

BUSH TAKING CREDIT FOR OTHERS' ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM:

Austin American-Statesman: Texas' Improvements Happened Due to 15-Year-Old Reform Efforts, Not Bush. "Education experts say Texas' gains are more the result of reforms initiated 15 years ago -- reduced class sizes and equalized funding for rich and poor school districts -- than the state's testing and accountability system that has matured since Bush took office in 1995. ... Earlier reformers, including former Democratic Gov. White and Dallas billionaire Ross Perot, who headed White's special committee on education in 1984, deserve the bulk of the credit for improved test scores. They established smaller classes (22 students in grades kindergarten through four), competency testing for teachers and no-pass, no-play rules, which sidelined students from athletics or other extracurricular activities when they failed to score 70 (of a possible 100) in their courses." [Austin American-Statesman, 8/1/99]

Fort Worth Star-Telegram: School Reforms Predated Bush. "A review of the record indicates that the states's most important school reforms -- including standardized tests and other accountability measures -- took root long before Bush moved into the Governor's Mansion. Education experts, and even Bush aides, say that his predecessors are more responsible for improvements in Texas education. ... (Bush spokesman David) Beckwith says Bush has always acknowledged the contributions of his predecessors ... But such acknowledgments, as might be expected during a run for public office, have been largely absent during the campaign." [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 7/11/99]

Los Angeles Times: Bush Doesn't Deserve Credit for Texas Education Improvements. "The argument over the success of the Texas education system -- sometimes referred to as the 'Texas miracle' -- is of major importance for Gov. George W. Bush as he campaigns for president. He spoke proudly of the performance of the schools in his home state as he made a swing through California last week. But changes such as reduced class size and increased spending resulted from policies implemented before Bush took office in 1994, [sic] the same year the accountability system was put in place." [Los Angeles Times, 7/6/99]

Washington Post: Bush Doesn't Deserve All of the Credit in Reading Improvements. "He (Bush) only deserves some of the credit for the improvement in reading proficiency. Like much about his record in office, the reality of what he has done is more complicated than the campaign rhetoric." [Washington Post, 3/21/99]

"Bush's campaign platform in 1994 hung on promises to reform education, juvenile justice, welfare and civil court procedures. Not coincidentally, the conservative-leaning Legislature had already been working on overhauling state laws governing all four...Bush today boasts as part of his re-election campaign that he batted a perfect four-for-four, even though none of the reforms went as far as he wanted them to go, especially welfare." [Houston Press, 10/29-11/4/98]

BASIS FOR BUSH'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM -- TAAS -- UNDER FIRE

Texas' accountability system is based largely on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. Bush often cites improvements in TAAS scores as evidence of his education leadership. A closer look at his record, however, shows that Bush bases his education record on a test that has been attacked as outdated and too easy, discriminatory to minorities and detrimental for students and teachers. While TAAS scores are used to determine a school's rating, critics argue that too many students are exempted from the test for valid results. The test is also the focus of a task force investigation into alleged cheating and faulty records, raising the question of how the system can hold schools accountable if it is not held accountable itself.

Editorial Blasted Bush's Accountability System, Based on TAAS Test. According to an Austin American-Statesman editorial, "the TAAS test, the scoring system and the statewide accountability rankings always stir considerable controversy. Some critics contend the test is too easy, some believe the 45 percent passing rate is still too low and others worry that teachers are teaching students to pass the TAAS instead of teaching the curriculum. The pressure for a district to achieve a high ranking goes beyond educational excellence. A low ranking can threaten a community's economic well-being, lower property values and create a downward spiral that is hard to arrest. That pressure almost certainly caused Austin and other schools districts to cheat to improve school rankings." [Austin American-Statesman, 8/18/99]

Pro-Kids Group Called TAAS a Poor Measure of Skills. In 1998, Just for the Kids, a nonprofit group aiming to improve standards in Texas schools, said the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills program was not an effective method of measuring schools. While the state's accountability systems grade schools based on percentage of students who passed the test with a 70 percent or higher, a state formula showed that a student must score at least 85 percent to be proficient in a subject, meaning many passing students were not proficient. The group argued that this discrepancy led to high scores under the state's accountability system for some schools where students were not proficient in the tested subjects. [Austin American-Statesman, 12/4/98]

TAAS SUBJECT TO INVESTIGATION INTO CHEATING, FAULTY RECORDS:

Comptroller Starts Task Force to Investigate Allegations of Cheating, Faulty Records on TAAS Test. In 1999, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander announced the formation of a new state task force to examine allegations of bogus dropout rates, faulty financial records and cheating on state tests in Texas school districts. Rylander said she believed the task force investigation was necessary after hearing numerous reports of districts tampering with test results and submitting inaccurate information on state reports on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test. [Dallas Morning News, 9/22/99]

TOO MANY STUDENTS EXEMPTED FROM TAAS:

Editorial Said Texas Emphasis On Standardized Tests Leaves Children Out. "Take Texas as an example. The state has a mostly sterling reputation as an education reformer. But last year, Texas required that the test scores of any student without a special education exemption be counted toward its

all-important school rankings. In just one year, Texas schools somehow found an additional 38,000 students who qualified for special education exemptions. In San Antonio, alone, the number of test-exempt students jumped from 39% of special education students last year to 65% this year. And guess what? San Antonio's test scores rose -- the 'greatest victory yet' in school reform, trumpeted the school district in a press release. ... The losers are the newly excluded special education students in San Antonio; teachers now don't have to worry about educating them to standards." [USA Today Editorial, 9/8/99]

