

Minutes CESE Annual Meeting, June 25, 2012

Out-going president Terry Dunbar called the annual CESE meeting to order on Saturday, June 23, 2012 at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico (UNM). Terry opened the meeting by asking those in the audience to introduce themselves. Following these introductions, he began his speech:

I have been a teacher for a long time. I have thought about school improvement for a long time. I want to speak today to those teachers in the audience who want our schools to be better. I want to speak to the non-teachers in the audience who also want school improvement but do not understand why the schools have not gotten better. And I hope to end by explaining why organizations like CESE are critical if we are to attain improvement in New Mexico schools.

Much is dependent on the life of a teacher. I think every teacher wants to add value to his or her school. We start every year with a positive attitude. We plan interesting and effective lesson plans, we vow to make a connection with every one of our students, and we hope for harmonious relationships with fellow staff members. Many of us will achieve those goals. It would be nice if, when we succeed in these efforts, that we be recognized if not rewarded for our positive contributions. When we add value, we would like for it to be seen.

Yet somehow our system of schooling denies us much of the satisfaction we seek. It seems that every year the expectations laid upon us increase. And those factors that we consider so important, the little things that make for overall success, are not always noticed and rarely acknowledged, except by the most perceptive of administrators. Our colleagues don't have much of an opportunity to note our classroom acumen – they're busy in their own classrooms. We have to content ourselves with the personal joys of a job well done. The priceless comments of students, those little you-had-to-be-there moments, the joy you feel when you see the light bulb go off over a student's head, these are what we work for. We know the little things that add value to a school, and that's what helps us get up in the morning and look forward to going to work.

Our job satisfaction doesn't come from our salaries. Never did, probably never will. I don't know any teachers who went into education to get rich. We do, however, want our salaries to be based on a fair and just premise. Now that we are on the verge of having pay tied to the performance of the students in our schools, we would very much like to see that the state uses a system that is fair. This is especially important given that the portions of student performance that will make up most of the school's grade are math and reading Standards Based Assessment test (SBA) scores. At the secondary level, not all teachers teach math or reading. So our school's grade, and therefore our grade, and therefore our pay is based largely on someone else's students.

An online survey of 10,000 American teachers, released in March, found that only 16% believe linking student performance and teacher pay is "absolutely essential" or "very important" in retaining good teachers. That's down from 28% in 2010. The findings

show that teachers welcome evaluations. "They just didn't want it all based on one test." And the survey found that teachers simply don't trust the tests. Only 26% say they're "an accurate reflection of student achievement." We read trash talk about teachers who want to avoid accountability. The governor has said she wants teachers whose students don't score proficient on the SBA to be rooted out, shamed, and fired. You may have heard me refer to this as the neutron bomb approach to school reform. Save the buildings, wipe out the people.

In my experience, teachers are not averse to evaluation. We want the best for our students and our schools. We don't mind being judged on what goes on in our classrooms. If test results must be used as part of the evaluation process, then care must be taken to ensure that it is done in a logical and reasonable manner. You may have read an article I wrote for a recent edition of our newsletter, the Beacon, in which I wrote about one of our board members, Steve Brugge. Steve is an excellent teacher. His students and their parents agree that he is excellent. Yet Steve is likely to retire soon because of the B.S. that he sees in schools and education. Will our new evaluation system provide recognition to Steve and others like him for the fine work that they do? Will the system be able to retain its best and brightest? Will school evaluation be used to help schools learn from one another? Will the evaluation system encourage teachers to collaborate or will it foster competition between them?

In the past few weeks, there has been news that the Governor and Secretary of Education-designate have compiled a list of teachers who are not in unions and then tried to conceal it by asking those involved to use private emails. Word got out anyway. What do you think they intend to do with the list? What other purpose would they have had except to divide us, to turn one against another? Would that foster more collaboration between teachers and schools?

Nevertheless, thanks to *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), that's what we use. NCLB was passed in 2001. That was the year of 9/11! Doesn't that sound like a long time ago? Doesn't that law seem very outdated now? Yes, I know that waivers will make it possible for states, including New Mexico, to propose their own systems of school and teacher evaluation. Yet New Mexico's proposed system uses the same kinds of tests! So if that's the way it's going to be, doesn't it make it all the more important that we do the job right?

