

Let me put the problems of the Washington, D.C. schools in a broad National context. We are at a historic moment in American education and the public schools in Washington are the focal point. In Washington, education has truly reached a time of momentum and possibility. We need to bring our schools into the 20th Century. More important, we need to prepare our students for living in the 21st Century.

In the past six months much has been said and written about the Washington, D.C. Public Schools, not only here but throughout the nation.

I think this must be emphasized. It is true we are the focal point. It has been under close scrutiny and much comment has been made about it. If we wanted to sum this up, I think we could say that our school systems are a failure at the present time, not to every child but to too many children.

In essence, that is what the recently completed Columbia University study of the Washington, D.C. Schools stated.

While we believe that much has been said about our schools can be said about all urban education; there is a difference. This is the Nation's Capital. It is an international center. At this point I would like to consider one aspect of this failure, and that is the teachers' salary structure.

Salary for teachers is money to meet the bills. In a time of rising costs, this is important and reason enough for salary increases. But salary is more than just money to meet the bills. Salary is a reflection of the importance placed on individuals and their work. Salary is prestige. It is morale. It is incentive. It is hiring power to retain staff for our school system.

The measure of the adequacy of our teacher salary scale is best viewed from the adequacy of the staff which the District Schools has been able to recruit.

The area of our greatest critical concern is the teaching staff, for central to the instructional program is the teacher in the classroom. Nothing happens in education until it happens to a child, and it is the teacher who has this direct contact with children.

This is where we have had our greatest problems and nothing happens in this business until it happens with children and it is the teacher that deals with the children. So that is the key here.

PASSOW REPORT

Unfortunately, the District of Columbia has competed at a disadvantage for educational staff over a long period of years. The attrition on quality is apparent. In saying this, I do not rely solely upon my own observations, but rather upon one of the most searching, detailed, and in-depth studies of a school system that has been made in the history of this Nation. A review of the recently completed Columbia University Study of the Washington, D.C. Schools, generally referred to as the Passow Report, finds that the major single problem concerns the quality of our staff. And by staff, the report refers to all staff, teaching and administrative.

This is the group that has been down here for over a year. They are some of the best experts in the Nation. They are not people we employ and they have said we are in deep and worsening trouble and I think we have to respect their judgment.