Too Many Students Excused from TAAS for Valid Results. Almost 16 percent of third-graders statewide skipped the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, due to an exemption policy that allowed students to be excused from the test because of learning disabilities, parental requests or limited English proficiency. In one Spring Branch school, almost 60 percent of fourth-grade students failed to take the test. Critics argue that it is invalid to use the test results for school evaluations if so many students are skipping the test. In an editorial, the Houston Chronicle wrote, "Unless all students take the test, or the state's exemption policy is more clearly defined and strictly followed, TAAS scores will be virtually meaningless -- at least as a matter of inspiring the public's confidence that they are on the up and up as a true and honest measure." [Houston Chronicle editorial, 8/8/95]

EDUCATION COMMISSIONER SAID TAAS WAS OUTDATED, TOO EASY:

Bush Education Commissioner Said TAAS Was Too Easy. In 1999, Bush-appointed Education Commissioner Mike Moses said it was time to replace the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test with a tougher student testing program, one that matched the state's new curriculum. "We need to advance our testing program to be sure that it includes this more challenging material," Moses said. "The TAAS test has served us well since 1990, but we have hit a ceiling with that test. It is time to begin working on a new test that can take our schools and students into the 21st century." [Dallas Morning News, 8/17/99]

TAAS ATTACKED AS DETRIMENTAL TO STUDENTS:

Waco Parents Tried to Stop District From Using TAAS as Social Promotion Test. In 1998, a group of parents tried to block the Waco Independent School District from using the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test as part of its Bush-supported social promotion policy. The parents argued that the test was not designed to be a method of deciding promotion and that the test results were meant to be confidential, which is impossible if the test is used to determine promotion. Judge Alan Mayfield ruled against the parents, saying the parents had not shown enough evidence to get a temporary injunction. Bush spokeswoman Linda Edwards said Bush supported Waco's policy and encouraged other school districts to develop methods to end social promotion. [Austin American-Statesman, 8/14/98]

- **Columnist Said Texas' Standardized Tests Didn't Actually Improve Education.** According to columnist Monty Neill, "Nonetheless, proponents claim that high-stakes exams make students learn more. In reality, teachers often just drill them on how to beat a particular test. For example, in Texas, the high-stakes testers' 'poster boy,' scores have risen on the state's exam but failed to budge on the independent National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test. Observers report that some students cannot answer questions that don't exactly fit the format of Texas' test. When education is reduced to test coaching, most real learning is eliminated. Fortunately, there are better ways to improve school quality and monitor student progress. By having skilled teachers assess student academic performance over time through portfolios, projects and exhibitions, not one-shot tests, we can

achieve genuine accountability and improve student learning. That is the sort of reform all of our children deserve." [Monty Neill column, USA Today, 9/8/99]

Many Texas Students Pass Courses, But Fail TAAS and Can't Graduate. In 1998, the Texas Education Agency identified 2,454 students who left Texas schools without graduating after finishing all their classes but failing the TAAS test. [San Antonio Express-News, 9/26/99]

EDUCATORS BLASTED TAAS TEST:

Teachers Had Little Faith in TAAS. A 1997 poll of teachers showed that educators had little faith in the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, with 71 percent of the survey respondents saying "the TAAS has not been a positive thing for public schools." Texas State Teachers Association spokeswoman Annette Kootes also said in 1998 that the test was not designed for determining promotion. [Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, 7/24/97; Houston Chronicle, 1/15/98]

State Board of Education Member Criticized TAAS. "I question the validity of the TAAS," said Republican Bob Offutt, a member of the State Board of Education. "Everything that goes into the classroom is based on satisfying the TAAS." [Austin American-Statesman, 8/10/98]

Teachers Argued Statewide Test Created Bureaucracy, Not Local Control. A spokeswoman for the Texas State Teachers Association said in 1998 that the group opposed Bush's plan because it would take control away from local schools by requiring they use the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills to determine social promotion, rather than allowing individual districts to make that decision. "Whatever happened to local control," TSTA spokeswoman Annette Kootes asked. "This is straight state bureaucracy." [Houston Chronicle, 1/15/98]

TAAS ATTACKED AS DISCRIMINATORY TO MINORITY STUDENTS:

- **Department of Education Review Showed Texas Did Not Prevent Racial Bias in TAAS Test.** In 1998, the Department of Education conducted a review of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills and found that the test creation and administration process had insufficient mechanisms to stop bias in the test. [Dallas Morning News, 11/18/98]

Minority Groups Criticized TAAS as Racist. In 1997, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund said linking grade promotion to passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test would have disastrous results. Arguing the TAAS test discriminates against black and Hispanic students, the group sued the state. In 1999, a judge ruled that the suit would continue in September, 1999 to determine if the TAAS test was educationally invalid and had a discriminatory effect on minorities. In addition, the NAACP criticized the test, saying that the large proportion of minorities failing the test proved it was biased. [Dallas Morning News, 12/5/97, 11/18/98; Associated Press State & Local Wire, 7/30/99]

TEXAS DROPOUT RATES: POOR ACCOUNTABILITY, MISLEADING STATISTICS

The Texas accountability system Bush touts is based on several factors, including a school's dropout rate. Yet, while Bush is praised for including these factors in judging schools, he has failed to ensure that those schools are accurately reporting data. In fact, several schools have come under fire for under-reporting or not accurately reporting their dropout data, and the Texas comptroller has started a task force to investigate the faulty data.

