

Agenda For Kick-Off Meeting On Ending Social Promotion

April 1, 1998

10:00

OEOB

- Purpose of Guide--Relationship to Administration initiatives, proposals
- Audience and Level for Guide --State & local policy makers, school officials & staff, parents
- Timing--Schedule and "Back to School" activities
- Specific issues that need to be discussed:
 - Problem of ending social promotion while not promoting grade retention (research shows poor prognosis for students from both social promotion and grade retention)
 - Problem of not placing blame on students and parents while conveying some responsibility
 - Problem of high-stakes testing and differential impact on minorities
 - Recommending specific gates in students' academic career vs. interventions when appropriate
 - Other substantive issues
 - Fixing failing schools
 - Teachers
 - Educ. Opp. Zones

Guide is tied to Educ. Opp. Zones initiative.

Guide to frame the debate

④ tool to support President's use of the bully pulpit on this.

Art Coleman - Paper - Presented @ Nat. Acad. of Sciences,
differential impact on racial/ethnic
minorities of high stakes testing.

AFT Home page - sets out principles of how to do this.

Rather than retention, create an alternative instructional
program (?).

Time Line for President's Directive on Helping Schools End Social Promotion

- 2/23 President announces that ED will produce within 6 months: (1) guidelines for educators and policymakers on effective approaches to ending social promotions; (2) a plan and an inventory that identifies how federal funds can be used to assist states, districts and schools in this effort.
- 3/20 Team requests literature search of the research evidence on social promotion and retention.)
- 3/27 Team meets with White House staff to identify scope of the guidelines and audience.
- 3/27 Kickoff meeting with senior officers. Discuss nature of plan to assist schools and districts. Discuss and approve protocol for case studies. Identify federal programs for inventory, and sources of information for guide. Discuss the look of the report.
- 3/27 Team meets with Susan Frost's Thursday afternoon group.
- 4/3 Team sends out protocol for listservs and requests 2-week turnaround.
- 4/3 Team procures task order for focus groups with administrators, teachers, parents, and students.
- 4/24 Team completes literature search and compiles review. Examples of effective approaches received.
- 5/8 Team develops and revises outline of report and plan.
- 5/22 Team researches sources, makes external contacts, chooses sites for examples. Writes up inventory of federal funds.
- 5/29 Team meets with White House staff to present evidence, outline, and examples.
- 6/12 Team writes up case studies of effective practices.
- 6/26 Team drafts the report.
- 6/26 Team works with 1-800-USA-LEARN and Kickbush/Winters to establish dissemination process and website. Drafts Secretary's letter. Arranges graphic design, copy editing, and publication.
- 7/10 Team sends products to reviewers: Mike Smith, Terry Peterson, and external people (to be identified).
- 7/31 Team revises products based on comments.
- 8/14 Team sends products out for final review
- 8/21 Team finalizes report, prepares press copies with OPA, installs guide on Web.
- 8/28 Secretary transmits report to President. Press conference. Guide is on Web, copies are available for press, big distribution plan is announced.

Opinions of the American Public and Teachers on Social Promotion

- The public overwhelmingly favors setting “higher standards than are now required about what students should know and be able to do” in “math, history, English and science for promotion from grade to grade”: 87% are in favor, and 10% are opposed. And 65% favor requiring public school students in their community “to pass standardized, national examinations for promotion from grade to grade” (32% are opposed)(Gallup, 1995b).
- More than two-thirds (70%) of the public and 62% of teachers want to raise standards of promotion from grade school to junior high and require students to pass a test showing they have reached these standards (Public Agenda, 1994 & 1996).
- Fully 84% of the public supports requiring public school students in their community “to meet higher standards than are now required in math, English, history, and science in order to graduate from high school” (13% are opposed) (Gallup, 1995b).
- The public favors “stricter requirements for high school graduation, even if it meant that significantly fewer students would graduate than is now the case” (65% favor; 29% would be opposed) (Gallup, 1995b). Moreover, there is strong support for “having students pass an academic examination in order to graduate from school” (67% strongly favor, 20% favor, 6% oppose, 5% oppose strongly) (us News/World Report, 1996b).
- Almost nine in ten members of the public (88%) and 83% of teachers support not allowing students to graduate from high school unless they demonstrate they can write and speak English well (Public Agenda, 1994 & 1996).
- Teachers believe that automatic (social) promotion is “the single biggest cause of the tremendous disparities in student preparation,” and while teachers believe the practice should end, “54% acknowledged that they have promoted unprepared students during the past year”; 6 in 10 “say they fear that students repeating the same grade might create social and disciplinary problems for a class” (AFT, 1996).

