

***RONALD REAGAN LIBRARY DOCUMENTATION REGARDING
PRESIDENT REAGAN'S DESIRE TO MEET WITH CHARLOTTE
THOMSON ISERBYT, FORMER SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR, U.S. DEPT.
OF EDUCATION, 1981-1982.***

- (1) Text of handwritten note from President Ronald Reagan to Edwin Meese, III, White House Chief of Staff, dated August 2, 1982, regarding Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt's July 2, 1982 letter to President Reagan. Charlotte's letter requested a private meeting with the President related to need to abolish the U.S. Dept. of Education and includes valuable information regarding funding, development, and dissemination nationwide and internationally of Marxist educational research and programs. Such a meeting never took place.

- (2) Related documents are included in this packet.

Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt served as Sr. Policy Advisor, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Dept. of Education from 1981-1982 when she was relieved of her duties due to leaking Project BEST, an important computer technology grant, to *Human Events*. This grant was designed to control curriculum in all schools of the nation.

This packet dated March 17, 2016, contains documents provided by the Reagan Library in response to a Freedom of Information request made by Charlotte Iserbyt November 6, 2015.

VERBATIM TEXT

"Dear Ed,

I can't check this with Dept. of Ed. for reasons that will be clear when you read it. I feel though that maybe I should see this lady regarding the things she has brought up.

Let's talk about this when I get back from this junket.

Ron"

[Edwin Meese - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_Meese

Ed Meese

Dear Ed

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Let's talk about this when I get back from this junket.

Ron

F. 09260555

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date: August 2, 1982

NOTE FOR: EDWIN MEESE III

The President has

- seen
acted upon
commented upon

the attached; and it is forwarded to you for your:

- information
action

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
(x-2702)

cc:

*Note to Ed Meese from the President
regarding letter from Charlotte
Thomson Isorbyt on the Dept.
of Education*

CHARLOTTE THOMSON ISEBYT
2324 19th Street, Washington, D.C. 20009
202-462-5153

July 7, 1982

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Reagan:

I understand that the White House has received many letters and petitions requesting that the Department of Education (DOE) be abolished, that Secretary Terrel Bell be asked to resign and replaced by a Secretary more in tune with your philosophy, and that grants and contracts relative to the Secretary's Technology Initiative be cancelled or broken. Friends of mine across the country inform me that they have either received no reply to their letters or that they are receiving replies from the Department of Education which do not even address their concerns.

Leading conservative organizations and media (national and state) are concerned that the Reagan agenda for education is hardly distinguishable from that of President Carter and the NEA. Your promise to abolish the NEA/Carter Department of Education did not include a promise to replace it with a foundation for education. Your publicly stated concerns over the issues of manipulation of school children and declining test scores were not couched in terms that would allow for the present continuation of federal support for the development, evaluation, and dissemination of behavior modification/values clarification/social change curriculum and/or basic skills computer-based courseware (curriculum).

Why is it that scarce tax dollars continue to flow to education associations that publicly oppose and sneer at everything you stand for? The most recent example of this is the DOE's award of a contract to the Association for Educational Communications (AECT) to carry out Project BEST - Basic Education Skills through Technology. Are you aware that the Advisory Board of Project BEST includes education associations which have for years opposed any position or policy to the right of President Carter or Senator Kennedy. In fact, one of the prime beneficiaries of Project BEST (which will be strengthened by its significant role in the Project), and a member of the Advisory Board, is the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSO) which in a joint statement with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), dated April 7, 1982, came out against many of your education proposals. The concluding paragraph of the joint statement released to the press follows:

"Briefly stated...CCSO and NASBE Joint Legislative Conference speaker Haynes Johnson, a well-respected Washington Post commentator, mentioned that it appears that there is almost absolute consensus that we are headed down the wrong economic path ... the one major dissenter, however, is the President, and he remains firm in his convictions. Johnson also predicted that President Reagan would be a one-term President."

As one of your long-time supporters (founder of the Maine Conservative Union in 1973, which is affiliated with the American Conservative Union), and as a former (recently resigned) political appointee in the Department of Education (served as Senior Policy Advisor to the Asst. Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement, which is the office handling the Secretary's Technology Initiative), I am infuriated that precious tax dollars are going to an organization (AECT) which includes on its Project BEST Advisory Board associations which have played a significant role in the decline of student test scores, which have been deeply involved in the controversy over humanistic education programs, and whose memberships include

a good number of educators who supported the creation of the Department of Education and who worked to elect President Carter in 1976 and 1980. It is unlikely President Carter would have rewarded conservative organizations that opposed his election with million dollar contracts.

