

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Beyond Scandals

After a season of scandals and scandal-mongering, American voters are tempted to turn off, tune out and drop away from politics and civic life. Before they do, they should catch the signals coming their way from a new batch of presidential candidates. They're not just raising "issues" in an effort to win votes. They're talking about problems and how to solve them.

On the Democratic side, Vice President Gore and former senator Bill Bradley are about to start a serious argument over how to cover the 44 million Americans who lack health insurance. Gore made his bid this week with a sensible if modest plan to help kids and the near-elderly.

Even more striking were the reviews given Texas Gov. George W. Bush's education proposals—not by Republicans but by Democrats. The shrewdest among them pointed to serious shortcomings in the approach Bush outlined in a California speech last week. But they also see Bush pushing the schools debate in the right direction.

"It's very encouraging," says Rep. George Miller, a liberal Democrat from California. "There are a number of themes there that are very consistent with what we've been saying about school and teacher accountability, and also the accountability of the political system."

"What's good about it," says Sen. Jeff Bingaman, a New Mexico Democrat who is a partner with Miller in pushing for improved teaching, "is the emphasis on standards and measuring performance and building accountability into the schools."

Bush shrewdly distanced himself from many of the hot-button education issues and avoided teacher-bashing. "Education is too important to have a strategy of divide and conquer," he said. Bush also condemned the idea that disadvantaged kids should not be held to high standards. This entailed "the soft bigotry of low expectations." Good line, and right, too.

Bush's core policy proposal was also refreshing, if flawed. He wants to use the federal government's Title 1 program—it gives \$7.7 billion a year to schools that educate poor children—as a lever to force states to test children regularly to see if they're making progress. Schools would have three years to get their act together. If at the end of three years there is still no progress, Bush said, federal funds would be used to give parents of poor kids a \$1,500 voucher that they could use at the school of their choice, including private schools.

In pushing for testing, Bush is breaking with some of his fellow Republicans who, on principle, don't want the federal government to do much of anything about local schools. Gary Bauer, trying to corral the party's right flank in his quest for the presidency, quickly denounced Bush for proposing "another layer of bureaucracy at an even larger federal Department of Education."

But as Bush, Miller and Bingaman all argue, if tests aren't given, administrators aren't held accountable and parents are denied useful information on how their schools are doing. What meaning does the word "choice" have then?

The problem with Bush's idea is what he'd do when schools fail. Vouchers are not always a bad idea. But in many areas, a \$1,500 voucher would give parents no choice at all. "In many parts of my state, you go to public school or you don't go to school," says Bingaman. "There's no place to go with a voucher for \$1,500."

And Miller sees Bush evading the reason so many school systems fail: "Poor kids go to poor schools and get a poor education" because their local school districts lack money. "They can't pay their teachers as well, they don't have the education materials, they don't have the facilities," Miller says.

Kati Haycock, president of the nonpartisan Education Trust in Washington, calls Bush's education record in Texas "impressive" and likes his approach to accountability. But she raises the right doubts about his vouchers solution.

"If he means just tossing kids into a set of private schools that are totally unaccountable in terms of... having high standards and high student achievement, then I don't think that's the most effective strategy," she says. "On the other hand, there may be some circumstances where, if there are no high-quality public schools available, we may have to think about that." Vouchers, in other words, are a last resort, not an alternative to fixing the public schools.

But wherever this debate goes, it's a big improvement on the politics of ideological cheap shots and scandal. Any chance we can stick with it?

BBC -
Bush proposals

Richard Cohen

Keeping Bad Company

On the wall next to my desk I keep a blowup of an article from a British newspaper. The article recounted how one intellectual had found another morally deficient—and told him so in no uncertain terms. A “magisterial rebuke,” the paper called it, a wonderful term that occurred to me recently. It’s precisely what Bill Bradley should have given the Rev. Al Sharpton.

But that’s not what the Reverend Al got. Instead, when Bradley, who just made his presidential campaign official, recently appeared before Sharpton’s National Action Network, he spoke about the importance of racial unity but never mentioned that his host is the very personification of racial divisiveness.

The visit to Sharpton says something awfully troubling about Bradley. A man seeking the presidency ought to know the difference between a civil rights leader and someone whose very mouth is an anti-personnel weapon, hurting the guilty and the innocent with casual indifference. If, for instance, Sharpton just started to apologize to those he’s unjustly accused of racism all these years, it would amount to a second career.

No one who hears Bradley speak about race can fail to be impressed with his evident sincerity and how

Bill Bradley’s nod to Al Sharpton.

much the issue means to him. Indeed, he has called racial unity the core of his campaign. “It is who I am,” he told his Harlem audience. “It’s what I believe. It’s what I care most about. It’s one of the main motivations for my being in politics in the first place.”

