

"Amer Reads": reading tests
public awareness prog to
get folks newly involved
3/2 with schools -
service & involvement

Imagine what like
in 1999 when all given tests

file

* Best practices

Draft

Some things work better than others

Recommended standards:

Best choices to make

(What works)

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM: MICHAEL COHEN

SUBJECT: MEETING ON NATIONAL STANDARDS

You will be meeting with a small group of experts (Marc Tucker, Diane Ravitch, E.D. Hirsch, Rick Mills, Roy Romer, Hugh Price, Don Stewart) as well as Secretary Riley and Deputy Secretary Smith, on national standards and tests on March 5. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a range of options about how to move this agenda forward. This memo should help to prepare you for the meeting by summarizing the status of your proposal for 4th and 8th grade standards and testing, and identifying additional actions to consider once that initiative is firmly in place.

These additional steps are not yet fully developed. Because this will be a brainstorming meeting, we expect additional ideas to develop. After this meeting, we will present with a decision memo with specific options and recommendations.

(First chance to get an honest assessment)

I. YOUR PLAN FOR NATIONAL STANDARDS AND NATIONAL TESTS IN 4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATH

Summary of Plan

In your State of the Union Address you challenged every state to adopt high national standards and by 1999, to test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met. These national tests will be:

- o **Aligned with widely accepted national content standards.** In 4th grade reading, the test will be aligned with the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading standards, developed through a consensus process involving reading specialists, curriculum experts, state officials and others throughout the nation. In math, the test will be aligned with the TIMSS international math standard agreed to by experts in 41 countries, including the U.S.. The TIMSS standards are also very highly consistent with the national standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- o **Based on existing, widely accepted tests that will produce individual scores for students and parents in terms of the national standards.** The new tests will be based on the existing NAEP and TIMSS tests, which are designed to be administered to samples of students and produce national or state-level scores only. The new tests will provide comparable scores for individual students, revealing how well individual students perform relative to clear national or international performance standards

- o **Developed by recognized test developers.** The U.S. Department of Education will contract with a test developer to create these tests. The contracting process will begin shortly. The tests will be piloted in Spring 1998, and available for use in schools throughout the country in the Spring of 1999.
- o **Voluntary for use by states and local school districts.** Use of these tests will not be required as a condition of receiving federal program funds.
- o **Licensed to test publishers and interested states and school districts.** As a result of this licensing agreement, the federal government will not be involved in administering or scoring the tests, and the tests will be readily available.
- o **Available to parents and students on the Internet once the tests have been administered.** Each year, after the tests have been administered, the test questions and answers will be released publicly and placed on the Internet, so that parents can find out whether their children are meeting national standards even if their state or district does not use the tests.
- o **The focal point for national efforts to prepare all students to reach the standards.** The point of the national standards and tests is to help improve, not just to measure, student achievement. Between now and when the tests are first administered, there must be a focused, sustained effort, and the local, state and national level, to prepare students for these tests. America Reads is one component of such an effort.

We will provide you an overview of the implementation strategy for this initiative shortly.

Reactions To Date

The reactions to your plan have mainly been quite positive. The Washington Post, USA Today, and many local and regional papers have expressed editorial support for this plan. As you know, the Business Roundtable endorsed it the day after the State of the Union Address. Maryland has already agreed to participate in the testing program, and Gov. Engler will announce his support later this week. Diane Ravitch and Checker Finn wrote a very supportive op-ed piece in the Washington Post last week (copy attached). We expect other education and business groups to weigh in positively as their Spring meetings occur. In addition, informal conversations with state and local education officials and business leaders around the country have been encouraging. They welcome the tests, and believe you have found a way of defining the issue that avoids old political battles. Based on conversations with a number of chief state school officers, I believe that California, New York and South Carolina will commit to participate in the testing program in the near future. A number of others are possible quickly as well.

Criticism of this plan has taken three forms. First, some have said that your plan goes too far. For example, Gov. Thompson wrote an op-ed piece in the New York Times, arguing that standards should be left to the states and local communities. Second, some in the education community have renewed the familiar argument that tests are not the solution to low performance. Instead, they argue that additional funding, better teachers, safer and more caring

schools are what's needed. Third, some (e.g., David Broder, Robert Samuelson) have argued that your plan does not go far enough, because it is limited to only two subjects and grade levels, because it is not accompanied by significant new federal funding to prepare students to reach the standards, or because you do not require students to pass tests in order to graduate from high school or receive financial aid for college.

II. POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Your plan for national standards and tests in reading and math is a significant step forward, especially in light of the controversy that has surrounded the standards movement in recent years. The most important thing you can do to advance the standards movement is to continue to press the case for every state to adopt these tests. This month, you will speak to legislatures in Michigan and North Carolina; meet with the chief state school officers here in Washington; and possibly appear with Delaine Eastin and a broad coalition of business, education, and labor leaders to announce California's support for your testing plan. The Defense Department has agreed to use the tests in the schools it runs in the U.S. and around the world; we are working to arrange a public announcement for this in the next several weeks. In addition, the Education Department will soon be prepared to announce the formation of an advisory committee to guide the test development process.

We are off to a good start: if we can line up California, New York, and Michigan to support the tests, a number of other states will follow suit. But we must not let up for a moment in this crusade, and we must be especially careful not to propose any new measures that will undermine state participation in the 4th and 8th grade tests -- because the most visible indicator of success or failure will be the number of states that administer those tests in 1999.

Assuming that the testing initiative continues to gain support, it is not too early to consider what else you can do to advance the standards movement and improve student achievement. The key questions are whether to propose national standards and assessments in other grades or subjects (and if so, in which), whether to leave these matters entirely to the states, or whether to adopt some kind of intermediary position. In considering these questions you should consider what steps make the most sense educationally, and also what steps will move the country forward rather than reviving tired arguments. Below I lay out some basic approaches.

Approach 1: Lead a sustained national effort to prepare students to reach the 4th and 8th grade standards.

Setting national standards and creating national tests is not an end in and of itself; it should be the starting point for serious efforts throughout the country to prepare students to meet these standards and thereby raise academic performance. The most important follow up to the plan you have already announced is to lead a sustained effort to improve reading and math performance even before the standards and tests go into effect. Your America Reads initiative, is one significant element of this strategy, but there is more to be done. In reading, this includes identifying and promoting effective instructional programs and teacher training programs, especially through Title 1 and Goals 2000. And it involves a sustained effort to encourage parents to read to their children on a regular basis.

A comparable effort is required in math. The TIMSS study highlights the need to undertake a massive teacher retraining effort, and to challenge textbook publishers to create world class textbooks. Employers and professionals, such as engineers and scientists, can be mobilized to help by tutoring students, helping to train and support classroom teachers, assisting in developing curriculum materials, and showing students how math concepts are used in the real world. We have been working with OSTP, the Department of Education and the National Science Foundation to develop a strategy for coordinating federal resources to improve teaching and learning in math, and for systematically reaching out to the mathematical, scientific and technical communities.

Pro's:

- o There is the more public support for a limited focus on the basics than there would be on a broader proposal involving other subject areas (e.g., history).
- o This approach has the best chance of avoiding debilitating old debates about national standards; by winning over Finn, Ravitch, Engler. et. al., we have begun to transform the debate about national standards into a more productive one.
- o Succeeding at this effort will make it easier to push a more comprehensive approach down the road; overloading it early on in the process with a more ambitious agenda may rekindle old debates and slow down progress on this more limited approach.
- o The most important thing to do is to help kids meet the standards; by sticking with this focused approach, we can spend scarce time and attention mobilizing resources to actually improve, rather than simply measure, student achievement.
- o If we can succeed in significantly raising student performance in these grades and subjects, achievement in other subjects and grades will also increase, because reading and math are a foundation for other learning, and because we will have demonstrated for the nation how to use standards and tests to boost achievement.