What ever happened to the Reagan Revolution? Reagan appointees, who stood on principle and backed your philosophy to the hilt, have been asked to resign or have voluntarily resigned in disgust over the present policies of the Department of Education. How can your revolution take place without principled Reaganaut soldiers? The educationist philosophy of the past thirty years, now cleverly couched in terms such as the "New Federalism", "Partnerships with the Private Sector", etc., proceeds apace, and a strengthening of the very establishment you pledged to reduce, which has little or nothing to do with what actually goes on in our children's classrooms, continues without a hitch or a peep from the White House.

Cosmetic changes in the Department, i.e., the replacement of Carter liberals by Reagan conservatives on Advisory Boards, and the removal of a few controversial programs from the National Diffusion Network (NDN), etc., temporary changes which will disappear should there be a change in administrations, are of little or no significance. The abolition of the NDN, the federal government's transmission belt for federally-funded (developed) and evaluated programs, many of which deal with social change, and the abolition of the National Institute of Education (NIE), the left-wing education think tank (I know since I carefully went through many of its project files while on a 2-month detail to NIE), were essential steps for your administration to take. Why was this not done? Not only is the NDN securely in place, its federal control over curriculum (federal bureaucrats evaluate programs before they can go into the NDN), has been strengthened by moving it into the Regional Offices where it is in an even better position to compete with the private sector in the business of selling its federally-supported products. Why is it that the highly-principled and respected NIE Director, Edward Curran, was forced to resign due to his courageous letter to you recommending that NIE be abolished, when you, Mr. President promised the voters you would abolish the whole Department of Education, in which case NIE would have disappeared? I am sure that if you could see how NIE wastes taxpayers' money on silly and controversial social change projects that support the growth of the very educational establishment you pledged to cut back (most of which includes organizations which lobbied against your proposed education cuts), you would be very upset over the decision, taken while you were in Europe, to request Mr. Curran's resignation. You would undoubtedly initiate an investigation of exactly what Secretary Bell is up to in "his" Department of Education, as opposed to what he leads the public to believe as a result of his speeches, etc. Plans for education in the eighties, to which I have access, could not possibly please the Ronald Reagan I have come to admire, support, and believe in over the years.

Grassroots citizens, who worked day and night to get you elected, ask me "What is going on?" Since I am loyal to you all I can say is "I guess the President isn't allowed to know what is really going on. If he were, he would certainly take steps to reverse the present course in the Department of Education."

I would like to meet with you to discuss the concerns of your constituency. I feel that nothing less than a personal, private meeting with you will allow you to know what is really going on. I look forward to a reply from the White House to this letter and to my request for a private meeting. I trust, since I have recently resigned from the Department, that your staff will not refer my letter to the Department for a reply. Thank you so much for everything you are trying to do for our great nation.

Sincerely,

Charlotte T. Iserbyt
Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt

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'Secretary's Technology Initiative'

Bell's Education Department Betrays Reagan Policies

While President Reagan came into office with high hopes of breaking the stranglehold on public education wielded by groups like the National Education Association and their allies in the federal bureaucracy, HUMAN EVENTS has learned that his own secretary of education, Terrel Bell, is busily expending taxpayers' money to help perpetuate centralized control by the educationist network.

The vehicle for this effort is a four-year, \$16-million program known as the "Secretary's Technology Initiative," whose purpose is to develop and disseminate computer-based curriculum materials to be used across the nation. Amazingly, this initiative, to be financed out of the secretary's discretionary funds and given top priority among the department's programs, goes directly against the President's clearly enunciated educational policy.

The central thrust of that policy, as described in the 1980 GOP platform, is to virtually eliminate the federal role in education. Convinced that the federal involvement vests ultimate control of American education in the hands of educationist ideologues bent on increasing their own influence and power, the Republican platform promised to decentralize educational decision-making. Every major element of the President's program—including block grants, tuition tax credits, and eliminating the Department of Education—is directed toward this end.

Yet it is precisely such decentralization that Secretary Bell's technology initiative is meant to counteract. A key part of this initiative, for example, is a program known as Project BEST (for Better Education Skills through Technology), which is being developed by the Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT), an NEA spin-off group, under a two-year grant of \$855,282. A December 1981 draft outline of Project BEST, a copy of which has been obtained by HUMAN EVENTS, describes in vivid detail how its implementation will concentrate the development and control of curriculum materials in the very network of interest groups that has been responsible for the decline of the schools over the past two decades.