Doesn't it make it all the more important that there are organizations to monitor the state Public Education Department (PED) to make sure the job of school and teacher evaluation is done right? That it is done in a mathematically defensible way? Wouldn't it also be helpful if members of such organization were able to demonstrate ways for schools to collaborate and share best practices? That's what CESE members have been doing. That's why the work we do in CESE is critical at this time. Recently the value our work has been recognized by some folks who have an influence over state educational decisions. I am hopeful that this coming year will see our thinking used in more and more useful ways. I want those of us in CESE to feel that we have truly added value to the system.

Our incoming president, Ken Whiton, will be talking about our goals for the coming year. I also look forward to hearing our speaker, Pauline Eisenstadt, talk about her experience in the legislature. I really am curious to know why some of the knuckle-headed decisions are made, Terry said.

Outgoing treasurer Jerry Shelton followed by reporting that CESE has funds, mostly due to a generous donor, Marvin Mueller, whose contributions helped finance NMSR's radio show *Science Watch*, in which CESE members participated.

Terry then introduced next year's slate of officers:

Ken Whiton, president
Terry Dunbar, vice-president
Marilyn Savitt-Kring, secretary
Steve Brugge, treasurer

There were no new nominations. The slate was approved, and Terry handed the presidential gavel to Ken Whiton. Ken began with some personal history. Jerry Shelton, Ken said, encouraged him to join CESE. Later Ken joined the board, and now he is CESE president. Ken presented goals for the upcoming year:

1) Continue the Murfin work. This is our most important contribution to teaching and learning in New Mexico. No one else is setting aside hunches, solutions that feel good, or solutions based on anecdotal information, in favor of rigorous research, statistical analysis, and presentation of the facts. At this moment, "Think New Mexico" is pushing their "Smaller Schools Initiative," claiming they have research showing, "smaller schools have better graduation rates and stronger school achievement, particularly for the most vulnerable students." Walt Murfin's method proves otherwise. Meanwhile the Santa Fe School District is already moving in that direction.

No other organization is able to separate those factors, which affect student performance but are outside the control of school staff, from areas that are. No other organization can tell when a school is outperforming or under-performing what is expected of it, based on demographics. This is not to make excuses for poor performance. It is to show the role society plays in student achievement and the limitations of our schools. Others, including PED, have made attempts, but the Murfin analysis has proven they fall short.

2) Expand the audience for the Murfin work. Presentations have been given in several forums. Who else needs to hear what has been developed? How can they be reached with limited funds and time?

3) Clarify CESE's roll in educational improvement, as strictly non-partisan, and neither pro-union nor anti-union. Solutions based on political ideology have failed.

4) Continue supporting public policies that result in better science teaching and

encourage members to take part in the political process. Rather than only reacting to anti-science proposals, CESE will advocate for legitimate, peer-reviewed science.

5) Creationists will have to explain why they want to redefine science to fit their theology. Instead of just opposing bad legislation, we can also support good legislation.

6) Recruit new members. CESE is unique among organizations, working to improve teaching and learning. CESE invites, listens, and welcomes teachers into their ranks and respects the complexities of teaching. One group missing from our membership is principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, so it is important to recruit them and respect the complexities of administration and learn from them.

Dave Thomas followed Ken with a magic trick:

Our web address has changed from CESAME-NM.org to CESE.org. We purchased the name from Rob Skelton who lives in Australia.

Dave then levitated little objects of mylar with a hand-held Van-de-Graaf wand.

Next, Kim Johnson introduced our guest speaker, former state Senator Pauline Eisenstadt. Because CESE is a 501(c)(3) organization, we can't be politically involved, Kim explained. We can be asked to give information, but we can't go door-to-door campaigning. Pauline ran and served in New Mexico state House and state Senate, the first woman to do so. She served under four governors, two Democrats and two Republicans, roughly between 1984 to 2000 with a break in between. Her district included Rio Rancho, Corrales, and Bernalillo. Her book, *A Woman in Both Houses*, was published by the University of New Mexico Press. She recently appeared on a Channel 4 TV show with Stuart Dyson. She has been a CESE member since she retired from political life. Pauline is still sought after for advice.

