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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

10-6-99

## Nation's Wealthy, Seeing a Void, Take Steps to Aid Public Schools

By JACQUES STEINBERG

Long dismissed as the runts in the family of philanthropy, public schools and their students are getting fresh attention from high-profile donors plainly concerned about the nation's academic future.

Rather than donating only to their college alma maters, the wealthy givers — including George Lucas, the film maker, Theodore J. Forstmann, the Wall Street financier, and Leonard Riggio, the chairman of Barnes & Noble — are increasingly bestowing their largess on those individuals struggling just to make it through high school.

Their gifts were trumped last week by a \$1 billion scholarship program for disadvantaged minority students announced by William H. Gates 3d, the chairman of the Microsoft Corporation.

And yesterday, Eli Broad, chairman of Sun America, a Los Angeles-based financial services company, said he was setting aside \$100 million for urban school systems, primarily to help train superintendents, principals and staff.

Though the motives vary, the thread through all of these gifts is a conviction that government has been

unwilling, or perhaps unable, to rescue the public education system and its students. Moreover, many of the donors believe that the success of their businesses — the source of their wealth — hinges on an educated work force.

"I think the national community has realized it isn't enough just to give to higher education," said Eugene Lang, who may have sowed the seeds of this movement when he adopted 54 sixth graders at a Harlem school in 1981 and committed to send them to college. "You've got to catch children before they fall into that abyss," Mr. Lang said.

Though gifts to universities show no sign of abating — an annual survey tallied \$18.4 billion in donations to higher education last school year, a national record — fund-raising consultants say that the broader spec-

trum of educational institutions, including elementary and secondary schools, have begun to attract the very rich.

In part, the donations have been driven by the need for a helping hand: long seen as the responsibility of taxpayers, the problems and demands of the nation's public school students increasingly seem to be too overwhelming for Government to address. At a time when politicians are unwilling to raise school budgets, the lists of principals have never been longer: billions of dollars have been requested to buy computers, reduce class sizes, retain teachers and, perhaps most important, close the gap between rich and poor students.

"It's a large, intractable problem that our Government and public institutions can't solve alone," said Nancy Raybin, a management consultant who specializes in nonprofit institutions. "I think we're seeing the philanthropists trying to get the money to organizations and individuals directly, without too much bureaucracy in between."

In committing to provide \$1 billion in college scholarships to the neediest high-school seniors over 20 years — with hopes of subsidizing at least 1,000 students a year — Mr. Gates and his wife, Melinda, chose to do so not through a university or a group of universities but through the United Negro College Fund along with the

Hispanic Scholarship Fund and the American Indian College Fund.

By identifying talented but needy students before they reach college, Mr. Gates is following Mr. Lang, whose idea has been replicated in 64 other cities through the I Have a Dream Foundation, and Walter H. Annenberg, whose contributions to public education have exceeded \$800 million since 1993.

They have been joined by many others.

Mr. Forstmann, the financier, last year committed \$50 million to a \$200 million effort that would permit at least 40,000 inner-city public-school students to attend private schools over the next four years.

Mr. Broad of Sun America, who had previously contributed to Mr. Forstmann's private voucher program, said that almost all of his latest donation, the \$100 million that he committed this week, would go to public schools. He said he had not yet decided how the money would be distributed.

The George Lucas Educational Foundation, founded by the creator of "Star Wars," has spent \$10 million since 1991 to help elementary and secondary school teachers find creative ways to teach students, largely through film and technology.

Mr. Riggio, the chairman of Barnes & Noble, convened a campaign last year to raise \$10 million for Brooklyn Technical High School, the public school from which he graduated.

And expanding a program that

they began a decade ago, Michael Milken, the Wall Street financier who was convicted of six counts of securities fraud, and his brother, Lowell, will award \$25,000 grants to 172 elementary and secondary school teachers next month — bringing to nearly \$40 million the amount that the Milken Family Foundation has given to teachers.

Like Mr. Gates, who said he wanted to demonstrate that "private philanthropy can be part of making sure there is equal opportunity," each do-

### Donors tie the future of their businesses to better public schools.

nor has entered the educational arena for particular reasons — reasons that don't include having their names emblazoned on a college library (though in some cases, like Mr. Gates', the scholarships will bear the names of the donors).

In an interview conducted via E-mail, Mr. Lucas said he was trying to help students avoid the "frustrating" experiences that he had as a child growing up in Modesto, Calif.

"I was often bored," he wrote. "I often found myself wondering, 'Why can't school be more interesting?'"

To that end, Mr. Lucas's foundation is providing schools with 30,000

copies of a documentary he produced. The film, "Learn and Live," profiles five innovative school programs, including a fourth-grade class at a California charter school that studies insect anatomy with an electron microscope.

Mr. Forstmann, a senior partner in Forstmann Little & Company, an investment firm, and the chairman of Gulfstream Aerospace, has said he intends to use his program, which would transfer students to private schools from public schools, as a wake-up call to force public schools to improve.

His initiative has been seen as an effort to establish a foothold for the school-voucher movement, which would use taxpayer money for private-school tuition, a proposition that has pleased parents whose students are languishing in inner-city schools but has angered teachers unions.

Mr. Gates has not escaped criticism either. Though praised by the president of the United Negro College Fund for raising the prospect of minting hundreds of minority Ph.D.'s, Mr. Gates has been criticized for excluding white students.

"If you give money to the public schools, you're going to make the private schools unhappy," said Peter Dobkin Hall, a senior research scholar at the Yale Divinity School who studies the history of philanthropy. "If you give money to particular groups within the public schools, other groups will feel left out."

"Philanthropy is, intrinsically, not even-handed," Mr. Hall said.

The New York Times

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1999

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Andy - can we help?

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10-18-99

**Irish Americans Quick To Release Statements of Support for Commitment to Northern Ireland.** Following your speech in Ottawa last Friday, leading Irish Americans released statements upholding their confidence in your personal commitment to the Northern Ireland peace process and in your Administration's initiatives to put the Good Friday Agreement back on track. Support also came from Ireland with UUP MP David Irvine saying "the President is right" in his description of foot dragging in implementing the agreement.

**American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Honored with First-Ever Address by a President.** AAP representatives reported back that their membership was very pleased with your comments on Congress, the budget, and the debt.

**Mrs. Clinton Addressed New York Hospital Association.** The NYHA commented that her entire speech on Thursday was well-focused on all of the important health care issues facing society. Her address covered several of their key priorities in a very positive manner. They were pleased that she spoke about the need for BBA relief and resolution of the Medicare DSH issue.

**Presidential Commission Finds US Troops Kept War Victims Assets.** According to the Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S., property looted from Hungarian Jews was seized by American forces on May 16, 1945 from the 'Hungarian Gold Train.' The objects, mostly pieces of art and valuables, was subsequently taken by generals and soldiers in the U.S. Army, deemed unidentifiable and, in some cases, auctioned off or sold through Army Exchanges stores.

**Supreme Court Case Refusal Upsets Parochial School Supporters.** The Court voted 6-3 not to review a lower-court decision invalidating New York's latest attempt to create a school district to serve the chasidic community of Kiryas Joel in upstate Orange County. That effectively knocked out the state's third effort to provide special education to a group of special needs children in the Satmar enclave. Concerned that special needs children in religious schools are not being served well by the IDEA, Orthodox Jewish groups vowed to improve the federal law.

**Religious Groups Share Our Dismay Over CTBT.** While directing their anger at the Senate, groups are quietly questioning our strategy, fearful that it will be much harder to change the votes of those now on record opposing the treaty.

**Methodist Bishops Reflect Concern Over Vieques.** OPL hosted a briefing with NSC for a group of Methodist bishops, including Bishop Vera of Puerto Rico, who are preparing to issue a new statement on Vieques. They have opposed our military presence there since 1980, but there is potential for their being helpful to us as we move toward a transitional phase.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 17, 1999

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## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed  
Andrew RotherhamSUBJECT: Analysis of Bush Education Speech and Its Impact on ESEA

Attached is a detailed side-by-side of Bush's education speech, comparing his proposals with current law and with your ESEA plan.

The speech itself is more a triumph of centrist packaging than of substance. Much of what Bush proposed, such as state testing of Title I students, became law in 1994. His call for consequences in failing schools is less ambitious than your proposal – or for that matter, his own efforts in Texas. He said nothing about ending social promotion (again in contrast to his record in Texas). His most newsworthy proposal, to punish failing schools by turning federal funds over to parents, won praise from a segment of the elite press, but leaves him vulnerable to the Democratic attack that his plan will drain funds from public schools and the conservative attack that he's soft on vouchers (he deliberately avoiding mentioning the word).

