to you. You are in a better position to ask urban superintendents what is wrong and ask what the agency can do to get out of their way or to make things better. It seems to me that the thing that it lets you do is to begin to categorize their concerns on similar pieces of paper; and, finally, you can begin to generalize from those concerns and problems. You can begin to generalize what those urban districts want you to do about those problems, and develop some general role statements or general functional statements of what the SEA is expected to do with respect to urban districts over the next months and years.

Let me give you an example or two of what I mean. You may find, as we did, that the state requires that certain students in a school district be transported, but only about half as much money is provided by the state as is required to transport them. So the urban district looks to the state department which administers the rules and regulations for transportation. We need to get changes so that they can have more ability to transport our children. If you dig a little deeper, you'll find that most of those rules are written into the statutes. If that's one example of the kind of thing that needs changing, then it points up a general role for

the SEA to develop. The SEA should propose changes in legislation to better meet the needs of urban school districts. In our state, there's been a long history of writing legislation so that they favor the kind of situation that existed in rural school districts, but they certainly have little place today when you look at an urban transportation program.

A second kind of thing you might find would be where you have an issue that may not be born in the legislative statutes. Those problems may be with the SEA's own regulations and the state board policies. If those are getting in the way, then one of the roles that that generalizes, too, is the role of the SEA to look at itself analytically and carefully to try to see how it might change those rules and regulations and policies so that they enable the urban district to get on with its business in better fashion.

A third area where there may be difficulties concerns federal programs, e.g., federal funding and the comparability guidelines. If the urban district expects the state department to do anything about that, it expects the state department to perform a role of being a buffer, an interceptor, or an advocate of urban school districts with respect to the relationships with the federal government. Urban school districts may have better pipelines to the federal government than the state agency does. However, it's not always productive to assume that that's the case.

Again, with a shopping list of problems, you have a set of roles which guides the future development of the agency. The list points directions or serves as large parameters enabling you to develop some specific kinds of objectives and operational plans for getting at the business of solving some of those problems.

The urban districts have varying amounts of power. But that power is truly latent unless it's focusing somewhere. I don't think you can hope for changes in relationships to occur, or for the state education agencies to be very receptive in making change unless there is some kind of power present in the situation, however veiled or indirect. It certainly is evident that that is a necessity if you want to make successful changes, and this is where I think the SEA's ability to convene is one of the more important abilities or powers that the SEA has. There is a caution there, because everybody meets too much and too often meetings are fruitless. But I'm talking about a kind of convening for a purpose, where the power represented by urban districts is all focused on one, two or three particular issues. Let me illustrate that this way. I can go to people in our agency and say, "Houston needs more flexibility with its transportation problem." But it's much more effective when you have all seven urban superintendents sitting with the state commissioner saying, "We need more flexibility with transportation." Now, when you get a unanimous kind of agreement or consensus among the people who have the power and you focus it on one kind of issue, you see changes starting to take place. I think it goes further than just superintendents and state commissioners. I think it will permeate a number of levels in urban district staffs and state department staffs.

Most SEA staff people are well-intentioned people, and it's often the case that they take the actions they do because they are aware of the needs of urban districts. So I think it's useful to explore any number of avenues for beginning to help the people in the state departments to get more familiar with and aware of some of the kinds of things that urban districts wrestle with; e.g., through special briefings or ad hoc meetings of one kind or another, or exchange programs, or other means that may occur to you.

Let us not forget the opportunities in urban education. Which districts in your state have the staff and capabilities to do the kinds of developmental work to really provide the leadership in making changes in instruction, in organization, administration, or what have you? Certainly the state department of education is not likely to have an abundance of that kind of competency, nor is it likely to have anything like the kind you could get from an amalgamation of those kinds of people in urban school districts. The urban school districts have size and they have the resources of people to be leaders in the state in a great many ways. If the state department does not take advantage of that kind of resource in the state, it is whistling in the wind for changes that it might want to make in the state. It is a two-way relationship, or it certainly can be. There are many opportunities, I think, for quid pro quo kinds of operations. There is also a domino effect in that many of the smaller districts are going to take the lead of that urban district as well. So, if you want to implement things in your state, the urban districts can help you implement things in the state, just as the SEA can do some things to assist the urban school districts.

I'd like to say a word about organization of the SEA for undertaking this kind of activity. It does seem important to me that you have some person to devote his full time to this kind of an undertaking. He needs to be as closely tied or linked to the state commission of education as possible for a number of reasons. He needs to have enough knowledge about the state department to have entree to people at several levels in that department. He needs to have rank in the institution that will give him sufficient status in the SEA and in the urban district that he can at least function; i.e., talk to the people who need to be sounded out.

