

No Social Promotion /
Student Accountability

Social Promotion

ORGANIZATION OF RESEARCH:

- 1) What individual school districts are doing in response to the problems social promotion and grade retention present.
- 2) Attitudes which contribute to social promotion in public schools.
- 3) Arguments against social promotion.
- 4) Arguments for social promotion.
- 5) Possible alternatives to both social promotion and grade retention.

1) WHAT IS BEING DONE IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

- Socially promoted students are assigned to a team of teachers, psychologists, and social workers who create a "pupil progression plan."
 - They are planning on creating a more extensive summer school program for the "gateway grades" 2, 5, and 8.
 - Atlanta Constitution 5/12/97
- "Promotion Standard" if a student fails 2 of the 5 main subjects, the student has to go to summer school to get back on track. -- Houston Chronicle 4/24/97
- In Val Verde, CA school district officials are considering barring Middle School Students from taking electives until they get their basic skills up. This would apply to those students who fall in the bottom fourth of the class. -- The Press Enterprise (Riverside, CA) 8/19/96
- DeSoto County Schools Superintendent Jerry Baird is pressing the Board of Education with a list of changes to end social promotion.
 - The expansion of alternative school
 - A change in the requirements of middle school students to move from grade to grade.
 - The addition of teacher assistants to focus on remedial programs for grades K-5.
 - The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN) 6/13/96
- Students who are in danger of being held back are given contracts which spell out the subjects which they must improve in and advise parents of ways they can make sure that this happens. -- The Atlanta Constitution 6/3/96

- In Houston the Houston Federation of Teachers' organizations are pushing for legislation which includes the following:
 - Bans all social promotion
 - Requires children to be able to read before leaving the 3rd grade
 - Provides intensive intervention for failing students
 - Restores the teacher's authority in grading and determining if a child is retained or promoted.
- Dallas has one program which helps students who fail the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. 6th and 8th graders who haven't mastered the reading or math sections are required to attend an intensive 15 day program taught in a small group setting. --Dallas Morning News 1/23/96
- In Wake County, N.C. 5 areas must be considered before a student can be socially promoted:
 1. Academics
 2. The child's development
 3. Previous retentions
 4. Physical and social maturity
 5. Attitudes

--The Herald-Sun (Durham, NC) 6/11/95

2) ATTITUDES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL PROMOTION:

- A high rate of failure is seen as a sign of a bad teacher
- The Illinois State Board of Education has a policy against social promotion, but no mechanism to track schools that ignore that policy. --The Pantagraph (Bloomington, IL) 1/26/97
- Setting up special help means admitting that students are failing and no one want to do that.
- An AFT survey gave two reasons on why students are being socially promoted:
 1. Beliefs that retention creates discipline problems and does not help students
 2. Pressure from principals and parents to move students ahead.
- "Outlawing social promotion may be the best insurance that standards are met, but few districts have the stomach for it." --USA Today 4/18/97
- "Education is dealing with a long list of social conditions too numerous to list that contribute to the problem of social promotion." --LA Times (editorial) 7/3/96
- "The debate also raises sticky questions of accountability. Whose fault is it if a child has not mastered the skills and knowledge expected of him or her in a given year? Is it the child's for not trying or the teacher's for a job poorly done?" --LA Times 6/29/96
- "Effective and affordable alternatives are not so easily found." --The Times Union (Albany, NY) 5/31/96

3) ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOCIAL PROMOTION

- The AFT says that the possibility that a student might be helped gives teachers real leverage. --New York Times 6/16/97
- Social promotion creates 1) Low academic standards 2) Serious lack of interest in learning among students
- Social promotion undermines the efforts to hold students accountable for their work.
- "When you're talking about social promotion, there's no pressure on the child or the school to reach the standards you must reach before you go on to the next level." --Paul Vallas Chicago Tribune 5/27/96

4) ARGUMENTS FOR SOCIAL PROMOTION (OR AGAINST RETENTION)

- "Even if children do seem to show improvement immediately after retention, by fourth grade, those differences have washed away." --Connell Frazier, Education Department at Sage College
 - Students who are retained have a higher tendency to drop out.
 - It costs a lot to send a student through a grade again and they tend not to learn anything because they are repeating the same situation where they failed to learn in the first place.
 - There is the added cost of repeating a year and the loss to the economy by having students who don't move into the work force on time.
 - Creates a social limbo where the students have friends in two grades and don't really feel like they belong anywhere. The whole bad self-esteem issue.
 - Why Retention Doesn't Work
 - Grade retention does not ensure significant gains in achievement for children who are academically below grade level
 - The threat of non-promotion is not a motivating force for students.
 - Grade retention does not generally improve achievement or adjustment for developmentally immature students.
 - Economically, grade retention is a poor use of the education dollar, because it increases the cost of education (the retained child spends an additional year in the public school system) without any benefits for the vast majority of retained children.
 - Characteristics such as low socioeconomic status (SES) and poor classroom conduct affect the likelihood that a child will be retained.
- Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention
Lorries A. Shepherd & Mary Lee Smith editors
- In L.A. a student who fails the 1st or 2nd grade has only 20% chance of graduating from high school. (Flunking Grades p36)
 - "Retained children perceive retention as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive event designed to help them." (Flunking Grades p130)
 - "Parents who are poorly educated and who themselves had difficulty in school are over represented among the parents of non-promoted children." (Flunking Grades p 129)

5) POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO SOCIAL PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Something Similar to the IEP in Special Education

Description: This would be a document that is created with the student, teachers, parents, counselor, and if necessary psychiatrists to outline a plan for the student from the failed grade through graduation.

