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Father Gillen

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SUGGESTED REMARKS FOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY AT BRITANNICA READING
ACHIEVEMENT CENTER, OAKBROOK, OCTOBER 6, 1970

Good morning. It is a pleasure to meet so many of you both from the metropolitan press and television, and especially, the news media representing our neighbors in and around Oakbrook,

You were invited here for several very special reasons. Some of you have already had a close look at the Britannica Reading Achievement Center. For those who haven't had the opportunity, you will do so a little later.

As you might expect, Britannica is justifiably proud of this Center and the service it performs. I am equally proud to be identified with the Britannica Reading Achievement Center as a member of its advisory board,

Here at this Center is the type of educational program with resulting educational progress -- that I have always advocated. Whether it is provided by the public or private sector, education must maintain pace with our changing world if we are to be capable of meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

That's why I like the word "achievement" in the name Britannica Reading Achievement Center. It means progress! And that's what the students do in these classrooms -- the "classrooms of tomorrow."

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Students who come here are motivated to learn. Using films, records, taped listening exercises and a lot more that stimulates them to their highest point of interest, they do achieve. This was proven with 2,000 students in Ohio before this Center opened. And it is being proven right here in Oakbrook.

Every week, students come in that door who are indifferent to the learning process at school, indifferent to motivation by their teachers or by their parents. We want to know why. So they are given a series of tests that analyzes everything from word skills to comprehension and a lot more in between. These tests identify strengths as well as weaknesses. Using this information, the specialists at this Center capitalize on the youngster's strengths to correct his weaknesses, and hopefully, turn a poor reader into a good one.

We weren't surprised to find in our testing and work with hundreds of children that there is a direct relationship between poor achievement in school and unsatisfactory reading ability.

This correlation - bad readers are most often poor achievers - is nothing new! Some educators have been talking about it for years -- and it bears repeating: if a child cannot read properly, he is unable to understand his other studies and falls behind in all subjects -- a domino effect. He is usually a poor speller, and also does badly at math. Too much time is spent on class assignments, and he is reluctant to do homework.

└ The first thing we've got to do is motivate this boy or girl, make him want to learn. └ That's exactly what we do in the "classroom of tomorrow."

└ As one student told Director Jerry O'Connor after experiencing his first class, "You mean if I don't do well in school I can come back here?" (careful)

└ But reading isn't strictly an Oakbrook problem. Did you know that:

....half of the nation's adults lack the literacy necessary to master such vital reading as a newspaper, driving manuals, or job applications?

....according to a survey underwritten by the National Reading Council and announced last week, one in eight adult Americans lack the reading ability to fill out a driver's application, public aid forms or even apply for a social security number?

....one out of four students nationwide has significant reading deficiencies, according to the U. S. Office of Education?

....in each classroom, regardless of area or circumstance, 18 to 30 students need help in reading?

....25% of today's first graders will become remedial readers while 40% of today's fifth graders will become high school dropouts, primarily because of reading and reading associated problems?

....in Chicago, the average eighth grader is 1.2 years behind in reading?

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There are a good many more statistics I could quote to demonstrate the seriousness of this problem. Reading is a problem of survival -- those who can't read have difficulty surviving in society. ^{our modern} As an educator, and more importantly as a concerned citizen, I have observed this problem growing more serious all of the time. I'm glad to see that the current administration is, too. Earlier this year the president's message on Educational Reform contained some ideas with which I wholeheartedly concur.

He strongly emphasized the "Right to Read" program -- giving everyone the opportunity to read to the full level of their ability by the time they graduate from school.

Education is both a public and an individual concern. More and more it is becoming a private concern. Where the public sector fails, the private sector ^{must} ~~will~~ step in -- especially in the important area of education. This is now being done in many parts of the country. Private business is going into the classroom to help improve the academic performance for which the public is paying.

The winners, naturally, are the children. I'm all for this if it means progress. That's what I like about the Britannica Reading Achievement Center. It doesn't assume the role of education or the teacher. It supplements them.

That's one of the reasons I am here today, I have been given this opportunity to make an important announcement to point up our support and dedication to the quality type of education I've just been talking about.

As of this month, the Britannica Reading Achievement Center has been engaged by the Catholic Diocese of Joliet to test about 9,000 students in 83 elementary and intermediate schools.

Beginning last week, we began testing students in the second, fifth, and seventh grades. Using reading diagnostic tests, we are in the process of identifying the students in these 83 schools by reading ability. Within three months the tests will be completed, the results analyzed, and turned over to each of the 83 schools and the parents of the students. There will also be a follow-up program recommending procedures that the schools may wish to follow in upgrading all or portions of their reading programs.

From all of this, the schools and the teachers will be able to identify the underachievers, provide special help for them, design special programs, or map other solutions to identified problems.

We don't know yet what the tests will show. But I do know there is no better way of handling a potential problem than resolving it before it becomes totally unmanageable.

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↳ To help those students who need help most, the Britannica Reading Achievement Center will give 166 scholarships to deserving students. ↳ There will be one full scholarship for all-expense attendance at the Center and one partial scholarship given to two students in each of the 83 schools. ↳ Other students who wish to do so may attend the school at their own expense.

↳ Because of our concern for reading and academic excellence, all program materials ^{land services} are being donated. ↳ If we were to put a cost on this, it would be \$375,000. That's a bargain by anyone's standards. ~~For this amount~~ ^{for about \$4.00 per student}, the Joliet Diocese will know exactly where students excell, where they need help -- and how to provide that help.

↳ Most important, the Joliet Diocese recognizes the value of reading to a good school system. ↳ Here we have the Britannica Reading Achievement Center on ^{the} one hand working with the Joliet Diocese on the other hand for the mutual benefit of academic excellence in today's students.

↳ In an era of declining vocations, budgetary limitations, and without immediate hope of state aid, the Joliet Diocese made a bold move in soliciting the help of the Britannica Reading Achievement Center. ↳ I'm pleased that the program of the Britannica Reading Achievement Center has been recognized as capable of meeting the needs of a school system and its 9,000 students. It is evident that the Center is performing a vitally needed service and doing it as only the private sector could.

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The Rev. Niles J. Gillen, superintendent of schools for the diocese, will tell you more specifically about the program. It is a pleasure to share the same platform with such a forward-thinking man.

He is a person who has put the education of his school children above all other considerations in this alliance. As I said before, the winners are going to be the children. I hope to see more of this type of cooperation in education so that our country can grow and achieve the level of academic excellence called for by the end of the 1970s.

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