What is social promotion?

Passing kids that are below grade level?

to be socially promoted, need promotion standards that are disregarded.

likely, what we have is more informal.

NAPE

[40% of American kids can't read ~~or~~ independently (a basic level by end of 3rd grade).
75% can't read (a proficient level).]

Guide needs to set out what social promotion is -

~~or~~ either promotion w/out standards

or ~~pass~~ promoting kids who didn't meet the standards.

Must discuss the cost of retention (save \$ by use of summer programs instead).

Q: What are acceptable promotion standards?

Must be raised carefully.

Q: any external standard to assess whether kid has met the standard?

Blend of teacher assessment and external standards.

We need to get info to find out how folks are doing this?

How does the Dpt. talk about no social promotions @ high standards for all ~~while~~ while appreciating that some school districts have a lot of kids who don't meet standards.

Policies around promoting from School Board Assoc.

DRAFT
Presidential Directive
Helping Schools End Social Promotion

I. Introduction

What is social promotion? What is retention?

What do we know about social promotion and retention policies and their effects?

Literature review of negative effects of social promotion and retention policies. Neither passing students onto the next grade when they are unprepared nor retaining them in the same grade is a promising practice for increasing student achievement and preparing students for college and employment. Include context of race, class, gender, and discrimination in social promotion policies.]

• certain classes offered
• no ability grouping in lower grades

Alternative approach: The way to eliminate social promotion is to provide children with the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to meet challenging standards.

II. Effective Approaches and Promising Practices

This section outlines policy strategies for ending social promotion by helping children to learn, including: examples of schools and districts implementing these strategies, consideration of differences between elementary vs. high school students.

Consistent and high quality instruction -- quality professional development; looping; policies that provide for within-district consistency to cope with high student mobility.

✓ **Challenging Academic Standards** -- development of challenging standards with specific proficiency level for all students.

✓ **Quality aligned curriculum** -- focus on reading in early grades, curriculum that supports high standards.

✓ **Early childhood programs** -- strategies to address the uneven developmental needs of children.

→ **Changed ability grouping** -- ungraded schools, multi-age grouping, and other grouping practices that center on achievement and development.

Smaller schools/smaller classes -- methods for using smaller classes to address the needs of students.

✓ **Increased learning time** -- tutoring, after school programs, and summer school programs.

Increased home and community involvement -- strategies that help families to provide children with opportunities to learn, encourage family involvement in education, and reinforce school experience/academic progress; mentoring.

Effective monitoring and assessment -- appropriate assessments for measuring student achievement; effective use of data to track individual student progress and needs; collaboration and consultation among school staff across and within grades.

Intervention -- effective strategies for students who must be retained.

III. **Using Federal Resources to End Social Promotion**

This section outlines how U.S. Department of Education programs can be used to support an end to social promotion by helping to improve learning opportunities for all children. It will include promising models of how some states, districts, and schools have used these federal resources effectively to implement strategies discussed above to end social promotion and improve student achievement:

Goals 2000 -- helping states and districts develop high standards and aligned assessments, and strategies to bring standards into the classroom; improving teacher training; accountability.

Title I -- assistance to help at-risk students reach high standards; accountability; schoolwide programs; school improvement; Even Start; education of migrant, neglected, and delinquent students.

IDEA -- support for children with disabilities to help them meet challenging standards.

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration -- helping foster coherent schoolwide improvement with strategies to improve curriculum, instruction, parent involvement, professional development, evaluation, and coordination of resources.

21st Century Schools -- expanding the capacity of schools to meet educational needs of community after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

Partnership for Family Involvement -- collaboration of national, state, and local organizations, schools, and individuals to encourage parents and schools to work in partnership to further student learning.

✓ **Magnet and Charter Schools** -- providing alternative educational opportunities for students to reach high standards of achievement.

Proposed Initiatives and grant programs -- discussion of class size initiative, Educational Opportunity Zones, High Hopes for College.

IV. Conclusion

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 23, 1998

1998 FEB 23 P 4: 16
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUBJECT: Helping Schools End Social Promotions

The linchpin of our efforts to strengthen public education has been to raise standards and expectations for all students. As a result of State and local efforts, and with the support of Goals 2000 and other Federal education programs, students in every State in the country are beginning to benefit from higher academic standards and a more challenging curriculum.

