

ARTICLES

EDUCATION ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: CHALLENGE, MISSION, AND ADVENTURE

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On May 18, 1999, the newly appointed Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Vatican office for Catholic schools, universities, and seminaries, addressed a gathering of Catholic school administrators at Fordham University. The Most Reverend Giuseppe Pittau, S.J., was invited to deliver an address to the Fifth Annual School Executive Leadership Dinner. Archbishop Pittau brings a wealth of experience to his new position at the Vatican. In his role as Secretary, he shares responsibility for some 900 Catholic colleges and universities, over 3550 seminaries, and tens of thousands of Catholic schools. In his address, Pittau offers a synthesis of current challenges facing Catholic schools and highlights the critical role of parents, teachers, administrators, and the community in the education of children.

Among schools designated as Catholic, there are over 57,000 kindergartens in the world, educating more than 5 million children. Ten percent of these schools (5,700) are in the United States, serving 250,000 boys and girls. The Catholic Church counts about 84,000 primary and 34,000 secondary schools in the world, which serve almost 50 million students. In the United States, there are over 7,000 Catholic primary schools and 1,350 secondary schools, while the State of New York counts 720 primary and 130 secondary schools, educating 229,000 and 73,000 students, respectively (NCEA, 1998).

The Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican is not directly responsible for Catholic schools, as they come under the authority of the local bishops. It does, however, assist by promoting Catholic education in general, promoting and expanding the fundamental principles of Catholic education, establishing norms which govern Catholic schools, assisting bishops in sus-

taining schools in their dioceses, and following the activities of international organizations concerned with education, both Catholic and secular (John Paul II, 1988).

The field of education is changing rapidly due to a combination of factors that challenge educators. This challenge, in turn, creates a need for a renewed sense of the mission of the teacher as one who leads children into the pathway of life, an exciting adventure in which we all participate.

The first part of my presentation concerns the challenge of education today, something with which you are all quite familiar, while in the second part, I will present three essential elements of education: message, community, and service. These elements will be familiar to most Catholic educators from the U.S. bishops' 1972 document, *To Teach as Jesus Did*.

1. THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION

As we approach the completion of the second millennium after the birth of Christ, one of the most pressing issues is that of education. Throughout the world, the value of education is being promoted more and more as the primary means of guaranteeing the future of all humanity. Today, at the threshold of the third millennium, we are called to educate the new generations, aware, as John Paul II noted, that "the future of the world...belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium" (1994, p. 58).

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council assisted in the reawakening of the consciousness of the world to the fact that education is vitally necessary to our existence. The Council called to mind the "paramount importance of education in the life of men and its ever growing influence on the social progress of the age" (Vatican Council II, 1965, Preface). Education is an inalienable right of each woman and man individually and collectively because of their dignity as persons. But why is education seen as a challenge?

One obvious reason is the vastness of the endeavor: More than one billion children are of school age, and there are about 57 million teachers, according to a 1998 report by UNESCO. Therefore a significant portion of the world population is in the process of education, while teachers compose one of the largest and most diffuse professions. In spite of this, there still remain 130 million children who are not able to attend school and 900 million illiterate adults. But it is not only numbers which present an educational challenge to the world. There are deeper challenges that are the result of the rapid changes occurring in our culture.

New informational technologies bring the world to our house, revolutionizing working conditions, requiring a great flexibility in the processes of learning, and thus demanding that schools organize their activities accordingly. They have also adversely affected those who use them, especially chil-

dren who, in one sense, are formed by them. Many people manifest grave difficulties in developing healthy interpersonal relationships because of the impersonal and artificial nature of computers and television. This has affected family, youth, work, and social interactions. As a result, a need for greater, more mature, and more adequate formation has emerged.

The expansion of scientific and technical knowledge, which brings great progress to humanity, unfortunately also produces great ethical questions calling for a greater commitment to the solid education of children, integrating technical knowledge with cultural, moral, and ethical aspects of life. Consequently, the educational challenge is not only tied to the functional demands of the so called "society of knowledge," but to the very sense of education itself.