Decline from 1994 a Result of Changing Definition of "Dropout." Although the state's dropout rate seemed to decline substantially between 1994 and 1995, the drop is, in part, a result of not counting certain categories of students who drop out as actual dropouts. For example, for the 1994-95 school year, students who complete all graduation requirements but fail the exit-level TAAS are not counted. [Interim Report on Texas Public Schools]

Audit Finds Education Agency Miscalculated Number of Dropouts. Figures reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) may have under reported the number of dropouts by half in the 1993-1994 school year. No changes were made for the next year, so the 1994-1995 statistics may be similarly flawed. [Dallas Morning News, 8/29/96]

Texas Schools Did Not Provide Reasons for Students' Leaving. In 1999, state officials said that Texas schools statewide failed to provide explanations for about 3.6 percent of all middle and high school students enrolled the previous year who did not return to school the next year. [Austin American-Statesman, 5/25/99]

Texas School Districts Warned About Inaccurate Dropout Rates. Fourteen Texas school districts were warned in 1999 that their accountability ratings could drop because of inaccurate dropout data. The Texas Education Agency planned to audit the school districts looking for discrepancies in their reported dropout data. If discrepancies are found to be careless or intentional, the school districts could face sanctions from TEA. [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 8/17/99]

State Report to Track Dropouts Left 55,000 Kids Out. In 1999, the first report used to track every student who left a public school district demonstrated that Texas could not account for about 55,700 students who left in 1997-98. Some of these students were believed to have dropped out. The report was the result of a 1996 Texas Education Agency audit that showed that weak oversight by the TEA led to under reported dropout rates. [Austin American-Statesman, 5/13/99]

Bush Said Dropout Accountability Should Be Fixed If Evidence Proved It Was Flawed. Asked about problems in the state dropout rate accountability system, Bush said any problems in the system should be fixed. "I'm a strong believer in accountability," Bush said. "If the measuring system is flawed, I'd like to see the evidence and fix it. The idea of a measuring system is not to hide problems." [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1/9/99]

After Prompting from Legislators, Texas Education Agency Cracked Down on Dropout Rate Errors. In 1998, under pressure from Texas legislators, the Texas Education Agency required school districts to account for every student from seventh to 12th grade who did not return to school in the

fall, rather than only requiring the number of confirmed dropouts and graduates. After several school districts failed to account for thousands of students, the agency added a new rating for school districts that judged data quality. Critics of the state's dropout system said the new rating could cause an increase in the Texas dropout rate due to more accurate reporting. "It will perhaps help wake up a populace that has been lulled into thinking that dropout rates are no longer an issue in Texas," said Albert Cortez, director of the Institute for Policy and Leadership at the Texas-based Intercultural Development Research Association. [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 7/22/99]

State's Dropout Measurement Methods Criticized. Mario Robledo Montecel, executive director of the Intercultural Development Research Association, criticized the state's methods of accounting for dropouts after the organization showed many more dropouts than state figures show. The Texas Education Agency calculated a 9.1 percent dropout rate from 1991 to 1997, while the research group showed a 43 percent dropout rate from 1993-1997. "Without accurate ... dropout data tied to the accountability system, it is easy to wrongly conclude that the dropout issue is either solved, minimal or only affects minority children." Gov. Bush said problems in counting dropouts should be fixed. "If the measuring system is flawed, I'd like to see the evidence and fix it," Bush said. "The idea of a measuring system is not to hide problems." [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1/9/99]

BUSH AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

Although Bush has said he supports holding charter schools to academic standards, he has been attacked for failing to uphold those standards. In fact, under Bush, the State Board of Education chairman called several Texas charter schools "embarrassments," numerous charter schools have taken too much money from the state, and at least one failed to open its doors to students, despite taking hundreds of thousands of state education dollars. One school even closed down after violating several laws and requirements regarding health, safety and teacher benefits. When faced with these problems, rather than try to hold the schools accountable, Bush ignored the issue and encouraged expanding the charter school program.

BUSH SUPPORTED INCREASING NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS:

Bush Supported Charter Schools. "Charter schools will help education in general, reading in specific, by creating competition. Basically, what we've said is if you've got a better way to do it, then do it ... If you think you've got a better way ... start a charter school," Bush said in a speech urging Texas educators not to micromanage schools. "Charter schools is one part of encouraging academic excellence," Bush said. "I urge you to grant these charters -- to encourage innovation in our public schools, to resist the impulse to substitute our judgment for theirs." [[San Antonio Express-News](#), 2/16/96]

Bush "Absolutely" Wanted More Charter Schools, Supported State Requirements. In 1996, despite lower test scores and financial problems at some of the schools, Bush supported increasing the number of charter schools in Texas, provided the schools fulfilled state-set requirements, a proposal he would later make during his 1997 State of the State address. "I want more charter schools. Absolutely," Bush said. "The way the system should work is we want you to design the programs that meet the local needs, so long as you meet (requirements for) state results." State education groups opposed the plan, and wanted to see evidence that charter schools work before authorizing more. The 1995 Legislature approved the creation of 20 charter schools. The 1997 Legislature passed a law allowing 100 open-enrollment charters. [[San Antonio Express-News](#), 5/15/96; [Austin American-Statesman](#), 1/29/97; [Dallas Morning News](#), 8/18/97]

UNDER BUSH, TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS BROKE LAWS, MISMANAGED MONEY:

Texas Overpaid Charter Schools \$2.4 Million in 1996. Under Bush, the state overpaid charter schools \$2.4 million in 1996, their first year, because many schools over reported their enrollment. Fourteen of the 18 charter schools in operation in 1996 were overpaid. The state sought refunds from the schools that received the extra money, although the Texas Education Agency reported that 10 of 20 schools in operation in 1997 may have been overpaid. [[Houston Chronicle](#), 11/6/97]

Charter School Took State Money But Never Opened. Under Bush, the Cypress Youth Lodge Charter, one of 20 charter schools approved by the State Board of Education, received \$240,519 from the state but never opened. The school received \$21,000 a month from September 1996 to June 1997 for a projected enrollment of 48 students, despite the fact that the school had not educated any students. The school's charter was terminated in January 1998. [[Austin American-Statesman](#), 9/11/97; [Dallas Morning News](#), 1/7/98]