While he may offer specifics later, Bush has said little about what supports he would offer to turn failing schools around. By contrast, your plan includes a series of specific interventions that states and/or school districts must undertake in failing schools and sets aside resources for this purpose. Second, like any voucher scheme, his school choice plan holds failing schools accountable, but offers parents no way of measuring the performance of private schools, which won't subject themselves to the same tests. This is like giving Social Security recipients individual accounts without telling them the annual return on private investments. Third, the very education programs Bush proposed reforming – Title I and Head Start – would both face severe cuts in the out-years of the Republican tax and budget plan which Bush has said he supports.

In the next few weeks, as part of the House's piecemeal effort to reauthorize ESEA, Goodling will offer a Title I bill. We expect it to track Bush's approach, although conservatives' reaction to the Bush speech may keep Goodling from billing it that way. (Pat Buchanan says one of his main reasons for considering a third-party candidacy is that Bush even wants to "enlarge the Department of Education.") We will oppose the Goodling bill over vouchers, but try to pocket any progress we make on accountability.

## George W. Bush Education Proposals

| Issue                                                | Bush Proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Current Law                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Current Clinton Proposals<br>(ESEA, FY 2000 Budget Request,<br>or other proposal)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Title I State Assessments</u>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title I schools required to test students on academic basics each year—provides no definition of “academic basics.” Choice of tests left to the states.</li> <li>Assessments must be disaggregated by demographic group.</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires all states to have final assessment systems in place to measure performance of Title I schools/students against state standards in at least math and reading/language arts by 2001. Students must be assessed at a minimum at some point during grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.</li> <li>Requires assessment data to be disaggregated by demographic group by 2001.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <u>Rewarding Performance in Title I Schools</u>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 standards will be rewarded “significantly” through an “Achievement in Education” bonus fund.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States designate schools as distinguished if the school has exceeded the state's definition of adequate yearly progress for three straight years. These schools can then act as models/mentors for other Title I schools and are eligible for additional funds from the state.</li> </ul>                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States must set criteria for designating schools and school districts as “distinguished.” Criteria include measures such as gains in student performance, consistently high performance on state assessments, or improvements in participation.</li> <li>Secretary will reward states that demonstrate significant achievement gains in core subjects for three straight years, close the gap between low and high performing students, have strategies in place for continuous improvement including reducing social promotion and retention. Rewards include priority in ESEA grant competitions, bonus funds to states, or increased flexibility.</li> </ul> |
| <u>Turning Around Low Performing Title I Schools</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States will have three years to reform failing Title I schools by restructuring the management structure, changing personnel, reallocating money, taking over the school or school district, transferring education dollars to the</li> </ul>                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes a process for school and school district improvement that requires that (1) districts identify schools not making adequate progress for two consecutive years; (2) identified schools revise Title I plans in the year after being identified; (3) school districts help the identified schools to improve</li> </ul>                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires a change in Title I plan within three months of a school being identified for improvement with school district intervention beginning immediately. A school district may take corrective action at any time after a school is designated for improvement.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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|  | <p>parents and/or implementing a school choice program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If after three years students at the school still do not demonstrate progress toward the state standards the state will be required to (1) give Title I students in the school the option of (fully paid for) transferring to another school that is closing the achievement gap or (2) offer parents a portable fund of \$1,500 per child for use at the school or supplemental education service of their choice.</li> <li>• If a state adopts a private school choice program at any time, students in failing schools would have the option of taking a pro rata share of Title I funds with them to a private school.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: No information is provided about how the "fully paid for" transfer will be financed. The \$1,500 figure in option 2 is an average and will be financed by the student's pro rata share of Title I resources matched by an equal amount from the state (either state or federal dollars). The student will be entitled to these resources for the duration of the time they would have been enrolled at the failing school.</i></p> | <p>and ultimately take corrective action against schools that consistently fail. Corrective actions include curtailing a school's decision-making authority, transferring staff and/or students to other schools, or reconstituting the school. States use a similar continuum with regard to failing school districts.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets aside 2.5 percent allocation at the state level (about \$200 million total) for states and school districts to carry out corrective action and help low-performing schools. States reserve a share of this money but the majority is sent to the district level to facilitate rapid action.</li> <li>• Corrective action must include at least one of the following measures: implementing a new curriculum, redesigning or reconstituting the school, reopening the school as a charter school, or closing the school.</li> <li>• State and districts must also allow students to transfer out of schools identified for corrective action and must provide transportation or cover transportation costs for these students to attend other public schools.</li> </ul> |
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| <p><u>Move Head Start To the Department of Education</u></p>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “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 will oversee the administration and evaluation of local Head Start programs.”</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 1998 reauthorization requires that Head Start programs develop performance standards to ensure that at a minimum children participating in the program develop phonemic, print and numeracy awareness, understand and use an increasingly complex vocabulary, develop and demonstrate an appreciation of books, and in the case of non-native English speakers, progress toward English acquisition.</li> <li>• HHS and the Head Start Bureau cooperate with the Department of Education to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Revise Head Start performance standards to include effective transitions for children and families moving from Head Start to schools.</li> <li>*Ensure that all preschools funded with Title I meet the Head Start Program performance standards for education</li> <li>*Co-chair the America Reads Challenge workgroup on early childhood</li> <li>*Conduct joint training on literacy issues</li> <li>*Provide resources to ensure that grantees are working closely with their local elementary school.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |
| <p><u>Require Head Start Programs to Adopt a Proven Core Curriculum</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Start grantees must have a curriculum that supports the development of each child’s cognitive and language skills but there is no specified model.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |

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| <u>Award Head Start Contracts on a Competitive Basis</u>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Head Start grants will be open to competition and awarded on a selective basis.</li> <li>• In the speech he said that unsuccessful Head Start contracts would be put out to bid and "someone else, including churches, synagogues and community groups" could bid on them.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitions are currently held for Head Start grants regularly when the program expands into a new area, when a failed program is shut down, and for Early Head Start grants.</li> <li>• Current law allows community groups, churches, and synagogues to bid on Head Start contracts.</li> <li>• Programs are reviewed at least once every three years. The Administration has been clear that all Head Start programs must provide high quality services. Programs found to be deficient must correct the problems within a specified time period not to exceed one year.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <u>Head Start Funding and Expansion</u>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republican tax cut would have cut funding in half, resulting in 430,000 fewer children served.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 1993 Head Start funding has increased by 68 percent, resulting in 200,000 more children served.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FY 2000 budget request includes a \$607 million increase.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <u>Reform the Office of Education Research and Improvement</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhaul OERI and make it independent and operate it in accord with scientific standards</li> <li>• Eliminate the regional education laboratories.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The forthcoming OERI reauthorization proposal contains reforms to make the agency more independent and ensure that all research conducted is rigorous, sound, and publicly accountable. The agency will become the Institute for Education Research and will be governed by an independent board appointed by the President.</li> <li>• The OERI reauthorization proposal continues to support the regional laboratories.</li> </ul> |

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| <p><u>Require that the federal investment in education demonstrates results</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the 760 federal education programs and insist that every program boost student achievement or replace it with other programs that succeed in reducing the achievement gap.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the “760 federal education programs” cited deal with specific purposes such as boating safety, aviation safety, or health and are not administered by the Department of Education and are not intended to raise the achievement of elementary and secondary students.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The President has eliminated or consolidated more than 60 redundant or ineffective education programs during the past six years.</li> <li>• Almost every Clinton budget has proposed eliminating or consolidating redundant or ineffective programs.</li> </ul> |
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# A Kindergarten Crowd

47 Share Classroom in Prince George's

By DAVID NAKAMURA  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Teacher Michelle Mayfield wonders each day how to best fit her students into her classroom at Flintstone Elementary School so they have enough space to learn comfortably.

On the plus side, kindergartners tend to be very small. On the down side, she has 47 of them.

Here they were yesterday morning crammed in the 38-by-25-foot room: groups of six seated at seven tables and five more at individual desks, fidgeting in their 47 tiny seats as Mayfield tried to teach them to use, of all things, 47 pairs of miniature blunt-nosed scissors.

"Before you get your scissors," Mayfield began, "I want you to practice...."

But she was cut off by a chorus of chatter: "I want blue ones." "I want

green ones." "I want pink."

She tried again but was interrupted: "Can I wash my hands, Miss Mayfield?"