The following summary comes from Pauline's talk and her book.

Pauline said she appreciated being asked to speak here. She related an incident when she was walking along the Bosque and met someone who said, "You used to be somebody."

The legislative leaders she served with had "large personalities." When she began her political career, she walked into the "patron system." Pauline quoted Margaret Mead's definition of this system -- leadership and authority tended to focus on one person. The legislature was at the time controlled by twelve families. Pauline had to meet these leaders, and if she got their support, they would tell the rest of the family how to vote. As an Anglo female, she had to deal with male Hispanics who wanted to tell her what to do; however, Pauline argued with them. Although the patron system still lingers in northern New Mexico, she said, there have been many changes.

She chaired the Majority Caucus committee and served on many others, including the Appropriations and Finance committee. She learned that the most important committees

concerned money. She was appointed a member of the National Conference of State Legislatures and learned that other states had many concerns in common, such as budget, partisan battles, and end-of-session crashes.

At the beginning of her career, the state's annual budget was \$1 billion. In 2012 it reached \$5.4 billion, 62% of which goes to education.

While serving on the Appropriations Committee in the House, committee members were told that there would be a "mark-up;" that is, the decision of what bills that would be passed would be decided late in the evening—they would wait till after everyone left. She was told not to eat or drink anything after 5 p.m. because if you left the meeting to go to the bathroom, you might lose your bill. You had to be in the room, sitting at the table.

The most important issue in her district during Pauline's first term was the need for a new bridge over the Rio Grande. Most of Albuquerque is located east of the river, and the westside commuters had an hour drive, back and forth to work each day. The Senate approved the bill to build the Paseo del Norte bridge, but it stalled in the House. The reason was Raymond Sanchez, who opposed the bill because it ran through his primarily rural district. As she made the rounds talking to people for support, Sanchez followed her, talking to the same Democrats asking that they oppose the bill. She managed to gain the support from some westside Republicans, so they got the bill passed to reauthorize a small amount of money from a severance tax bond to designate it for the Paseo del Norte bridge.

They then needed money for the right-of-way acquisition for the bridge. She went to Governor Toney Anaya office trying to figure out how they would raise the remaining \$43 million. They got the remaining funds by selling debenture bonds, which had not been done by New Mexico before. However, another bridge is now needed.

During her second House term, she was chair of the House Rules Committee. In a 30 day session, this committee determines if the Senate bills are germane (have budget or appropriation implications) and can therefore be debated in committees. One of the leaders asked her about one senator's bill. She told him it was germane. He wanted to know how she knew. Pauline answered that she read the bill. He said he didn't want it to be germane. She replied that he then would have to find someone else to read the bill. After a pause, he said, "Pauline, you have bigger *cojones* than anyone up here."

Another bill that Pauline worked on was the creation of the Petroglyph National Monument. The costs were to be shared with the city, state, and federal governments. Studies indicated that this monument would attract visiting tourists. These petroglyphs, considered by some to be rock graffiti, are art forms created on rocks. Many groups testified in favor of this monument, and the legislation was finally passed.

Pauline was also instrumental in obtaining funding for the Nurse Midwifery Graduate Training Program which enabled the College of Nursing to train nurse midwives to deliver babies in rural NM, as they delivered 30 per cent of the babies in this state.

A bill to adopt the bizcochito as the state cookie was introduced. An amendment to this bill followed, causing its sponsor to reassess his bill to a “do not pass.” The amendment failed, although not unanimously. The amendment read “the state cookie shall be the lady from Sandoval County,” which was Pauline. For two days, she was the “state cookie.”

Pauline told of a time when Manny Aragon, president pro tem of the Senate, approached her desk, holding a sheet of paper with three columns written on it. He wanted \$25,000 of *her* capital projects (pork) for either the Hispanic Cultural Center or the Balloon Fiesta Park. She asked him what the column in the middle was for. He replied, “That is my s--t list for those who don’t give me anything.” Pauline said the projects were good, but they weren’t in her district. She laughed and told him she would think about it. As it turned out, none of the projects passed that year because they were talked to death and never came to a vote.