Report Said Waco Charter School Broke Laws and Should Lose Contract. In 1999, a

Texas Education Agency administrative law judge said that the Emma L. Harrison Charter School in Waco had broken several laws and accumulated an "insurmountable" budget deficit. The school, which was operating with a budget deficit of \$400,000 in May 1999, had received about \$779,000 from the state so far and had an average daily attendance of 168 students. The school had violated laws regarding non-profit corporations, open meetings, public information and payment of employees, along with child nutrition federal program requirements. [Abilene Reporter-News, 6/2/99]

TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOLS "EMBARRASMENTS," LACK ACCOUNTABILITY:

Bush-Appointed Education Chair Called Texas Charter Schools "Embarrasments." In 1999, Bush-appointed State Board of Education Chairman Chase Untermeyer called several of Texas' 90 charter schools "embarrassments and probably will be closed." For example, the Emma L. Harrison Charter school in Waco may have its charter revoked since an administrative law judge found that the school has "violated numerous laws and accumulated an 'insurmountable' budget deficit." The Cypress Lodge Charter School, which received \$240,519 in public funds, gave up its charter in 1998 before even opening its doors, and the state still had not recovered the money. Meanwhile, the Texas Education Agency found that several charter school teachers were unpaid and there were problems with payments to the Teacher Retirement System. Of the 17 charter schools rated in 1998, only nine received "acceptable" status and seven received poorer ratings. In order to solve the current situation, six new staffers, out of 24 that were requested, were added to the Texas Education Agency. [Associated Press State & Local Wire, 6/29/99]

Bush Refused To Discuss Texas' Charter School Program. Bush, who signed the Texas charter school program law in 1995 and has said that charter schools encourage education innovation, repeatedly refused an interview to discuss the declining status of some of Texas' charter schools. [Associated Press State & Local Wire, 6/29/99]

Teachers Group President Criticized Lack of Accountability with Charter Schools. As the number of Texas charter schools increased, Texas Federation of Teachers president John Cole advocated slowing down growth to ensure accountability. Cole said the state was moving quickly to the point where the charter school program would be too large for the state to control. "I fear we may be getting close to that point," Cole said. "The state really has no mechanism to make sure they are living up to the promises they make or to ensure financial accountability." [San Antonio Express-News, 5/20/98]

Study Criticized Schools for At-Risk Students. Under Bush, the Texas Education Agency's "performance standards for campuses serving at-risk students are so lax that, instead of preventing students from dropping out, they actually cause more students to drop out," according to a recent study of alternative schools. The study showed that the 500 public alternative schools, for problem students and those in danger of dropping out, have lower standards than traditional schools or the state's juvenile justice programs for expelled students. [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 12/26/98]

BUSH AND HOME SCHOOLING

"Despite the vow of Gov. George W. Bush that 'no child shall fall between the cracks,' the bottom line of Texas home schooling laws is that compulsory education no longer exists in this state."

[Dallas Observer, 3/18/99]

• *On September 24, 1999, George W. Bush will address the Home School Legal Defense Association, a group closely aligned with right-wing religious conservatives. In Texas, Bush has supported home schooling, despite the fact that Texas mandates no regulations on attendance or achievement standards for home schooled students. In fact, while national and statewide teachers' groups recommend requiring certification for home school teachers, Texas has no requirements for them. Texas officials have even criticized the Texas system for offering the parents of truant children a way to get around the system without actually educating their children. Bush has repeatedly called for more accountability in public schools, but has made no effort to apply those standards to his right-wing allies like Michael Farris and the Home School Legal Defense Association.*

BUSH SUPPORTS HOME SCHOOLING

Bush Proclaimed 1996 Home Schooling Week. In 1996, Bush proclaimed a week in May "Home Education Week." "Home schooling provides many children the opportunity to learn within the framework of family beliefs and values. Parents know what kind of educational program best suits their children," Bush said in an official memorandum. "Texans are encouraged to recognize the importance of the home school sector of education in Texas." [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 5/7/96]

Bush Said He Was Happy with Status Quo in Home Schooling. During his 1994 campaign, Bush said he supported the current rules on home schooling. "I'm happy with the status quo on home schooling," Bush said. The Texas Supreme Court ruled in 1994 that parents could teach their children at home, but authorized the state to request achievement tests for those students. The state has not mandated any achievement test for home schooled students in the years since the decision. [Dallas Morning News, 7/13/94; Texas State Law Summary, www.hslda.org]

TEXAS IS LENIENT ON HOME SCHOOLERS

Texas Has Very Few Requirements on Home Schoolers. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association, Texas has very few home school requirements. Although the state requires students to be in school between the ages of six and seventeen and requires the teaching of reading, spelling, grammar, math and good citizenship, there is no accountability system to ensure that parents are meeting those requirements. Texas does not require teacher certification, attendance or notice to the public school the student attended. [Texas State Law Summary, www.hslda.org]

Texas Considered One of the Most Lenient States to Home Schooling. Chris Klicka, head of the National Center for Home Schooling, a branch of the National Home School Legal Defense Association, said Texas was considered one of the most lenient to home schoolers. [Houston Chronicle, 9/2/99]

Texas Education Agency Has No Role in Monitoring Home School. The Texas Education

Agency advises parents who want to home school their children that the state has no role in monitoring, registration or approval of home-schooled students. The agency does provide parents with a list of home school curriculum suppliers and support organizations, but beyond that "it's their business, not ours," an agency spokesman said. [*Houston Chronicle*, 9/2/97]