Nice—but the wrong venue. The Reverend Al was one of those, after all, who falsely accused some white law enforcement officials of kidnapping and then raping Tawana Brawley, the 15-year-old black girl who concocted her tale after failing to come home one night. One of those Sharpton fingered was an assistant district attorney named Steven Pagonis.

“We state openly that Steven Pagonis, the assistant district attorney, did it,” Sharpton said back in 1988. “His lawyers say he may or may not sue us. If we’re lying, sue us, so we can go into court with you and prove you did it.”

Pagonis did just that—and won. Sharpton owes him money—not that Pagonis will ever see it. More important, though, he owes him an apology—a return of his good name. So far, he has not seen that, either.

The essence of racial unity—the essence of what Bradley is talking about—is the fundamental requirement that we treat one another with dignity and respect. Sharpton rarely does that. He casually vilified Pagonis and then simply left the scene—roaring away in his demagoguemobile as if nothing had happened. But something had. He had publicly accused another person of being a racist and a rapist. This is not your usual hello.

But it is for Sharpton. Later, he used the most incendiary and ugly language to refer to Jews in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn—“diamond merchants”—and still later he blamed “white interlopers” for the effort to oust a black-owned record store from its Harlem location. The landlord, it turned out, was neither white nor, as was widely believed, Jewish—but a black church.

This is not a happy record. But it is made worse, far worse, by Sharpton’s refusal to issue his own magisterial rebuke—this time to Khalid Abdul Muhammad. A year ago, this gutter bigot held his first preposterously named “Million Youth March” in Harlem. Sharpton spoke. He did so, he said, because no one was going to tell him where to speak and to whom. But having made his point, he had an obligation to say something about the antisemitic, Catholic-hating racist behind him. He said nothing.

Someone could say—and someone will—that Sharpton does some good, too. Fair enough. He has held New York’s Finest accountable as they, with depressing regularity, shoot up or beat up some innocent or relatively harmless person. His passion for black people seems keenly felt, and he has—even his enemies must concede—an absolute genius for generating headlines.

But racial unity cannot be a mere phrase—a wispy aspiration. If it means anything at all, it has to encompass a single ethical standard for all people, especially public figures—an insistence that we all be treated as individuals. Pagonis is an individual. “Diamond merchants” are individuals. “Outsiders” in Harlem are individuals. All of them, though, were treated as stereotypes.

Bill Bradley should never have gone to speak to Al Sharpton’s organization. By going and then failing to utter a single word of criticism, he increased Sharpton’s stature and diminished his own. Bradley’s a big man, but by stooping for votes, he made himself look small indeed.

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1999

The Bush Record on Education

“Texas leads the nation when it comes to improving public schools. We are raising standards, strengthening accountability and funding early intervention so that every child learns to read and no child is left behind.”

-Governor George W. Bush

Background

When Governor Bush was first elected in 1994, rules and regulations were stifling the capacity of local people to chart the path of excellence for their schools. Accountability and curriculum was focused on process not student results. The state education bureaucracy was growing unchecked. Teachers faced the menace of out-of-control, disruptive students. Yet they lacked the freedom to enforce class rules or remove such students.

The state had more than two dozen education goals, in the words of Governor Bush, “there were so many goals, there were no goals,” and despite state education funding of nearly \$22 billion a year, one in five Texas schoolchildren could not read. Many of these same students advanced from grade to grade, regardless of whether they had mastered the skills needed to succeed at the next level.

Number-One Priority

In response, Governor Bush made education Texas’ number one priority, both in focus and in funding. Working with the Legislature, he enacted key reforms based on three fundamental principles: local control, limited government and accountability for student performance and achievement.

➤ Local Control

Governor Bush believes in aligning authority and responsibility at the local level. When we send our children to school, local parents and teachers and school boards should control what goes on in those schools. In addition, power at the local level discourages excuses for failure and encourages accountability and enhanced student performance. Texas should settle for nothing less than excellence from both the schools and the students in them.

➤ Limited Government

Governor Bush believes the state’s role in education should be limited to setting measurable goals and then holding school districts accountable for achieving those goals. Today, Texas has four clear goals: excellence in math, science, English, and social studies. Texas has put fewer bureaucratic burdens on schools, but still holds them accountable to achieve these goals.