Benefits

- Provides clear guidance on what the students need to do to catch up.
- Allows them to progress socially while working towards learning the important skills and requirements that were missed.
- Helps students understand that failing is not OK and they need to be accountable for the skills they have missed.

Drawbacks

- Creates a lot of paperwork, administration, meetings, etc. to already overworked teachers' and administrators' schedules.
- Students who are failing tend not have the organization skills, willpower, or desire to work hard to catch up.
- What happens when the students don't follow the IEP?

Alternative School

Description: An alternative school would be a whole separate site, or possibly a school within a school. It would be better to have it be a separate site because that might help get the failing students away from the environment that caused them to fail. The school would be equipped with teachers, specialists, counselors, etc. who could work with the student. The student stays in the school until he or she is caught up with grade level for age and then returns to the "regular" school.

Benefits

- Students would receive attention that is specifically focused to help them catch up.
- Hopefully the staff could help determine why the student failed in the first place.
- Allows the students the chance to catch up on their own, without the label of grades.
- Serves as a place to solve the problems which created failure in the first place.

- My Prof. (Merrell Hansen, BYU) thought it was one of the better alternatives.

Drawbacks

- Students could face similar self-esteem issues as retention by being labeled as someone who needed to attend the “catch-up school”.
- Students could become dependent on the support received at the “catch-up” school and fail when returned to a “regular” school setting.
- It costs a lot of money to run a whole other school. Districts could pool their resources and several could run one “catch-up” school. However, that could create long distances for students to travel and there could be differences in how each District wants the school run, etc.

Contracts

Description: Students who are in danger of being held back are given contracts which spell out the subjects they must improve in and advise parents of ways they can make sure that this happens.

Benefits

- Students are held accountable to learn what they failed to learn
- Students are told specifically what they need to do to be promoted.
- This is a good way to try to solve the problem before it gets too big for the student.
- This is expensive.

Drawbacks

- You still need a backup in case the students don't fulfill the contract
- Requires good parental involvement and support.
- Doesn't address why students are failing in the first place.

Summer School

Description: Students who fail make up the work in summer courses.

Benefits

- Widely used and accepted.
- Most Districts already have summer school programs in place.
- Summer school provides a sort of “punishment fitting the crime” and holds students accountable.

Drawbacks

- What happens when a student fails summer school?
- Prevents high schoolers from working full-time during the summer which just might teach them accountability
- Summer school is already widely used and hasn’t solved the problem.
- How do you learn in two months what you should’ve learned in ten months?

In School Resource Program

Description: This is a multi-step plan that would take students out of the regular classroom and put them in a sort of resource room. This room would then help them to catch up to their peers.

- 1) Potential failures would be identified early and give special help.
- 2) After the administration (teacher and principal) make a decision to retain, the parents are contacted.
- 3) An individualized and detailed educational plan was prepared for the remediation process.
- 4) Students are not recycled through the same curriculum, but placed in special classes with low student / teacher ratios.
- 5) All retainees are placed in classes of 12-15 students with a teacher and a full-time aide.
- 6) Many children are main streamed into the regular program with age peers for part of the day.
- 7) Pupil-personnel-service teams are consulted on a regular basis and a continuous evaluation was made.
- 8) This evaluation could allow the child to rejoin the age group at any time.

(I found the description for this program in Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention on page 25)

Benefits

- Students get the attention and curriculum they need. This is not a repeat of the classes they failed.
- Recognizes that students don’t fail everything in a grade and helps to mainstream them back to their age group where they belong.
- Makes everyone happy. It holds students accountable, doesn’t cost as much as retention,

and allows the students to have a way to get back with their peers.

Drawbacks

- This program takes time and costs money in hiring more staff.
- This creates more responsibility for teachers and other staff.
- Students can still be labeled as stupid because they have to go to the special class.

Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention edited by Lorries A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith, New York: The Falmer Press, 1989.

about \$40 million to higher education in the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Republicans have their own version of

a budget, but even that may go down without much of a fight.

"I hope we can work something out," said Sen. Gex Williams, R-Verona. ■

44. Associated Press

05-30 10:41a

About 2,600 seniors won't graduate

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - Younger students are doing better on the state's ninth-grade proficiency tests, but nearly 2,600 high school seniors still haven't passed and won't graduate with their classes, the Ohio Department of Education reported today.

More than 61 percent of high school freshmen passed all four parts of the test required for their graduation in 2000. That's up from 59 percent for last year's ninth-grade class.