TEACHERS' GROUPS, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS CRITICIZE HOME SCHOOLING

Teachers' Groups Expressed Concern about Untrained Parents Teaching Kids. Two Texas teachers groups, the Texas State Teachers Association and the Texas Federation of Teachers expressed worries that home-schooled students were being taught by parents who did not have college degrees or teacher training. "That may work well enough in early education, but beyond that students are best served in a classroom setting, either public or private," said Texas Federation of Teachers Secretary-Treasurer John O'Sullivan. [*Houston Chronicle*, 9/2/97]

National Education Association Said Home Schoolers Should Be Held Accountable. According to a National Education Association 1999-2000 resolution, the national teachers' organization argued that home schooled students should be taught by licensed teachers using state-approved curriculum. "The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. When home schooling occurs, students enrolled must meet all state requirements," the group said in its resolution. [NEA 1999-2000 resolutions, H-67; www.nea.org]

Officials Say Texas Laws Make Home Schooling a Cover for Truant Students. Some Texas officials and truant officers say that Texas' lax laws on home schooling allow parents to use home schools as a dodge from truancy laws when they cannot or will not get their children to attend school. Justice of the peace Robert Forman, who hears truancy cases in Dallas, said that the number of parents using home schooling as a way to conceal truancy has grown so quickly that "I could stand outside my court asking people if they wanted to buy a letter saying they were home schooling and make so much money, it could be my retirement." "I hope they (home schooled children) sue their parents when they grow up," said Arlington truant officer Janean Aaron, arguing that the state's home schooling law does not have any mechanism to stop flagrant abusers. [*Dallas Observer*, 3/18/99]

BUSH'S FEDERAL EDUCATION PLAN: DEMOCRATIC PROPOSALS WITH NO FUNDING

In his first federal education speech, Bush proposed requiring schools that get Title I funding to meet certain testing standards and said that if schools did not meet those standards in three years, the funding would be taken from the schools and given directly to the parents in a back-door voucher program. Bush did not acknowledge that nearly every part of his federal accountability plan was either already in place or part of a Clinton proposal. In fact, Bush failed to go as far as Democratic proposals, because he would take funding from schools, but would do nothing to help the schools improve scores.

Columnist Said Bush Education Plan Was a Public Relations Ploy. Columnist Derrick Jackson wrote, "What Cellucci and Bush would do with the schools that are not achieving is an answer that lies hidden in the thundercloud. ... Nor, ideally, should we be afraid of ranking the schools either, to find out which ones need resources or maybe a round of firings. But that is precisely where politicians have suffer discrimination from low expectations. Many micro-efforts around the nation show that low-income students can learn. No one, certainly no one in the approaching thunderstorm, has woven those small triumphs into an optimistic national vision. That leaves us with a forecast in these early rounds of high stakes tests of high winds, damaging hail, and washed-out students." [Derrick Jackson column, Boston Globe, 9/10/99]

Bush's Education Proposal Mimics Democratic Accomplishments. Morton Kondracke wrote in Roll Call, "According to a Department of Education analysis of Bush's speech, almost every standards and accountability proposal in it already is either in federal law or part of Clinton's agenda. One exception is the transfer of Project Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Education, but legislation has already been passed to beef up its emphasis on reading rather than day care. Meantime, if Republicans show signs of developing a compassionate conservative approach to choice, Democrats still have the edge on willingness to pay for educational improvements. Bush's speech contained not a hint that either the federal government or the states should be spending more to produce 'world class' schools -- even to help 'failing' schools improve." [Kondracke, Roll Call, 9/9/99]

Editorials Question Bush's Belief in Local Control and Federal Accountability. Several editorials blasted Bush for his support of both local control of schools and federal accountability over them in his first federal education proposal. According to the Houston Chronicle, "The very fact that Bush is proposing federal intervention raises questions about his own confidence in the accountability of local control." Another editorial said, "Bush may have to flesh out how he squares his advocacy of local control with mandated federal accountability. Also a concern expressed with accountability system has been about the fairness to disadvantaged children if the system is based solely on a performance test." According to the Concord Monitor, Bush "says that control over schools -- and thus accountability for their performance -- should reside at the local level. And he touts the potential of competition and choice to invigorate the educational system. Yet Bush's education plan doesn't call for ending Federal aid, or turning it over with no questions asked." [Houston Chronicle, 9/12/99, 9/4/99; Concord Monitor, 9/10/99]



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Slate
Policy Corner: Bush Ed II
By: Jacob Weisberg
Posted Thursday, Oct. 7, 1999, at 3:09 p.m.

big education
attack on
of \$3 billion in
2,000 charter
federal
bad idea,

There are some decent things in Bush's second
proposal that got overshadowed by his implicit
conservative Republicans. One is Bush's offer
loan guarantees to spur the construction of
schools in two years. Consolidating some 60
education programs into five categories isn't a
either.

But the central thrust of Bush's "Culture of
Achievement" plan,

just the kind of which relates to standards and testing, deploys
trying to unwieldy regulatory mechanism Bush is elsewhere
advisors don't eliminate. Indeed, even Bush's top education
sense--except in think this aspect of the proposal makes much
political terms.