New situations in schools that were unknown in the past necessitate research in the behaviors currently seen. One hears the phrase the "crisis of education," which is due in part to the fragmentation of life and the enforced artificial neutrality which weakens the potential for education and may result in a sense of frustration, boredom, or weariness among both students and educators. Education becomes less and less the education of a person and more and more instruction in certain informational aspects of life, losing the aspect of the person who is open to the transcendent, to moral and spiritual values. This impoverishment of values constitutes the center of the educational challenge.

2. HOW TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE

I will offer three elements which are fundamental to the issue: 1) the use of what might be called the "inheritance" of experience, 2) the sense of a human being as a whole person, and 3) a concern for one's fellow human beings.

A. INHERITANCE OF EXPERIENCE

Often in critical moments of change, there is a tendency to put everything "up for grabs," that is, to put everything up for discussion and revision, as if one must begin from zero. This attitude is present in the field of education, as one considers the role of education, its mission, and the institutions in which it takes place. But we are not at zero. One could say we have thousands of years of experience behind us, and certainly hundreds of years in forms similar to what we know today. We must take a look at the treasure we have at hand, that of our history and the difficulties and solutions which have occurred in the past.

One of the advantages of today is the existence of many organizations that promote education. These provide resources and an opportunity for those involved in education to share their experiences, a process that usually benefits both parties. As the saying goes, we don't have to "reinvent the wheel."

Two points which have proved to be part of the foundation of education are: 1) that the center of attention must always be the person, and 2) that the most important resources available are the women, men, and children involved in education, who provide a veritable treasure house of wisdom and knowledge for the good of all.

B. CONSIDERATION OF THE WHOLE PERSON

Today's culture leads us toward exterior and interior fragmentation. Interiorly, many are beset by uncertainties, not knowing how to distinguish good from evil, true from false, real from imaginary. While we have made great and positive progress, increased our capabilities tremendously, and improved our efficiency, we have also expanded our ability to manipulate realities, even those related to life itself in its most basic and essential elements, for example, through genetic engineering. It seems we have arrived at a point of self-contradiction because we find ourselves incapable of answering the questions we have brought upon ourselves.

The answer can be found in a return to the human being as a whole and indivisible person, with dignity, and with certain rights and responsibilities. A person is not just a sum of various horizontal components, but rather a harmonic composition including ethical, spiritual, and religious dimensions. If we consider the word "educate," it is derived from the Latin *ex ducere*. *Ex* means "out of," and *ducere* means "to lead" or "to draw along." Education, therefore, means, in one sense, to lead someone out of themselves, on to new and broader horizons. It does not mean to fill students with facts or information, but to bring them out of themselves into a new world as enlightened individuals. In this sense, the aim of education is to form students capable of living their lives with dignity and of relating to other people, that they might become free members of society. Young people must be encouraged to open themselves progressively to reality and to form a healthy and robust perspective on life in which human, spiritual, and religious values are not foreign concepts.

The fruit of this work is not the result of structural means or technological advances, but of the work of persons, because education passes from one person to another. A good school and a good education are the result of good educators, not of the best computers available. The goodness of a school does not depend so much on the quality of the material resources as on the community of persons who are part of it. The student is not a problem to solve with sophisticated technical didactics, but a person for whom one cares. As the Congregation for Catholic Education stated in a recent document,

During childhood and adolescence, a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student's formation when placed in a context of personal

involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, lifestyles and day-to-day behavior. While respecting individual roles, the community dimension should be fostered, since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. (1998, par. 18)

A school, therefore, should not be seen merely as a structure, but as a community for the person and of the person. Only when this perspective is well understood and established can one begin to examine the specific roles played by individuals. A famous educator, St. Ignatius of Loyola, said that the most important thing in education was the *cura personalis* and referred to the centrality of the person in the educational process by saying that education is a thing of the heart. And the heart beats for the whole person, not only for one or another part.

C. THE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL

The third element necessary to confront the educational challenge of today is the involvement of everyone. No one can consider himself or herself exempt from this responsibility by saying they are outside the situation or not affected by it.

Our complex society makes more obvious than ever the fact that education cannot be achieved by the school alone, and even less by individuals. Education is a community project, and the educational system could be compared to a net that brings together a variety of people, each coming from a unique background. In addition to the students and teachers most intimately involved, their families participate in the life of the school to varying degrees, as does the state, the civic community, the Church, and various associations and organizations in the area.