Meanwhile, 40 percent of eighth-graders passed the five tests required of their graduating class. The eighth-grade class is the first that must

pass a science portion in addition to sections covering math, reading, writing and citizenship.

This year's freshman class took the science test but was not required to pass it. Seniors were not required to take the test.

"This performance confirms what we have known all along - that children rise to the level of our expectations," state Schools Superintendent John Goff said in a news release.

About 98 percent of this year's graduating class - 115,287 seniors - passed all four required parts, the department said. The 2,592 students who

did not are eligible to participate in a summer tutoring program and retake the tests in July or August.

About 1,800 students who failed to graduate last spring still have not passed one or more parts of the proficiency test. About 1,000 members of last year's senior class passed the test during the past year.

Students in private schools continued to outperform their public-school counterparts, the department reported. Among nonpublic schools, about 60 percent of eighth-graders, 85 percent of ninth-graders and 94 percent of 10th graders have passed the tests. ■

state standards - program -
test results
(+ see reverse)

45. Indianapolis Star

May 30, 1997

Zendejas suspends magnet program's director

By Leonard N. Fleming / The Indianapolis Star/News

INDIANAPOLIS (Thu, May 29, 1997) — Ralph Bedwell, longtime director of Broad Ripple High School's dual magnet program, has been suspended.

Indianapolis Public Schools officials are investigating allegations that he wrongly assigned some students to the program.

The officials want to determine whether Bedwell favored some students over others higher on a waiting list for the humanities and performing arts magnets.

Also, they want to find out if he placed students in a magnet program who were never on the waiting list and then failed to notify district administrators until after they were enrolled.

Superintendent Esperanza Zendejas called any improper assignments of students "unacceptable."

"I would not suspend an employee based on just plain talk," said Zendejas, indicating she believes she has cause to discipline Bedwell.

"Clearly, an administrator (Bedwell) is responsible for overseeing that process," she said. "This is not about the quality of the program. This is about the integrity of the process."

Bedwell, who was notified Friday of his suspension with pay, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Parents of at least 50 students have complained that their children were assigned to nonmagnet schools next fall instead of to Broad Ripple under the new feeder system.

Those students were in the magnet program at Broad Ripple this school year, but, school authorities said, they had been improperly included in the program.

Some Broad Ripple parents and teachers will stage a pro-Bedwell rally in the school's cafeteria tonight. It will be led by Steve Hyatt, a former IPS board member who has a daughter in Broad Ripple's magnet program.

E. Lou Jones, a School Board member, made the issue public last week

during a board meeting.

The programs are highly competitive. Admission is dictated by student academic achievement, racial balance and adequate space. Racial balance for high school magnets is set at no less than 48 percent black and no greater than 78 percent black.

The performing arts magnet began at the former Shortridge High School in 1976 and was moved to Broad Ripple in 1982. Bedwell helped create the humanities magnet at Broad Ripple in 1979.

There are 640 students in the two programs.

Broad Ripple Principal Larry McCloud refused to comment on the allegations. He called them a "delicate, sensitive and serious personnel matter."

McCloud was in danger of losing his job earlier this year because of declining test scores and high dropout rates.

"I'm shocked," said Doris Young, a magnet teacher who helped Bedwell create the humanities magnet. "He's one

of the reasons the program's been so successful. He's so accessible to kids."

Said Tauri Chapman, a student who is

in the performing arts magnet, "If it wasn't for him, then I wouldn't be winning the scholarships that I'm

winning now. He's good, and he believes in giving people their chance."■

46. Seattle Times

May 30, 1997

Seattle school's test scores rise - for everyone

by Dick Lilly Seattle Times staff reporter

Test scores for Seattle Public Schools students have moved up on all three districtwide tests given this year.

Scores released yesterday for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) showed gains of one to three points in all areas tested - reading, language arts and math - at all grade levels. The tests were given last month.

"We now have three indicators that what we are doing is working," said schools Superintendent John Stanford. "Our staff has been focusing on teaching essential skills and they deserve kudos for these improved scores."

The announcement follows news earlier this week that Seattle students in the third, fifth, eighth and 11th grades also improved their writing ability, as measured by a writing sample scored by outside consultants.

Seattle students in the fourth, eighth and 11th grades also made

across-the-board gains on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) for the second year in a row, pulling out of a slump dating to the early 1990s. The test is required by the state.

The scores released yesterday cheered school officials because ethnic-minority students made gains equal to or greater than white students. Nevertheless, most minority youngsters continued to score five to 10 points below national averages for all students while white students, for the most part, remained 10 to 15 points above national averages.

Closing the gap in academic achievement between minority and white children is one of the district's major goals.

The scores for low-income children and children with limited English proficiency also increased, though they remained significantly behind the scores

for children from middle-class and English-speaking homes, respectively. Schools will send students' scores home to parents next week, said Dorothy Dubia, district spokeswoman.

The Seattle School District switched from the California Achievement Test (CAT) to the ITBS last year, so there's no data on long-term trends. Few suburban districts use the ITBS, though on other standardized tests, such as the CTBS given statewide in the fall, suburban schools generally score from a few to as many as 30 points higher than city schools. Scores generally rise with income levels in school districts throughout the metropolitan area.