Con's:

- o Most of the arguments for national standards and tests in 4th and 8th grade reading and math can be made for other subjects as well: for the most part, well-crafted national standards will be more demanding than those set at the state and local level; we live in a mobile and diverse society, and national standards provide a common foundation for all; just as math is math regardless of where one lives, the same is essentially true of science, geography, and writing.
- o Our limited focus on reading and math could unduly restrict attention in local schools to these subjects, at the expense of science in elementary schools, history and literature in middle schools, etc.
- o Our limited proposal may seem small and inconsequential (even though it is not); we may be missing an opportunity to strike out more boldly.

- o As a strategic matter, we should recognize that whatever we ultimately accomplish will be less than what we aim for. If we don't aim higher, we might not accomplish our current proposal.

The following approaches are intended as possible additions to, not substitutes for, the approach described above. We believe that none of them should be pursued publicly over the next 4-6 months, or they are likely to undermine efforts to sign states up for participation in the 4th and 8th grade testing initiative. *(Peter Dinkins)*

Approach 2: Highlight the best standards in other subject areas and grade levels, and urge states to adopt them.

States, local school districts, and a host of national organizations (e.g, National Geographic Society, New Standards, etc.) have developed standards in all academic subject areas. These vary in rigor and quality. This is the right time in the national standards process to take stock of what has been developed, identify the most challenging and useful sets of standards from among those developed by states and national organizations, and urge all states to adopt the best standards and assessments that are identified. This would result in an overall improvement in the level and quality of state standards, and greater commonality -- though not necessarily strict uniformity -- in the standards among states. This 'bottom up' approach to national standards would also retain a good deal of flexibility for states.

This approach will work best if the judgements about the quality of existing standards are made by a nonfederal source. It will be politically very difficult for the Education Department to undertake this task. While no national organization is ideally suited for this role, the best candidate is ACHIEVE, the new entity established by the governors and business leaders after the 1996 National Education Summit in Palisades. The mission of this organization, once it is operationally, will be to assist states to develop and implement high quality academic standards and tests. This approach, then involves reaching an agreement with the business leaders and bipartisan group of governors that, together with them, you will urge states to adopt or adapt the best standards identified by ACHIEVE.

Pro's:

- o By keeping the governors at the center of this approach, you will increase state commitment to using the best standards and keep the approach a bipartisan one.
- o This approach can promote national consensus on what students should learn in various subject areas based on the best standards that are available, and without raising the specter of federal intrusion.

Con's:

- o ACHIEVE's capacity to do this work is untried. It has yet to hire an executive director or staff, or conduct any work. In addition, ACHIEVE was established explicitly to focus on state, rather than national standards, since the political atmosphere at the education summit was very much in opposition to both national standards and federal involvement

in standards. It is not clear if the ACHIEVE governing board has the political room needed to alter its mission as envisioned here.

- o Unless the governors and business leaders actually push states aggressively to coalesce around a small number of high quality standards and assessments, this approach may make a difference in only a small number of interested states, while the rest continue to act independently.

Approach 3: Focus on High School Completion: Appoint a commission to figure out how to get a good high school level test, appropriate for postsecondary education and employment. The absence of a high school level test leaves the 4th and 8th grade proposal seemingly incomplete. If standards are important, they are surely as important at the completion of high school as they are at earlier transition points.

However, testing at the high school level poses far more difficult issues than at earlier grade levels. There is no obvious 12th grade test to turn to, comparable to the 4th grade NAEP and 8th grade TIMSS tests. (The SAT's are not appropriate because they are only taken by college-bound students, and are not aligned with any curriculum standard.) It also is not clear what grade level(s) would be most appropriate for testing; 12th grade represents high school completion, but leaves students who do not meet the standards with no real second chances to improve. From this perspective, 10th grade testing would be preferable, if testing were to be done at a single grade level. Alternatively, a number of states, including Maryland and New York, are using a series of end-of-course tests each year in high school, instead of a single test or battery of tests administered at one time. Finally, any high school testing proposal inevitably will raise questions about the consequences of student performance on these tests -- for high school graduation, college admission, financial aid and employment.

We believe that the best way to approach the issue of high school testing would be to appoint a commission, with significant representation from the higher education and employment communities, as well as from others with a stake in the education system. The charge to the commission would be to make recommendations about the desirability and uses of national standards and testing for high school completion, and for recommendations on the design, development and implementation of the system it envisions. Through its work, the commission would be expected to build a consensus around the recommended approach.

Pro's

- o It is even more important to have some kind of high-school level national standards and test than it is for 4th and 8th grade, because these standards determine what students will learn before they enter the world of work or postsecondary learning.
- o High School level tests, if they are challenging, will have a profound effect on teaching, curriculum, and learning throughout the K-12 system, since the entire system must be oriented to helping students pass the tests.

- o A commission, with a clear charge, will be seen as serious and important. It will demonstrate clear leadership, especially if its recommendations are bold and significant.
- o The high school level issues--including whether and/or how tests should be used for high school graduation, employment and student financial aid--are significant, and could benefit from sustained, visible national attention.

Con's

- o Precisely because high school standards and testing can have powerful effect throughout the K-12 system, this proposal can provoke criticisms of a federal takeover of school curriculum.
- o Appointing a commission may be seen as a way of dodging tough issues, rather than asserting bold leadership.
- o The commission may recommend steps that will be highly controversial, or that you may not wish to accept (e.g., require students to pass a national test in order to qualify for federal financial aid).

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 4, 1997

MEETING ON EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

DATE: March 5, 1997
LOCATION: The Cabinet Room
TIME: Briefing 1:00 pm - 1:10 pm
Event - 1:10 pm - 2:10 pm
FROM: Bruce Reed
Michael Cohen

I. PURPOSE

To discuss several ways of advancing your agenda of national standards and tests.

II. BACKGROUND

This is an opportunity to brainstorm with some of the leaders of the standards movement on the best alternatives available to you. The purpose of this meeting is not to make any final decisions on your strategy, however, it provides you with an opportunity to take into account the recommendations of experts in the standards field when making your decisions on this issue. In addition, this is a valuable opportunity to gain the support of this important group for your education reform initiatives over the coming months.

Attached is an overview of your plan for national standards and testing in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, and a summary of reactions to date. As a follow up to this meeting, we will provide you with a decision memo that incorporates the ideas discussed by the participants.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Briefing Participants:

The First Lady
Secretary Riley
Deputy Secretary Mike Smith
Erskine Bowles
Sylvia Mathews
Bruce Reed
Michael Cohen
Rahm Emanuel
Don Baer

62028

Event Participants:

The First Lady

Secretary Riley

Deputy Secretary Mike Smith

Erskine Bowles

Sylvia Mathews

Bruce Reed

Michael Cohen

Melanne Verveer

Rahm Emanuel

Don Baer

Diane Ravitch, Former Assistant Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration

Don Hirsch, Professor of English, University of Virginia, Director of the Core Knowledge Project and author of The Schools We Need.

Governor Roy Romer

Don Stewart, President of the College Board

Richard Mills, Commissioner of Education for New York State

Hugh Price, President of the Urban League

Marc Tucker, President of the National Center on Education and the Economy and Director of the New Standards Project.

Elaine Kamarck

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed Press.

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Make brief opening remarks and then turn to each participant to speak.

VI. REMARKS

Talking Points Attached.

Education Standards Meeting Background on Non Administration Participants

Diane Ravitch

Former Assistant Secretary of Education Research and Improvement, Bush Administration

Diane is an enthusiastic supporter of your plan. She will argue that you remain focused on 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, in order to maintain bipartisan support. She will also argue that if you consider advancing a high school test, that you also consider requiring students to pass it in order to be eligible for financial aid for higher education.

Richard Mills

New York State Commissioner of Education

Rick is also a strong supporter of your plan. He will argue that you use the bully pulpit, relentlessly, to press states, communities, schools, teachers and parents to do everything necessary to prepare students to meet the standards.

Hugh Price

President, Urban League

Hugh has been speaking forcefully about the need to make sure that students in urban schools are held to high standards, and that leaders must work to remove the barriers that prevent students from meeting these standards, including low expectations, lack of parental support, incompetent teachers, and limited resources.