➤ **Accountability**

Governor Bush believes the state's role in public education is to set clear and measurable goals and hold districts accountable for results. Under Governor Bush's leadership, the state has strengthened its accountability system into one of the nation's toughest. The state now sets goals at the state level and rates individual campuses based on their ability to meet or exceed those goals. Texas has raised and will continue to raise the bar for what constitutes "acceptable" and "exemplary" achievement by schools in basic academic skills.

Results: Texas students thrive during the Bush Administration

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Test scores have improved significantly for four consecutive years. Minority students in particular showed impressive gains – some groups improving their scores by as much as 60 percent.

- The number of students who passed all parts of the TAAS test has increased 47 percent while Governor Bush has been in office, from 53 percent in 1995 to 78 percent in 1999.
- The number of minorities passing the TAAS increased from 38 in 1994 percent to 69 percent in 1999.
- Reading performance has improved: 87 percent of all students in grades 3-8 and 10 passed the reading TAAS in 1998, up from 77 percent four years ago.
- Texas schools continue to improve. From 1994 to 1998, the number of schools rated "exemplary" rose from just 67 to 1,048. During the same time, the number of "recognized" schools more than doubled from 516 to 1,166.

Texas students have demonstrated outstanding performance on national evaluations since Governor Bush has been in office

- On the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Mathematics, African-American fourth graders in Texas ranked first in the nation among African-American fourth graders, with Hispanic students close behind.
- Texas recently earned the distinction of being one of two states that has made the greatest progress in education in recent years, according to the National Education Goals Panel.

Governor Bush's Reading Initiative

To address the immediate problem of illiteracy in schools, Governor Bush outlined in January 1996 a simple, yet profound, goal: that every Texas child learn to read on grade level or better by the end of third grade and continue to read on grade level or better throughout his or her schooling. To help schools achieve this goal, Governor Bush and the Texas Legislature, the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education gave educators new tools to improve reading performance. They include:

- A rigorous core reading curriculum that is knowledge-based, back-to-basics, and phonics-driven – i.e., a curriculum based on the *science* of reading;
- A new diagnostic tool, the *Texas Primary Reading Inventory*, to help kindergarten through second-grade teachers detect and correct reading problems early; and

- \$82 million over a four-year period to fund Reading Academies – intensive schools-within-schools to teach reading programs that work.

Accomplishments

From 1995 through 1999, Governor Bush and the Texas Legislature enacted a series of reforms to establish clear goals, return power to local communities and hold local school districts accountable for educating the children of Texas. Highlights:

- **Toughened the accountability system.** Under Governor Bush's leadership, the state has developed its accountability system into one of the nation's strongest and most comprehensive to ensure that no child is left behind. This system begins with diagnostics as early as kindergarten and continues with assessments in grades 3 through 11. Students *will be* measured and their schools *will be* measured.
- **Insisted on local control.** In 1995, the Texas Legislature passed and Governor Bush signed a new Education Code that decentralized public education and restored local control to schools. The new code is strong but flexible; it sets clear goals and holds districts accountable for achieving them – yet it gives teachers, parents and administrators the freedom to chart their own course to excellence by eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and oversight. More than 200 state rules were abolished, giving local school districts more freedom to determine how best to educate.
- **Reduced federal education oversight.** Texas is one of only 12 states in 1996 to apply for and receive Ed Flex status from the federal government. This status gives educators more freedom in deciding how to use federal education funds to implement federal programs in ways that will meet the needs of Texas students and communities. Since 1996, Education Commissioner Mike Moses, a Bush appointee, has granted more than 4,000 Ed Flex waivers to Texas school districts and charter schools, which is fourteen times more than the U.S. Department of Education has granted in the entire country since 1995.
- **Returned to basics.** Since Governor Bush took office, Texas has created a rigorous core curriculum that is knowledge-based and back-to-basics for all subjects and grades. The goal is excellence in the core subjects of English, math, science and social studies. This effort marks the first overhaul of state curriculum in a decade. Texas now has clear, specific expectations for what students should learn and know, as opposed to the earlier, prescriptive approach to how local educators should teach. Textbooks and assessment tests will be updated to reflect this new focus on the basics and the goal of higher standards.
- **Ended social promotion.** Governor Bush campaigned for and signed legislation ending social promotion in Texas' public schools. The initiative will help teachers identify and help students who have trouble learning in the earliest grades – when learning problems are easier to fix. The initiative, which will start with the kindergarten class of 1999, requires extra help for children diagnosed with reading problems at any point during kindergarten through second grade. The initiative also

requires additional intensive reading instruction for any child who fails the reading portion of the third-grade TAAS test. Students are required to pass the reading and math portions of the TAAS test in fifth grade and eighth grade before being promoted to the next grade level.

