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MEMORANDUM

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General

To: Steve Ricchetti
From: Andrew Rotherham
Re: Accountability, Charter Schools, and Class Size initiatives
Date: September 16, 1999

This memorandum describes our accountability, charter school, and class size reduction initiatives. Our accountability initiatives fall under the umbrella of our Education Accountability Act which the President first announced in this year's State of the Union Address. The legislation was transmitted to Congress as part of the President's proposal to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The Education Accountability Act:

- Helps states and districts turn-around low-performing schools by requiring states to set-aside 2.5 percent of its Title I allocation to improve state and local capacity to intervene in and turn around low-performing schools. The set-aside would increase to 3.5 percent in 2003-04. At least 70 percent of the funds go to school districts with the remainder being used by states.

Funds would first be used in consistently low-performing schools and school districts to implement strong corrective actions that dramatically alter the structure of schools and the instructional strategies to help students in the school or school district. Districts would take at least one of the following corrective actions: (1) implementing a new curriculum that is research-based and offers substantial promise of improving student achievement; (2) redesigning or reconstituting the school, including reopening it as a charter school; or (3) closing the school and allowing its students to transfer. In all instances of corrective action, districts may also allow students the option of transferring to a new school.

- Assists all students in meeting challenging state standards. Our proposal would hold states and school districts accountable for helping all students progress through school and graduate having mastered the challenging material needed for them to meet high standards. States will be required to put policies in place that require school districts to (1) implement research-based prevention and early intervention strategies to identify and support students who might need additional help meeting challenging standards; (2) provide all students with learning opportunities in classrooms with qualified teachers who use proven instructional practices tied to challenging state standards; and, (3) provide continuing, intensive and comprehensive educational interventions to students who are not meeting standards on a timely basis.
- Requires states to develop first-rate student progress and promotion policies to end the practices of social promotion and traditional grade retention. With educational supports in place to help students meet high standards, our proposal would require states to implement policies to end practices of social promotion and grade retention within four years. States would hold school districts accountable for ensuring that all students meet challenging standards at key

transition points or graduating from high school. States would define the three key transition points (e.g., fourth grade and eighth grade), but would be required to include high school graduation as one of the transition points. States would be held accountable for ensuring that assessments used for purposes of promotion are aligned with the state's standards; use multiple measures, including teacher evaluations; offer multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate that they can meet the standards; are valid and reliable for the purposes for which they are being used; and provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and limited English proficient students.

- Helps place qualified teachers in all classrooms by ending the practices of hiring emergency certified teachers and asking teachers to teach classes out of their subject expertise. Our proposal would help ensure that classroom teachers are qualified and prepared to teach to high standards by requiring states to include as part of its certification process for new teachers, an assessment of both subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills. In addition, it would phase out the use of teachers with emergency certificates and the practice of assigning teachers to subjects for which they lack adequate preparation.

Our proposal would require states to ensure that, within four years, at least 95 percent of their teachers are (1) fully-certified, (2) working toward full certification through an alternative route, or (3) are fully-certified in another state and working toward meeting any state-specific requirements. In addition, states would be required to ensure that at least 95 percent of secondary school teachers have had academic training or demonstrated competence in the subject area in which they teach.

- Implements sound discipline policies to ensure a safe, orderly, and drug-free learning environment in every school. Our proposal would require states to hold school districts and schools accountable for discipline policies that focus on prevention, are consistent and fair, and were developed with the participation of the school community. States would also be required to ensure that schools have a plan to help students who are expelled or suspended continue to meet the challenging state standards.
- Promotes public awareness and accountability through school, district, and state report cards. Our proposal would help ensure that parents in all states have access to the information they need to evaluate the quality of their schools by requiring state, district, and school-level annual report cards that go to parents and the public. The report cards would include information on student achievement, teacher professional qualifications, class size, school safety, and, where appropriate, the academic achievement of subgroups of students — including ethnic and racial subgroups, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities — to ensure accountability for helping all students achieve to high academic standards. States, school districts, and schools would be required to have these policies in place within one year.

The Education Accountability Act provides support for states to meet these requirements and implement sanctions for states that persistently fail. If a state does not meet the requirements

under the Education Accountability Act, the Secretary of Education could provide assistance and require an alternative action plan. If states continue to fail to implement these accountability provisions, the Secretary would have the authority to take actions such as terminating administrative flexibility or withholding administrative funds.

Congress has not acted on any of these proposals thus far although it is still early in the ESEA reauthorization process. The House passed Teacher Empowerment Act—which the Administration does not support—requires states to certify 100 percent of teachers by 2004. That provision was inserted to secure the support of Representative George Miller.