The ITBS is a nationally normed test, meaning that 50 is an average score and a score of 55, for example means that 54 out of 100 students scored lower and 45 scored higher.■

47. Minneapolis Star Tribune

May 30, 1997

Peter Hutchinson quits as superintendent

Mary Jane Smetanka, Norman Draper, David Peterson and Rob Hotakainen / Star Tribune

After 3 1/2 years that were watched by educators and politicians around the nation, Minneapolis public schools Thursday abruptly ended their pioneering partnership with a private management firm that served as the district's superintendent.

School board members and Public Strategies Group Inc. (PSG) said that the parting was amicable and that the firm had completed most of what it had been hired to do. But the immediate departure of firm President Peter Hutchinson, who acted as the district's superintendent, coincided with increasingly rocky relations with parts of the minority community and with criticism of the

district's poor performance on state tests.

"It was the most intense 3 1/2 years of my life, the most challenging, certainly the most difficult, and, without question, the most rewarding," Hutchinson said.

Katrina Reed, labor-relations director, was named interim superintendent. Officials said the search for a schools chief will begin immediately and that they hope to hire someone by fall. School board members indicated that the new superintendent is likely to be a trained educator, unlike Hutchinson. School Board Chairman Bill Green said he would like him or her to be someone with "a much more intimate knowledge of how a school district works."

But Green, who confessed that he was "one of the most skeptical" about hiring Hutchinson and PSG, credited Hutchinson with "creating a vocabulary, a checklist, a vision of what the district is, and being able to articulate that."

"I'm satisfied at where we are," Green said. "I would not be happy if we did not know how to say goodbye."

Breaking new ground

When Minneapolis schools hired Hutchinson and his consulting firm as superintendent in late 1993, it was the first big-city school district to turn all of its operations over to a private firm. Hutchinson's novel pay-for-performance contract drew national attention from

of you will support that. (Applause.)

But the most important thing we can do is something that the federal government should not do directly, but something I'm convinced will not happen unless we get out here and beat the drum for it and work for it. And that is to have recognized high standards for math and science and other basic subjects that are national in scope, measured by national and international standards, adopted locally, implemented locally, but nationally recognized and nationally tested throughout the United States. Until we do that, we will never know whether we have achieved our goal of international excellence in education for every student in the United States. And I ask your support for that.

This has never happened. People have talked about this. When we wrote the national educational goals we anticipated that we would have to develop a set of national standards -- not federal government standards, national standards. The councils of mathematics teachers and science teachers have done a lot of work on this. A lot of work has been done on this.

But nobody has yet been willing to say, or at least we haven't had enough people willing to say -- whether they were governors or state superintendents of education or local school boards -- we're all going to accept these and we want to have some tests we can give to our students which will measure not how smart they are, not what they might have happened to learn, but whether they know the things that we say are essential for every student to know in math and in science in order to succeed and win in the world they're going to live in. That is what we must do as a nation, and we have delayed too long, we shouldn't delay any more. By the time we start the new century we ought to have these standards adopted, embraced and evaluated in every school district in that United States and I want you to lead the way, just as you are here. (Applause.)

I have heard all the arguments in the world against this. But no one has yet made a compelling case to me for how calculus is different in Chicago from Little Rock, Arkansas or Coty, Wyoming or, for that matter, Germany or Singapore or any other place in the world. That is what is the genius behind what you've done here with this First In The World Education Consortium.

We already know we're not doing well enough as a nation. What our students in general learned in math in the 8th grade is learned in Japan in the 7th grade. Even more troubling to me, what each year students in Germany in Japan learn 10 to 20 math subjects in depth, our students are asked to cover 35 math subjects, and therefore don't learn any of them in depth.

Last year, educators around the world gave a half a

1. Announced results of TIMSS for the Consortium
2. Renewed our call for national standards
3. Challenge
4. ↑ Goals / C.S.

First in the World
Press Briefing

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Northbrook, Illinois)

For Immediate
Release

January 22, 1997

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
MIKE MCCURRY

Glenbrook North High School
Northbrook, Illinois

12:40 P.M. CST

MR. MCCURRY: Here we go. All right, just in case the news from that speech might have been somewhat opaque to you -- (laughter) -- let me just fill in a little bit to go with the President's full-throated cry for standards. How often over the last four years have you heard President Clinton talk about the need for world-class standards in education?

We now have those world-class standards with respect to math and science through the TIMS testing, and the success here in the consortium schools that we celebrate today is the success the President wanted to lift up to show how the application of these standards can be used to reform education nationally, how the application of standards can really make a difference as teachers, as parents, as communities, as administrators come together to really build better schools for the future. Education is a key element of that foundation for the bridge to the 21st century. The President, in his very first trip of the second term was determined to put the spotlight on an issue which arguably will dominate his domestic agenda during a second term.

He also today is doing something that increasingly he will do in exercising the power of the presidency in a second term, which is to not just talk about the conversation up and down Pennsylvania Avenue with Congress, but to go out where the real work is being done in communities to build the 21st century that we want for our children, and demonstrate what works and encourage Americans to replicate that success.