There is a great temptation to ask many things of a school: to assure the future of youth, to assist those disadvantaged by social conditions or family, to take care of children while their parents are working, etc. The school must know its limits, but at the same time, it cannot neglect its responsibility to envision education as a comprehensive reality.

Having discussed some of the challenges that have such a deep impact on schools, I now would like to consider three fundamental elements of schools. In a 1972 pastoral letter entitled *To Teach as Jesus Did*, the bishops of the United States described three essential aspects of Catholic education: the message, community, and service. These characteristics are basic to any type of education, whether Catholic, public, or private.

3. THE MESSAGE: TRUTH

In considering the role of schools, it is necessary to ask what is the message that a school hopes to transmit to the children who pass through its halls.

Children pick up multiple messages at school, some communicated intentionally and many unintentionally. Both may have considerable influence on the lives of the students, and thus it is worth reflecting on what message should be transmitted and how best to transmit it.

Surely the fundamental message of all schools is that of the truth, for, as Aristotle said, "All human beings desire to know," and

truth is the proper object of this desire. Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are. Within visible creation, [the human being] is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows, and is therefore interested in the real truth of what he perceives. (John Paul II, 1998a, p. 25)

No one is genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not. As St. Augustine said, "I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none who wanted to be deceived." Whether relating to mathematics or social studies in an elementary school classroom, or aspects of life, such as marriage, profession, or religion, there are basic truths that govern our lives. It is the responsibility of all involved in the education of young people to teach the truth, and how to discover truth for themselves. Young people are accustomed to receiving information in quantities unimaginable in the past. But without knowing how to distinguish truth from falsehood, they have no means to integrate all the information they receive, and they don't know how to use the information for their own good or the good of humanity. In today's culture, this search for the truth is of grave importance because many people question the very existence of objective truth, turning instead toward that subjective truth that is based on what pleases them at a particular moment or what supports their opinion. It is thus liable to change at any moment, and provides a deadly instability in a life that is already fragmented by a multitude of activities, relationships, and living situations.

A. UTILITARIANISM

Among relatively recent developments which impact on teaching the message of truth is the influence of the popular philosophy of utilitarianism, which seeks as its goal either pleasure or power, or both, "with the resulting risk of tragic consequences for those who are starting out in life" (John Paul II, 1998b, p. 7). UNESCO, the United Nations organization concerned with education, reported in 1998 that a production mentality has permeated the politics of education throughout the world in the last 30 years. This philosophy uses terms like "evaluation," "efficacy," "performance," "results," "budgetary constraints," and "human capital" to describe the quality and the objectives of education (UNESCO, 1998, p. 29). All of these are important

factors, and certainly have their place for consideration in any organization, but one must take care that the dignity of each person who is a part of that organization does not become a number in a file drawer.

Although this mentality of power and efficiency may not be so visible in primary school children, by middle school or junior high, students have repeatedly received messages through various media indicating that money has the power to buy anything one wants, and therefore is the highest value in life. What they do with those messages depends to a great extent on how well they have learned to think for themselves, to evaluate, and to seek a higher truth.

B. TECHNOLOGY

The growth of technology has had and will continue to have a tremendous impact on the "message" of the school. With new technologies of communication revolutionizing numerous sectors and processes, some people are tempted to put technology at the center of the educational process. This should not be. While technology provides marvelous instruments that enhance education, the electronic tool remains merely a useful instrument. It is the teacher who dwells at the heart of the process of learning and of social transformation (Major, 1996). Administrators are responsible for ensuring that technology remains what it is intended to be: a tool to assist teachers and students in the process of learning.

The General Director of UNESCO, Federico Major, noted that society sometimes operates

under the illusion of creating human prosperity and happiness through science and technology alone.... [Schools should encourage] respect for consciences, passion for truth and love of freedom in the context of professional service...to be a modern and effective means of formation and a factor of progress for all society. (Major, 1996)

C. THE MESSENGER

United closely with the message is the messenger. The effectiveness of the message to be conveyed is intimately tied to the witness given by the one who transmits it. The importance of teachers and their role in education cannot be too strongly emphasized. And when I speak of teachers, I include, according to their individual tasks and responsibilities, all those who, in any way, belong to the educating community: administrators, staff members, and teaching assistants. Rather than mere transmitters of notions, educators are called to be teachers of life. Teaching is not a part to be enacted through the arid repetition of facts learned in books. It is above all a communication of life. The task of the teacher is certainly to transmit the competence that he or she possesses. But that is not enough.

