

# The Competency Address

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*F*our score and more years ago our forebears brought forth on this continent a new notion, conceived in equality, and dedicated to the proposition that all are entitled to a free public education.

*N*ow we are engaged in a great debate, testing whether that notion or any notion so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of the war over minimum competencies. We have come to discuss the topic in hope that the competency movement will not serve as a final resting place for those of us devoting our lives to education. Because of the impact testing may have, it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do so.

*B*ut in a larger sense we cannot deliberate, we cannot equivocate, we cannot decide this matter. The state legislators, wise and otherwise, have mandated it far beyond our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it will be interested in what we do.

*I*t is for us, the educators, rather to get on with the unfinished work which the critics have thus far so noticeably begun. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that for the sake of students we take increased devotion to that cause for which they may have to give their last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that no weak students shall be retained in vain, that this nation shall have a new burst of basic skills, and that school systems of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish because some were judged incompetent.

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