Marc Tucker

President, National Center on Education and the Economy and Director of New Standards Project
Mark will express support for your proposal, point out that it falls short of a comprehensive national system of standards and examinations, and urge you to endorse his New Standards effort as an example of the kind of system of standards others should adopt.

Roy Romer

Governor of Colorado

— FILE —

Donald Stewart

President, College Board

Don will have ideas about how to create a meaningful national test for high school graduation.

E.D. (Don) Hirsch

Professor of English, University of Virginia and Director, Core Knowledge Project

Don has developed a set of detailed, grade-by-grade standards which are in use in a national network of more than 400 schools. He will argue that, to be useful, national standards must be grade-by-grade and specific.

EDUCATION STANDARDS MEETING TALKING POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT

- I am pleased each of you could join me today for this discussion. The issue of national standards is a topic I have spent many hours talking to almost everyone of you about, sometimes going back quite a few years.
- As you know, in my State of the Union Address I announced my initiative to create national standards and individual level tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. I have challenged every state to implement these tests.
- Today, I'd like your advice on three questions:
 - o What do we need to do to get my proposal for fourth and eighth grade testing implemented nationwide?
 - o What do we need to do to help prepare kids to meet these standards in 1999?
 - o What else should we do to keep the standards movement moving forward?

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 4, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRUCE REED
MICHAEL COHEN

SUBJECT: YOUR PLAN FOR NATIONAL STANDARDS AND
NATIONAL TESTS IN 4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH
GRADE MATH

Summary of Plan

In your State of the Union Address you challenged every state to adopt high national standards and by 1999, to test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met. These national tests will be:

- o **Aligned with widely accepted national content standards.** In 4th grade reading, the test will be aligned with the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading standards, developed through a consensus process involving reading specialists, curriculum experts, state officials and others throughout the nation. In math, the test will be aligned with the TIMSS international math standard agreed to by experts in 41 countries, including the U.S.. The TIMSS standards are also very highly consistent with the national standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- o **Based on existing, widely accepted tests that will produce individual scores for students and parents in terms of the national standards.** The new tests will be based on the existing NAEP and TIMSS tests, which are designed to be administered to samples of students and produce national or state-level scores only. The new tests will provide comparable scores for individual students, revealing how well individual students perform relative to clear national or international performance standards
- o **Developed by recognized test developers.** The U.S. Department of Education will contract with a test developer to create these tests. The contracting process will begin shortly. The tests will be piloted in Spring 1998, and available for use in schools throughout the country in the Spring of 1999.
- o **Voluntary for use by states and local school districts.** Use of these tests will not be required as a condition of receiving federal program funds.

- o **Licensed to test publishers and interested states and school districts.** As a result of this licensing agreement, the federal government will not be involved in administering or scoring the tests, and the tests will be readily available.
- o **Available to parents and students on the Internet once the tests have been administered.** Each year, after the tests have been administered, the test questions and answers will be released publicly and placed on the Internet, so that parents can find out whether their children are meeting national standards even if their state or district does not use the tests.
- o **The focal point for national efforts to prepare all students to reach the standards.** The point of the national standards and tests is to help improve, not just to measure, student achievement. Between now and when the tests are first administered, there must be a focused, sustained effort, and the local, state and national level, to prepare students for these tests. America Reads is one component of such an effort.

Reactions To Date

The reactions to your plan have mainly been quite positive. The Washington Post, USA Today, and many local and regional papers have expressed editorial support for this plan. As you know, the Business Roundtable endorsed it the day after the State of the Union Address. Maryland has already agreed to participate in the testing program, and Gov. Engler will announce his support later this week. Diane Ravitch and Checker Finn wrote a very supportive op-ed piece in the Washington Post last week (copy attached). We expect other education and business groups to weigh in positively as their Spring meetings occur. In addition, informal conversations with state and local education officials and business leaders around the country have been encouraging. They welcome the tests, and believe you have found a way of defining the issue that avoids old political battles. Based on conversations with a number of chief state school officers, I believe that California, New York and South Carolina will commit to participate in the testing program in the near future. A number of others are possible quickly as well.

Criticism of this plan has taken three forms. First, some have said that your plan goes too far. For example, Gov. Thompson wrote an op-ed piece in the New York Times, arguing that standards should be left to the states and local communities. Second, some in the education community have renewed the familiar argument that tests are not the solution to low performance. Instead, they argue that additional funding, better teachers, safer and more caring schools are what's needed. Third, some (e.g., David Broder, Robert Samuelson) have argued that your plan does not go far enough, because it is limited to only two subjects and grade levels, because it is not accompanied by significant new federal funding to prepare students to reach the standards, or because you do not require students to pass tests in order to graduate from high school or receive financial aid for college.

Summary

Your plan for national standards and tests in reading and math is a significant step forward, especially in light of the controversy that has surrounded the standards movement in recent years. The most important thing you can do to advance the standards movement is to continue to press the case for every state to adopt these tests. This month, you will speak to legislatures in Michigan and North Carolina; meet with the chief state school officers here in Washington; and possibly appear with Delaine Eastin and a broad coalition of business, education, and labor leaders to announce California's support for your testing plan. The Defense Department has agreed to use the tests in the schools it runs in the U.S. and around the world; we are working to arrange a public announcement for this in the next several weeks. In addition, the Education Department will soon be prepared to announce the formation of an advisory committee to guide the test development process.

We are off to a good start: if we can line up California, New York, and Michigan to support the tests, a number of other states will follow suit. But we must not let up for a moment in this crusade, and we must be especially careful not to propose any new measures that will undermine state participation in the 4th and 8th grade tests --because the most visible indicator of success or failure will be the number of states that administer those tests in 1999.

1ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1997 McClatchy Newspapers, Inc.
Sacramento Bee

February 28, 1997, METRO FINAL

SECTION: EDITORIALS; Pg. B7

LENGTH: 1374 words

HEADLINE: AMERICA NEEDS A NATIONAL PROGRAM OF STUDENT TESTING

BYLINE: Chester E. Finn Jr. and Diane Ravitch

BODY:

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S proposal for national testing makes sense. As former assistant secretaries of the Department of Education in the Reagan and Bush administrations, we urge Congress to support it.

When President Bush and Lamar Alexander suggested something similar, which they called American Achievement Tests, congressional Democrats scoffed, and no such bill was ever introduced.

And in 1992, when a bipartisan panel called the National Council on Education Standards and Testing recommended a form of national testing, a convoluted scheme that involved different tests based on common standards, the idea was ignored by congressional leaders and attacked by prominent educators.

Still, it was a good idea then, and it's a good one now.

In fact, Clinton's version of national testing is better than Bush's in these important respects: It doesn't require any new standards or tests to be devised, and it does not hinge on dubious efforts to attach multiple tests to uniform (nonexistent) standards.

The administration has figured out that the nation already has two excellent tests that measure student achievement in reading and math, the most basic of basic skills. Accordingly, the president has proposed that states and school districts be permitted to use a respected national test for fourth-grade reading and an equally admirable international test for eighth-grade mathematics.

Nobody is obliged to use these tests. The federal government will pay for the first round of testing, and after that it's up to states and districts.

THEY CAN, however, embed the national tests into their own testing programs, which virtually every jurisdiction has, and commercial publishers would be licensed to offer them, a welcome form of "outsourcing" that would hold down costs, bureaucracy and allegations of unfair government competition.

Most important, they're good tests, incorporating standards far more rigorous than those most states now use.

The reading test is based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been around almost three decades but has never been used by districts or schools to report the progress of individual students. The NAEP reading test is solid, multifaceted and has rigorous standards built into it.

Sacramento Bee, February 28, 1997

For eighth-graders, the White House proposes to make available the math part of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), given to a half-million youngsters in 41 countries. The standards are built into the international comparisons. It's TIMSS results that enabled us to see that our eighth-graders perform poorly in mathematics compared with their peers in many other industrial countries.

Consider how powerful it will be for parents and teachers to compare the math prowess of their eighth-graders in, say, Phoenix or Minneapolis, to the performance of their peers in Korea and the Czech Republic. Consider the impact of parents in Denver or Boston actually seeing how well their fourth-graders read in relation to a national standard of proficiency.

