



City of Cambridge

R-1.

IN CITY COUNCIL

December 20, 1999

MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

- WHEREAS: This City Council was deeply saddened at learning of the death of Jeanne S. Chall on November 27, 1999 at the age of seventy-eight years; and
- WHEREAS: Jeanne retired in 1991 from the Harvard Graduate School of Education where she taught for twenty-six years; and was an expert on how children learn to read; and was an advocate of the phonics approach to reading; and
- WHEREAS: Jeanne was born in Poland and immigrated to New York City with her family; was the first in her family to go to college; and
- WHEREAS: Jeanne graduated from City College cum laude; earned her master's degree in 1947 and her Ph.D in 1952 from Ohio State University; and
- WHEREAS: Jeanne's passing will leave a void in the lives of all her surviving family, her sisters Sylvia Rauch, Miriam Warmbrand, and Shirley Decker and her seven nieces and nephews; and
- WHEREAS: Jeanne will be sorely missed by all she touched and loved; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED: That this City Council go on record extending its deepest sympathy to the family of Jeanne S. Chall at this time of such personal loss; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the Chall family on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council December 20, 1999.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Mayor Bluejay
all

#1 R-1 ✓

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Jeanne S. Chall, 78, Educator And Expert in Early Reading

By WILLIAM H. HONAN

Jeanne S. Chall, a leading expert on how children learn to read and a vociferous antagonist in at least two of the major educational controversies of the last quarter-century, died on Nov. 27 at her home in Cambridge, Mass. She was 78.

The cause was heart failure, said Ariadne Valsamis, a spokeswoman for the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where Dr. Chall taught for 26 years, until retiring in 1991.

Dr. Chall championed both challenging reading material for children and the use of phonics in basic reading instruction, as against limited-vocabulary texts and the so-called whole-language approach.

With the argument that easy is not necessarily good, she was a rigorous opponent of the prevailing view of reading specialists in the mid-1970's that if assigned reading was too difficult, children would become frustrated and give up trying to master it.

That view, Dr. Chall said, was responsible for a rash of "cute kiddie books" with lavish four-color illustrations, limited vocabulary and rudimentary syntax that made few demands on early readers.

Dr. Chall (pronounced shawl) attacked that orthodoxy with scores of books and articles in which she called for challenging primers.

Dr. Chall pressed her beliefs in a 1977 study that was commissioned by the College Board as part of a project to learn the reasons for a sharp decline since 1962 in average scores on the reading-comprehension part of the SAT. Although her report pointed to a number of possible explanations, it found that the scores tended to rise with the level of difficulty of the material students had been given to read from their earliest days in school.

Dr. Chall engaged in renewed combat in 1983, when, in the spring issue of *Contemporary Education Review*, she wrote a blistering review of a scholarly book, "On Learning to Read" (Knopf, 1982), by the psychologists Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan.

The Bettelheim-Zelan book, which had been almost universally praised by other professional educators, argued that the ability to decode words need not be taught but instead was intuitive, resulting without effort from the reading of imaginative, interesting stories. Accordingly, the authors said, the cure for the decline in reading scores was more entertaining and engaging primers.

Dr. Chall scorned that argument, maintaining that "comparisons of different beginning-reading methods



Martha Stewart/Harvard University

Jeanne S. Chall

over the past 70 years have found that methods that teach decoding earlier and more systematically produce better word recognition as well as better reading comprehension."

Dr. Chall also vigorously supported phonics, the method of teaching beginners to read by having them associate certain letters with the sounds those letters represent.

Many experts have de-emphasized phonics over the last two decades and instead adopted the whole-language approach, in which reading is taught through context rather than recognition of the alphabet. But Dr. Chall said her research showed that knowledge of the alphabet and familiarity with the sounds that make up words were crucial.

She expressed her view in "Learning to Read: The Great Debate" (Harcourt Brace, 1967), recognized as a definitive analysis of reading research.