"This is ridiculous," Mayfield said later. "They can't learn with that many. On the first day, one girl had to go home sick because she wasn't used to all the people."

Crowded classrooms are a problem in schools throughout the Washington region, but on this day, in this Oxon Hill classroom, the conditions had reached near overload.

Not that officials weren't concerned. School board members got an earful from angry Flintstone parents at a board meeting Thursday night. But the issue is a complicated one in Prince George's. Although the county is building 13 to 26 new schools in the next six years, County Executive Wayne K. Curry (D) is-

sued a moratorium on buying any more \$35,000 trailers so that all construction funds can be devoted to the new buildings.

So, officials say, they are scrambling to move some of the system's 420 trailers from less crowded to more crowded schools. It's a stopgap measure that is complicated by the fact that 40,000 of the district's 133,000 students switched schools this year because of boundary changes or other reasons.

"We basically try to rank schools from the most overcrowded to the least," said Bill Greene, the system's director of pupil accounting. "We worked all summer on it because when we take away the [trailers] from a school, that means forever."

But the school system's planning office long has been criticized for not being accurate enough in its estimates of school enrollment. Mayfield said she was expecting 35 kindergartners, but

46 showed up on the first day. Another student arrived yesterday.

"Imagine having to take attendance 46 times or having to figure out which of the 46 children needs to buy a lunch," Kathy Foutz, another Flintstone teacher, told the school board Thursday night, as parents held signs that read "46." "Maybe you want to be a substitute in there for a day?"

Darrell King, whose daughter K'Linn is in the class, said: "It's ridiculous. There's no way they can teach 46 children at the same time. They must be overwhelmed."

Flintstone has a building capacity of 506 and a current enrollment of 683. Four trailers behind the building accommodate some of the overflow, but officials had to convert the music room and the computer lab to classrooms.

Complicating matters is that Flintstone is a magnet school with a Montessori program, whose classes are capped at 25 students.

Officials say relief is on the way.

Two trailers are due at Flintstone on Monday, said Tony Liberatore, supervisor of support services. A second kindergarten teacher is helping Mayfield and will be able to take over a class of her own when the trailer arrives.

"The trailers probably will come from somewhere else that needs them," said school board Chairman Alvin Thornton (Suitland). "It's a painful thing, but at some point, we have to stop talking about it, as a school here or a classroom there, and use it as a point to talk in terms of a systemic issue."

Until help arrives, Mayfield will do what she can. After a bit of prodding yesterday, her students raised their scissors in the air, and 47 voices said in unison: "Open, close. Open, close."

Mayfield exhaled a big sigh and paused to pick up a piece of brown construction paper. She started to speak again, but it was too late.

"I want blue." "I want green." "I want...."

The Washington Post  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1999

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9-13-99

# Chartering a Course

## Students Settling Into Works-in-Progress

By VALERIE STRAUSS  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Undeterred by workmen installing windows and sawing wood two floors below, Lei Kendale got on with the business at hand: Teaching his new fourth-grade students the "Code of Civility" they were expected to honor.

Pointing to the blackboard, he asked the uniformed boys and girls, "What's the word?" then snapped his fingers. "Responsibility!" they answered. He moved to the next word, snapped again and the response came back louder, "Respect!" And so it went this week in the opening days of the new Robert Louis Johnson Arts & Technology Academy Public Charter School for kindergarten

through fifth grade in Northeast Washington.

Across town, at the Booker T. Washington Public Charter School for Technical Arts in Northwest Washington, the construction work was closer and louder. With the buzzing of electric saws filling the air in the partially built room, 22 teenagers sat in chairs with no desks as they began a high school program of traditional subjects and training in the construction and building trades.

The schools—both works-in-progress—are two of 10 public charter schools opening this and next week in the District. They join 19 others already in operation, part of a public education move-

ment that advocates say will have a profound impact on education in the nation's capital.

The District, where two charter schools began operating in fall 1998, now has the fastest-growing charter school movement of any city in the country. With a congressional mandate that allows 20 new schools to open each year, proponents say it may not take long before the number of independent charter schools comes close to rivaling the city's 145 traditional public schools, which serve about 71,000 students.

There are more than 1,100 charter schools across the country, with some 250,000 students. There were about 3,500 students in D.C. charter schools last year, and supporters say enrollment could double this year.

The learning-amid-construction atmosphere is typical of new charter schools, which operate with public funds, are free to students and enjoy a great deal of autonomy.

Proponents say that such schools offer parents an option within the public system and will force traditional schools to improve to keep students. Opponents say charter schools drain resources from traditional schools, making it difficult for them to improve.

Charter school programs in the District are diverse—so much so that they don't all have regular 180-day school years. Cesar Chavez Public Charter High School in Northwest Washington, for example, operates on a 221-day year and gives students only a month off for summer vacation. Some schools are designed for children with learning disabilities, adjudicated youths and high school dropouts. Others emphasize technology, math and science, language immersion, the arts or vocational training.

Booker T. Washington, which has about 100 students in grades 9 through 12, offers training in trades including carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring and bricklaying as well as computer skills. It also has a night program for adults.

"The school offers me a chance to learn the skills I am interested in," said Alicea Bland, 18, a senior who last year attended a charter school that didn't reopen this year. She opted for charter schools, she said, because her neighborhood public high school has no vocational training, an example of how vocational education in

the District has all but disappeared in recent years.

Students at Booker T. Washington said the first few days there were marked by disorganization, with staff members feeling their way through what many liken to the start-up of a new business. But the students said they expected improvements and were willing to take a chance on the new school.

Booker T. Washington was founded by Ed Pinkard, a construction and real estate consultant who said he wants to fill the city's vocational education gap. Robert L. Johnson was started by parents who were upset in 1997 when D.C. school officials closed their neighborhood elementary school. They won approval to open a charter school in the same building.

Both schools are experiencing the same first-year growing pains most charters face.

"I sympathize with those people just starting to open schools now because I was there a year ago," said Irasema Salcido, founder of the well-regarded Cesar Chavez high school, now in its second year and located in the same building as Booker T. Washington.

"It is hard, impossibly hard. You can't imagine the difficulties," she said. "Now,

the second year is very different. We are not dealing with the unknowns. . . . You know what you have control over and what you don't."

Source: *Washington Post*  
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# Tale of Two High Schools: An Object Lesson

## Chicago-Area Students Witness How Disparities Affect Education

By WILLIAM CLABORN  
Washington Post Staff Writer

CHICAGO, Sept. 10—Three busloads of students from a down-at-the-heels, 90-year-old high school in Chicago's South Side and their teenage counterparts from a new, \$62 million state-of-the-art school in the wealthy suburb of Naperville had a close encounter today with an adage from legendary songstress Sophie Tucker:

"I've been poor and I've been rich, and I can tell you that rich is better."

The two groups of students, spent the day touring each other's facilities and getting a close-up lesson in the inequities of educational funding. In other words, seeing how the other half lives.

Orchestrated by Jesse L. Jackson and his Rainbow-PUSH Coalition, the event was designed to throw a spotlight on the huge disparities that exist around the country between the quality of public education delivered to poor students vs. that showered on the rich. While most of the national education debate has focused on taxpayer-funded vouchers for private schools, the more immediate concern in many communities is how to address what many argue is the unfairness of having children in one part of the city get a far better education than those in another. The amount of funding in suburban school districts, Jackson argues, is often three times higher than that in inner-city neighborhoods.

For the mostly white, well-off students at Naperville's Nequa Valley High School, about 35 miles northwest of the city, the eye-openers from their visit to Harper High School in the economically depressed Englewood neighborhood were the peeling paint in a food service classroom, a science laboratory devoid of water or gas connections and any visible sign of chemistry equipment, a music room without soundproofing or uniforms for the school band, a gymnasium with dilapidated bleachers and a computer room without connections to the Internet.

"I just want to cry," said Lauren Drane, a 18-year-old junior from Nequa Valley, as she walked through the dimly lit corridors of Harper High with her classmates. "This is so out of this world, I can't believe it. I'm just so lucky to have what we have."

But she was no less astonished than Sarika Walker, 15, an African American sophomore at Harper High School, upon seeing the Nequa Valley school's three gleaming new gymnasiums, two Olympic-sized swimming pools, elaborately equipped laboratories and lavishly appointed music rooms and

computer centers.

The 2,500-student school, situated on a landscaped, 50-acre campus, has a 12-court tennis complex, fitness rooms with row upon row of exercise equipment, and even a functioning bank for use in business and economic courses.