According to every major poll, an overwhelming majority of the American people want national standards and tests. Until now, there has been no way for parents or public officials to get good information about how students are doing.

Instead, they've been stuck with college entrance tests that are not representative of the full population and that, in any case, aren't even administered until the end of high school. Or they have had to settle for "standardized" tests that yield spurious results about youngsters being "at or above grade level," even though "grade level" is simply a statistical average, not a true standard.

Only with such information can parents make wise choices among schools; can parents and legislators appraise how well their school systems are doing; can teachers and principals determine how effective their efforts are, and take corrective action where needed.

To those worried about "local control," we say that these tests are a yardstick, not a harness. They give the federal government no new powers. The test results, in fact, will actually enhance local control by empowering consumers, policy-makers and professionals to know what actions need to be taken locally to improve education.

So important is national testing that it must be safeguarded from politicization, a temptation sure to arise if the student results are as bleak as everyone expects.

To prevent this possibility, responsibility for national testing should be removed from the federal Education Department (and congressional committees) and placed under the control of an independent, nonpartisan body. Such an entity, called the National Assessment Governing Board, already exists.

THE WHITE House's current plan to give control of national testing to the Department of Education would, we think, be a big mistake. If Clinton will agree to turn the program for national testing into an autonomous agency, akin to the National Science Foundation (where the National Science Board sets policy) or the National Transportation Safety Board, then Congress should endorse this part of his education package. This proposal deserves their support.

Once upon a time it was even a Republican idea. Now it is a good American idea.

Sacramento Bee, February 28, 1997

GRAPHIC: BRINTON/Special to The Bee

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 1, 1997

March 4, 1997

Note to Mike Smith

As requested, attached are the briefing materials that were promised to General Becton on "best practices" at the elementary and secondary school levels. We are continuing to track down additional programs as well as data on costs and effectiveness. We will send up a revised package as soon as we obtain the additional information.

The attached set of materials contains information on:

Best Practices in Reading and Mathematics

- Best Practices in Reading
 - Success for All
 - Reading Recovery
 - Word Work
- Best Practices in Mathematics
 - Comprehensive School Mathematics Program
 - Success Understanding Mathematics
 - Connected Mathematics Project

Whole School Programs

- New American Schools
 - Modern Red School House
 - ATLAS Communities
 - National Alliance for Restructuring Education
- Career Academies
- Schools Within Schools
- High Schools that Work (SREB initiative)
- Reconstitution of Failing Schools or Districts

Ricky Takai
Val Plisko

cc: A. Ginsburg

Best Practices in Reading and Mathematics

Best Practices in Reading

Elementary School Projects

Success for All

Overview: The philosophy of the Success for All program is based on research which links the academic problems of children in their formative years, particularly retention or poorly developed reading skills, to being at subsequent risk of dropping out of school. Success for All is designed to ensure that children do not experience this initial failure and are able to reach the third grade with adequate basic skills. Success for All is currently operating in 450 schools throughout the U.S. in 31 states.

Features of the Program: To fully implement Success for All, the sponsors recommend having a full day preschool and kindergarten. These programs emphasize language development, readiness, and self-concept. The children use the Peabody Language Development Kits and a program called Story Telling and Retelling (STaR). In grades pre-k through 6, trained teacher tutors work with students who are failing to keep up with their classmates in reading. The tutors are certified teachers and work one-on-one with children for 20 minute periods outside of the regular reading program. Priority for tutoring is given to first graders.

In addition to tutoring, daily 90-minute reading sessions are held with small homogeneous ability groups. These sessions are conducted by a teacher trained in the use of the Success for All materials. The kindergarten and first grade program emphasizes language skills, providing children with phonetically regular mini-books which they read to each other in pairs. In the second through sixth grade, students use basal readers, novels or anthologies but not workbooks. In these grades, the reading program emphasizes cooperative learning activities built around partner reading, identification of characters, settings, problems, and problem solutions in narratives. At all levels, students are required to read books of their own choice for 20 minutes at home each evening. Students are assessed every eight weeks to determine if alternative teaching strategies, changes in reading group placement, or need for tutoring services is required.

Teachers are required to follow detailed manuals for most activities and receive three days of instructional training in reading at the beginning of each school year. Further in-service sessions are provided throughout the year to help teachers with classroom management, instructional pace, and cooperative learning techniques. In addition, all preschool and kindergarten teachers receive training in using the STaR and Peabody programs.

The two other major components of the program include the Family Support Team and the Success for All facilitator. The Family Support Team is made up of a parent liaison, a counselor, and the vice-principal who assists parents in ways they can aid in the success of their children in school. The Facilitator works with the teachers in each school to help them implement the program.

Evidence of Success: Success for All has been evaluated in 23 sites in nine districts and eight states. In all cases, the program has proven successful in improving students reading skills; in every district, Success for All students learned significantly more than did matched control students. Spanish forms are also available and have been successfully evaluated.

Costs: Program costs include materials, and extensive staff development. Staff development costs include three full days of staff development for classroom teachers and 20 person days for program staff to provide follow-up assistance to staff. These costs are estimated to be approximately \$45,000. The program also requires a facilitator and teacher tutors. The facilitator and teacher tutors are usually drawn from existing teaching staff.

Contacts: Robert Slavin or Nancy Madden
Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 516-0274

Sites Using the Program:

El Vista Elementary School
450 El Vista Avenue
Modesto, CA 95355
(209) 575-4665
Principal: Jennifer Schindler

Lackland City Elementary School
101 Dumont
San Antonio, TX 78236
(210) 678-2946
Principal: Jerry Allen

P.S 159
2781 Pitkin Ave.
Brooklyn, NY
(718) 277-4828
Principal: Kathy Garibaldi

Poinciana Park Elementary School
6745 NW 23rd Avenue
Miami, FL. 33127
(305) 691-5640
Principal: Cynthia Clarke

Reading Recovery

Overview: Reading Recovery is an intensive early intervention program for first grade children having difficulty with beginning reading. It was based on years of research in New Zealand. The program is designed to promote good reading by teaching reading strategies before a pattern of failure develops. The program includes procedures for teaching reading, a staff development program directed by a specifically prepared "teacher leader," and a set of administrative systems that work together for quality control. Currently, Reading Recovery programs can be found in 47 states in the U.S.

Reading Recovery is not a packaged program; it relies heavily on training teachers to deliver highly focused lessons in which students learn to monitor and correct their own reading and to use many kinds of information (background experience, knowledge of language, letter-sound correspondence) as they read.

To fully implement Reading Recovery, the district or school must have a person designated as teacher leader. The responsibilities of the teacher leader are to design and implement the teacher training at each site. To become a teacher leader requires a teacher to spend a full year being trained at one of the Reading Recovery Training sites--in the United States, Ohio State University is a designated training site. The teacher leader then trains Reading Recovery Teachers.

Features of the Program: In most cases, Reading Recovery teachers select the lowest achieving students in the first grade to provide intensive one-on-one tutoring for 30 minutes each day. This tutoring is in addition to regular classroom reading instruction. It includes both reading and writing activities as well as strategies to develop children's thinking and reasoning skills. When the Reading Recovery teacher considers the child has become a proficient independent reader, the treatment is discontinued. This normally takes around 16 weeks. The success of individual programs is often measured by the discontinuing rate.

Evidence of Success: Ohio State University collects and analyzes data from Reading Recovery sites nationwide. The program is successful with most of its students. In 1995-96, 83 percent of the students (59,266) in the program were "discontinued" from the program after 60 days. Students are "discontinued" when they are judged to be independent readers. Eighty-six percent of the children scored at or above average on reading tests at the end of the school year.

Costs: The primary costs are for the training required by the teacher leader (1 full academic year). Additional costs include the periodic in-service that is required.