Manny Aragon was sentenced to five and half years in prison for three federal felony counts of conspiracy and mail fraud in a scheme to defraud the state of about \$4.4 million in the constructions of the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Courthouse in Albuquerque. This was nine years after Pauline retired from the Senate. She voted for this bill because Aragon said it was needed. However, the cost of the bill was bloated, and Aragon and his partners stole those extra funds.

The New Mexico state Board of Education (SBE) passed new Science Content Standards, which were adopted on August 22, 1996. They were very deficient in several areas of modern science, especially evolution and the age of the Earth. There were editorials in newspapers that said the SBE had failed. During the first week of the Senate session in 1997, Pauline introduced a single-page bill, Senate Bill 155, to enact a new section of the Public School Code. It essentially said that the state Board of Education would adopt the curriculum standards with regard to the teaching of evolution to conform to the National Academy of Sciences’ national science education standards for life sciences and earth and space sciences.

Pauline said the place exploded. She received death threats, and the police followed her around for protection. Pauline said as the battle continued, it reminded her of the movie *Inherit the Wind* she had seen many years ago.

The Christian Coalition had begun to lobby many bills, and they were opposed to SB 155. Pauline noted that of all the bills they summarized, SB 155 was the only one that had an “Appendix A,” which among other statements, said was, “. . . an all-out war and the targets are marriage, the sanctity of life, the family, the Founding Fathers, Biblical virtues, and even Christ Himself.”

As a result, scientists also began to organize as lobbyists. Those who testified in favor of SB 155 were Nobel Prize winner, Murray Gell-Mann; scientists and educators James Findley, Dave Thomas, Steve Getty, Genie Scott, Alan Hale, April Holladay, Mark

Boslough, Marshall Berman, Timothy Moy, Kim Johnson, and Steve Brugge. High school student Michael Yates testified that his biology courses were not adequately preparing him for college.

Those who spoke against the bill were Alan Morgan, the current state school superintendent. He said the legislature should not be mandating that certain theories be adopted for the school curriculum. Los Alamos scientist John Baumgardner said evolution was a fraud because the fossils did not reveal all the steps from primitive to more complex forms, *and* it was an attack on the religious beliefs of New Mexico citizens. He was everywhere during that session, Pauline said, and he didn't seem to see the conflict between a 6000 year-old Earth and plate tectonics.

The Catholic Church supported the teaching of evolution, and so did the majority of Christian denominations in New Mexico, according to Gregory Barrette, minister of Christ Unity Church.

The Senate Bill 155 was approved on the floor of the Senate by a 24-17 vote with a roll call vote. It was primarily along party lines with two Republicans voting yes and two Democrats voting no.

Scientists tend to be rational, Pauline said, politicians not so. The *House* Business and Industry Committee were looking for reasons to kill the bill. The full committee was not present, so they tabled it. Usually this means the bill is dead, but this was not what happened next.

She visited one of the members of that committee that was absent from the meeting that day. She asked him what happened, and he said, “Pauline, I know you are right, but your scientists will disappear, and the Christian Coalition will kill us in the next election.”

The bill was removed from this committee and sent to the House Education Committee.

Pauline called on Tim Moy, as he could speak well to the legislature. Tim said there was no conflict between science and religion; however, it seemed that the House members were listening to the religious right.

We once again testified with our experts, Pauline said, including Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann, who was ignored. We lost on a vote of 6 to 5 to table the bill.

Greg Toppo of the Santa Fe New Mexican wrote that the most enduring image from, the session was the sight of Murray Gell-Mann leaving the House Education Committee after unsuccessfully urging them to pass this bill. The title of his column was “Lasting Image: State Thumbs Nose at a Genius.”

Pauline concluded by recommending that we get to know our legislators. Legislative bodies tend to resist new ideas. The patron system is changing. Today there are more women and a younger generation in power.

After Pauline's intriguing presentation, we adjourned the meeting for refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,

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