- **Implemented the Governor's reading initiative.** At Governor Bush's urging, the Legislature appropriated \$82 million over a four-year period to help fund reading academies in Texas schools. Reading academies are schools-within-schools that provide accelerated, research-based reading instruction for children who have reading problems in the early grades. The earlier a reading problem is diagnosed, the easier it is to correct.
- **Created a zero-tolerance policy for bad behavior.** Teachers now have the authority to remove disruptive students from their classrooms. Instead of expelling students, which essentially puts them on the streets, the Legislature and Governor Bush worked together to create an alternative education system to help these students.
- **Offered choice in public education.** The Texas Legislature, with the support of Governor Bush, authorized the creation of open-enrollment charter schools, including schools for "at-risk" youth. There are currently 168 charter schools approved in Texas. Together, they authorized home-rule school districts and campus and program charter schools, and provided financial incentives for schools to accept children who want to transfer from a low-performing school.
- **Increased funding for education.** Texas has increased state funding for public schools by \$8.3 billion, representing 56 percent of state spending increases during Governor Bush's tenure. State funding per pupil has increased 37 percent. The boost in state-level funding for public schools has helped ease the burden for local taxpayers.
- **Helped build more schools.** Governor Bush and the Texas Legislature allocated almost \$400 million to help local school districts pay off debt service costs for school bond programs. The state's financial commitment is making it possible for districts to build more than \$5 billion worth of new classrooms in Texas.
- **Increased teacher pay.** The minimum salary for teachers increased 33 percent during Governor Bush's term in office. The increase included a \$3,000 across-the-board pay raise for all Texas teachers, which the Legislature approved and Governor Bush signed into law in 1999.
- **Expanded the Advanced Placement program.** In 1999, Governor Bush and the Texas Legislature boosted the amount of funding for high school advanced placement classes from \$2 million to \$21 million. The additional money allows districts to create as many as six new advanced placement classes per high school, pays up to half the cost for the student test and pays for teacher training in the courses.

- **Focused on reading preparation.** In 1999, the Legislature approved \$19 million to improve Head Start and early childhood development centers. First Lady Laura Bush, in an effort to support the Governor's education priorities, began promoting an early childhood development initiative in December 1998. The initiative includes support for a competitive grant program to fund reading-readiness pilot programs for low-income preschoolers. The Texas Legislature allocated \$2 million for the grants.

Promoting Choice in Education

Governor Bush believes innovation and competition will inspire our public schools and improve the quality of education for all students. That is why he strongly supported efforts to expand educational opportunities in Texas including:

Charter Schools

Charter Schools are public schools created by local parents, educators, school districts, businesses, or foundations and are open to children who meet the admission requirements set forth in their charters. Charter schools are free from most state regulations governing traditional public schools, provided they participate in the school finance system, adhere to student performance requirements and meet basic constitutional guidelines. Today in Texas there are more than 88 operational, and 168 state-approved charter schools with more than 17,000 students. Seventy-eight percent of these students are minority children. Tax-exempt bond financing will be available to Texas charter schools for the first time this year because of legislation passed during the 1999 Legislative Session.

Texas charter schools enjoy widespread support from the Texas business community. In 1997 Texas business leaders established the nonprofit Charter School Resource Center to help nurture viable and effective charter schools across the state. The center provides professional expertise on education policy, curriculum development, and services, including daily technical support, expertise on accounting and legal matters and business start-up information. Other public-private partnerships include:

- **Financial Foundation for Texas Charter Schools**, which provides early-stage working capital at low interest rates for charter schools.
- **Governor's Business Council Charter School Task Force**, which matches in-kind contributions from major Texas corporations with the needs of charter schools.

Public Education Grant Program

The Public Education Grant Program (PEG) allows students in low performing schools to transfer to another district in search of educational opportunities. Under the PEG program, state funds for that student also shift to the new district. The program is designed not only as an alternative for under-served students, but as a catalyst to foster competition and creativity in the learning environment.

Contracts for Educational Services

Texas school districts are allowed more flexibility than ever before to seek out creative alternative for at-risk or special needs students. No longer limited to public sector solutions, districts can contract for services with private entities and organization to serve most effectively the needs of all Texas children.

What Others Say...

"...And on national examinations, Texas schoolchildren have begun to show up their peers in other states. The trend has become so consistent that Texas' public school system, long among the nation's most troubled, is viewed today by educators as an emerging model of equity, progress and accountability."

-The New York Times, May 28, 1999

"...all I can say is that in Texas, with regard to education, George Bush has managed to maintain the sort of system that ensures attention, support and achievement for minority and poor kids. While he has been governor, the gap between minorities and whites has closed rather remarkably."