Jeanne Stemlicht Chall was born in Poland on Jan. 1, 1921, and moved with her family to New York City when she was 7. She became the first member of her family to go to college, graduating cum laude from City College in 1941. She earned both a master's degree (1947) and a Ph.D. (1952) from Ohio State University, and taught at Ohio State, Teachers College of Columbia University and City College before joining the Harvard faculty.

Dr. Chall is survived by three sisters, Sylvia Rauch of East Brunswick, N.J., and Miriam Warmbrand and Shirley Decker, both of Rego Park, Queens, and seven nieces and nephews.

New York City High Schools Are Said to Pad Attendance

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

A commission that Gov. George E. Pataki appointed to investigate possible corruption in the New York City school system has found evidence of inflated student attendance figures at dozens of high schools, state officials who have read the panel's preliminary report said yesterday.

Attendance figures help determine how much state aid a school receives, and state officials have long suspected that some New York City schools inflate the numbers to get more money.

Those who have read the report, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the investigation had found that some high schools kept students on the attendance rolls even after those students transferred to private or parochial schools or moved out of state. One student who died in the summer of 1998 was kept on his high school's rolls for the entire 1998-99 school year, the officials said, even though the student's mother had informed the school of his death.

In another case, the officials said, a high school included a student on its rolls who had never enrolled at the school. The student had been marked late on 60 separate days, and the school had even issued a report card for the student, they said.

The officials said they expected Mr. Pataki to disclose more details about the investigation in a news conference this week. Mr. Pataki convened the commission in January to check the reliability of the attendance figures, and to investigate possible corruption and mismanagement at the city's School Construction Authority.

Neither investigation is finished, the officials said, but Mr. Pataki is disclosing some preliminary findings this week because he gave the commission an initial deadline of Dec. 1 to report back to him. The Democratic majority in the State Assembly, which has close ties to city education officials, has criticized the commission as a waste of money and questioned whether the investigations were necessary. Mr. Pataki has budgeted \$2.8 million for the commission in the current fiscal year.

Karen Crowe, a spokeswoman for Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew, said yesterday that she could not comment on the preliminary findings because the commission had not shared them with the Board of Education. Ms. Crowe added that the Board of Education was taking steps to improve the accuracy of high

school attendance figures, and that it had conducted its own investigations of several schools suspected of inflating attendance figures.

The state officials refused yesterday to discuss whether Dr. Crew or any Board of Education officials would be implicated in the commission's findings. The preliminary findings come after a scathing report last week by Edward F. Stancik, the special investigator for New York City schools, who charged that 43 teachers, 2 principals and 2 paraprofessionals at 32 city schools had been involved in cheating on standardized math and reading tests.

Dr. Crew fired three school aides and six teachers who did not have tenure on Thursday, after concluding

**Acting on suspicions
that inflated
attendance produces
extra state aid.**

that they had helped students cheat on standardized tests. Both Mr. Stancik's report and the state commission's preliminary findings come at a sensitive time for Dr. Crew, since the Board of Education is considering whether to extend his contract, and he is weighing whether he even wants to remain on the job.

When Mr. Pataki created the commission last winter, it was seen as a swipe at Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, with whom Mr. Pataki had a chilly relationship at the time. Mr. Giuliani at first joined Dr. Crew in criticizing the commission as a waste of time and money. But since then, Mr. Giuliani's relationship with Mr. Pataki has improved and his relationship with Dr. Crew has deteriorated.

Mr. Giuliani left no question yesterday that he now fully supported the commission, saying through his spokeswoman that Mr. Pataki and Roslynn R. Mauskopf, the state inspector general who leads the panel, "are to be commended for the work being done." The commission "is making a strong case in a constructive way for eliminating the Board of Education and the 32 local boards" and replacing it with a system that is "accountable to the mayor and the City Council," Mr. Giuliani said.



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1301 R
Resolution #1

Mayor Duehay, Vice Mayor Galluccio and
entire membership re: resolution on
the death of Jeanne S. Chall.

In City Council December 20, 1999

ORDER ADOPTED