Oftentimes we realize how weak a posture we have with the legislature in trying to make changes. Sometimes we fail to get all of the ducks lined up in trying to focus attention on a particular problem, and it just falls apart. There are some valleys in the way you may feel about your undertakings from time to time; but there are other times when I see those urban school districts with a real consensus, with a real focus on some kind of issue that they want to see changed. And, although we can see that stretch out a long way ahead before very much of any significance is reached, it does leave me with the feeling that over a period of time the SEA can be of assistance to urban school districts; can carry out new roles with respect to those urban school districts in helping them solve the problems that they face, both now and over the next decade.

HOW STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

CAN AID LARGE DISTRICTS

Martin W. Essex*
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ohio

Not unlike Professor Harold Hill in "The Music Man", "Ya gotta know the territory."¹ To understand the indigenous character and historical development of the urban center is to "know the territory" of that tumultuous frontier of education.

Our traditional agrarian and small craft economy suddenly vanished in the '50's and '60's as if a magician had waved his wand unveiling a new societal structure. Technology made the unskilled unemployable and accentuated the fact that they were poor. The cotton picking machines, gang plows, and liquid weed killer obliterated the 40-acre, a mule and a plow economy. Urbanization concentrated the poor and minorities in older housing as the "white flight" established suburbia. Community leadership disappeared. An unprecedented anonymity beset urban America. Resentment replaced civic pride. The school was confronted with unprecedented learning and behavioral problems.

Educators, who had been prepared to graduate four percent of the elite from the secondary school in 1900, and who had made massive adjustments to graduate 40 percent by the 1940's, suddenly found another new clientele in the classrooms who were unsuccessful and rebellious in this curricular setting. The universities were equally unprepared to be of assistance. Scavengers and idealistic writers who were interested in a fast buck, lacking knowledge, preparation and integrity, heaped scorn on the teacher rather than understanding.

State departments of education were equally unprepared to deal with this frontier. The cities had been the centers of erudition and wealth. Traditionally, the large city had the best teachers and the best curriculum--in fact the best schools in America. Departments of education had been designed to serve rural areas; the cities had staffs superior to those in the state education agency. The severe problems had been in the rural area and, hence, state departments had been directing their limited resources to the appropriate place.

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The state equalization funds of the Mort, Morphet and Johns period were managed by departments of education to give the rural youngster a suitable educational opportunity. Hence, the manpower in the department of education needed a rural orientation.

For a decade, beginning in the mid-'50's, I sat in the conferences of the large city superintendents as we grappled with these cataclysmic changes. By that time, Brown vs. Topeka had come. The courts began to take charge of the schools. The litigation was costly. The implementation of decisions met with resistance. The large city superintendency was characterized as untenable. The turnover was rapid. The superintendent became the hate symbol of discontent. Able board members, confused and maligned, chose to join the "white flight." A new superintendent frequently came from the small all-white district because he had no track record which blemished his credentials. State superintendents frequently lacked urban experience.

By the mid-'60's, that four percent graduating from high school had risen to more than 50 percent. Our American dream of a prior era had become a reality. Technology went on at an accelerated pace; unfortunately, the welfare rolls mounted week after week. Frank Keppel, U.S. Commissioner of Education, gave national visibility to the urgency of a further reduction of the dropout rate. There was no place for the unemployable youngster except on the street--with a future of crime and welfare dependency.

The enactment of the ESEA of 1965 was in direct response to the civil disobedience, burnings, and school disruptions in large cities. The superintendents of large cities were saying--quite appropriately--that departments of education were of little assistance to them. Further, they expressed the opinion that, "The state agency does not understand this complex frontier and the state legislature is not responsible to our needs. Send the ESEA money directly to us--not through state government." A compromise sent the funds to the state education agency but not the state legislature. Concurrently, some of us in the large cities pushed vigorously for Title V funds to strengthen departments of education. Disrespect continued because few state education agencies were able to employ persons who had experience in the urban center or who understood its inexorable demands.

By 1967, the one-man, one-vote court decision swept the country. The cities had great hope, but again the "city slicker" legislator had an inexperienced suburban "crab grass" chap beside him. The "corn stalk brigade" continued to have the know-how. Thus, the challenge was before us to design a state education agency which could effectively communicate the need and assist the large city. This demanded a vast change in values and knowledge. This colossal change in the American societal structure was becoming more definable, but the solutions were still elusive.

The issue is clear. Can the state agency and the large city administrators work together constructively and compatibly? If so, how?

With an abundance of humility, I am pleased to share this platform with my esteemed contemporary, Paul Briggs, of the Cleveland schools.