Contacts: Gay Su Pinnell or Carol Lyons
Ohio State University
1929 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
(614) 292-7875
(614) 292-7879

Sites Using the Program:

Sutter School
5075 Daisy Ave
Long Beach Unified School District
Long Beach, CA 90805
(310) 984-5897
Contact person: Connie Williams

Word Work

Overview: Word Work is based on a framework that incorporates some of the most promising features of both standard phonics and literary appreciation, while ensuring that students acquire skills needed for independent reading and writing. This literature-based approach motivates students and also assists them in developing or strengthening their decoding skills.

Features of the Program: Word Work is an integrated decoding-spelling program designed for students from kindergarten through second grade. Instruction incorporates principles of social-cognitive learning and is more student-centered than teacher-directed. A distinctive feature of the program are the small-group problem solving activities which pose “real” problems to the students with open-ended possibilities. The point is not only to find the correct answer, but to justify the work. During group task exercises, teachers do not teach, but monitor and facilitate students interactions and activities, and assessing students’ skill and knowledge.

Word Work sessions are organized into Lesson Blocks, two-week segments allocated to a specific curriculum element. A block typically begins with teacher-led small-group instruction on a practical curriculum concept, and ends with teacher-led whole-class assessment. Between these activities, there exist a variety of options, including whole-class, small-group, and individual activities, some teacher-led reinforcement and review lessons. Typically, each instructional segment begins with a focused lesson that takes a small amount of time in the morning hours, three or four days a week, dedicated to the study of “words.” There is generally 12-35 minutes allocated for this. Small groups are sometimes used for direct instruction; three groups for 10 minutes each. Whole-class or small-group activities take about 15-20 minutes. Overall, instruction focuses on letter-sound correspondences for small amounts of time, leaving most of the school day for text-level reading and writing.

Evidence of Success: Although Word Work is still under development, pilot evaluations in a few school sites indicate positive results. First grade students at Fruitvale Elementary School in Oakland noticeably improved their scores on standardized tests and exceeded the performance of other schools in the District. The Omaha Public Schools has also had success with Word Work. In Spring 1996, the Reading Department of the Omaha Public Schools decided to implement Word Work for its kindergarten students who were judged at-risk for first grade. Observations and teacher interviews suggest that dramatic improvements were achieved for these students who showed gains in test scores and in word and sentence reading. These effects seem to be sustained for the duration between the end of the program and the beginning of first grade.

Contacts: Robert Calfee
Stanford University
School of Education
Stanford, CA 94305-3096
(415) 723-8698

Sites Using the Program:

Fruitvale Elementary School
3200 Boston Avenue
Oakland, CA 94602
(510) 879-1170

Omaha Public Schools
3215 Cuming Street
Omaha, NE 68131
(402) 557-2002

Best Practices in Mathematics

Elementary School Projects

The Comprehensive School Mathematics Program (CSMP)

Overview: The Comprehensive School Mathematics Program (CSMP) is a complete, K-6 curriculum that makes mathematics accessible, understandable, and enjoyable. The program was validated by the National Diffusion Network as effective with all types of learners, including students who are at risk, bilingual, gifted and talented, and children with special needs.

Features of the Program: The approach underscores that students' mathematical understanding is developed out of problem-solving contexts. CSMP's unique feature is the use of nonverbal languages that give children immediate access to the mathematical ideas and methods that are necessary to solve problems and to continually expand students' understanding of mathematical concepts. Through these languages, the curriculum engages children immediately and naturally with mathematics and its applications without cumbersome linguistic prerequisites. Tools such as the Papy Minicomputer, the hand-held calculator, and various geometry tools are used extensively throughout the curriculum to pose problems, explore concepts, develop skills, and define new ideas. The curriculum emphasizes opportunities for students to use mathematics in a connected way. For example, relationships and patterns are shown in number theory as well as in geometry, probability, and logical reasoning.

Evidence of Success: Evaluations of CSMP show that CSMP students are better able than comparable non-CSMP students to apply mathematics to new problem situations, specifically in the areas of number patterns and representations, relational thinking, estimation, prediction, large numbers, fractions, work problems, and mental arithmetic. CSMP students show a higher level of enthusiasm and interest in math than do comparable students in more traditional programs.

Costs: The cost for a single teacher to use CSMP as the core math instructional program ranges from \$175 in Kindergarten to \$450 in sixth grade. That fee includes the cost of a teacher's manual, demonstration lessons, and student materials for 30 students. CSMP offers free workshops to participating teachers at its headquarters in Colorado, but charges \$200 a day plus travel expenses to send a trainer to a school site to provide on-site workshops.

Contact: Clare Heidema
Director, CSMP
2550 South Parker Road, Suite 500
Aurora, CO 80014
(303) 743-5520

Success Understanding Mathematics (SUM)

Overview: Success Understanding Mathematics (SUM) is a national professional development program that focuses on increasing the mathematical achievement of elementary students by training teachers to employ such practices as questioning, the use of manipulatives, and the analysis of real-world problems. It began as an instructional program for Chapter 1 students in Des Moines, Iowa, but is now run independently of the school district, with sites around the country.

Features of the Program: The program's methods match the recommendations of the NCTM Standards. Program characteristics include:

- A problem-solving approach
- Emphasis on reasoning, number sense, and operation sense
- Use of manipulatives by students to make connections between math concepts, language, and written symbols
- The role of students to investigate, guess, check, reason, and discuss
- The role of teachers to pose real-world problems, and to guide student learning by questioning

The program, which consists of two to three days of pre-implementation training and follow-up training, presents teaching methods of investigation that can be used with any textbook. As teachers themselves use manipulatives to explore and model problems, they become more alert to possible variations in student thinking. Long before they are able to perform related computations young children can join and separate sets of objects and share them fairly. They invent strategies to answer their own questions.

Program components include teaching methods that can be used with any textbook, management materials, and support for teachers. Publications include two strategy books with suggested lessons and questions for teachers to use with their students, assessment inventories and inservice materials.

Evidence of Success: Pretest and posttest data on a variety of mathematics achievement tests between 1987 and 1990 upheld validation studies done in 1980 and 1985. After one year of SUM instruction, students scored at significantly higher levels than would be expected by the test norms. Supplementary evidence included teacher questionnaires which showed that the SUM Program training was effective in influencing teachers to make the instructional changes recommended by the NCTM Standards. Student attitude surveys showed that students demonstrated positive attitudes toward mathematics.

Costs: The program charges \$400 a day for the initial two- or three-day training session, plus travel expenses for the trainer. The required materials cost \$45 per teacher for a classroom set, with an optional \$60 for a popular set of problem-solving cards. Teachers often purchase

manipulatives from private vendors to supplement their instruction.

Contact: Kathleen Bullington
4100 Aurora Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50310
(515) 278-0867

The Connected Mathematics Project (CMP)

Overview: The Connected Mathematics Project (CMP) is a mathematics curriculum development effort funded by the National Science Foundation and based at Michigan State University. The curriculum, which is still under development, consists of eight units in each of the four middle grades (5-8). Each unit addresses a major mathematical concept, or cluster of related concepts, using several "investigations" that the students solve. Instruction in basic math skills is embedded in the context of solving problems.

Features of the Program: The instructional process for each unit consists of three phases:

- **Launch**--The teacher introduces the problem and the key concepts that it addresses, and reviews past material that students will need to apply to solve the problem.
- **Explore**--Students congregate in small groups to brainstorm ideas and solutions to the problem.
- **Summarize**--Students reassemble as a full class, with each small group presenting its understanding of the problem and proposed solution strategies.

The curricular units strive to draw connections among various strands of mathematics, between math and other disciplines, and between the conceptual and applied characteristics of mathematics. Student assessment includes traditional tests and quizzes as well as journals, projects, and student self-assessments. The Dale Seymour publishing company handles the large-scale production of CMP materials.

Evidence of Success: During the first year of pilot testing, participating students' performance on a subtest of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills did not decline and equaled the performance of a control group. However, participating students significantly outperformed the control group on a project-designed assessment that used open-ended items to measure their ability to reason and solve problems.