Manhattan Institute on In the plan unveiled at his speech to the
or penalized Tuesday, Bush proposed that states be rewarded
student with federal dollars on the basis of whether
implies standards performance improves in the future. This
of rewards and and testing: If you're going to have a system
who punishments, you have to have some way to judge
states points, in deserves which. W.'s idea of merit pay for
Bill Clinton, fact, toward something advocated by his father,
national standards and countless other education reformers:
benchmark for what and tests. National standards would set a
to know. children of different ages should be expected
evaluation of how National tests would allow for objective
them. well various states and schools were teaching

problem. Conservatives But this runs smack into a big political
of education reject anything that smacks of federal control
the right is policy, funding, or curriculum. In particular,
Education paranoid about bureaucrats at the Department of
tests. They see setting curricular standards or administering
prerogatives and a step national tests as a violation of local
general. toward a Washington takeover of education in

you might call So Bush splits the difference, opting for what

Goldberg local-national standards. Here's how his Rube
it. In line with system would work, as far as I can understand
their own conservative dogma, states would be free to set
be obligated to standards and select the tests that they would
every year, as a give to every child between grades 3 and 8,
federal government condition of receiving federal money. The
would pay half the cost of these tests.

plan, which deals The problem: As with the first part of the
Bush Ed"), the with Title One funding (see "Policy Corner:
deserve more or states themselves determine whether they
unaware of this less money from the feds. Bush is not entirely
another moral-hazard problem. To counter it, he adds
government "asks" "optional" test, this one federal. The federal
in the annual (in other words, tells) states to participate
National Assessment of Education Progress
(NAEP). The idea here is, as Ronald Reagan once said,
"Trust but verify."
but if they don't, States don't have to participate in the NAEP,
themselves and prove that they must pay for an alternative test
the results can be "equated" with NAEP results.

So what would happen if the state test and the NAEP
differed, as they inevitably would? This is left ambiguous, for
obvious reason. If federal money is actually tied to performance
on NAEP, then the state tests are a meaningless sop to
conservatives. And if the money is tied to state tests, then the
whole incentive structure--and the idea of making valid
comparisons among states--collapses.

and William Bush's education "surrogates," Diane Ravitch

speech to Bennett, spoke to reporters before his Tuesday
able to do so explain and defend his proposal. Neither was
what they think. very well for a simple reason: It contradicts
advocates of Both Ravitch and Bennett are long-standing
national standards and testing.

case for Ravitch, who has written two books making the
alternative for national standards, says there is simply no
both parties. Bush, because of the opposition to the idea in

Congress is not going "It's become obvious that at this point
phone interview. to endorse a national test," she told me in a
it?" Ravitch, "So what would be the point of Bush supporting
Democrat rather who says she considers herself a dissatisfied
endorsement, "I think than a Republican, adds this lukewarm
the right thing." that he is in some strange fashion trying to do

about the Bennett is equally unenthusiastic. I asked him
Tuesday. "I told the standards issues after Bush's speech on
Education], we governor that when I had the job [secretary of
me. "Ninety-two evaluated the state evaluations," Bennett told
the percent were scoring above average. You add up
picture." individual state assessments and you get a rosy
might be Bennett said that while he thought Bush's plan
person." workable, "I'm more of a national-standards

supposedly In other words, on a day when George Bush was
Republicans, he was distancing himself from conservative
issue at the center actually caving to their foolish dogma on the
advisors on of campaign--over the objection of his two top

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October 6, 1999, WEDNESDAY; ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. A1

LENGTH: 998 words

HEADLINE: BUSH AGAIN TAKES GOP TO TASK FOR NEGATIVITY
DEBUTS SWEEPING EDUCATION REFORM PLAN

SOURCE: Wire services

BYLINE: TERRY M. NEAL, Washington Post News Service

DATELINE: NEW YORK

BODY:

Texas Gov. George W. Bush criticized his party Tuesday for espousing negative rhetoric, failing to portray a message of inclusiveness, and forgetting that conservative policies should benefit those left behind in an affluent society.

Bush's remarks, during a speech on education, marked the second time in a week that the Republican presidential front-runner has challenged his party to rise above the perception of it as a repository of uncaring and mean-spirited ideology. Last week, he stunned many of his supporters on Capitol Hill when he denounced a congressional GOP budget plan that would save money by deferring tax credits for the working poor.

"Too often, on social issues, my party has painted an image of America slouching toward Gomorrah," Bush told his audience at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank. "Too often, my party has focused on the national economy, to the exclusion of all else, speaking a sterile language of rates and numbers, of CBO and GNP. Too often my party has confused the need for limited government with a disdain for government itself."

He continued: "This is not an option for conservatives.... Our founders rejected cynicism, and cultivated a noble love of country."

As he has throughout this early stage of his campaign, Bush used Tuesday's speech to stake out the middle ground in American politics and distance himself from the GOP's right wing. Though Bush has stood with his party on a number of key issues, he has taken opportunities to show that his style of conservatism has a softer edge.

In presenting his second major education initiative, Bush explained how his "compassionate conservatism" would translate to real policies.

While his ideas generally hewed closely to long-favored conservative themes such as school vouchers and charter schools, he indicated his intention to avoid some of the party's hot-button rhetoric and ideas.

For instance, while he said he would consolidate 60 education programs"into five flexible categories,"his aides and advisers, including former Education Secretary William J. Bennett, said the proposal included no plans to downsize or eliminate the Education Department, long a goal of conservatives.

Another example is Bush's plans for testing. He called for mandatory testing of third- through eighth-grade students in math and reading.

States where student performance fails to meet a specific standard would lose up to 5 percent of federal funding. States would be able to determine their own method of testing, a nod to conservatives who oppose national testing, which President Clinton has proposed. But Bush would allow the federal government to use the National Assessment in Education Progress test essentially as an audit to verify state test results.

That immediately drew criticism from the campaign of GOP rival Malcolm S."Steve"Forbes Jr.."It is discouraging to see any Republican presidential contender propose new education mandates and controls at the federal level," said Forbes national campaign chairman, J. Kenneth Blackwell. At the same time, Jenny Bachus of the Democratic National Committee said Bush is "trying to pull the wool over the American people's eyes. People are smart enough to see through his pretty words and look at the policies he's advocating."