It has a handsome new stadium for its Wildcats football team; Harper's athletes have to walk more than a mile to a city park for daily practice.

"In some ways it makes me jealous, because Harper is a very old school and they have more materials to help them succeed in life," Walker said. "I can't feel angry with them if they happen to have this advantage, but I sure can see myself in a school like this."

But the inequities between Harper High, whose enrollment is 99.3 percent black, and Nequa Valley, which is 85.8 percent white, go beyond the physical plants, Jackson stressed in an interview while riding in a school bus between the two schools.

At Nequa Valley, almost 94 percent of seniors graduate, compared to 52 percent at Harper High. Chronic truancy is 12 percent at Harper and zero at Nequa Valley. And only 1 percent of Harper's students who took the standardized proficiency test last year exceeded the state average in reading. Thirty-seven percent of Nequa Valley 10th-graders did.

Most telling of all, instructional and operating expenditures per pupil are nearly \$2,300 more at Nequa Valley than at Harper High, according to school officials.

The inequity in funding here is typical of imbalances across the country that have contributed to wide gaps in the quality of education between city and suburban schools. The annual per pupil expenditure in some suburban schools exceeds \$15,000, Jackson said, while many city school districts spend less than \$5,000 per student.

Jackson said the gap in education between city and suburban schools is wider than before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954 overturning separate but ostensibly equal schooling and the integration of Central High School in Little Rock in 1957.

As Sarah Monahan, 16, a Nequa Valley junior, searched in vain for chemistry equipment and dissecting tables at Harper's science class lab, the reality of what inner-city students face began to sink in. She looked even more uneasy when Harper science teacher David Finkle gamely told the students, "We make do with what we have by making supplies out of simple materials. You don't necessarily need a gas line in the lab to

learn about science."

"We have so much more. It's not fair," Monahan said. When asked why she thought her school was so much better equipped, she replied, "Well, in the suburbs, the parents just have more money. The kids are just more privileged, I guess."

Jackson said administrators at Harper High have tried hard to make their school more attractive with fresh paint, new lockers and other cosmetic improvements within a limited capital budget. But, he said, "You can't paint a new lab or a decent band room, and you can't paint decent textbooks and computers that work."

He was critical of federal and state education policy which, he said, favors "faddish" solutions such as school vouchers to send some students to private schools, or charter schools operated with public funds.

State Rep. Monique Davis (D), who joined the tour, said she would call for a special session of the state legislature to debate the issue of inequities in school funding. "It's unfair for some kids to start out in such a competitive world with such an obvious disadvantage. We've got to change the way we fund education."

Before the end of their long day of rude awakenings, the students were talking earnestly about starting a student exchange program, and some Nequa Valley music students said they wanted to share their room and some of their equipment with the Harper students.

Jackson said he was touched by the interaction between the students that he saw and overheard along the way. But looking out a school bus window at boarded-up slum dwellings as the group drove through Englewood, Jackson said wearily, "There's no doubt in my mind that this area has been redlined for capital... and when you cut off capital, it affects everything."

The Washington Post  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1999

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The New York Times  
Sunday, September 12, 1999

## Denver Teachers Accept Plan Linking Pay to Performance

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER -- The city's teachers union has approved a two-year pilot program -- the first of its kind in the nation -- to tie teachers' pay raises to how well students do on tests.

"It's an experiment, and I think it's worth the experiment," said Laurie Bourg, a fourth-grade teacher who voted for the pact.

The program, proposed by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, will involve only a small group of volunteers at first. At the end of the two years, a decision will be made on whether to expand the program to all teachers.

"The teachers of Denver have decided to give it a try," said Becky Wisink, union vice president. She would not give totals from Friday's vote.

"From teachers' perspective, the real value of this pilot is that they can be involved from the ground up in the design, implementation and evaluation of the study," said teachers union president Andrea Giunta.

The next step is the appointment of a design team that will create and oversee the study.

Many teachers are now asking how classroom performance can be measured, especially when so many variables are out of their control.

"I was in the printing business for 15 years, and you can't run schools like a business," said Roxanne Rhodes, a high school social studies teacher. "If I bought paper in my printing business and it wasn't up to quality, we could send it back. You can't do that with students."

In Denver and many other districts around the country, teachers automatically get raises based on length of service.

Some districts around the country have offered merit increases or bonuses, but they base the decision on schoolwide achievement or factors such as a teacher's work outside the classroom.

The Denver program, in contrast, would reward teachers for how well the children do in their individual classrooms.

The participants in the pilot program would get bonuses, rather than raises. However, if the program is enacted permanently, the teachers whose students do well will be rewarded with actual salary increases.

Their pay would not be docked if their students didn't measure up.

"This program is truly different. It's not a bonus. If it's enacted in two years, it changes where you are in the salary schedule based on student achievement," said Kathleen Lyons, a spokeswoman for the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union with 2.4 million members.

Starting teachers in Denver make \$30,000. The top salary, which requires a doctorate, is \$60,362.

About 450 of the district's 4,300 teachers in 12 elementary and three middle schools would volunteer for the pilot program. Teachers who want to volunteer must get the support of their principal and 85 percent of the other teachers in their school.

The volunteers would be divided into three groups, which would

measure student performance differently. One would use students' scores of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Another would use scores on a standardized test created in the district. The third would somehow test how much students improve after their teachers have taken classes to enhance their skills.

Over the past year, Denver schools reported higher test scores among white students. But minority scores lag behind, and the 67,000-student district is under pressure from the federal government to reduce the gap between whites and minorities.

Last spring, five of 11 grades failed to meet the reading average on the Iowa Tests. Five years ago, not one grade level was above the average.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1999

## Two Views on How to Get Johnny to Read and Think

School began this week for most students, and so has another round of debate over how it should be run.

So The New York Times posed a question to two education gurus: How can schools produce educated students?

Howard Gardner, a Harvard professor and the author of the new book "The Disciplined Mind: What All Students Should Understand" (Simon & Schuster), Gardner argues that critical thinking and analytical skills in various disciplines should be the backbone of any educational approach, and that these do not depend on studying a particular subject matter or using a core curriculum. Gardner, who is perhaps most well-known for his theory of multiple intelligence, which posits a broader kind definition of intelligence than can be measured by IQ scores, proposes a focus on a limited number of subjects. Such case studies -- like the theory of evolution, Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" and the Holocaust -- would teach students how to think, respectively, like a scientist, and artist or a historian.

E.D. Hirsch Jr., the author of "Cultural Literacy," (Houghton-Mifflin, 1987), is a professor of education and humanities at the University of Virginia and president of the Core Knowledge Foundation. Hirsch, whose book "The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them" was published by Anchor in paperback last month, argues that to function well in society, people need a vocabulary of common information, of -- facts, stories and skills that make up a shared literacy. His approach is being used in some of New York City's newest charter schools. He argues that the progressive tradition in education, which Gardner represents, has miserably failed students, particularly disadvantaged ones, and that a school combining drills and practice where needed with a demanding core curriculum will continue to produce the most successes.

## Toward Good Thinking On Essential Questions

By HOWARD GARDNER

As one concerned with precollege education, I'm gratified by the attention paid to this topic over the last two decades. At the same time I have to signal my uneasiness that so much of the discussion centers on means: should we have charters, vouchers, teachers' unions, national tests etc. I think it is essential that we step back, at least periodically, and ask about the ends or aims of education. My own answer can be stated succinctly. A dozen or more years of education should yield students who can think well about the essential questions of human life: who are we, where do we come from, what's the world made of, what have humans achieved and what can we achieve, how does one lead a good life? Many people, institutions and experiences can contribute to formulating these questions and the answers. The distinct contribution of formal education is to equip students with the ways of thinking, the scholarly disciplines, that have been constructed over the years to allow individuals to think well and deeply about these questions and some viable answers.

In speaking of disciplines, I have something specific in mind. Disciplines did not always exist; they are human-created methods and structures for approaching long-standing puzzles. Historians evaluate documents and testimony to reconstruct plausible accounts of past events. Scientists generate hypotheses about how the world works, collect data relevant to those hypotheses, analyze

the data objectively and then revise or endorse the original hypotheses or theories. The arts are also disciplines: they involve clear procedures for production (how does one write a fugue, stage a ballet, render a portrait) and for interpreting the productions of others. For those inclined to dismiss the disciplines, imagine a world without such mental furniture.

By a convenient pun, the attainment of disciplines requires discipline. This is because our natural, common-sense ways of making sense of the world are non- or even anti-disciplinary. Only through years of asking questions and following well-honed strategies can we replace common-sense accounts (e.g., human beings have always existed, the best portraits are photographs) with more nuanced and grounded disciplinary accounts.