On page 27, for instance, the draft outline notes that an "effect of block

The image shows the front cover of a report titled "Project BEST Advisory Board". The title is at the top right. Below it is a large graphic featuring a television screen displaying a map of the United States, with a hand pointing at it. The text "Basic Education Skills through Technology" is written vertically next to the screen. At the bottom left, there is a small illustration of a person sitting at a desk with papers and a telephone. The background of the cover is white with some faint horizontal lines.

grants is to alter an array of established relationships that have been woven around categorical programs, each of which has its own network of service providers and users, interest groups, legislative sponsors and professional associations. The move away from categorical funding will disrupt patterns of interaction at the national, state, and local levels...."

Of course, it was exactly the disruption of the interaction among these interest groups that the President had in mind when he proposed block grants. However, the draft outline goes on to describe how the common use of modern computer technology can keep this network functioning.

Among other forms of technology, Project BEST envisions the widespread use of "national teleconferences," "videotape modules," "audio conferencing," and "electronic mail" to both continue and enhance the existing educational power structure. On page 4.9, the report notes: "Simply stated, the electronic mail is a central computer that allows individuals in a prescribed network to send and receive messages to and from each other. Messages are 'sent' but not delivered until the recipient requests them. In addition, the sys-

tem allows an unlimited number of 'bulletin boards.' These are usually lists of information that is stored and made accessible on-call to anyone wanting to read them (e.g., listings of new publications, announcements of upcoming meetings, etc.)."

The report adds that "Project BEST will develop four data bases" to be made available "through the electronic mail, toll-free telephone or by mail." These will include "an information bank of print and nonprint resources on basic skills and technology," "a directory of regional pools of experts," and "a microcomputer software exchange." When it is realized that "software" refers to curriculum materials put on computer discs for direct use by students in place of textbooks, it becomes clear that Project BEST is a blueprint for an unprecedented degree of educational centralization.

While the report frequently pays lip service to such notions as the need for local input and meeting local needs, the fact is that the curriculum materials, goals, "pools of experts," and so forth that are promoted by Project BEST's data banks will not be chosen by just anybody. On the contrary, only those state and local agencies, professional

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that ought to worry us, it's the team.

weapons."

Continued from page 1

nizations, and publishing firms that are specifically invited to participate in Project BEST will "mine which 'experts' and computerware" (i.e., curricula) should be promoted through the various data banks, and which should be dismissed as unacceptable.

It should such fears of "Big Brother"-type plots be chalked up to mere right-wing paranoia. A chart on page 3.3 of the report is only—even recklessly—explicit. Under the heading, "Project DESIGN FEATURES (What control or manipulate?)," the chart lists 25 factors. These include "State participation/selection process," "role of Advisors," "content of program," "production elements involved in materials development," "training of leaders," "resource people utilized," "estimated use of project's products and services," and "institutionalization: professional associations and States involved."

Who are these favored groups, which are to be given such extraordinary power to "control or manipulate" the future direction of American education, all courtesy of tax monies made available by Bell's Education Department? Don't your breath looking for any Reaganites among them. As already noted, the project is being funded by an organization that was formerly a division of the NEA, a group that has been vocally opposed to everything Reagan stands for.

Participating in Project BEST as members of the Advisory Board are some 18 NEA think-alike organizations, including the American Association of School Administrators, the National Council for the Formation of Teacher Education, the National Association of State Education Media Professionals, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In indication of what these groups are like, the CCSSO board voted recently to take stands on issues as the "'New Federalism,' the federal education, tuition tax credits, the Department of Education, and federal budget cuts." In exception, the CCSSO disagreed with the Administration policy in each of these

draft outline of Project BEST is quite open about that a major goal of the program is to give the future clout of its own participants,

including "the U.S. Department of Education and the professional associations that are cooperating in the project." The Department will benefit, says the report, because it "will have a practical example of...a functional State-Federal partnership." And the participating organizations "will benefit in the eyes of their dues-paying constituents if they can provide appropriate and relevant" information on the role of technology in education.

In addition, the report notes that the centralized information network "will be continuable without Federal support after the Project ends," through the cooperation of state education agencies and the professional associations at the national level "with a vested interest in maintaining these resources."

For conservatives, the centralization of curriculum information and development under the aegis of such left-oriented groups would be outrageous at any time, let alone under the Reagan Administration. As the Republican platform noted, these are the very kind of groups that have severely harmed schooling in this country by indulging in "one fad after another," and by promoting the "manipulative and sometimes amoral indoctrination" of elementary and secondary pupils.