Bush's education proposals and his overall message defy standard political orthodoxy that says Republican candidates must run to the right in seeking their party's nomination and move back to the middle for the general election. In Bush's case, he has already moved to the middle , a luxury his strong front-runner status affords him. By attempting to redefine conservatism, analysts say, Bush has effectively adopted his own brand of "triangulation,"the term used to describe Clinton's political strategy.

Moderate Republicans praised Bush's statements."We should be more optimistic and support more positive things,"said Rep. Peter T. King, R-N.Y."We do sometimes come across as almost ascetic and puritanical when it comes to society."

House leaders declined to comment on Bush's remarks, though some said privately they believed they were aimed more at Patrick J. Buchanan and other conservative presidential aspirants than at Congress.

Last week, campaign spokeswoman Mindy Tucker said Bush was not trying to distance himself from the unpopular Congress, but simply was expressing his disagreement on one relatively narrow policy matter.

Tuesday, communications director Karen Hughes insisted Bush was not attacking the GOP but the image created by partisan foes.

"There's recognition that conservatives have been misportrayed,"she said."There's recognition that there is a public perception that our party is mean-spirited."

But when asked about the line in Bush's speech suggesting the party had confused the need for limited government with a disdain for

government itself, Stephen Goldsmith, Bush's senior domestic policy adviser, said: "It's intentionally in the speech, and it was meant to send a message."

Former Education Secretary Bennett, who is advising Bush but has not endorsed anyone, said: "What he wants is a broader party with a different message and never yield the high ground of compassion to the Democrats. They don't deserve it."

Bush unveiled his education policy last month, offering a plan that would allow some federal money to be spent on private education. Tuesday he proposed a vast expansion of charter schools, calling on the federal government to contribute \$ 300 million to back a \$ 3 billion loan guarantee to finance 2,000 new charter schools.

He also said he would support the expansion of tax-exempt education savings account contributions from \$ 500 to \$ 5,000 each year and allow parents to use the accounts to cover expenses for kindergarten through 12th grade.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: October 6, 1999



Search: General News;bush education

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Bradley Focuses on Working Families

By Dan Balz and David Von Drehle
Washington Post Staff Writers
Friday, October 8, 1999; Page A8

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley, arguing that "prosperity that fails to bolster families is hollow and unsustainable," yesterday outlined a series of proposals designed to ease the burden on working families.

Bradley spoke about work and families in New Hampshire as Republican presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole issued a tough anti-drug message on the U.S.-Mexican border in California. She attacked President Clinton as weak on drugs--"he lacks the moral authority to send a message that drugs aren't cool"--and she promised to crack down on smuggling, trafficking and use of all illegal drugs, including marijuana.



Democratic presidential hopeful Bill Bradley delivers a policy speech at Conval High School in Peterborough, N.H., on Thursday. (AP)

In New York, Vice President Gore appeared with prominent environmentalists to collect their endorsements. He took the chance to accuse Texas Gov. George W. Bush of "carrying water--dirty water--for the special interests" and polluters.

Bradley's speech was his latest effort to detail the policies underpinning what he has called a campaign of big ideas. Last week in Los Angeles, he unveiled a \$65 billion proposal that he said would dramatically reduce the number of Americans without health insurance, estimated at roughly 45 million people. In contrast to that speech, yesterday's was far more modest, particularly in dollar terms--and some of his ideas echoed proposals supported by Clinton and Gore. Gore on Tuesday dealt with the same subject in a New York speech.

But the former New Jersey senator, who spoke at a local high school in southern New Hampshire, said that while this program is "not about big government," it is still about "big ideas and the courage to commit ourselves to finding a common-sense balance between family and work in America."

As Bradley concluded a two-day campaign swing through the nation's first primary state, two new polls charted his continuing progress toward overtaking Gore there.

A poll by Franklin Pierce College for the television station WNDS showed Bradley forging ahead of Gore in New Hampshire, 42

percent to 35 percent. That poll also showed that Bradley now runs ahead of Bush (51 to 36 percent), while Bush leads Gore (45 to 41 percent)--bolstering Bradley's claim that he would be a stronger nominee in 2000 than Gore.

A second New Hampshire poll released yesterday by the Boston Herald and WCVB-TV showed Bradley at 39 percent and Gore at 37 percent among likely Democratic voters, a statistical tie. The same poll last June showed Gore with a 12-point lead over Bradley.

Bradley played down the significance of the new findings. "This is a long campaign," he told reporters. "Obviously, I'd rather be ahead than behind."

In his speech, Bradley described American families as harried and stressed, torn by the demands of employers forced to compete in a global marketplace and by obligations to children and aging parents. "Our nation has been good at building our economic infrastructure," he said. "But for far too long, we have neglected our social infrastructure. We are economically healthy. But are we socially healthy? Are we spiritually healthy?"

Bradley's plan includes four specific proposals.

The first calls for the federal government to provide \$2 billion annually in matching grants to the states to replace the "catch-as-catch-can hodgepodge of underfunded, uncoordinated efforts" to provide quality child care with a more comprehensive system. The idea is modeled after a North Carolina program.

His second proposal would tap the growing ranks of retirees to provide more after-school mentoring programs for young people. Bradley said he would offer tax-free stipends to retirees who agree to volunteer a prescribed number of hours each week working with young people in schools, churches and nonprofit organizations.

Bradley's third proposal aims at providing young people the skills to obtain good jobs and giving older workers opportunities for retraining as new skills are required by the economy. To do this, he said he would establish "Life-Long Learning Communities" through the nation's community colleges, modeled after a successful program in Texas. He estimated the cost at \$400 million annually.

Finally, Bradley, like Gore, called for expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act by extending its requirements to businesses with at least 25 workers, rather than the current 50-employee cutoff. Bradley also said he would require employers to provide as much as 24 hours of unpaid leave annually to enable workers to attend parent-teacher conferences or take a family member to the doctor.