If we could see all throughout the 16,000 local school districts in this country, the kind of commitment to standards of excellence that we've seen in these school districts here, we could make significant

progress toward the education goal reforms that we have.

Now, how does the federal government help these school districts come together? In this case here, with the consortium, the Education Department provided a lot of technical assistance to this consortium during the course of 1995 and '96 as they worked through the restructuring of their curriculum and applied new techniques and new discipline to the teaching of math and science, and they also provided a \$150,000 grant last year, last fall, to help I guess with some of these guys -- with the costs of administering the test and applying the lessons learned from the test, which is an evaluative process to the teaching of their curriculum here.

So what we can do is, in a sense, provide the cookie cutter that allows local school districts to go out and emulate the success that we see elsewhere by providing a tool that people can use for the administration of this test. Now, this is clearly a school district in which they have the kinds of

resources, the kind of community involvement, the kind of commitment from parents and teachers and administrators to really

do the discipline of applying standards of excellence, but what the President will suggest is that we need to do that everywhere.

And as you know, later today he goes down to Chicago, a school district that has had considerable trouble dealing with schools in distress and which is actively in the process of reforming and actively applying, in a way, their own set of standards by putting schools that are not cutting it on probation and demanding a strategy for improvement. And the President wants to compliment the effort that they're making down there. So you see two much different types of school districts doing different types of things.

Now, the President -- the Education Department's involvement here comes in really two different fashions on how they help, or two different programs that are critical. One is Goals 2000, which is the commitment to help states develop their own standards, and then apply them using local resources, and the President in his FY '98 budget when it goes up to the Hill on February 6th will propose a 26 percent increase in funding for Goals 2000. He will propose a FY '98 expenditure of \$620 million, which is an increase from the 1997 enacted level of \$491 million for Goals 2000. That represents a significant increase; it's a commitment to the kind of standard-setting that we are demonstrating the success of here north of Chicago today.

In the charter schools area, charter schools will be also a subject of the President's discussions down in Chicago later in the day. We are proposing nearly a doubling of the amount for charter schools. The President's FY '98 budget, when

it goes to the Hill on February 6th, will propose \$100 million for charter schools, an increase from the enacted 1997 level of \$51 million.

So more resources where appropriate within the context of the balanced budget plan to those things that can improve education for the future, education being a central element of the President's second term agenda.

Q To get these increases in these two programs, do you just shuffle money within the Education Department, or does the education spending --

MR. MCCURRY: Well, the Department, like other departments, has had to live within the contours of a balanced budget discipline, but I'm not going to comment on other aspects of the Education Department's budget. We're just providing the figures on these two programs because they are centrally connected to the standards that the President is talking about today.

Q Mike, she's not asking about other parts of the budget, she's asking about --

MR. MCCURRY: I know, she was asking about a budget process that I'm not going to be amplifying on right now.

Q Can you just say whether the overall Education Department budget has gone down?

MR. MCCURRY: I'm not going to give you that answer, because we'll be doing more on that at future times. I've given you two specific program elements today that are related to what the President is talking about today.

Q Will these elements take money away from other existing programs?

MR. MCCURRY: I'm not going to write budget stuff

for you. I've given you two pieces of information to help you understand the commitment to providing more resources for these efforts, connected to standards.

Q Who is it who is selling the schoolchildren down the drain? Is it the local school boards who are blocking this, or is it the Republicans in Congress who wanted to eliminate Goals 2000?

MR. MCCURRY: No. Look, in the era of goodwill and partisanship I'm not going to walk through the history of what almost happened to Goals 2000 and some of our priority investment

in education for the future. But I would say that in some sense, that -- we had a debate last year about that type of commitment, and I think the American people by and large rally to the view that we need to invest more in education because it's a building block for the future. Better learning means better earning. It's centrally connected to our economic strategy for the long term. So it's connected to what we measure as success as we look ahead to the year 2000, and in any community there are different elements that lead to success and, to answer your question, sometimes different elements that account for failures.

The key thing is to have -- I mean, it's interesting, one of the lessons learned from some of the testing that's done here that it's not necessarily more time in front of a television or a lack of commitment on the part of teachers or students; it sometimes is the way in which things are taught, or how you teach the subject matter itself, which is what you learn from the discipline of having a testing process itself.

Q Mike, this school --

MR. MCCURRY: A couple of minutes, and then some of the guys from the Education Department and Domestic Policy Council can help out.

Q This school district aside, can you talk about why you think that setting higher standards makes people able to achieve them just by, like, writing them down?

MR. MCCURRY: Well, because learning how to measure progress and learning what is internationally recognized as standard is the only way you can tell where you are. It's like having the North Star in the sky that you can navigate against. You need to have a fixed point of reference so you know whether you're behind or ahead, which is what was established through the TIMS process. And then once you know what the standard is or what the benchmark is you can begin to evaluate your teaching methods, your curriculum, make sure that you've got yourself organized in order to accomplish those objectives.