An increased accent on new means of education and communication seems to suggest that computers provide more highly qualified and faster instruction than human beings. While this attitude could lead to the underestimation of the essential nature of the role of the teacher and discouragement among educators themselves, it should be obvious that the technical, scientific, economic, and industrial advances occurring daily are giving an even more critical role to teachers and schools. Schools must respond not only to these new demands, but to the question of how to integrate them into educational goals. The figure of the teacher will emerge even more in the future as the educator of the whole person. Looking at the future from this perspective should serve to motivate the teacher to strive toward fulfilling this serious responsibility to the best of his or her ability.

Teachers should be inspired by reflection on their role as shapers of new generations for the benefit of humanity, in which they give assistance to youth to develop their intellectual capacity while instructing them in the various disciplines, all in the context of integral education of humanity. Personal contact with young people in which teachers help them to appreciate the values of life and to seek the truth is a major contribution of teachers to the life of the United States, both for its future and for its destiny. We should not forget that the future of a country takes place primarily in the field of education. This is especially true in our society, in which multiple problems in the social order, economics, technology, and science demand a strong response on the part of those involved in education in order that solutions be sought that aim at the authentic good of the person individually and humanity collectively. Without this focus on the common good, solutions may become directed toward special interests, based on economic, political, cultural, or national concerns that will eventually slide toward the moral degradation of society. In this context, the tremendous importance, responsibility, and dignity of the profession of the teacher are clearly seen.

4. COMMUNITY

The second aspect of a school that greatly affects those who spend a good part of their day there is that of community. Each school, whether private or public, is a community made up of students, teachers, other staff members, and the principal. One could also add parents and members of the civic community, for they participate especially in the support of the school, and the school should always consider collaboration with parents important, for it is they who have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. Each school has its own unique culture, developed from its history, traditions, and customs, which has a tremendous effect on those who "live" in the community. As the authors of a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1990 noted, "whether students and teachers think of a school as

factory or a family will have powerful implications for day-to-day behavior” (Deal & Peterson, 1991, p. 26).

Among the members of this community, the most active are the students, the teachers, and the administrative staff, each with a unique role to play.

A. THE STUDENT

Students are not objects of the school, but rather the principal subjects of the scholastic community. They are subjects who become progressively more knowledgeable, active, and responsible for their own education and formation. When students are not considered to be subjects, it is easy to slip into the perspective of relegating them as “resources for development” of a society that has a market mentality. The object of education, to the contrary, is that each individual will become more human, *being* more rather than *having* more. In order to be more, one must be not only *with* others, but *for* others.

B. THE TEACHER

Within the school community, teachers hold a position of great responsibility. Today’s teachers suffer from a variety of experiences not encountered by their predecessors. These experiences include the loss of esteem for the teaching profession in the eyes of the world; the orientation of formation for teachers, which has a special relevance in the United States in light of recent reports that indicate that large numbers of teachers are not fully qualified for the positions they are holding (UNESCO, 1998); new technology and its implementation in the classroom; and the participation of teachers in educational changes.

Although in some parts of the world the teacher is valued as a leader in the community and respected by all, in many other countries teachers have suffered a loss of esteem in the eyes of society which often results in a loss of esteem in their own eyes. This has come about through a variety of factors, for example, poor formation in the teaching profession, lower pay than other professionals, less involvement and interest on the part of parents in the education of their children, and the degradation of the working conditions in many schools. All is exemplified by violence, vandalism, insufficient resources for educational materials, a lack of funds for proper maintenance, and possibly an unappealing physical setting.

The description of a teacher depends greatly on a clear appreciation of the role by the one called to teach. One could describe a calling to the teaching profession as a type of vocation. In other words, one teaches not so much in order to survive, to acquire a social prestige, or to meet practical needs, but because of a vision that teaching has a great effect on future generations.