-Susana Navarro, Executive Director of the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, a nonprofit group in El Paso

"In a relatively short period of time, the whole culture of education has changed in Texas. Today, kids of color and poor kids there are fully expected to learn."

-Richard F. Elmore, Professor, Harvard University's Graduate School of Education

"By shining a light on the various subgroups at the same time it is raising standards, Texas has managed to pursue both excellence and equity."

-"Quality Counts," Education Week Annual Report. (Education Week reports major improvements on national and state standardized tests.)

"...within the past few years, Texas has become one of the highest-performing states in the nation. While many educational reform efforts quickly buckle to union pressure or public discontent, Texas' system has only become more rigorous over time. If this trend continues, Texas, one of the nation's poorest states, may soon become the best place to get an education."

-Policy Review, March, April 1998.

September 2, 1999

Education Policy of George W. Bush, Part I: "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND"

"More and more, we are divided into two nations, separate and unequal. One that reads and one that can't. One that dreams and one that doesn't...All children can learn, and no child should be left behind."

—Governor George W. Bush

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governor Bush believes that all children can learn, and no child should be left behind. That is why he considers it a scandal that the educational achievement gap between rich and poor, Anglo and minority, is not only wide, but in key areas such as reading, is wider today than it was in 1992. It is for this reason that he is devoting the first of a series of education speeches to the issue of disadvantaged children in struggling schools – and the role of Government in helping them.

As President, Governor Bush will commit his administration to closing the achievement gap, as he is doing in Texas. During each of his years as Governor, all ethnic groups in Texas – in all grades – have advanced in reading and math. Indeed, according to the National Education Goals Panel, Texas is one of two states that have made the greatest progress in education in recent years.

While the education of our children remains the primary concern of states, communities, and parents, **Governor Bush believes the federal government can – and must – help close the achievement gap by implementing three key reforms:**

To **Ensure that Federal Education Programs Produce Results**, Governor Bush will:

- Require that federally funded programs boost student achievement, or they will be replaced by other education programs that succeed in reducing the achievement gap.
- Reform the Office of Education Research and Improvement so that it operates independently and scientifically and empowers states with research on how to teach children most effectively.

To **Make Education the Top Priority of Head Start**, Governor Bush will:

- Move Head Start to the Department of Education to make school readiness – instruction of pre-reading and numeracy skills – its top priority.
- Require Head Start programs to adopt a proven core curriculum.
- Award Head Start contracts on a competitive basis to spur improvements.

To **Ensure that Federal Funds Underwrite Success Not Failure**, Governor Bush will:

- Require states to demonstrate improved academic performance for federally benefited students in return for federal funding and unprecedented flexibility.
- Award "Achievement in Education" bonus funds to states and schools that are closing the achievement gap.
- Require states to offer parents of Title I students stuck in persistently failing schools the option of using their federal education dollars to participate in a school or program of their choice.

The National Achievement Gap Has Grown During the 1990's

"We are a nation where a majority of fourth graders in our cities can't read and understand a simple children's book... Where the achievement gap between rich and poor, Anglo and minority, is wide – and, in some cases, growing wider still... My administration will do things differently... I will carry a passion for high standards and high hopes to the highest office in the land... When we spend federal money, we want results—especially when it comes to disadvantaged children."

—Governor George W. Bush

Governor Bush believes that all children can learn, and no child should be left behind. That is why he considers it a scandal of the first order that the educational achievement gap between rich and poor, Anglo and minority, is not only wide, but in some cases, growing wider still:

- Disparity between ethnic group performance on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has either grown or remained substantial in most subject areas. The NAEP is currently the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas.
- The achievement gap on NAEP math and reading exams has widened since 1990. The reading gap between African American and Hispanic students and White students is larger today than it was in 1992.
- The current administration concedes that 68 percent of fourth graders in the highest poverty schools could not read in 1998 at NAEP's "basic" level. In low-poverty schools, by contrast, more than three quarters of the children read at or above the basic level.
- In a recent report, the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, an advocacy group devoted to closing the achievement gap, criticized "the widespread propensity of school officials to maintain and tolerate a permanent underclass of low-achieving students who are disproportionately poor and minority."

Governor Bush believes that it is precisely among these disadvantaged children in struggling schools that educational failure exacts its highest price. He believes we owe these children the pride and promise of learning – and that the new "knowledge-based" economy demands it.

As President, Governor George W. Bush will commit his administration to closing the achievement gap once and for all.