The disciplines are arguably the most important human inventions of the last two millenniums. Yet their importance tends to be obscured, especially in the rhetoric-filled discourse of education. Instead, we hear a lot about facts, skills, tests and subject matter. None of these terms should be dismissed, but they attain fresh significance when they are considered in a disciplinary context.

First, skills. I know no one who opposes the acquisition of basic skills: reading, writing, calculation. One cannot even enter the disciplinary worlds unless one has mastered the three R's. Basic skills are the means for acquiring the disciplines, just as the disciplines (and ultimately interdisciplinary amalgams) provide the means for thinking well about important issues.

Next, facts. You cannot think well about a topic or question unless you have information, data, facts. However, that information should be acquired not for its own sake but as a means of finding a better answer to a consequential question. Facts can only be well used if they relate to one another in a meaningful way: otherwise, to use Alfred North Whitehead's term, they are simply "inert knowledge." Facts need the connective tissue of disciplines, or they are undisciplined, rote information.

Subject matter is typically collapsed with disciplines, but it is important to honor a distinction. One can have lots of facts in a subject without having any disciplinary understanding. Too often a person is considered a master because she or he has taken a certain number of courses, often called Carnegie units. A person understands to the extent that he or she can apply knowledge appropriately in a new situation. Only an individual in possession of disciplinary moves can do this.

Which brings us to tests, or assessments. There may be some who oppose assessments, but I am not in their ranks. Not in the least! At the same time, I reject as inadequate most of the short-answer instruments currently being adopted at the state level. These instruments may probe factual or subject-matter knowledge, but they typically fall short of probing disciplinary mastery and understanding. In life no one presents us with four choices, the last of which reads "none of the above."

I favor instruments that actually determine whether a person can think in a disciplined way. So rather than ask students to name nine Civil War battles, I would ask them to assess two historical accounts based on the same primary documents (or create their own). Rather than asking students to recall a chemical formula, I would provide them with data from an experiment and ask them to extract the regularities (and perhaps indicate which other data need to be collected next). Rather than asking students to memorize authors or lines from a poem, I would ask them to edit or complete an unfinished poem.

Every educational philosophy reflects a certain knowledge base and a certain value system. My educational regimen builds on findings from cognitive science. These findings indicate that, when young, individuals develop intuitive theories that are very powerful and difficult to eradicate. While some are on the mark, most are remote from the disciplines. Only a concerted effort over years to establish disciplinary ways of thinking can eradicate or educate the

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
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unschooled mind. My own belief is that this goal is best achieved by focusing in depth on certain important topics; not only does one come to understand those topics well, but in the process one gains incipient mastery for what it is like to use the methods of a discipline.

This incipient mastery can be built upon for the rest of one's life. I am idealistic enough to believe that once individuals have genuinely understood a theory like evolution, a historical period like the Holocaust, a work of art like "The Marriage of Figaro," they will insist on commensurate understanding of other topics in the future.

Pursuing this line of reasoning, I find myself out of sympathy with a preordained canon. One can acquire disciplinary ways of thinking from a variety of topics, and it simply does not matter that much which ones happen to be used. It is more important, in my view, to use examples that are valued by the community and that come alive for students than to insist that everyone read the same play or master the same theorem or learn the same topics in science. I don't care that much if one can name the planets; one can always request that information from a Palm Pilot. I care mightily that half of the American population (and perhaps some of our recent Presidents) can't distinguish astronomical from astrological ways of thinking and that two-thirds of Americans don't see the disciplinary difference between evolutionary and creationist accounts of the origins of human beings.

In putting forth these views, I find myself at odds with much of the program put forth by E.D. Hirsch Jr. Perhaps it is possible to reconcile our work to some extent — for example, by emphasizing his "Core Knowledge" in early grades and my disciplinary focus for the later grades. I have admiration for his democratic vision, his belief in public education and his sponsoring of programs in our schools. Still I think it is valuable to put forth these quite different educational visions: one focusing on questions and on ways of thinking, the other on factual answers and on shared knowledge. The value is in part epistemological, different views of the mind's use; in part cultural, different views of an educated society.

## Finding the Answers In Drills and Rigor

By E.D. HIRSCH Jr.

he most interesting debate about American education concerns why the United States has not fulfilled the egalitarian aims of schooling as well as other democracies have. The main cause of inequality in American schools, I have argued, has been the dominance of the progressive-education tradition, which has seriously misconceived itself as the guardian of social progress and democratic ideals. I hope Howard Gardner is right that my work poses a threat to the assumptions of the progressivist tradition.

If we are lucky, the end of the 1990s will mark the end of spurious connections between educational ideas and political affiliations. During the last two decades, when Democrats have controlled a school board, the district has tended to favor the whole-language method of teaching reading, to encourage the use of calculators for "math understanding" (instead of memorizing the multiplication table) and to disparage multiple-choice tests, all positions connected with progressive education but not logically with the platform of the Democratic Party.

By contrast, when a majority of school-board members have been Republican, the district has tended to favor the explicit teaching of phonics, the memorization of the multiplication table and the use of standardized tests, positions properly associated with educational conservatism but not necessarily with political conservatism. On the contrary, political conservatism, understood as the preservation of the social status quo, is best achieved by progressive educational methods.

There have been recent signs that the politics of education is belatedly becoming more sophisticated. As long ago as the 1930s, Antonio Gramsci, a brilliant Communist opponent of Mussolini, denounced the new "progressive" ideas that were being introduced into Italy from the United States. He argued that social justice required educational conservatism because only if the poor worked hard in school to accumulate the "intellectual baggage" of the rich could they earn money and wield the levers of power. Gramsci, the Communist, serving on a modern American school board, might surprise fellow board members by voting with Republicans.

So might James S. Coleman. Progressive methods failed disadvantaged students, he concluded after a decade of inquiries into the implications of his famous 1966 report, "Equality of Educational Opportunity." What people remember about his 1966 report is that schools appear to count for little in determining educational achievement, whereas family background matters a great deal. This statistical fact upset many people, including Coleman, because it dashes the democratic hope of giving all students an equal chance by simply putting rich and poor together in the same common school. If the common school does not in fact reduce the advantages of wealth and privilege, then the premises of democratic education must be re-examined.

After the Coleman report, one had a choice of two positions: one could become an advocate of compensatory education to narrow the achievement gap between groups, or one could adopt the determinist view that the schools can do little to rectify the ills of the wider society. The deterministic position, which excuses the schools for failing to reduce the test-score gap between groups, is widely held in the American educational world. But after further research, Coleman adopted the compensatory position.

Published in the '80s, that research showed that most Roman Catholic schools were better at achieving equity than most public schools. Catholic schools followed a rich and demanding curriculum, required a lot of drill and practice, and expected every child to reach minimal goals in each subject during the year. As a result disadvantaged children prospered academically, as did their advantaged peers, and the schools narrowed the gap between races and social classes.

This deeper inquiry of Coleman's started a controversy almost as fierce as the one surrounding his 1966 report. It was seen as an attack on public schools, but, as Coleman unanswerably pointed out, his findings were not limited to Catholic schools; the very same democratic results were being achieved by the few public schools that defied progressivist doctrine. Consistent with that finding is the fact that recent improvements in equity have been achieved only by school reforms that use conservative methods like drill and practice (e.g., the Success for All program at Johns Hopkins) and a demanding curriculum (e.g., the "Core Knowledge" series of books).

After so many practical failures, few educational experts overtly label themselves progressivists, but one can detect de facto progressivists by certain distinctive traits. First, there is their belief that knowledge and skill will be gained incidentally from intensive study of a few subjects. This incidental method claims, against all evidence, to achieve greater depth, as if there were a simple trade-off between depth and breadth. A claim is made under various labels and slogans such as "the project method" and "less is more" that exposure to a few complex experiences will cause understanding to occur naturally, an idea that first gained currency during the Romantic movement.

The persistent attractions of this "natural" method may possibly be explained by the vestigial Romanticism of American culture, but as Lisa Delpit observes in her book "Other People's Children," the progressivist mode of teaching has consistently failed to benefit African-American children (and many advantaged children as well).

Another mark of progressivism (and another vestige of the Romantic movement) is its criticism of an "overemphasis" on language. Emerson said: "We are shut up in schools and college

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recitation rooms for 10 or 15 years and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing." But as Ms. Delpit points out, these anti-verbal ideas have done the most harm to the most disadvantaged students. Their greatest deficits are in vocabulary and the conventions of literate language; they make up math deficits much more readily than language deficits.