A sense of frustration or overwork can easily result in a teacher who merely recites lessons without any enthusiasm either for the subject itself or for the aspects of the discipline that could lead students deeper in their for-

mation as solid members of society. But to avoid this, teachers must have assistance, especially that of adequate preparation. Formation of teachers requires competence in the discipline that they teach, in the didactics of that discipline, and in the science of education.

C. THE PRINCIPAL: AS LEADER, AS LEARNER

The role of the principal is fundamental to the success of the scholastic community because he or she is the head and director, and others follow both what is said and what is seen by way of example. The principal is watched closely by all members of the school community. There is a correlation between the extent to which the principal seeks the opinions and assistance of teachers and how well teachers cooperate with each other. It is noted whether the principal is seen in the halls and available to students and teachers alike, or is usually hidden in his or her office behind a secretary. If the principal communicates appreciation, praise, and support for teachers, they are likely to do the same for each other and for the students. If the principal has high expectations that students will learn, teachers and students will have similar expectations.

Perhaps one of the most important examples for a principal to set is that he or she is also a learner. R. S. Barth, a principal himself, stated in his book *Improving Schools from Within* that "as learners, principals have a bad reputation" (1990, pp. 126-127). He noted numerous justifiable reasons: lack of time, prior unsatisfying experiences, a feeling that school money and time could be used for other things, a feeling that attending courses manifests that one is imperfect, and the fear that if they learn something new, they have an obligation to implement it.

But the whole purpose of a school is for learning, and no one should consider herself or himself exempt. Surely the commitment of administrators to continuing formation will provide a wonderful model to teachers and students alike that all are joined together in the process of learning. Many of the skills that you practice are learned skills, or could be enhanced by the input from someone else. Learning, at whatever level, brings new life not only to the one who is learning, but to all with whom he or she comes in contact (Barth, 1990).

5. SERVICE

The third essential aspect of the function of a school is that of service. Each school provides a service by its very operation in forming its students for their own benefit and for that of society, but it is also essential for the common good that students learn to serve as well as to be served. The practice of service, at its root, is an obligation that demands that we uncover the God-given potential of every person.

To achieve this goal, it is important that the leaders of the schools and the school system itself have a mentality of service. For example, a principal of an elementary school in rural Nevada served students in the lunch line, helped students with their homework, and did maintenance work and other projects during the summer to indicate his total support of the school and his willingness to serve. Obviously this is not for every principal, but his example of participation and personal commitment spoke much louder than anything he could have said to encourage both teachers and students to serve one another for the benefit of all (Deal & Peterson, 1991).

This aspect of education is all the more essential in our times, given the individualism prevalent in society and the wide tendency to restrict the scope of education to training for a job, with exaggerated emphasis on immediate results and financial success. Today's fragmented society discourages helping one another, yet we are social beings, created to be a community. If children learn to serve one another in the community of the school, that attitude of availability and generosity will carry over into the other little communities to which they belong, such as their families, churches, neighborhoods, etc.

Service has many different forms and can be introduced into the life of a school in a variety of ways. I would like to discuss four that seem of particular importance. Although they may not seem to be directly of service, they provide the foundation for an attitude of service which will endure far beyond a single act of assisting another person. These four are moral education, cultural education, formation of conscience, and service to families.

A. MORAL EDUCATION

The moral education of young people is a particular and essential service to the individual students and to society as a whole, for the welfare of a country depends on the morals of its citizens. In light of the constantly changing, ever more bewildering context in which young people are growing up, it is imperative to train them for leadership, to teach them to assume responsibility so that they may have a positive influence on those with whom they come into contact in their adult lives. This does not signify the formation of a socioeconomic elite, but rather the education of students as leaders in service, wherever their future may take them and to assist them in developing the qualities of mind and heart that will enable them, in whatever walk of life, to work with others for the common good. The effects of a lack of any moral foundation can be seen ever more frequently in the accounts of violence, deceit, and immorality that fill the news media. Much of this is caused by an individualism in which all actions are judged according to how they affect the individual performing the act, but with little regard for the effect on others or the long-term effects on the individual. An attitude of serving one another developed in small children in schools across a nation could do much toward reducing this tendency in society as a whole.