A Philosophy of Reform

“Some say that schools can’t be expected to teach, because there are too many broken families, too many immigrants, too much diversity. I say that pigment and poverty need not determine performance. That myth is disproved by good schools every day. Excuse-making must end before learning can begin.”

—Governor George W. Bush

In the last several years, a movement of parents and legislators, voters and educators, has resulted in an explosion of innovation in education. This movement is proving that public education can be improved – quickly and dramatically. Governor Bush believes that out of these efforts a philosophy of reform is emerging – a philosophy aimed at a culture of excellence. That philosophy is based upon these principles:

- First, schools must have clear, measurable goals. These goals should be focused on the acquisition of basic skills and essential knowledge.
- Second, there must be regular testing and measurement to ensure that the goals are met. Education is about results, and testing helps educators and parents judge whether the desired results are being achieved.
- Third, effective reform requires accountability. The only sure way to create a culture of excellence is to have incentives for success and consequences for failure.
- Fourth, accountability must be accompanied by local control. If schools are to be held to high standards, they must have the freedom to meet those standards as they think best.
- Finally, competition is an essential ingredient in raising standards and creating accountability. Only the pressure of competition – and the power of parental choice – can change the status quo.

Governor Bush has applied these principles to education reform in Texas. As a result, during each year of the Governor’s administration, all ethnic groups in all grades have advanced significantly in reading and math. And the performance gap has narrowed between economically disadvantaged and minority groups and their more advantaged and non-minority peers, whose results have also improved.

As President, Governor George W. Bush will apply these same principles to the challenge of closing the gap nationwide.

The Federal Role in Education—Making Sure No Child is Left Behind

“The federal government must be humble enough to stay out of the day-to-day operation of local schools, wise enough to give states and school districts more authority and freedom, and strong enough to require proven performance in return.”

—Governor George W. Bush

Governor Bush believes that the federal government can – and must – play a key role in closing the achievement gap. Specifically, in return for increased federal funds and unprecedented flexibility in using those funds, the states must be held accountable for improving the academic achievement of students who benefit from federal assistance. The federal government should offer incentives for success in narrowing the achievement gap, impose consequences for failure, and encourage competition to spur action.

Accordingly, as President, Governor Bush will champion three key reforms designed to ensure that no child is left behind.

Reform #1: Ensure that Federal Education Programs Produce Results

“We will start by funding only what works in education – only those methods and ideas that prove their power to close the achievement gap...My administration will require every federal program—in teacher training, curriculum research, school safety—to prove results. If it can’t we will shift that money into a program that is using it wisely.”

—Governor George W. Bush

The federal government funds more than 760 different education programs. We know that these programs produce a lot of paperwork: it is estimated that processing forms alone requires 25,000 full-time employees. What we do not know is whether these programs produce results. Unfortunately, federal money too often funds faddish, rather than rigorous research, and too few federal programs are scientifically evaluated.

The Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) is supposed to sponsor reliable research. But despite receiving \$510 million annually, it has generally failed to fulfill its task of developing and disseminating successful teaching techniques.

OERI’s largest sponsored research program is the ten regional education laboratories, funded at \$50 million a year. Established in 1965, the labs were intended to help states discover and implement what works in education. Instead, they have undertaken research that is fragmented, faddish, and vulnerable to politicization. Two former Assistant Secretaries of OERI have written that the regional labs “undertake a mishmash of research, dissemination, and technical assistance activities, aimed mostly at state and local education agencies...the program as a whole has outlived whatever justification it once had.”

Governor Bush believes that solid research in education can identify the most effective means of teaching children and closing the achievement gap. For example, recent research by the National Institutes of Health has shown conclusively that phonics-based instruction is the best means of teaching children to read. Research on early learning must also be a priority so that solid curricula and teaching strategies for use in Head Start and other pre-school settings can be developed.

Therefore, as President, Governor Bush will:

Require that the Federal Investment in Education Demonstrate Results: The federal government will insist that every program it funds will boost student achievement, or else it will be replaced by other education programs that succeed in reducing the achievement gap.

Reform the Office of Education Research and Improvement: In order to generate valid research that will empower the states, districts, and educators with research-based programs that most effectively teach children, OERI will be overhauled to ensure that it operates independently and consistently with the standards of a science-based research center. The regional education laboratories, which have failed to meet their purpose of providing helpful research to states and educators, will be sunset and opened to competitive bid.

Reform #2: Return Head Start to its Original Purpose – Education

We have learned that effective early childhood education programs can have a tremendous bearing on the future academic success of our children. That is why Governor Bush believes that Head Start should be reformed, not scrapped.