I've got plenty of people here who can tell you more on that, and you'll also see in the pool report, I think -- Allison, didn't Secretary Riley talk a little bit about that, too?

Q Mike, in the Morris book, he suggests that the President backed away from requiring national standards because you took polls; is this true?

MR. MCCURRY: I've said all I have to say on the Morris book.

Q Mike, the President drew a distinction between the federal government setting standards and establishing

national standards. Who does he envision setting these standards?

MR. MCCURRY: Well, standard setting, as envisioned by Goals 2000, is a state and local process, but in this case

we're providing a little bit of help at the federal level in seeing how we apply now internationally recognized standards.

There have been some common -- a lot of hard work going into establishing the criteria evaluated in the TIMS test, and that is something that the President today is challenging local school districts and states, as they do their own standard setting, to look at, to emulate and perhaps to administer in

their districts because it's a way in which we measure whether we in fact become world class.

If the goal is world-class performance, measured by a world-class standard, then that ought to be something that those who are responsible for setting the standards at the local level embrace.

Q Who is responsible for the TIMS standards, do you know that?

MR. MCCURRY: TIMS was developed internationally. I think there is some good background in the little handout that we've got on how they actually developed that.

John, one last thing for me before I go.

Q If national standards is the goal, why would you not have a national curriculum and a national test by which you could do it?

MR. MCCURRY: Well, in a sense, that's what the TIMS test now is. It is a test that -- what the President is saying today is, this is, in effect, something that you can look at and know where you are as measured against 41 other countries that have been folded into this testing standard. So it is, in effect, almost a way that you measure your ranking internationally, and of course obviously you can make cross-comparisons nationally as well.

Q What about a national standard test for teachers, Mike?

MR. MCCURRY: Look, why don't I turn it over to some experts on the subject. Anything else you want to get me on before I go?

Q Could you just briefly give a run --

MR. MCCURRY: We'll do that. Anything else? Any other subjects you need me for? Because I've got to go. Okay, thanks.

MR. COHEN: My name is Mike Cohen. I'm a special assistant to the President for education, the domestic policy council. Let me say a couple things about questions that came up already about national standards and who develops them and where this TIMS testing fits in. I'll be happy to take any other questions you've got, and I've got colleagues from the Education Department here who can help out, as well.

There are national standards in math and science. They've been developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, a private group. They've been developed by the National Science Teachers Association and the National Academy of Sciences and other scientific groups that have basically looked within the discipline, within the profession and said, what's important for kids to learn.

The international testing built on those things and also basically asked the question, what is it that kids in other countries are expected to learn. That's how you get an international standard; you ask the question, working with

educators from other countries, what is it that students in those other countries learn, and what would be a test that reflects the common expectations and high expectations in all the countries.

That's what the TIMS test does. It's been done by an international group of educators. They are not part of the federal government, though the federal government provided the bulk of funding for that effort, both for the participation of the United States and for most of the international support for it in each country, though each paid their own way for that.

In other subjects, there have been other efforts to develop national standards by private groups, some with federal funding and some without federal funding. And states are working at developing their own standards. We're at a point in a lot of subject areas where you can begin to see the common expectations

from state to state, and how they fit with those expectations that national groups have set, which when you put it all together is what begins to give you a foundation for national standards.

With regard to the question on national testing, the President has been very clear that he wants to see a national testing program in place. This TIMS test is a good first start at it. While it was given to a sample of students nationally in its original administration, every school district in the country was also invited to participate in that. This is a test given to a sample of kids, kind of like a poll. So you had a national

poll and each school district was given the opportunity to administer its own poll to a sample of kids in its district.

The 20 districts that we're visiting today were the only ones in the country that came forward about a year ago and agreed to administer the test. So this is the only places -- just one second -- these are the only places in the country that have administered the test as a sample in their own districts so they can tell how well they are doing -- not how well the whole country is doing, but how well they are doing.

What the President has done today is challenge other districts to come forward and do the same thing. And the U.S. Department of Education will make that test available so other districts can replicate it.

Yes, you look confused.

Q I am confused on this test. If they said a sampling of students, but not the entire district, that's how we know that 8th graders are performing --

MR. COHEN: That's right. This is from a sampling.

Q -- below average because they've already taken this test?

MR. COHEN: Here in this district, these -- they have already taken the test and the results are back.

Q -- the whole district wide, but nationwide, where do you get this figure where you say 8th graders are performing below average? And that's because they took the test already, right?

MR. COHEN: The test was taken a year ago. The national results -- the international results were released last November. Okay, Pat can brief you in more detail on that. But the short version of it -- last November, when these were released -- and I bet every one of your papers had stories on this, okay -- the U.S. ranked slightly above average in science among the 41 countries and slightly below average in math among the 41.

Q The question is, did every American student take this test?

MR. COHEN: No.

Q I think the answer is no.

MR. COHEN: No, a sample of students nationally took

the test and in addition to that, a special sample of students from these 20 districts also took the test. So you have --

Q -- school district plucked out a few kids at random or some --

MR. COHEN: It's a scientific sample representative of the country in the first instance, and representative of these districts in the second instance.