In 1991, the Louis Armstrong Middle School in Queens, New York, was selected to serve as one of the field-test sites for the Connected Mathematics Project. Louis Armstrong teachers received both on-site and off-site instruction to learn about the Connected Mathematics Project. The school sent the teachers to Michigan State University over the summer for intensive training. Relying on its collaboration, the school also enlisted mathematics education professors from Queens College to serve as mathematics specialists who would visit classrooms and work with teachers as they implemented the project.

The results of the Louis Armstrong Middle School project have been positive. The California Achievement Test (CAT-5), New York City version, was administered to all eighth-grade students at Louis Armstrong in the spring of 1996. The 30 Connected Mathematics Project students' scored between the 46th and the 99th percentile, with the median score in the 78th percentile. The 123 students in non-Connected Mathematics Project classes' scored between the

16th and 98th percentile, with the median score in the 62nd percentile.

Costs: CMP is charging \$300 per teacher for an upcoming five-day summer workshop to introduce teachers to the curriculum; the fee does not include travel expenses. The CMP teacher's guide costs \$11.50, and student materials cost \$4.75 per student.

Contact: Glenda Lappan or William Fitzgerald
Project Directors
Connected Mathematics Project
Michigan State University
101 Wills House
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
(517) 432-2870

Whole School Programs

New American Schools

Modern Red School House

Overview: The Modern Red School House is one of the New American Schools designs developed by the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis. Other partners include Arthur Andersen & Company, the Educational Excellence Network, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Center for Effective Schools, and Advanced Systems. The Modern Red School House design was piloted in four schools in Indiana and the Bronx, beginning in 1993. Since then it has begun to expand to schools in Memphis, Arizona, and Dade County.

Features of the Program: The Modern Red School House model sets content standards in core disciplines that all students are expected to master; the standards use the Advanced Placement exams as their benchmark for what students should know and be able to do. Each school establishes task forces on organization and finance, technology, community involvement, curriculum, standards and assessment, and professional development. Together, these task forces determine how the school will ensure that all students reach the standards. The primary and intermediate curriculum is based on E.D. Hirsch's Core Curriculum, and the high school curriculum is based on the Department of Education's James Madison series. Schools are divided into three divisions rather than 12 grades. To pass to the next division, students must pass performance-based Watershed Assessments in the core content areas. Teachers at the pilot sites each received about 20 days of professional development, beginning with a summer institute on the Modern Red Schoolhouse design.

Evidence of Success: At the pilot sites, the percentage of students meeting essential skills on state assessments rose in three of the four sites. The percentage of students at the pilot site in the Bronx who mastered state objectives in reading and math nearly doubled, and attendance improved dramatically, too.

Costs: The total cost for a school to implement the Modern Red Schoolhouse design ranges from \$90,000 to \$150,000 over three years. That figure includes 20 days of professional development for every teacher and, follow-up coaching, and consultations with task forces and leadership teams. It does not include the potential costs of installing new technology that supports the model's instructional program.

Contact: Sally Kilgore
Hudson Institute
5395 Emerson Way
Indianapolis, IN 46226

(317) 549-4168

Sites Using the Program:

Hansberry Academy
Diana Caraciollo, Principal
Bronx, NY
(718) 542-5362

ATLAS Communities

Overview: Atlas Communities is one of the New American Schools designs. Partners on the design team include the Coalition of Essential Schools (Ted Sizer), the School Development Program (James Comer), Project Zero (Howard Gardner), and the Education Development Center. The model was piloted in three schools in Norfolk, Virginia, and then expanded to schools in Memphis, Dade County, Gorham (ME), and Prince George's County (MD).

Features of the Program: ATLAS creates K-12 pathways, or groups of schools consisting of a high school and its feeder schools, in an attempt to foster a seamless educational experience for students. Across the pathways, teachers work together to create an integrated and coherent curriculum and corresponding assessment strategies. Representatives from each school in a pathway meet regularly on a management and organizational team to promote collaboration in all areas affecting student learning. The curriculum is based on essential questions dictated by largely students' interests. Committees of school staff work to establish healthy learning environments within the school and to enlist parents' and community members' help in fostering the development of every child. Professional development opportunities include common planning time for teachers on instructional teams and, electronic networks, and study teams.

Evidence of Success: A Title I ATLAS school in Prince George's County demonstrated significant gains in reading achievement. Parent involvement and student motivation at one of the pilot schools in Norfolk increased dramatically.

Costs: The fee for a single pathway consisting of 3-5 schools is \$80,000 for the first year, after which fees are renegotiated on an annual basis. The fee purchases a half-time liaison from ATLAS, an intensive leadership institute for pathway teams, and delivery of materials. It does not include the costs of installing technology to give teachers access to ACE, the ATLAS Communities electronic network.

Contact: ATLAS Communities
Education Development Center
55 Chapel St.
Newton, MA 02158
(617) 969-7100
www.edc.org/FSC/ATLAS

National Alliance for Restructuring Education

Overview: The National Alliance for Restructuring Education (NARE) is a partnership of three states, four city school districts, and national organizations committed school reform. It is also one of the New American Schools (NAS) design teams, although NARE predated NAS. The model was piloted in five schools in Kentucky and Washington. New sites have opened in New York, Arkansas, Pittsburgh, and San Diego.

Features of the Program: The keystone of NARE's model is the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). Modeled after Oregon's certificate of the same name, the CIM acknowledges that students in about the 10th grade have demonstrated mastery of a set of world-class standards. NARE has designed new standards and assessments that measure progress toward those standards. It has also redesigned learning environments to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn the content they need to earn the CIM. NARE sponsors workshops for school personnel, a national conference for school leadership teams, and on-site technical assistance.

Evidence of Success: Eighty-seven percent of NARE's Kentucky sites earned cash awards from the state for exceeding the learning goals established by the state's assessment system, compared with 37 percent of schools statewide.

Cost: Each member school pays about \$9,000 to the Alliance for annual professional development for an eight-member leadership team. The fee also includes materials and supplies. In addition, schools pay \$21,000 a year for on-site technical assistance, a connection to NARE's electronic network, and participation in the national conference. Finally, schools pay \$30 per student in grades 4, 8, and 10 to administer the New Standards reference examination and portfolio assessment system.

Contact: Marc Tucker
National Alliance for Restructuring Education
700 Eleventh St. NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-3668
www.ncee.org

Career Academies

Overview: Career academies originated in Philadelphia in 1969 and began to appear in California in the early 1980's. The academies target at-risk youth and were designed to combine academic course work and vocational training through the "schools within a school" model. Today over 100 career academies exist in the United States. Programs often partner with national and local business, and are structured to prevent at-risk students from dropping out by providing an academic curriculum focused around a particular industry or field of work.

Features of the Program: Admission to and retention in career academies is generally dependent on meeting at least minimum academic qualifications. Many schools have more than one academy within the same school, in order both to keep teacher-student ratios low and to appeal to a broader body of student interests. Career academy curriculum focuses around specific fields, which in the past have included public service, travel and tourism, finance, and manufacturing science. The most important instructional aspect of the career academy model is the integration of academic and career preparatory course work, which enables students at-risk of dropping out of school to see the importance of their academic classes in the world of work. Students take a core of academic classes which are integrated with vocational-technical classes relevant to preparation for work in the academy's field, and receive workplace experience and career counseling.

Students generally take a block schedule (i.e. fewer classes for extended periods) of integrated academic and technical courses and move together from class to class, under the instruction of the same set of teachers for their entire secondary careers (3-4 years). A reduction in overall teaching load and the reduced student-teacher ratio in academy classes give teachers time to prepare specialized instructional and ancillary activities for students; to monitor and consult on student performance and attendance; to provide personal counseling, including referral to community agencies; and to contact parents as needed.

Most academies work closely with a business partner who provides advisory and technical support, part-time and summer internship opportunities to students, field-trip opportunities, equipment, and adult mentors to serve as role models for upperclassmen.

Evidence of Success: Data from the 45 state-funded California Partnership Academies during the 1994-95 school year indicates the four year impact of the program on the cohort of students graduating in 1995. Data indicated substantial gains in: the percentage of students with attendance over 90% (from 63% prior to admission to 82% as seniors); grade point average (40% had GPA's below 2.0 as freshman, 20% did as seniors); and credits earned (97% were earning enough credits to make normal progress towards graduation as seniors). For more information see the California Partnership Academies: 1994-95 Evaluation Report, by Charles Dayton (California Department of Education).