B. CULTURAL EDUCATION

In addition to the tremendous service which moral education provides to society, cultural education should be another fundamental part of the formation of young people. Pope John Paul II recently told a group of students, teachers, and administrators from the schools of Rome that “the school’s task [is] to develop in the students an appropriate knowledge of the world, of cultures and of languages, and at the same time to help them search for the truth with an open mind, in order to form a free and responsible personality” (1999, p. 4). As the global society becomes smaller through advances in transportation and communication, it is essential that we learn to live peaceably with one another, appreciating the differences between us rather than judging one culture superior to another. To acquire this appreciation, however, requires knowledge of the other culture, for one cannot appreciate what one does not know.

This places a great demand on teachers and administrators, for prior to educating children to become culturally sensitive, teachers must have cultivated this value in themselves. Major noted “that education cannot be required to train individuals who are creative, tolerant, civically and ethically aware, and respectful of the environment if these same skills and capacities are not found in teachers themselves” (1996, p. 4). Although teachers cannot directly promote their personal values, nevertheless, every student knows well what values a teacher holds. Both moral and cultural education are probably taught far more through the actions of teachers and administrators than through actual lessons. Students pick up very quickly the differences between a teacher who treats all children equally and one who judges according to race, sex, or ability; between one who is available to listen to a child and one who never has the time; between one who helps students and other teachers and one who is concerned only for his or her own affairs.

C. FORMATION OF CONSCIENCE

The third aspect of service I wish to develop is that of the formation of conscience. It is closely related to moral and cultural education, both of which serve to form the consciences of students. Every man and woman has an obligation to form their conscience, to learn to distinguish good from evil, to study and reflect on issues fundamental to life. Sometimes the formation of conscience is downplayed because of an overemphasis on freedom of thought. Freedom of thought gives everyone the right to form and express his or her own opinion. But we must teach students to remember that their right to an opinion does not mean that their opinion is right! An individual private opinion, regardless of who the individual might be, can never be considered to be of equal value to absolute values and morals.

Students who have well-formed consciences will provide an invaluable service to their country. They will be aware of the people living and working

around them, concerned for their well-being, able to make decisions based on sound principles, and prepared to make a contribution for the benefit of others. This is especially important with the increase of technology, which makes possible many things that no one dreamed of in the past. But just because something is possible does not mean it is beneficial; it could also be detrimental.

Students should acquire an awareness of the importance of personal decisions in the private or political domain, as it is a fundamental lesson in learning to deal with questions concerning true cooperation with others. We must never forget that value-free education does not exist. During the particularly vulnerable years of childhood and adolescence, teaching will inevitably influence in a positive or negative manner. Therefore, schools that endeavor to form the whole person, not just a specific intellectual ability, are rendering an enormous service to society.

The United States of America, blessed by God with enormous resources, has a heavy responsibility in the larger community of people on this planet. Schools should include as a priority the education of young people to the imperatives of justice that should direct your national political, military, cultural, and economic policies. "In the absence of justice, no enduring peace is possible" (National Conference, 1972, p. 26).

D. SERVICE TO FAMILIES

Another area of service provided by schools is that of service to the family. Parents have the primary obligation to educate their children, but the state has an obligation to provide the means to assist in strengthening family life and to help parents fulfill the awesome responsibility of teaching their children. This task falls primarily on teachers and administrators, who demonstrate their belief in the family through their words and actions. Although family life is perhaps not taught as a course, especially in primary schools there is ample opportunity to emphasize the role of the family. This is made more difficult today by the extremely high percentage of children who come from non-traditional families, but the situation makes it more imperative that the family be supported, assisted, and given respect for its irreplaceable role in the advance of society.

You are well aware of the many and varied challenges confronting you in your work, yet you are also aware of the mission of all people, in whatever role they play in educating our young people, to ensure that they receive the formation necessary to fulfill such an imposing responsibility. And yet we know also the excitement of this challenge and mission, the adventure of education in the third millennium, and thus we have the courage to redouble our efforts to form the children of today into the leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for your tremendous dedication to the education and development of children, the hope of the future.

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