Q --

MR. COHEN: No, this is -- these -- samples were selected under international guidelines to make sure you had a fair sample of kids. This is not picking out the best kids. This is really designed, again like you would do a poll to get a representative sample.

Q Just a question here. These school districts are wealthy school districts. The class sizes, the one we saw had only 18 kids in it. Why did you choose this kind of district to come to to make your first point on education? I mean, they obviously have a luxury in a way to do this kind of testing that another school might not think is their priority.

MR. COHEN: The President came to these districts to make this point again because they are the only districts in the country that stepped up and administered this test so they could find out how well they're doing on the standards. If other districts around the country had done the same thing, we would have had a choice of districts to go to.

But the fact that these districts are suburban and wealthier than others doesn't mean that these international standards should only apply to them. Because the kids in inner cities, whether they know it or not, are competing against the same international standards. And if they don't have an opportunity to find out what those standards are, to know how well they're doing compared to them, and have their schools put in place curriculum and teaching practices that will teach them the standards, they will never meet them. That's the President's point. These are the first ones to do it. But in fact, this is something that every district in the country ought to be doing.

Q So what kind of resources are available to inner city schools to do this, to follow up on Allison's point? What kind of resources, federal, are available for this?

MR. COHEN: Let me answer that in a couple of ways. First of all, the Education Department has -- working with the National Science Foundation -- has resources to help about 50 to 60 school districts or consortium school districts or states around the country administer the test in the next -- in this

spring or the following spring. So there's a challenge for a small number to come forward and do that, though. If 60 came forward, that would be a 60-fold increase in the number that we have right now. So it's a big step up, if you will.

Secondly, the federal government provides a significant amount of resources targeted to districts with large concentrations of poor students, in particular, to focus on basic skills and on math and science. The Title I program concentrates its funding on inner city districts and districts with large

concentrations of poverty. The Eisenhower Professional Development Program provides training for teachers particularly in math and science. The National Science Foundation has a program designed to improve math and science teaching and learning in about 20 urban school districts around the country, something like that.

So there are federal resources available to help. But it is also the case that the bulk of the resources still come from the state and local level, as they do with everything else in education. But it is not the funding level that is depressing the curriculum in schools. It's not the funding level that's keeping outmoded teaching practices in place. It's not the funding level that's holding the expectations down for students. That's a pretty big part of what the President's been saying.

Q When you double the amount for charter schools, do you have numbers on how many additional charter schools can receive -- is there a number on --

MR. COHEN: I'm not sure I can give you the number

-- do you have the number of charter schools for next year? We're aiming for 3,000 charter schools by the year 2000. We have about 400 in place now. And the money that we're proposing for next year would fund start-up costs for about 1,000 to 1,200 charter schools.

Thank you.

Q So -- 1,000 to 1,200 new charter schools?

Q Twelve hundred new charter schools?

MR. COHEN: Yes, that's right.

Q For next year?

MR. COHEN: For next year.

Q Explain how the Goals 2000 money helps set standards in precise terms as possible? I don't really

understand what the money pays for.

MR. COHEN: Sure. Yes. The Goals 2000 money does several things, right -- the money first of all is distributed by the federal government to states according to a formula and the number of kids in the state and how much poverty they have. The state then distributes the money to local school districts on a competitive basis. Now, there are several ways in which the Goals 2000 money helps set standards.

Some states have used the money to form committees of teachers to go look and see what other states expect of kids, what other countries expect of kids, to try to come to agreement on what standards ought to be set in their state. Pat Forgione, before he came to the U.S. Department of Education, was Commissioner of Education in Delaware, and if I'm not putting words in your mouth, I think that's essentially what you did with Goals 2000 money. So it literally supported the process of coming to agreement on what the standards ought to be and getting the information necessary to do that.

Secondly, I think I'm going to take another Delaware example if I can, Pat. Pat used the money that he had that was given out to local school districts to help local schools develop model curriculum that were tied to the standards so that teachers all over the state could not only look at the state standards, but also begin to look at curriculum to see how to translate that into classroom practice.

In Colorado, they used the money to develop model

standards at the state level, and then each district or districts could apply for money and use that to set their own local standards, because it's more of a local control tradition in Colorado.

One last point on that -- an awful lot of states around the country are using the money once they've set the standards to train teachers in new teaching practices and in the subject matter that they will need so they can teach kids to those standards. Does that help?

Q You said that there are now 400 charter schools. How long have they been around? Has it been just been a year or two?

MR. COHEN: When President Clinton took office in '92 I think there was maybe one or two charter schools in existence. Now there are approximately 400. When we took office, I think Minnesota was the only state in the country that had a charter school law. Now, 26 states and the District of Columbia have -- it's been a tremendous explosion in the last four years, and I think our start-up funds probably pay for

roughly 300 out of the roughly 400 charter schools in some way or another; we're stimulating and supporting those efforts.

Q Mr. Cohen, I wonder if I could ask you two

quick questions. Is there a dollar figure attached to this push towards standards? The things the President talked today, wanting to do in a second term, is there a rough dollar figure that can be attached to the combination of tuition credits and all of the things you listed, and can you break out standards separately and say that there's a figure attached to them?

