

**Testimony of  
James R. Vivian, Director, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
at a Field Hearing of the  
Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities  
of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources on  
"School Reform in Connecticut: Lessons for our Nation"  
Held at the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
in New Haven, Connecticut  
on September 3, 1992**

Senator Dodd, I want to extend to you, to Senator Sullivan, and to the other witnesses today a very warm welcome to Yale University which, together with the New Haven Public Schools as our partner, has conducted the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute for the past fifteen years. On behalf of the many New Haven and Yale faculty members who have participated in our Institute, I want you to know how appreciative we are of your interest in hearing this morning about the results of their collaboration. The Institute represents a longstanding commitment of Yale University to assist in strengthening teaching in our local public school system and--by example and with our direct assistance--schools in many other cities and towns across the nation. In fact, our Institute held in this room this past December a second national meeting of representatives of programs from many different states which are working in the vein of our Institute here. I believe that it is therefore fitting that you would decide to hold this hearing here today.

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Senator, this hearing is also very timely. The National Endowment for the Humanities recently announced that they had awarded to Yale an endowment challenge grant to assist us in making the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute the first collaborative program of its type to be permanently established within any University. We have set a goal of raising a \$5 million endowment for our work in the humanities to provide Yale the capacity to conduct this work in perpetuity. By taking this unprecedented step, I earnestly hope that we send a strong signal to colleagues at other universities and schools that such a program can be not only developed but also sustained.

In my view, one of the highest educational priorities for the 1990s and beyond is for universities and schools to work together at the local level to improve the quality of urban public education. After a decade of intense scrutiny of our nation's schools--after almost countless studies and reports--I believe, at least I hope, we are rediscovering a basic fact concerning education reform: That is, whether or not the changes which have been

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envisioned in the reports, enacted by state legislatures, mandated by local boards, sought by the business community can be made depends to a very considerable degree on the support, the leadership, and the preparation of school teachers. Of all the ways schools and universities might collaborate, then, there are no programs more important than those that concentrate on excellence in teaching. The needs of teachers in our public schools are compelling, and to strengthen teaching in public schools we must provide for the ongoing preparation of individuals already in the profession, as well as those now entering it.

The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute therefore developed an approach that balances study in the central academic disciplines with an emphasis on the practical application of teachers' new learning in school classrooms. This, the genuinely collegial relationship between University faculty members and school teachers, the emphasis on teacher leadership within the Institute and in schools, as well as the duration of our collaboration, are central features that distinguish the program.

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Since its establishment in 1978, the Teachers Institute has become by far the most comprehensive, intensive, and sustained collaboration of Yale faculty members with public school teachers. Between 1978 and 1992 the Institute has offered 93 different seminars in the arts and humanities, and in the sciences; 74 Yale faculty members have given Institute talks or led one or more seminars. I would note with great pride and appreciation that Yale's Acting President Howard R. Lamar not only played a key role in the establishment of our Institute in 1977, but that he has himself led two Institute seminars, one in 1978 and another in 1991. More than three-hundred individual teachers have completed the program, and two-thirds of them are currently teaching in New Haven. More than 40 percent of all New Haven secondary school teachers of the humanities and the sciences have completed the Institute, many more than once.

Finally, Senator, this hearing could not be more timely because of the recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. We are indeed fortunate that Connecticut's senior Senator sits on this Committee whose

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work on this and other legislation has been so instrumental in assisting our nation's colleges and universities and schools.

Senator, as early as 1985 I was pleased to have the opportunity to testify in Washington before this Subcommittee concerning a bill that Senator Dale Bumpers had introduced which would have provided for the establishment nationwide of teachers institutes in the humanities. He indicated then that our Institute was the kind of program for which his bill would have provided encouragement and support at many locations across the country. Similar provisions were then incorporated last year in legislation which was passed by the House of Representatives, though not by the Senate.

It is therefore heartening that Title V of the reauthorization provides for the professional development of teachers through programs conducted in partnership by universities and schools on a local basis. I am encouraged to find there, among other provisions, an emphasis on programs which address

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course content in key academic subjects and a priority given to partnerships that demonstrate their long-term feasibility. Based on our experience in New Haven, I believe these are two of the indispensable elements in effective collaborative programs.

Senator, if the Congress does appropriate for the next fiscal year the sum of money which Title V authorizes for this precise purpose, you will provide very necessary assistance for programs like our Institute which can assist the nation's schools in specific ways.

From a ten-year study of our experience in New Haven, we know that collaborative programs which emphasize subject matter, if they are conducted with teacher leadership and on a collegial basis, can further prepare teachers in the subjects they teach, heighten their morale, increase their expectations of their students' ability to learn, and encourage them to remain in teaching in urban school districts. Senator, the proportion of New Haven teachers who have reported that the opportunity to participate in our

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Institute influenced them "a lot" to stay in teaching in our community's public schools more than doubled during the past five years.

Because of the magnitude of the longstanding--and arguably worsening--crisis in the preparation of our nation's 2.4 million public school teachers, only a greatly increased federal investment in our educational future holds any real prospect of making more widespread these kinds of collaborative practices. As you know, systematic change in our education system cannot be made with spare change. Successful models have demonstrated the value of their approach, and the time has come for the resources to be made available for these practices--and the systemic changes they foster--to be spread to cities and towns across the country.

In short, I believe the Congress passed landmark legislation this year in support of partnerships designed to strengthen teaching and learning in schools. This comes, as you know, after the decade of the 1980s when the percent of the federal budget spent on education declined from 2.5 to 1.7

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percent.

In my view, it is therefore urgently required that there should be an increased federal role in this area. From my perspective at the local level, the need for such strategic federal assistance has only become more obvious during the past seven years since the Congress first considered aspects of the proposals which recently were enacted.

Again, Senator Dodd, thank you for holding this hearing at Yale today. We are truly grateful for your strong interest in and support for strengthening the education all our students receive in schools in Connecticut and across the country.