Later this month or early in October Congress will begin more substantial work on ESEA. At this time more debate on our accountability proposals will occur.

Charter Schools

When the President was first elected there was one charter school operating in the country. This year, more than 1700 will be open and 36 states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws. Charter schools are public schools founded by parents and teachers, and are open to all. In exchange for high levels of accountability for student achievement, they are given more autonomy and flexibility than traditional public schools in staffing decisions, curricula design and other areas. Charter schools exemplify a standards-based approach to education. Every charter school works with a public authority to establish clear performance standards. A charter school that fails to meet the terms of its charter is closed down. The federal grant program for charter schools, which was reauthorized with the President's leadership in 1998, gives priority to states that have strong standards of academic accountability. Charter schools receiving funding from the federal government must also be measured by the same state assessments as any other public school. Surveys find high levels of support and satisfaction among parents of public charter school students. A recent national survey found that 65 percent of parents rated their child's public charter school as better than their former public school (only 6 percent rated them worse). The U.S. Department of Education reports that seven out of ten charter schools have a waiting list of students who want to enroll.

In his August 28, 1999 radio address the President released almost \$100 million in grants to support public charter schools. The awards included \$41 million in new grants and \$54 million in continuation grants.

Class Size Reduction

Last year Congress made a \$1.2 billion down payment on the President's plan to hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the early grades to a national average of 18. Early results from the program are encouraging overall.

Based on preliminary data, the Department of Education estimates that hiring with first year funding will result in approximately 24,660 teachers hired. This is less than the 30,000 teachers

that were expected to be hired this year—likely due to waivers in California and Indiana that resulted in fewer teachers hired in those states. The department is looking into other possible reasons for the lower number.

Below are several examples of school districts that are using class size reduction funds in innovative ways to attract, recruit, and employ new teachers and to impact learning in the early grades:

- **Philadelphia.** Philadelphia is using federal class size reduction funds to address the challenges of teacher recruitment, support for new teachers, and class size reduction. Philadelphia has hired 265 “literacy interns”, college graduates who lack teacher certification. Many are mid-career adults who are making the transition to teaching. These interns have received two weeks of intensive training during the summer, and now are working in classrooms along side, and under the supervision of, fully certified teachers. They are also enrolled in “alternative route” teacher education programs, which will lead to full certification in two years. Once certified, the interns will teach in small classes. Philadelphia’s strategy enables it to recruit capable people into teaching and ensure that they become fully qualified; provide an extraordinary level of mentoring and support for teachers in their first two years on the job, immediately give students the benefits of smaller instructional groups by having two adults in the classroom, and ultimately lower class size in more conventional ways.
- **Montgomery County, MD** – Montgomery County, is combining federal class size reduction funds with state and local funds to support its Reading Initiative in every first and second grade class in the county. The initiative combines small classes of no more than 15 for reading instruction with the use of proven reading instruction approaches such as Reading Recovery.
- **Columbus, Ohio** – Columbus has hired 58 fully certified teachers with its class size reduction funds, and placed these teachers in 13 high poverty, low performing schools, reducing class size in grades 1-3 from 25 to 15. Along with the implementation of proven models of reading instruction, such as Success for All, as well as a number of other school reforms, class size reduction is a central part of Columbus’ efforts to turn around low performing schools and implement a social promotion policy.

Legislative Status

- On July 20, the House passed H.R. 1995, the Teacher Empowerment Act (TEA) a teacher quality bill that has some similarities to our ESEA teacher quality proposal (a focus on sustained, high-quality professional development and an effort to improve alternative routes to teacher certification), but does not maintain our class size reduction initiative and weakens the targeting of professional development funds overall.
- The Senate has not yet acted on authorizing class size as part of ESEA. A version of TEA was introduced in the Senate by Senators Lott and Gregg, though it is not certain that it will be

included in the Senate's version of ESEA.

- The Senate Appropriations subcommittee is expected to include \$1.2 billion for Class Size Reduction, though this possibly will be subject to its reauthorization. This is \$200 million less than the Administration's request for \$1.4 billion.

Summary of Recent Events

In order to highlight our ongoing commitment to the class size reduction, and to reassure Members who were expressing concern that the administration was backing away from that commitment, the President has done two class size events in the past months, as well as a few school construction events which also addressed class size reduction. First, in a radio address on June 26 the President announced the release of the down payment of \$1.2 billion in federal funds to schools across the nation allowing them to begin hiring the first 30,000 teachers in time for classes this fall. Second, the President visited Brook Grove Elementary School in Maryland on September 7 to highlight class size reduction as part of the America Goes Back to School Events. At this event the President also released \$33 million in federal funds to help prepare high-quality teachers, and underscored the Administration's commitment to providing *both* smaller classes and better teachers.

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