Dole delivered her speech on drugs about 30 feet from the fence dividing California from Mexico, and she chided the country on the other side of the fence. "Mexico, long a close friend and important neighbor, needs to extradite drug lords to the United States and make a concerted effort to reduce the flood of methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine and crack across the border," she said.

Citing studies indicating that the rate of drug use among children is rising after a period of decline, Dole charged that the Clinton administration has given up in the war on drugs. She stressed diplomatic efforts to cut off the flow of drugs from abroad and education efforts to cut the demand at home.

"It is time we throw down the gauntlet and cease timid negotiations with foreign governments that cannot or will not put a stop to the production or smuggling of drugs," Dole said.

The speech was the third of four speeches planned by Dole to lay the foundation of her campaign. Earlier speeches were on education and foreign policy; the fourth speech will deal with taxes.

Dole is struggling to maintain her hold on second place in GOP polls and to fend off Arizona Sen. John McCain. In the Franklin Pierce College poll, McCain surged past Dole in New Hampshire, with 23 percent to her 8 percent.

Yesterday, McCain and Steve Forbes denied a report in the Boston Globe that their supporters have been spreading word that Dole may drop out of the race. "I would never do such a thing, nor would anyone who works for me," McCain said, and he promised to fire anyone who does. Forbes called the accusation "utterly preposterous."

Gore got a boost from New York environmentalists--led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Larry Rockefeller--who gave him \$100,000 and their endorsements. They felt it was time, Kennedy said, because a relatively small but vocal group of greens, Friends of the Earth, had surprised Gore recently by throwing its support to Bradley.

"We needed to do something to make sure people understand the environmental community is solidly behind Al Gore," he said. "Sometimes your friends have to stand up when momentum is going against you."

Kennedy and Rockefeller joined Gore in attacking Bush. "I'm going to put party labels aside and put our kids' future first and the Earth's future [and] team up with New Yorkers and other Americans who recognize an environmental champion when they see one," said Rockefeller, a Republican who said he is bitterly disappointed with Bush's record.

Balz reported from New Hampshire, Von Drehle from Washington. Staff writer Ceci Connolly in New York contributed to this report.

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October 6, 1999, Wednesday, PM cycle

SECTION: National Political

LENGTH: 770 words

HEADLINE: Bush proposes national testing; Texas program gets praise, criticism

BYLINE: By PEGGY FIKAC, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: AUSTIN, Texas

BODY:

As Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush calls for mandatory state exams to gauge school performance nationwide, a similar program in his home state of Texas has brought higher pupil scores, criticism and a lawsuit.

"We think it (Bush's testing plan) is a horrible idea, given the history of the state of Texas" with a state exam required for graduation, said Leticia Saucedo, staff attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

The organization filed a lawsuit on behalf of Hispanic education groups and some minority students who completed their school work but did not receive diplomas because they failed the statewide academic skills test required to graduate.

The plaintiffs argue that the "exit test" is invalid and discriminatory. State lawyers defend the exam as fair and say the gap between minorities and whites is narrowing.

In a speech Tuesday, Bush proposed requiring states to design and administer annual tests to pupils in grades three through eight. States that fail to improve after five years would lose some of the federal money they receive for elementary and secondary education, while improving schools would be eligible for bonus funds.

In the same speech, the Texas governor criticized other Republican leaders for the second time in a week. "Too often, my party has confused the need for limited government with a disdain for government itself," he said.

"Too often, on social issues, my party has painted an image of America slouching toward Gomorrah. Too often, my party has focused on the national economy, to the exclusion of all else."

Last week Bush criticized Republican leaders in Congress for advocating a slowing of payments to working poor families in an effort to reduce the federal budget.

Although the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills is given beginning in elementary school, only the exit test is being challenged in the lawsuit.

But others question whether the overall testing program drives the public school curriculum and thus narrows pupils' education experience.

"It has driven our scores up dramatically. ... The other side of the coin is there's a price, and I think

teachers have been feeling and parents are beginning to feel that price," said Jay Levin of the Texas State Teachers Association.

"There is a great emphasis placed on the testing in the overall academic program, and there's a lot of practice going on for the test, which I'm not saying is good or bad. In some situations, it does take away the ability to teach more critical thinking skills and analytic skills," he said.

Supporters say testing is the best way to gauge whether schools are doing their job and that Texas' program has worked well.

"It helps the public know what they're getting for their money. That's important since they pay for it," said John Cole of the Texas Federation of Teachers, whose national affiliate endorsed Vice President Al Gore, a contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, on Tuesday.

In Texas, the mandatory test is a key part of the state accountability system for schools, which are rated based on student scores, dropouts and attendance. The system predates Bush but has been strengthened under his tenure as governor.

The test was given this spring to more than 1.8 million Texas students in grades three through eight and those preparing to graduate.

Of those, 78 percent passed all sections of the test. That's up from 73 percent last year, and from 53 percent in 1994.

"I think the mere fact that we give a school district a grade based on how they're performing in terms of their students mastering the state's curriculum has been an enormous motivator for teachers, students and administrators," said Teel Bivins, a Republican who chairs the state Senate Education Committee.

Regarding the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund lawsuit, which is in mid-trial, Cole, of the Texas teachers association, said the state test should not be attacked for showing that students haven't mastered the material.

"This is a little bit like saying you want to throw out the thermometer because it keeps showing some kids have a fever," he said.

Saucedo said her group is concerned about test results being used in a way that punishes students since the Texas system long has experienced unequal funding among schools and has a "history of unequal educational opportunities among students."

"I don't think we've ever said we're against tests as an evaluation tool. Our problem is to use it in a punitive way. I think it harms students in the end more than it helps them," she said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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