Head Start was established in 1965 and was originally intended as a literacy program, designed to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged toddlers and their more advantaged peers. Today, it is the largest federal early childhood development program, funded at \$4.4 billion a year. It currently serves more than 840,000 low-income children, most of whom are three- and four-year-olds. It is administered through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which contracts with local providers to run the programs.

However, instead of focusing on education, Head Start evolved largely into a day-care, health and nutrition program, that does little to prepare children for reading and math once they begin school. While some local Head Start programs have produced cognitive gains for participating youngsters, there is no pervasive evidence of the educational effectiveness of Head Start as a whole. The largest evaluation of Head Start to date, an April 1997 GAO report summarizing the findings of nearly 600 Head Start studies, shows that after three decades, Head Start lacks consistent results in preparing children academically for school. While recent reforms of the Head Start program are a move in the right direction, more can be done.

As President, Governor Bush will:

Move Head Start to the Department of Education: To ensure that Head Start makes education a priority and focuses on building skills for school readiness, especially pre-reading and numeracy, the Department of Education, not HHS, will oversee the administration and evaluation of local Head Start programs.

Require Head Start Programs to Adopt a Proven Core Curriculum: The federal government will identify model curricula and effective methods of teaching pre-reading and school readiness. These research-based best practices will be made available to local Head Start programs so they can better prepare youngsters to enter school ready to learn.

Award Head Start Contracts on a Competitive Basis: New Head Start grants will be open to competition and awarded on a selective basis. Upon renewal of each existing Head Start contract, the program will be evaluated based on its effectiveness. If a program is found ineffective in teaching pre-reading and school readiness, its contract will be opened up for competitive bid.

Reform #3: Restructure Title I to Close the Achievement Gap

"A president is not a federal principal, and I will not be one. We must trust parents and states and local communities to chart the path to excellence, and free them from the burden of bureaucracy. Yet when it comes to federal money, we have a right to expect excellence for everyone – to expect high goals and accountability...the federal government will no longer pay schools to cheat poor children."

—Governor George W. Bush

Title I was created in 1965 as the federal government's principal means of closing the achievement gap between the children of low-income families and their counterparts. It currently provides \$7.7 billion annually to local school districts to supplement the education of 11 million low-income students across the country. Nearly half of all public schools and 94 percent of all school districts now receive Title I money.

Unfortunately, little evidence exists that Title I has made any appreciable contribution to closing the achievement gap. Two long-term studies mandated by Congress, *Sustaining Effects* in the late 1970's and *Prospects* in the early 1990's, concluded that, after billions of dollars in spending, Title I had achieved virtually no lasting gains in the academic improvement of poor students. Even the most recent long-term study, the *Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance*, begun after the 1994 reform of Title I, reports disappointing results. The interim report, released to Congress in July of this year, seems to suggest that Title I students are growing academically at less than a year's progress for each year in school.

Governor Bush believes that we must stop using federal money to fund failure. It is time to impose quick and rigorous consequences for performance under Title I so that we can truly begin to close the unacceptable gap that exists between disadvantaged students and others. Schools that produce results should be rewarded. But when a school fails – after

being given an opportunity to change – its Title I funds should be given directly to the parents of eligible children for them to use for the educational program or school of their choice.

As President, Governor Bush will administer Title I to ensure that schools have both the pressure to perform and the freedom to succeed. Specifically, he will:

Focus Title I Funds on Earlier Grades: Students in K-12 will still be eligible for Title I, but Title I funds will focus on students in the elementary grades, where the achievement gap in reading and math skills begins.

Hold Schools Accountable for Performance of Title I Students: All states must annually assess Title I students in grades 3-8 in reading and math and report the results on a disaggregated basis. Each state that has not already done so must adopt its own standards of acceptable student performance and institute reforms that will move Title I students toward that standard through improved academic results, thus closing the achievement gap.

Establish an “Achievement in Education” Fund to Reward Success: States that make the greatest progress in closing the gap for economically disadvantaged students and schools within each state that make the greatest gains in moving Title I students toward the state-set standards will be rewarded significantly through an “Achievement in Education” bonus fund.

Give Low-Performing Schools Three Years to Reform: States will have three years to reform failing Title I schools by restructuring their management, changing personnel, reallocating resources, taking over persistently low-performing schools or districts, transferring education dollars to the parents, and/or implementing a school choice system. During this time, if a state enacts a private or public school choice program, it should be able to offer parents of Title I students in failing schools a pro-rata share of Title I funds to help pay for these choice options.