In an obvious attempt to dampen criticism, the technology initiative is concentrating in its early phase on promoting education in the so-called "basic" skills. But this is hardly reassuring to conservatives. The report on Project BEST notes, for example, that "Generalizations to other areas and technologies can be relatively easy, but only after the Project has been successful." The report adds that the same processes used for basic skills in the initial phase can be used in "other curriculum areas."

Also disquieting is the peculiar notion held by some as to just what constitutes improving "basic" skills. A summary of Secretary Bell's remarks before a July 14, 1981, meeting on information technology paraphrases him as listing the following among "[p]otential educational roles for technology":

"The sabre-toothed curriculum. Students have to be better educated and more competent than ever before. We don't want to use school time unnecessarily to teach students things that modern technology makes obsolete, e.g., accuracy in long-division." As many conservatives see it, it is precisely such dependence on technology at the expense of basic drill in the fundamentals that is chiefly responsible for the declining achievements of recent years. For Secretary Bell to promote

such an approach in the name of "basic education" is mind boggling.

Veteran Reaganites in the government who have learned of Bell's technology initiative have reacted angrily and now believe he should be fired. They stress that this effort, which so thoroughly undercuts the President's goals, is not merely peripheral. Rather, it is the very cutting edge of Bell's program as secretary.

Bell is currently scheduled to participate in a special teleconference on the technology initiative to be held on June 22. An estimated 45 state education agencies will participate in the teleconference, which is being coordinated by the AECT at a cost of roughly \$75,000. And that figure is over and above the original \$855,000-plus grant received by AECT for Project BEST.

Also coming under fire from conservatives is Donald J. Senese, who, as assistant secretary in charge of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), is directly responsible for conducting the technology initiative. A former staff member of the House Republican Study Committee whose appointment as assistant secretary was originally applauded by conservatives, he is now being strongly criticized for meekly following Bell's bidding, with critics using such harsh terms as "sell-out" and "squish." In addition to his efforts on behalf of the highly questionable technology initiative, knowledgeable conservatives within the Education Department say he has been acquiescing in the installation of liberals in key departmental posts.

In a telephone interview with HUMAN EVENTS Senese downplayed the significance of the technology initiative and of Project BEST that are being pushed by Bell. "There are some conservatives out there who just distrust anything new," he said. He indicated that he knew nothing about any plans for centralized data banks, adding that "What some people may describe as control, we would look upon as coordination. We believe there is a federal role in bringing together the states and the private sector."

However, a close reading of some of the Department of Education's own documents reveals that there is far more to Project BEST and the technology initiative than Senese's bland statements might suggest. That's why growing numbers of conservatives believe Bell must be replaced as secretary, and the sooner the better. Otherwise, the President's own plans for returning control of education to parents and local officials seem destined for total failure.



Ronald Reagan Library

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Simi Valley, CA 93065-0699
800-410-8354
www.reagan.utexas.edu

March 17, 2016

In reply refer to:
Case # 2016-005/1

CHARLOTTE THOMSON ISERBYT
519 RIVER RD
DRESDEN ME 04342

Dear Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt:

This letter is in further response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated November 6, 2015, regarding Letter From Herself. We have processed and opened-in whole approximately 6 pages of Presidential records responsive to your FOIA request. FOIA requests for Reagan Presidential records are processed and reviewed for access under provisions of the 1978 Presidential Records Act (PRA) (44 U.S.C. §§ 2201-2207), which incorporates the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552) in substantial part.

Copies of these pages are enclosed.

At this time, you have the right to file an administrative appeal of any Reagan Presidential records responsive to your FOIA request that have been withheld under an exemption category of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). To appeal a FOIA exemption, the appeal must be submitted in writing to the attention of the Deputy Archivist of the United States, c/o the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, 40 Presidential Dr., Simi Valley, CA, 93065, by email to Reagan.library@nara.gov, or by facsimile to (805) 577-4074. You should also include a copy of your original request and our denial. Both your appeal letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "FOIA Appeal." You have 35 calendar days from the date of this letter to file your appeal. The Library will coordinate your appeal with the appropriate authority. Since these are Presidential records administered in accordance with 44 U.S.C. §§2201-2207, Executive Order 13489 and NARA regulations at 36 C.F.R. § 1270.46, NARA must notify the former and incumbent Presidents prior to the release of any information in response to an appeal. If an appeal is filed and a determination is made to release more information, once the provisions of E.O. 13489 have been met, we will contact you.

If you have any further questions regarding your FOIA request, please contact me,
shelly.williams@nara.gov or 1-800-410-8354, ext. 74012).

Sincerely,

SHELLY WILLIAMS
Archivist