The order of the listing is not meant to suggest priorities.

STAFFING AND STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Our first move in 1967 was to create a position of Assistant Superintendent for Urban Education. Robert Greer, a minority person himself, assumed this post after two decades of administrative experiences in the polyglot of change in Gary, Indiana.

Our department seminars have been characterized by minority leaders telling it "as it is." Personnel from large city schools, including perceptive and successful administrators such as Paul Briggs, participate in these seminars. Staff persons were given periodic assignments in the large cities so that they might be shown around and absorb elements of the changing environment.

Agressive actions were taken by the State Superintendent to bring salaries for personnel more nearly in line with those of large city staffs.

The State Superintendent meets periodically with the superintendents from the nine core cities in Ohio. Having served as one of them, I have found it relatively easy to communicate the state perspective and to understand inner city needs. These conferences normally become strategy sessions on legislation.

Unity in both directions is required. The department needed assistance from the large city superintendents with the Governor and the legislature. Paul Briggs has never been too busy to come or to send staff personnel for such assignments. The State Superintendent has maintained a consistent posture with the administration and the legislature for recognition of urban education assistance.

SPECIAL FUNDING FOR LARGE CITY SCHOOLS

In Ohio, our urban funding has taken the following directions:

(A) "Disadvantaged pupil program funds" based on numbers of AFDC children. The districts receive an allocation of \$200 per child. The magnitude of this funding is illustrated by the fact that Cleveland has 60,000 AFDC youngsters. During the present biennium, the numbers statewide have increased so that the per pupil payment is somewhat lower. Nineteen areas of services are eligible to be included in proposals to qualify for these funds. The range of services extends from buttressing ESEA Title I to the employment of security guards.

(B) Municipal Overburden funds compensate for the fact that large cities have extra costs which tend to dry up tax funds which otherwise would be available for school services. The dimensions of this funding are illustrated by the \$5.8 million which go to Cleveland annually.

(C) Elimination of the tax charge-off against state assistance for vocational education units and special education units. Normally, the large cities have higher per pupil tax duplicates than the state average, and the charge-off was disadvantageous to them. The result has been a funding increase from approximately \$4,000 to \$13,000 per unit.

(D) Extension of transportation subsidies to the large cities which had been barred in the past due to their tax valuations. Similar recognition was directed to the driver education subsidies.

EMPHASIS ON LEADERSHIP

A third major thrust in relations has been to downgrade the regulatory and upgrade consulting services. One example is the team approach to evaluation of schools for chartering purposes. Twenty to thirty persons are assigned to a large city for a week or two weeks to evaluate the secondary school at intervals of not less than each four years. It is a mutual learning experience in a work setting. The large city learns of agency services and the capabilities of its staff. The department staff becomes more knowledgeable of the urban complexities. The mutual respect for urban educators and the state agency is illustrated by the fact that these sessions are usually initiated with a dinner and exchange of both expectations and descriptions of existing practices. The exit conference may be another social work occasion at which time the issues can be discussed in an atmosphere of peer relationships.

All advisory committees to the department are expected to include representation from the urban center.

The integration area is one which has received significant study and attention. The "do-ables" have been attained through cooperative efforts, and federal orders have been avoided.

Perhaps, in closing, one should accentuate the fact that state education agencies are very difficult instrumentalities to understand. The university does not teach about them and the typical school administrator has no frame of reference which permits him to understand the very complex and voluminous operations which characterize departments of education. They exist in a different structure of governmental relationships than local school districts. The state agency not only functions as the central offices of a large city school district, but functions within constraints that may not only include a state board of education but a state finance department, personnel department, a governor's office, a legislature, and within statutes which must be applied to widely varying school situation.

Publications, regional conferences, state meetings, and ready access to state agency personnel must be maintained. Whereas a decade ago the communications between the large city and the state agency were rare indeed—because the state agency was not considered competent to assist and had few reasons to be acquainted with the large city districts—now, the counterparts of various divisions are as close as the phone and are normally on a

first-name basis. The devastating problems which have beset the large city, and the changing economy which permits the states and the federal government to relate more equitably to revenue sources bring the urgency for strong personnel in the state education agency. The legislature is rapidly becoming the "big" school board. It must have a competent state education agency to interpret policies with empathy and to deliver services with competence.

The future of America, not unlike the societies of the past, depends on the restoration of the American city so that it once again will become the center of erudition, culture and opportunity. Education--the proper kind--is the only answer to the largest of American challenges in the last half of this Twentieth Century. In this respect, our experiences in Ohio lead to an optimistic outlook for the years ahead.

The solutions to the quality of education lie not in the courts but in educational statesmanship.

