



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Kathy Speakman  
Program Chair  
Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association  
639 Buhart Wynd NW  
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Dear Kathy

From time to time, one hears a presentation of special quality. I was very impressed with a presentation at the 1993 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) conference in Washington, DC and I want to relay to you the particulars.

The presenter was Dr Iris Rotberg, senior social scientist with the renowned Rand Corporation in Washington, DC. Dr Rotberg talked about the problems with international test scores and clearly demonstrated why international test scores are inappropriate comparisons. She reviewed the myths (and systematically debunked each one) and called for action to deal with child poverty and students-at-risk, actions she said would improve schools and achievement levels. She is seconded from the National Science Foundation and is one of Rand's senior staff. She is furious at the constant abuse of test scores and is particularly upset with the work of Harold Stevenson who has studied student test scores in mathematics and science. (Stevenson is one of the academics featured in Joe Freedman's videotape, *Failing Grades*.)

I had a discussion with Dr Rotberg in Washington and she indicated that she would be very pleased to accept an invitation to a teachers' convention in Alberta. I do not believe she would be expensive; she has been in Alberta before, is motivated to come, and would probably not need to generate new stuff to present.

I recognize that you are well into your convention planning. There are many compelling reasons, I believe, for trying to work Rotberg into your program. By late 1993, the national test results (school achievement indicators program), focusing on Grade 11 mathematics across Canada, will be released. The Department of Education has quietly bought into the Stevenson study and will be releasing data about Alberta math results

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(Grade 11) fairly soon; senior Department officials have advised the Association that the math results are dismal in comparison to most other countries. The Department of Education has already established a "mathematics initiative," supposedly to improve the teaching of mathematics, in preparation for the announcement about national and international test score comparisons. By February 1994, mathematics test score comparisons will be a major issue.

I have enclosed some articles by Dr Rotberg. She has also done a fair bit of research into "Chapter 1" programs (additional federal funding for elementary students with special needs) and has given testimony, on behalf of the Rand Corporation, to the US Congress. Dr Rotberg can be reached as follows:

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Her secondment to the Rand Corporation likely concludes in November at which point she returns to the National Science Foundation.

I have made the speaker suggestion to North Central and Calgary City conventions. If you would like more information about Dr Rotberg, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

G R Thomas  
Executive Assistant

GRT/jml  
Enclosures  
cc A Kernaghan, President, Greater Edmonton Teachers'  
Convention Association