Costs: Career academies can involve substantial start-up costs depending on the technical focus of the academy. Some equipment is usually donated by business partners. The California Partnership Academies spend about \$750 to \$1,000 per student per year in addition to regular

district per-pupil expenditures.

Contacts: Heather Phillips
The National Academy Foundation
New York, NY
(212)420-8400

Susan Cummins-Tidyman, Consultant
California Department of Education
(510)942-3413

Sites Using the Program:

New York City Academy of Finance (11 Programs)
Murray Tandler
(718)935-3776

Academy of Travel and Tourism (3 Programs)
Dade County, FL
Ann Fields
(305)885-8127

Sequoia Union High School District
Redwood City, CA
Marilyn Raby, Director, Curriculum Services
(415)369-1411

Small Schools/Schools within Schools

Overview: The Small Schools movement developed in response to concerns about the large size typical of urban secondary schools. Students in large urban high schools, particularly at-risk students, often get lost in such institutions, and cannot receive the individual attention they need. Moreover, large schools are often burdensome to manage effectively and make it difficult for teachers to recognize and direct their teaching to the needs of individual students. The small schools movement originated in New York's Central Park East schools 15 years ago and after achieving dramatic results has since spread to Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago, and other urban areas. Building on its past successes, New York has recently undertaken the creation of approximately 50 additional small schools (carved out of larger schools) under the New York Network for School Renewal, made possible by a \$25 million challenge grant from philanthropist Walter Annenberg.

Features of the Program: Small schools are most often formed by partitioning an existing school into several "schools within schools" within the same building, rather than constructing new facilities. Within a school, each sub-school typically serves no more 250-300 students, who will take classes together and be taught by the same set of teachers for their entire secondary school career. Decreasing the size of an individual student's school also establishes clearer lines of accountability for parents. Not only do student have fewer teachers, they regularly have the same teachers, whom parents can become much more familiar with.

Typically schools do not hire additional staff, and the school principal and administrative staff continue to fulfill the same functions. "Schools" share the building's gym, auditorium and library. Advocates of small schools stress, however, that the changes to the school must be more than simply the creation of different administrative units. By teaching the same group of students each year, teachers are able to become more familiar with their student's needs and are able to develop longer-term instruction plans and goals. Teachers are responsible for the overall academic plan of the "school" and spend more of their non-teaching time collaborating with other teachers in their "school," as they work closely with the same students. (Most schools also regularly set aside time for teachers to deal with issues affecting the larger school entity.)

To accommodate using the same set of teachers within each school, teachers teach several subjects and in many cases, schools within schools also adopt block scheduling, in which students take fewer classes, for longer periods of time, each semester. Classes may alternate daily or by semester. Block scheduling has also been undertaken in many schools as a reform separate from the small schools movement, and there is substantial evidence of its positive impact on grades, attendance and SAT/ACT test scores. Extended (or block) classes expose students to course material more intensively and in greater depth than typical classes, and allows students to focus on fewer subjects at a time.

Evidence of Success: The success of the Central Park East schools (several schools within the original school) has been widely documented. Ninety-five percent of Central Park East's students, many of whom are low income, graduate from high school compared to 50% among other school in that area. 90% of the Central Park east graduates go on to college.

Costs: Small schools created individually in new buildings can create substantial costs. However, most small schools are formed by internal restructuring of existing schools into "schools within schools" and does not necessarily engender new costs. Schools administered by separate bodies (for example, a principal for each school within a given school) would require hiring additional staff, though most schools do not follow this model.

Contacts: Michael Klonsky
Small Schools Workshop
University of Illinois
(312)413-5882

Sites Using the Program:

Central Park East Secondary School
1573 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10029
(212)860-8935
Paul Schwarz or David Smith

Chicago Vocational High School
Betty Green, Principal
(773)535-6100

Southern Regional Education Board, High Schools That Work

Overview: In 1987, the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB), a partnership of states, school systems, and school sites in 19 states, launched a project designed to change the future of secondary school students in general and vocational programs of study. The consortium's *High Schools That Work* program is designed to:

- Increase the mathematics, science, and communication achievement of students in general and vocational studies to the national average of all students by the year 2000; and
- Combine the content of traditional college prep mathematics, science, and communication courses with vocational studies by promoting the use of the following key practices.

Features of the Program: The main objective of the *High Schools That Work* initiative is to strengthen the academic rigor of classes in the general and vocational programs. This is being accomplished by:

- Revising vocational courses to advance communication, mathematics, and science competencies of students.
- Revising academic courses to include applied learning strategies that enable students to understand abstract concepts through solving concrete problems.
- Requiring students in general and vocational programs to complete three courses in mathematics and three in science, with at least two credits in each area equivalent in content to courses offered in the college preparatory program. Students should also complete at least four courses in a vocational major and two courses in related areas.
- Providing guidance and counseling services that help students see the connection between what they are learning in school and their goals beyond high school. Parents are involved in the process of planning a high school program of study.
- Participating in and using student assessment and program evaluation information to check and improve the curriculum, instruction, school climate, and school organization and management.

Evidence of Success: Evidence from eight of twenty-eight original pilot sites demonstrated that high schools could succeed in dramatically raising the achievement of students completing vocational programs to the national average in English, math, and science as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Six of these sites had been among the lower-achieving sites prior to instituting the key practices.

Contacts: The goal of the SREB-State Vocational Education Consortium is to establish a network of *High Schools That Work* sites at individual schools or school systems. Schools or systems interested in joining the network should contact:

Gene Bottoms, Consortium Director
State Vocational Education Consortium
Southern Regional Education Board
592 Tenth Street N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30318-5790

Sites Using the Program:

Central Vo-Tech
Three CT Circle
Drumright, OK 74030
(918) 352-2551

St. Mary's County Public Schools
Loveville, MD 20656
(301) 475-5511

Reconstitution of Failing Schools or Districts

Schools need to be held accountable for results. As Secretary Riley has asserted, . . . "we cannot and must not tolerate failing schools. If a school is bad and can't be changed reconstitute it or close it down." States, school districts, and communities need to be able to intervene in schools that are not providing an adequate education for their students. Reconstitution of schools is one way -- albeit a last resort measure -- to turn around low-performing schools.

What is reconstitution?

- Reconstitution of schools refers to the takeover (of daily operations, staffing, and all decision-making) of a consistently low-performing school or district by a higher level governing body. For example, a district could reconstitute a school or a State education agency could reconstitute an entire district and its schools.
- In order for schools or districts to be reconstituted, they need to have failed to meet expectations over an extended period of time. Such sites have already been identified as needing improvement, but have failed to make the improvement targets specified in the corrective action plan.
- The threat of reconstitution may be sufficient to cause schools to change. After being identified as a low-performing school, Patterson High School in Maryland hired a new principal, who handpicked several new teachers to lead the planning effort. The school's improvement team developed a plan to increase student achievement by restructuring the school day and the way instruction is delivered. In 1995-96, Patterson's attendance rate rose from 69 percent to 77 percent, more students passed the Maryland Functional Test required for graduation, and a greater percentage of seniors graduated than in prior years.

How do you do it?

- Intervention needs to be based on an objective analysis of school performance and how far it is from meeting State or locally-established performance targets. If performance remains chronically low, the school would be required to develop and implement an improvement or corrective action plan.
- During the improvement process, the district or State would be responsible for making resources available to the school, such as technical assistance and additional professional development for teachers. The district or State would continually assess the school's progress to determine if student performance is improving.
- If improvement targets are not met and the school remains low-performing or declines further, the district or State would have the authority to replace all school staff and have

the new staff develop an improvement plan. The district or State would also have veto power over decisions made by newly hired school staff.