If our efforts to promote higher standards are to lead to increased student achievement, the standards must count. Students must be required to meet them, and schools must provide each student with adequate preparation.

At present, too often standards don't count. Students are passed from grade to grade often regardless of whether they have mastered required material and are academically prepared to do the work at the next level. It's called "social promotion." For many students, the ultimate consequence is that they fall further and further behind, and leave school ill equipped for college and without the skills needed for employment. This is unacceptable for students, teachers, employers, and taxpayers.

That is why I have repeatedly challenged States and school districts to end social promotions -- to require students to meet rigorous academic standards at key transition points in their schooling career, and to end the practice of promoting students without regard to how much they have learned. As every parent knows, students must earn their promotion through effort and achievement, not simply by accumulating time in school.

This is especially important in the early grades, where students must acquire a firm foundation in reading in order to learn other subjects in later grade levels. Students should not be promoted past the fourth grade if they cannot read independently and well, and should not enter high school without a solid foundation in math. They should get the help they need to meet the standards before moving on.

Neither promoting students when they are unprepared nor simply retaining them in the same grade is the right response to low student achievement. Both approaches presume high rates of initial failure are inevitable and acceptable. Ending social promotions by simply holding more students back is the wrong choice. Students who are required to repeat a year are more likely to eventually drop out, and rarely catch up academically with their peers. The right way is to ensure that more students are prepared to meet challenging academic standards in the first place.

Schools must implement those proven practices that will prepare students to meet rigorous standards the first time. Schools must provide smaller classes, especially for the most disadvantaged students. They must be staffed with well-prepared teachers. Schools should use specific grade-by-grade standards and a challenging curriculum aligned with those standards. They must identify those students who need extra help early on, and provide it immediately. There must be after school and summer school programs for students who need them. The entire school staff must be accountable for results, and must work together as a team to achieve them for every child.

If steps such as these are taken in every school as part of an overall effort to require students to meet academic standards, we would see a dramatic rise in student achievement and a decline in student retention rates. My Administration must help States, school districts, and schools take these steps.

A growing number of States and school districts is responding to the challenge of ending social promotion. A recent study by the American Federation of Teachers shows that seven States now require school districts and schools to use State standards and assessments to determine if students can be promoted at key grades. We must encourage more States to take this step.

Chicago has also ended social promotions, and instituted a program that provides after school programs for students who need extra help and mandatory summer school for students who do not meet promotion standards. In Cincinnati, student promotion is now based on specific standards that define what students must know and be able to do. The standards are designed to prepare students to pass the State's ninth-grade proficiency test. My Administration's proposal to establish Education Opportunity Zones in high poverty urban and rural communities will help more local school systems take these and related steps to help students meet challenging standards.

As more States and localities move to end social promotions, we must help them design and implement approaches that will succeed. Therefore, I am directing you to take the following actions within 6 months:

1. Produce and Widely Disseminate Guidelines for Educators and Policymakers on Effective Approaches to Ending Social Promotions. Drawing on the lessons from research and practice, these guidelines should provide educators and policymakers with practical advice on how to design and implement policies that require students to meet academic standards at key transition points before being promoted. The guidelines should help schools:

- implement strategies that will prepare all students to meet the standards on time;
- end the use of remedial strategies that have been shown to be ineffective;
- provide students who do not meet the standards with immediate and effective extra help -- such as after school tutoring programs and summer school -- so they can be promoted on time;
- implement effective interventions for students who must be retained; and
- make appropriate use of tests and other indicators of academic performance in determining whether students should be promoted.

2. Help States and School Districts Use Federal Education Resources to Implement Effective Practices. The Department of Education should develop a plan to inform States, school districts, and schools how Department of Education programs and resources, such as Title 1, Goals 2000, the 21st Century Schools Program, the Comprehensive School Reform Program, and others, can be used to implement the recommendations in the guidelines described above.

Together, these initiatives can help ensure that our students receive a solid foundation in the basic skills of reading and math, and master advanced subject matters as well. They can help improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, and ensure that students who need extra help get it without delay. They can help strengthen our public schools by raising standards, raising expectations, and restoring accountability.

William J. Clinton

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March 9, 1998

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state
& district
Policy
- ECS
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