Keith Stanovich and his colleagues have shown that a score on a standardized reading test in first grade is the best predictor of 11th-grade academic achievement, a shocking indictment of present-day schools and a powerful illustration of the accuracy of standardized tests and of the centrality of verbal training for determining life chances.

Disparagement of objective tests is a third way to detect progressivists. Their hostility to tests is not surprising, given that progressive methods fail to improve test scores. Yet standardized reading tests are among the most valid and reliable assessments that exist and among the most important instruments for measuring excellence and fairness in education. To take a reading test, a student has to perform the very skill being assessed. These tests, even in their much-maligned multiple-choice forms, are highly correlated with each other and with real-world reading skills.

Competence in reading (that is in comprehension) is central to academic achievement and to participation in economic and political life. High school graduates who read well enough to get into top colleges know about 100,000 words, which means an average learning rate of more than 15 new words a day, an astonishing number attainable only by wide reading and by psychological mechanisms that are only beginning to be understood.

A broad vocabulary is an index to broad knowledge, and broad knowledge, extended over time, is the key to depth of knowledge and to a general ability to learn new things.

Since the late '60s it has been known that high literacy entails prior background knowledge over many different domains. Within a given literate culture, the most literacy-enhancing background knowledge can be identified and taught to all students. Theory predicts that teaching such a high-octane curriculum will raise everyone's reading and learning levels and narrow the achievement gap between social groups. This prediction has now been confirmed by independent researchers.

Teaching a curriculum that produces high literacy for all is a potent way of fostering the egalitarian goal of democratic education. But before we can advance toward that goal on a broad front, many progressivist ideas will have to be discarded.

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September 1, 1999

President Bill Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

You are using the full weight of your office to bring nationwide improvement in the education of our young. I applaud you.

I have written my seventh book - "Young Heroes of the Bible", which will be published shortly. It is a retelling of some of the best known Bible stories through my eyes and in my language, no "thou wouldst - thou couldst". I want to encourage young people to read the Bible as a story of adventure.

But I didn't write the book to make money. I wrote it to intrude on our national preoccupation with violence, to awaken our youth to the knowledge that they, like those in the book, can decide to be on the side of the angels and do heroic things.

All revenues from the book go to a program inaugurated by my wife Anne. This program freshens and refurbishes school campuses in Los Angeles. We work with the Unified School District, but ours is a completely private operation, privately funded. It's a simple idea - a clean, appealing campus beckons students to it. It makes school a desirable place to be and stimulates the appetite to learn, as well as play.

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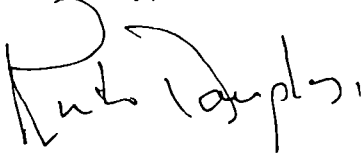
\* This venture is successful because the effect on any given school yard is immediate. The new cleanliness, foliage and equipment suggest new thinking, harmony rather than violence. Up till now, 61 playgrounds have been completed. 31 more will be ready by the end of the year. We hope to make this program national in the next millenium. If there is anybody on your team who can help us with this project, I would appreciate it.

✓ In Judaism, a man begins a new life after seventy. On December 9th, my birthday, I will have my second Bar Mitzvah (God willing). I will be eighty-three, but I will be standing with the young.

✓ If there is anybody on your team who can help us

Mr. President, let's pick up our trumpets (or saxophones) and all play together the music of a more beautiful tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Kirk Douglas

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# Education Standards Gaining Momentum

*Third of States to Unveil New Skills Tests*

By KENNETH J. COOPER  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Across the country, from New York to Alaska, students returning to school this fall will face new and harder achievement tests that are being phased in state by state, grade by grade, subject by subject. The culture of standardized testing has filtered all the way down to kindergartners in Texas and Alabama, where youngsters are being closely monitored to make sure they'll be ready for academic hurdles that lie years ahead.

During the coming school year, about a third of the states will introduce new tests for public school students at a variety of grade levels, according to "Making Standards Matter," an annual survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers.

This year's burst of new tests in 18 states represents a gathering of momentum in what Deputy Secretary of Education Marshall Smith calls the "standards-based movement," which has seen nearly every state first adopt academic standards and then begin creating customized tests to determine whether students have met those standards.

But with experience, state and local school officials are learning that the standards movement is going to require more than just tests to get results.

"We're at the point where most of the states have got standards and are beginning to change their assessments and, hopefully, their curriculum and instruction," said Wayne Martin, a testing specialist at the Council of Chief State School Officers. "They keep discovering there are more and more places to add on."

Curriculum, teaching methods and even textbooks are being adjusted to fit the new state standards, with teachers receiving additional training to pull them all together. And for the students who don't pass the test, school systems are taking remedial measures such as longer school years, mandatory summer sessions and extra tutoring before, during or after regular classes.

The biggest challenge is getting

teachers to where they feel comfortable teaching to different standards than they have in the past," said Smith, who was an education professor before coming to Washington.

For example, North Carolina, which implemented much of its testing program in the past few years, found that further training of high school teachers in reading instruction would be needed because some students still have reading problems after passing through lower grades in less academically strict times, said Marvin Pittman, the state's assistant superintendent of education.

The adoption of statewide standards also has led to tighter structuring of curriculum and greater uniformity of what is taught in each grade. In Houston, for instance, the school district has taken the Texas standards and developed more specific curriculum guides for academic subjects at every grade level.

"This is the first time we've had a common understanding of what is to be taught in each grade and in each subject across the district," said Susan Selaiani, the district's chief of educational services.

One side effect of more defined curricula, however, has been that teachers have less flexibility to wax expansively on a favorite topic or let a spirited classroom discussion race away. In Florida, teachers in Tallahassee have cut back on time students have to work on science or history fair projects and this year anticipate taking classes on fewer field trips. The subjects and activities of a general school experience... in many of our schools are being diminished or eliminated," said David Clark, spokesman for the Florida affiliate of the National Education Association.

Even class textbooks are being altered to keep pace with the standards revolution. "Textbook publishers are changing their textbooks in accord with state standards in influential states: ... California, Texas, Virginia and Massachusetts," said Gilbert T. Sewall, director of the American Textbook Council, a research organization based in New York.

School districts in California, for example, are spending up to \$250 million this year to buy new texts that will match new state standards in reading and mathematics. Those standards require that younger students be taught to read using phonics, rather than the "whole language" approach based on literature that had been in use for a decade. Similarly, the state's math standards have shifted away from solving problems related to everyday life and toward learning basic skills in the early grades and specific theorems in later ones.

But perhaps the greatest change brought about by the standards movement thus far has been a significant shift in the attitude educators hold about student failure. The gradual imposition of stricter academic standards—coupled with state threats of serious consequences for students who fall short on tests and for schools with large numbers of failing students—has made it more difficult for teachers and administrators to write off as

inevitable the failure of students with serious educational deficiencies. Instead, many of the nation's school systems are priming themselves to prevent such students from failing the all-important tests—in many places years before they will have to take them. As of last year, 20 states required local districts to intervene to help struggling students and provided funding for such programs.

"The standards and accountability being put in place across the country is making it a lot clearer that preventing failure is easier than making up for it after it happens," said Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

Starting this year, Alabama's high school juniors will have to pass four new exams in reading, writing and grammar, math, and science before they can graduate. In preparation, teachers gave the new tests to last year's sophomores in a trial run to identify students in need of remedial help, which tutors are to provide this year after school.

This fall, Alabama schools are taking that preemptive approach to a new level, testing kindergartners—who won't be taking the graduation exams for a dozen years—to determine their readiness for school. First- and second-graders will take other tests designed to spot reading problems early.

Those and other initiatives, Harris explained, add up to "finding ways we can guarantee to keep all students in Alabama on track to graduation."

Similarly, in Texas, educators have begun to focus on prepping kindergartners for a third-grade state proficiency test that kicks in in 2003, which pupils will have to pass to be promoted to the next grade. This summer, nearly all kindergarten teachers in Texas participated in four-day workshops in which they studied the latest research on reading, sampled different teaching methods and worked on diagnosing reading problems early. "Next summer, we'll be concentrating on training first-grade teachers," said Debbie Graves Ratcliffe, a spokeswoman for the Texas Education Agency.

That sort of methodical preparation and implementation has meant that the standards movement, though proceeding at a heady pace, will take years to work all the way through the nation's schools.