Make Funds Portable After Three Years: If, after three years, state reforms have not worked and the combined academic results of Title I students enrolled in a school still do not demonstrate progress toward the state-set standard of acceptable performance, the state will be required to:

- Give Title I students in these schools the option (fully paid for) of transferring to an acceptable school that is closing the gap for such students; or
- Offer parents of these students portable funds, which can be used to obtain for their child an education at a school of their choice or supplemental education services. These funds (worth an average \$1,500 per child) will consist of the student’s pro-rata share of Title I funds, provided by the Local Education Agency, and an equal amount, provided by the state from its federal or state funds. Portability would be in effect for the period of time the child would have been enrolled in the failing school.



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GOVERNOR BUSH VOWS TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

September 2, 1999

LOS ANGELES, CA – Governor George W. Bush today gave the first in a series of three education speeches saying, "When it comes to federal money, we have the right to expect excellence for everyone. In my administration, federal funds will not follow failure."

In a speech that focused on the federal government's role in helping disadvantaged students, Governor Bush defined his view of local control. "The federal government must be humble enough to stay out of the day-to-day operation of local schools, wise enough to give states and school districts more authority and freedom, and strong enough to require proven performance in return."

Governor Bush outlined bold public reforms aimed at closing the gap between rich and poor students through high expectations, high standards and real accountability.

The cornerstone of the initiatives announced today is an overhaul of Title I, the \$7.7 billion federal educational commitment to poor children. He proposed making sure that every school getting Title I funds tests its disadvantaged students on the academic basics every year. The state, not the federal government, will choose and administer those tests. If the scores are improving, a school will be rewarded with a grant and special recognition. If the disadvantaged children are not making progress, the school will be warned that it is failing and given time to change.

At the end of three years, if the school has not improved, the Title I funding will be matched with other federal education money given to the state and made available to parents for tutoring, a charter school, another public school that is showing success, or a private school – whatever the parents choose.

"In the best case, these schools will rise to the challenge and regain the confidence of parents. In the worst case, we will offer scholarships to America's neediest children, allowing them to get the emergency help they should have. In any case, the federal government will no longer pay schools to cheat poor children," said Governor Bush.

The most recent studies of Title I show no lasting gains in the academic improvement of poor children. The interim report of the Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance shows that Title I students are growing academically at less than a year's

progress for each year in school.

Governor Bush also proposed improving the Head Start program to make sure that it is an education program that prepares young children for the academic years ahead. As President, he would move Head Start from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Education. **-more-**

"We now have compelling evidence that children ages three and four can begin to read. We also have a massive Head Start program, serving 840,000 disadvantaged children at just those ages," said Governor Bush. "This is a perfect fit. My administration will reform Head Start programs and aggressively emphasize early reading skills."

The Department of Education will provide a recommended curriculum to Head Start programs that includes the "best practices," reliable scientific information on the best methods of teaching. After an evaluation of the Head Start programs, renewal contracts will only be given to those who use the curriculum to prepare the children. Programs that don't will be discontinued and the contract will be opened to competitive bid.

Governor Bush believes that solid research in education can identify the most effective means of teaching children and closing the achievement gap. He proposed reforming the Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI) to ensure that it generates valid research that will empower the states, districts, and educators with research-based programs.

Governor Bush vowed to make sure that educators are provided with the best information on effective teaching methods including "one area where the teaching research is definitive: The best way to teach children to read is phonics. No new theory or method has ever improved on it. The National Institutes of Health – in the kind of rigorous research we need – has proven that phonics works and that children can learn to read much earlier than we assumed."

Governor Bush spoke to the Latin Business Association's (LBA) Annual Expo. The LBA assists Latino entrepreneurs in gaining entrance to and flourishing in the business world. Governor Bush told the organization why he chose their event to unveil his first education proposal saying, "I am here with you today because you are leaders and because you embody the permanent hope, the durable dream, of this nation: to build a better life for ourselves and our children."

"You and I know that wealth is more than a static resource, to be hoarded and counted. Ultimately wealth is found in imagination and work and education – the hallmarks of the entrepreneur. Education, in particular, can predict the future earnings of an individual, and the economic future of a nation. There is no better weapon against poverty, because there is no better weapon against despair."

"The enormous frustration with public education in America leads to two temptations. One is to dictate local policies from Washington. But this is an approach that has been discredited by 30 years of

failure. Our schools do not need more bureaucratic oversight, they need pressure to perform and the freedom to change. But there is another temptation – to give up on public education entirely. To talk only of ending agencies or slashing programs. But this approach is too limited. One sixth of the American population is in public schools. The content of their education will determine the character of our country."

He concluded, "Our common good is found in our common schools. And we must make those schools worthy of all of our children. Whatever their background, their cause is our cause, and it must not be lost."

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