- When the improvement targets are consistently being met over a several-year period by the school or district, control and decision-making authority would be turned back over to the school or district.
- Alternatively, if a failing school is completely shut down, parents and the community could be provided information about promising options for education programs that worked in other places. Such options could include one of the program school designs from the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). The NASDC design teams could help local teachers and parent plan for a new school, provide quality training to teachers, and assess the progress of the school. This approach would reduce the need for families and students to leave their own neighborhood or community to find a good school and correct the deterioration of a troubled school in their neighborhood. They could open an public charter school, created and managed by parents, teachers, and the community.

State and Local Examples of Reconstitution

District Intervention in Failing Schools

San Francisco

Under its Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), the San Francisco Unified School District reconstitutes failing schools, replacing the entire staff with a new principal, teachers, and support personnel. Under CSIP, the district places low-performing schools on a one-year probationary period, during which they are expected to improve student performance. At the end of that year, a team consisting of the superintendent, two assistants, and a former principal review the school's test scores, attendance and suspension rates, student portfolios, improvement plan, and other measures before selecting those that will be reconstituted. The Board of Education must approve all decisions to reconstitute schools. All staff at reconstituted schools are relocated to other schools, but they may reapply for their positions at the school. The Board then hires a new principal, who is responsible for hiring a new teaching staff as well as janitorial and cafeteria personnel. The new team must then put together an improvement plan to raise student achievement and other outcomes. Since the beginning of CSIP in 1992, eight schools have been reconstituted.

Recently CSIP and the broader 1982 desegregation consent decree agreement, which authorizes both race-based assignment of students and reconstitution of failing schools have come under attack. A lawsuit filed in federal court in January 1995 over the effects of the decree's race-based system of classifying and assigning students on Chinese-American students, who currently are the largest ethnic group in the district, has the potential to end CSIP if the court decides to throw out the consent decree. It is unclear if or when the case will go to trial. A court decision could have both positive and negative effects on teachers, administrators, and their unions because, although the reconstitution process clearly causes upheaval and concern, the consent decree also brings a lot of funding for paraprofessionals and other school improvements.

State Intervention in Failing Districts

New Jersey

New Jersey has seized control of three public school districts due to their failure or high level of corruption. All school districts in the state are subject to a state monitoring procedure which determines if the school district is meeting certain state standards in the areas of student performance, curriculum development, professional development, condition of facilities, and certification of teachers. If a district fails to meet a certain proportion of the standards, local officials must develop a corrective action plan for the district, which is then evaluated by the state Department of Education. If the plan is determined to be unsuccessful or inadequate, the district goes through a compliance investigation. If this investigation determines that the district is unable to meet the requirements set forth by the monitors, the Academic Bankruptcy Law requires the state to take over control of the district. Based on this procedure, the state took over

Jersey City Schools in 1989, which failed to meet two-thirds of the state standards at that time; Paterson Schools in 1991, which met only one-half of the state standards; and Newark Schools in 1995. According to the law, districts remain under state control for a minimum of five years.

When the state takes over a school district, the local school board, superintendent, and key personnel under the superintendent are removed and replaced by a state-appointed superintendent. This individual and other officials within the SEA become the policy body for the district. This body helps the district create a new school board, which initially has no voting power but, in year two of state control, can vote on curriculum matters; in year three, on legal matters; and in year four on budgetary matters. However, while in office, the state-appointed superintendent maintains veto power over all board decisions. After five years, the board can regain control when the district can meet a certain proportion of the state standards required by the monitoring procedure.

Recent data on student achievement at the three state operated school districts demonstrate that the schools are making progress toward certification. Although the board recommended that Jersey City Public Schools remain under state control for an additional year, its students showed impressive across-the-board gains. Passage rates for eighth grade students in 1995-1996 improved to 77.4 percent on the reading section (a gain of 6.6 percent over 1994-1995); 76.5 percent on the writing section (a gain of 2.1 percent over the previous year); and 61.7 percent on the mathematics section (a one-year gain of 9.5 percent). Gains were also impressive for eleventh-grade students, 67.2 percent of whom passed the reading section (4.2 percent more than the previous year); 79.2, or 10 percent more than last year, passed the writing section; and 71.4 percent, a 6.7 percent improvement, passed the mathematics section.

Student results for Paterson do not show as much growth as Jersey City, but they do indicate improvement. Students posted gains in the reading and mathematics sections of the EWT, but their scores remained unchanged on the writing section. Results of the high school test were also inconsistent, but the reviewers noted signs of aggressive efforts at the local level to target weaknesses and identify successful methods to improve them. Paterson's results are similar to Jersey City's in that current fourth grade students who entered the district at the time of the state takeover have demonstrated the greatest gains in achievement.

Ohio

In a highly controversial move, state officials took control of the Cleveland Public Schools in March, 1995, after a federal judge declared the district to be "in a state of crisis." The court ruled that internal dissension, management problems, and a crippling budget deficit had undermined the district's ability to carry out its educational program. State officials were also called in to fill a "leadership void" left by the departure of the district's superintendent and two top deputies. The court also mentioned low student performance as a factor in the decision, although it was not the primary factor. The district's new state-appointed superintendent, Dr. Richard Boyd, also a state deputy superintendent, is working with a team of state and local administrators to manage the district's daily operations and develop a reform plan.

Under the reform plan, entitled "A Blueprint for Change," principals, teachers, and parents have more control over a local school's budget, curriculum, scheduling, and professional development activities. The plan shifts the focus of the school board away from day-to-day operations and toward setting student achievement goals and insuring sound financial practices for the district.

Eight "Fast Track" schools are piloting the increased decentralization. The district chose four elementary schools, two middle schools, and 2 high schools from a group of applicant schools. The eight schools met as school teams for six months to plan improvement efforts using small planning grants provided by the Cleveland Foundation, and began implementing their new programs this fall. The eight Fast Track schools will serve as models for 40 "Transformation" schools, which will begin implementing changes next school year. Among the changes that the Fast Track schools have instituted are extended school hours to encourage family involvement, new grading systems, tutoring in basic skills by community volunteers, and expanded professional development opportunities for teachers.

State Intervention in Failing Schools

Maryland

Based on student attendance rates and achievement on state assessments, schools in Maryland can become eligible for reconstitution by the state. Once identified as low-performing schools, school-based teams craft improvement plans that must be approved by the state. If schools fail to adhere to their plans and if student outcomes do not improve, the state may choose to reconstitute a school. Thirty-five Baltimore schools have been identified over the past three years, although none have been reconstituted.

Schools can use the identification process as impetus to improve services to students. After being identified as a low-performing school, Patterson High School hired a new principal, who handpicked several new teachers to lead the planning effort. The school's improvement team developed a plan to increase student achievement by restructuring the school day and the way instruction is delivered. All students pursue courses of study that cater to their career goals while preparing them for postsecondary education. In 1995-96, Patterson's attendance rate rose from 69 percent to 77 percent, more students passed the Maryland Functional Test required for graduation, and a greater percentage of seniors graduated than in prior years.

Kentucky

Kentucky's school accountability program, passed as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), holds schools accountable for helping their students achieve high standards. The program is based on an accountability index that measures student achievement in five academic areas and four non-academic areas (attendance, retention, dropout, and transition to the next level of school or the job market). The assessment instruments that measure student achievement are based on high standards for what students should know and be able to do developed by the state with input from teachers and subject area specialists. Every two years, the state establishes a

target score for each school to reach based on its previous achievement. A school that exceeds its target receives a cash reward whose distribution is determined by the school's faculty. Schools not meeting their target must develop a school improvement plan. Schools whose index score declines over two years must develop a school improvement plan and are assigned a "distinguished educator" by the state to provide support and advice on improving student performance. Schools that are continually in decline may, after an extended review, be taken over by the state; teachers in the school may be subject to dismissal.

Based on 1996 results from the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS), 88 showed improvement but did not their improvement goals, another 88 schools have been labelled "in decline," and nine have been placed in the "crisis" category. All of the schools in these three categories are being assigned a "distinguished educator" for a two-year period to help them develop and implement school improvement plans. Only if those plans do not generate significant improvements in student performance will the schools be subject to a state takeover.