One of the last groups of students who will have to take new state tests, according to an AFT survey last year, will be those in Maryland. When members of the state's class of 2007 reach high school, they will have to face new exams in American history, world history and English.

By that time, more than a decade will have passed since a commission created by Congress urged that proficiency tests be aligned with academic standards.

"It takes years really to get those standards implemented," said Susan Agruso, state testing director in South Carolina. "It's ongoing forever."

The Washington Post

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1999

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

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# New York Begins Test Of Charter School Plan

## 1,000 Students in the State Are Entering Privately Run, Publicly Financed Classes

By ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS

This summer, Annie Harris, a P.T.A. vice president at Public School 65 in the South Bronx, put her daughter's name in the lottery for New York City's first charter school, a new kind of experimental school that supporters portray as the salvation of public education. The only person she told was her husband, a limousine driver, and she swore him to secrecy.

Although P.S. 65 is a failing school, Ms. Harris felt guilty about deserting it. She is a leader in the effort to fix it, and proudly confides that she is on a first-name basis with Chancellor Rudy Crew. But Loretta's future came first.

No matter that the new school was in a church building in Harlem that is on a street as forlorn as any in the South Bronx. Its promise transcended geography.

"One of our kids is making it out of the Bronx," Ms. Harris said, overjoyed when Loretta won the lottery.

This week, about 1,000 schoolchildren, Loretta among them, will enter the first three schools to be created under New York State's new charter law. Two are in New York City, and one is in Albany.

A year ago, Ms. Harris and the

### 'One of our kids is making it out of the Bronx.'

other families, many of them among the state's poorest and most disadvantaged, would have had no choice but to go to traditional public schools. They switched because they are searching for new hope for their children, and because educators and politicians have given them faith that charter schools can cure everything that the stereotype says public schools lack: good teachers, higher test scores, discipline and safety.

It is far too soon to say whether charter schools, which are publicly financed but free of the Board of Education control and union rules, will work or be one more broken promise for families who feel they have been betrayed before.

But the dreams of parents and educators are just one face of the fledgling charter-school movement. As Loretta's new school, the Sisulu Children's Academy, opens today, a day ahead of other New York City public schools, it is also the story of millions of taxpayer dollars going to a private start-up company with no track record anywhere.

The company, Victory Schools Inc., is run by a Wall Street financier better known for his billion-dollar leveraged buyouts than for his educational credentials. It promises to outperform surrounding public schools not by spending more, but by using novice, relatively low-paid teachers trained in a packaged curriculum, based on the popular "core knowledge" books by E. D. Hirsch

Jr. and on another method, direct instruction, which dictates what teachers will do and say almost every minute of the day.

Victory intends to propagate schools as efficiently — and if its owner realizes his ambition, nearly as profitably — as McDonald's makes hamburgers.

Along the way, it has struck an informal partnership with a major institution in Harlem, the Canaan Baptist Church. By renting the church's nearly unused community center, the school is helping to rejuvenate the church. For its part, the church, led by the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, who lobbied for charter schools in Albany, is lending the school its credibility.

A decade ago there were no charter schools anywhere in the country. (The first was in Minnesota in 1992.) Now there are more than 1,200, from schools in Arizona that have been investigated for financial improprieties to schools in Boston and Los Angeles that have been widely praised for their innovations.

When New York passed its charter school law last December, it entered the scene fairly late, becoming the 34th state to allow them.

The law imposes a limit of 100 on the number of charter schools that can be created, but there is no limit on the number of existing public schools that can convert to charter status. The schools face monitoring by the State Board of Regents, not local boards of education.

Sisulu has promised to do better than other public schools in the neighborhood, which are among the lowest-performing in the city. Even if the school fails to meet its test-score targets after three years, there is an escape clause: if 70 percent of the families approve of the school, the contractor may remain. But if it does not meet its targets within five years, Mr. Klinsky said, the state can revoke its charter.

Since the school goes up only to the second grade, children will not be required to take state tests, which begin in the third grade, this year. It is to expand by one grade each year.

Sisulu is the creation of Steven B. Klinsky, a partner in the investment firm of Forstmann Little & Company, which has no stake in the charter school. Mr. Klinsky said he started the school for a combination of altruistic and unabashedly capitalist reasons.

Quoting Martin Buber, he tells how he believes that everyone was placed on this earth to accomplish one good thing. "I can't invent a new medicine," Mr. Klinsky said. "But I can do something in education."

In 1993, he started an after-school program in memory of his brother, Gary, in East New York, an impoverished part of Brooklyn. That program, now serving 460 children, is nonprofit. Sisulu plans to use a similar after-school program, open until 6 P.M.

But Mr. Klinsky contends that despite the populist veneer of charter schools, only a contractor with significant assets can overcome the financial and logistical hurdles needed to open one. Even before the first stu-

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1999



Photographs by Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Marshall Mitchell, a trustee at Sisulu Children's Academy, one of New York City's first charter schools, greeted Inemesit Essien, a first grader, last month at an orientation for parents and students.



Shaquille John and his mother, Carlene, at the Sisulu orientation.

dent has arrived, Mr. Klinsky said, he has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the school. To make a profit, he needs to achieve economy of scale by opening other charter schools.

Mr. Klinsky has capitalized on his political connections. The board of advisers to the school includes Erskine B. Bowles, former chief of staff to President Clinton, and the Rev. Floyd W. Flake, a former Congressman.

When Mr. Wainwright proposed to start a school but faced questions about the separation of church and state, Mr. Klinsky came to the rescue by agreeing to rent the community center, on 115th Street between Lenox and St. Nicholas Avenues, for \$160,000 a year. After the first year, the business plan contemplates expanding to an adjoining church-owned building.

The church has been the lure for some parents.

"It should be pretty good," said Valerie Banks, whose son, James, will go to first grade at Sisulu. "It

can't be too wrong, because Canaan Baptist won't let anything go too wrong."

Anyone living in the city was eligible to enter a bingo-style lottery for admission. Some parents waited more than two hours for the names of the lucky children to be fished from a drum. Despite the showmanship, almost every child who applied found a place.

The school hired teachers through newspaper ads and word of mouth, receiving 150 applications and hiring 11. Three of the teachers are uncertified. School leaders would not disclose the salaries offered, but many of the teachers are beginners who have never led an elementary school classroom and will need considerable support to succeed.

"I left corporate America," said Cathy Inniss, one of the teachers, a former commercial insurance underwriter. Her previous teaching experience, she said, was as a mentor to students in a Catholic high school and as a Girl Scout leader.

School officials have worked hard to instill a sense of ownership in the parents. The principal, Berthe Faustin, a petite, authoritative woman, promised that parents could visit their children's classrooms whenever they wanted. Some teachers, she said, would even give out their home phone numbers.

But in other ways, Sisulu is like any other public school. Class sizes are larger than those in elite private schools, and about equal with those in surrounding city schools.

The contract lists \$3,110 per pupil, including teacher salaries, textbooks, supplies and aides, compared with an average in Harlem public schools of \$3,500.

The curriculum — Direct Instruction for reading and math; Core Knowledge for history and science — is focused on helping children pass the standardized tests, leaving as little as possible to chance.

In Direct Instruction, teachers are expected to follow a script, word by word, gesture by gesture. A consultant, Jane DeNapoli, spent seven days before school opened training the

new teaching staff in the verbal prompts and hand gestures that Direct Instruction uses to cue children. "Get ready," the teachers intoned again and again, copying Ms. DeNapoli's inflection exactly.

Core Knowledge, developed by Dr. Hirsch, a professor at the University of Virginia, tries to define cultural literacy, from nursery rhymes to historic events. Dr. Hirsch is the author of the commercially successful series of books "What Your First Grader Needs to Know," and so on for each grade.

To many parents, the cookie-cutter approach was reassuring, and parents seemed beguiled by the opportunity to try something new and different.

Valerie Banks, who is on public assistance, would send her only son, James, to private school if she could afford it. She knows that her neighborhood school, P.S. 144 in Harlem, ranks among the lowest in the city, with 21.7 percent of students reading at grade level and 12.5 percent doing math at grade level in 1999.

When she spotted a flier promoting Sisulu, she jumped at the opportunity. "It's a risk, but what caught my eye was that it said discipline," she said. "When you're a poor person, public school is usually your only option."

Sisulu has given James a scholarship for his uniform, supplying two pairs of pants, two shirts, a sweater and a tie. Ms. Banks's mother, a retired transit cleaner, contributed 8 long-sleeved white shirts, one short-sleeved shirt and 24 pairs of socks. Now all he needs are the black shoes (his good Easter shoes are blue).

Last week, James received a welcoming card from his teachers. "Can't wait to see you," it said, signed, "Mr. Henderson and Miss Ortiz." His cousin, who will also go to the school, got a postcard, too, but with a completely different message on it. Ms. Banks was pleased by the difference, concluding that the teachers had written the cards themselves.

"It sounds pretty good," she said. "You just got to wait and see."

POTUS -  
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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
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September 30, 1999

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As we enter into another serious appropriation fight over education priorities with Congress, I thought you might be interested in an analysis of various recent polling data.

- **EDUCATION HAS STAYED AS THE TOP PRIORITY THROUGHOUT THE POLLS THIS SEPTEMBER.**
- **THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FOR INVESTING IN EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT.**
- **ON A NUMBER OF EDUCATION ISSUES, THE REPUBLICANS ARE NOT IN SYNC WITH THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS, PARTICULARLY DEMOCRATS AND INDEPENDENTS.**

There is much stronger support from Americans for the President's education budget and agenda than for those proposed by the majority in Congress. I have attached a series of powerful and interesting results from recent polls and surveys. The public wants investments in serious changes to fundamentally improve education at all levels of government. At the federal level, they want flexibility while addressing nationwide priorities such as reducing class size, fixing and modernizing schools, expanding after-school programs, getting technology into the classroom, improving teacher quality, and helping students prepare for and pay for college.

The Republican leadership in Congress seem to be basing almost their entire argument on opposing all of the President's initiatives by arguing that education should be left to locals and states, for example block grants, and/or that money should be taken away from public schools for private school vouchers. What these polls show is that these arguments not only do not appeal to Democrats, but also do not hold with Independents, or even with some Republicans.

The bottom line is the President's agenda resonates especially well with Democrats and Independents, and even with a substantial number of Republicans.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Riley

Attachment

## EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENTS IN THE PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC EDUCATION AGENDA

- A. Support for Education over tax cuts.** We find that "improving education and the schools" will be "very important" to 79 percent of Americans when choosing a president next year, more than any other issue. Only 44 percent say "cutting taxes is very important, making it 14<sup>th</sup> out of 15 issues.

| <u>Top 5 issues</u>           |     | <u>Bottom 5 issues</u>       |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Improving Education        | 79% | 11. Helping Middle Class     | 61% |
| 2. Handling the Economy       | 74% | 12. Handling Gun Control     | 56% |
| 3. Managing the Budget        | 74% | 13. Handling Foreign Affairs | 54% |
| 4. Handling Crime             | 71% | 14. Cutting Taxes            | 44% |
| 5. Protecting Social Security | 68% | 15. Campaign Finance Reform  | 30% |

Source: ABC NEWS poll, released on September 5, 1999

- B.** Public is equally split on spending for "social programs" or "cut taxes", but when "education" is inserted as a partial definition of social programs, the support for "social programs" then becomes **2 to 1 overall, but 3 to 1 for Democrats, and 3 to 1 for Independents.**

If you had to choose, would you prefer using the budget surplus to cut taxes or to pay for social programs?

| <b>Half sample A</b>    | <u>Primary Voters</u> |            |            |                                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|
|                         | <u>Total</u>          | <u>Dem</u> | <u>GOP</u> | <u>Indep./Other (estimates)</u> |
| Cut taxes               | 44%                   | 31%        | 62%        | 40%                             |
| Pay for social programs | 42                    | 54         | 27         | 44                              |
| Both (Vol.)             | 5                     | 7          | 3          | 5                               |
| DK/NA                   | 9                     | 8          | 8          | 11                              |

If you had to choose, would you prefer using the budget surplus to cut taxes or to pay for social programs *such as education and welfare*?

| <b>Half Sample B</b>    | <u>Primary Voters</u> |            |            |                                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|
|                         | <u>Total</u>          | <u>Dem</u> | <u>GOP</u> | <u>Indep./Other (estimates)</u> |
| Cut taxes               | 28%                   | 21%        | 42%        | 22%                             |
| Pay for social programs | 58                    | 65         | 42         | 66                              |
| Both (Vol.)             | 8                     | 7          | 11         | 6                               |
| DK/NA                   | 6                     | 7          | 5          | 6                               |

Source: CBS News Poll, released September 23, 1999

**C. At least three-quarters of Americans support five education priorities:**

Here is a short list of possible changes that could cost more money and require additional tax dollars. Please tell me if you would favor or oppose making each of the following changes in your community to improve your public schools.

|                                         | Favor | Oppose | Don't Know |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|--------|------------|
| Fixing run-down schools                 | 92%   | 7%     | 1%         |
| Reducing class sizes                    | 86    | 13     | 1          |
| Placing more computers in the classroom | 81    | 16     | 2          |
| Paying teachers more                    | 77    | 20     | 3          |
| Adding more security at schools         | 76    | 22     | 2          |

Source: National Public Radio/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School of Government Survey of 1,422 adults nationwide (Sept. 7, 1999). The error margin is 3 percentage points.

**D. Programs like expanding after-school also resonate extremely well with the public.**

*Adults were asked: To provide kids in your community with access to good after-school programs and early childhood development programs like Head Start, would you be willing to pay more taxes or pass up a tax cut?*

|                                                                                             |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Pay more taxes?</i>                                                                      | 50%        |
| <i>Those who were unwilling to pay more taxes, but who were willing to pass a tax cut:</i>  | 24%        |
| <b><i>Total percent of those willing to pay more taxes, pass up a tax cut, or both:</i></b> | <b>74%</b> |

Source: Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, August 12-15, 1999

**E. Little support for vouchers over investing in public schools improvements.** Some have proposed taking money from public schools to pay for tuition at private and parochial schools. Despite widespread support for education reform, however, only 31 percent of Americans support private school vouchers according to the Kaiser poll.

These attitudes have been remarkably consistent over the past half-century, according to a Life Magazine poll on whether the U.S. government should fund public or church schools (September 1999).

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In general, would you say you are in favor of the idea of federal money being given to schools run by churches, or should federal money be given just to public schools?

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|                         | 1950 | 1999 |
|-------------------------|------|------|
| Church schools too      | 30 % | 30 % |
| Only public schools     | 45   | 56   |
| Against all federal aid | 8    | 3    |
| Don't know/no answer    | 17   | 11   |

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Source: Life Magazine/Yankelovich Education Poll (September 1999)

**F. Democrats and Independents Support an Education Agenda and Funding In Line with the President's Agenda.** The two areas where the Republicans differ greatest with Democrats and Independents is leaving education to the local and state levels and supporting vouchers. The Republican argument connects principally to their base without much room to grow. While the President's agenda resonates with Democrats, Independents, and even some Republicans.

**Note: A CBS poll recently released asks for just one priority that the President should do to improve education.** The numbers are much smaller here compared to other polls because people polled could only pick one, but you will find that here, too, you see much stronger support for the changes being proposed by the President versus the majority in Congress.

What is the most important thing a President could do to improve EDUCATION in this country?

|                                    | <u>Primary Voters</u> |            |            |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------|
|                                    | <u>Total</u>          | <u>Dem</u> | <u>GOP</u> | <u>Indep./Other (estimates)</u> |
| Increase school funding            | 17%                   | 20%        | 16         | 15                              |
| Need better teachers               | 11                    | 12         | 8          | 13                              |
| Increase teacher salaries          | 9                     | 9          | 9          | 9                               |
| Funding college/scholarship        | 6                     | 7          | 3          | 8                               |
| Discipline/truancy                 | 5                     | 5          | 3          | 7                               |
| Smaller class size                 | 5                     | 5          | 4          | 6                               |
| Improve curricula/standards        | 5                     | 7          | 6          | 8                               |
| Facilities/computers               | 4                     | 3          | 3          | 3                               |
| <b>Leave it to locals/states</b>   | <b>4</b>              | <b>3</b>   | <b>10</b>  | <b>1</b>                        |
| Parental involvement               | 2                     | 1          | 2          | 3                               |
| <b>Vouchers/school competition</b> | <b>2</b>              | <b>1</b>   | <b>6</b>   | <b>1</b>                        |
| School safety                      | 2                     | 2          | 2          | 2                               |
| Enact national standards           | 2                     | 1          | 2          | 3                               |
| President CAN'T do anything        | 5                     | 2          | 9          | 4                               |
| Other                              | 8                     | 9          | 7          | 8                               |
| DK/NA                              | 13                    | 13         | 10         | 16                              |

Source: CBS News Poll, released on September 23, 1999