MR. COHEN: I don't think so. The Hope Scholarship that he talked about, for instance, I believe we've got that at about \$42 billion over six years. I'll double-check those figures for you if you need it, because that's off the top of my head -- it is much more difficult to come up with a set figure for standards, but what I can tell you is that over the last four years between Goals 2000, which is now \$490 million, we're asking for \$620 million, the Title I program, which provides the lion's share of federal support for elementary and secondary education and is aimed at helping low-income kids in particular meet the same high standards that states set is about \$10 billion -- roughly \$10 billion an year. And the School-To-Work program, which is also focused on high standards, is about \$400 million a year between the Education Department and the Department of Labor. So we're looking at almost \$11 billion by rough calculation. I can again check figures for you if you need me to.

Q That's all money that needs to be appropriated by Congress this session?

MR. COHEN: Every year, the Congress needs to appropriate money. The figures that I gave you are pretty consistent with what we've got in place right now, though.

Q I guess what I'm saying, then, is how much more is he asking them to spend this year to do the things he thinks will be new and necessary?

MR. COHEN: As Mike indicated, the only two parts of the budget we're prepared to talk about right now are the charter schools figure and the Goals 2000 figure, but not the rest of it.

Q Is there an ideal number of charter schools you want in the country? Do you want to kind of control it so that you don't have too many sort of -- since this is a relatively new phenomenon, can you talk on that a little bit?

MR. COHEN: Well, the President's goal is to get 3,000 charter schools in place by the year 2000 or 2002. Again,

I'll have to check what we said about that -- 3,000 charter schools by the year 2000. That would be a sustained, significant growth each year. But we are also investing some money in monitoring them, in -- we've got some evaluation reports that the Education Department will release in the near future that are trying to learn how do you help manage these charter schools so that they're focussed on quality, so that they remain accountable for results, so that they -- as states and local school systems begin to put them in place, they in fact get implemented in a sensible fashion. So part of our responsibility is to help people learn how to do that.

Q How can you explain the fact that only one group of school districts came forward to take this test? Is that because other school districts are afraid of losing local control?

MR. COHEN: There were -- there may be a number of reasons in that. There were only a handful of others that had come forward and said, gee, we'd like to take the test but we either can't quite get the money together or we don't -- you know, we can't get our act together in time to meet the deadline.

But I think it takes a real push to convince local school districts that in fact the right thing to do is to aim for the highest standards in the world. That is not something that comes naturally to local school districts. It really takes some leadership and some push to get them to recognize the value in doing that and to be willing to take the risk in discovering that they are falling short of the mark for their students. That takes some courage to compare yourself to the best in the world -- as opposed to how we did last year, where we can always show a little bit of improvement and tell the community we're doing well. This takes a real risk to commit yourself to finding out the truth.

Q The President seemed to be saying, too, that there is some concern out there about losing local control.

MR. COHEN: Well, you know, a lot of the debate about Goals 2000 in the last -- well, since it started, has been this debate that somehow the federal government is going to take over the curriculum in school systems, which I should point out has not happened in any state or any school district that's receiving Goals 2000 money, but there has been this myth generated that there is sort of a federal effort to undermine local control.

And as the President pointed out, local school boards don't determine algebra and don't determine the laws of physics. There are some things that kids ought to learn pretty much in common all over the country. We need to figure out what that is, people need to commit to those goals and standards and

figure out the way to reach that. And that's not going to take away local control from everybody.

Q Just a question on the nitty-gritty of the costs of giving these tests. What does it cost to give the test in a school district, and is that for overtime for teachers to administer it or is it for the testing service? Where does that money come and go?

MR. COHEN: Pat Forgione is the commissioner of the National Center on Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education that administers the TIMS testing program.

MR. FORGIONE: Thank you, Mike. The main cost in doing this is to ensure the quality control. Historically, these kinds of studies have not been trusted because you don't know

what the sample is, the follow-through, were selected kids tested. So the main cost here will be \$50,000 at a grade level to do math and science. If a district wanted to do grade 8 math and science, \$50,000 would be the cost.

The main costs are to bring out the team to select the sample. This school district had 3,000 kids at grade 8; 750 were selected. They did not select them. They were selected independently. There was monitoring to make sure the right kids took the test. If you're absent, you have to follow up. You have to have a lot of quality control so when you release the results we can really say, here's the way the United States is versus other countries -- in this case, how school districts are.

Q So those 750 were chosen at random, or how does that happen?

MR. FORGIONE: Were chosen randomly by the contractor, using a sampling model to assure that we would get a random sample of children in the district, across all the regular classroom. So this is including all the kids in this district -- from the very best to the weakest academically, were all on a list, and we selected them. We went in, got those kids, tested them, collected the data, followed up if they were absent, and

put together a database in which today we're able to report to you that this district would rank first in the world in science and second in the world in mathematics. And that's a far call from the United States' position, if you remember the results that we released last November, where the United States had a number of countries -- 20 countries in math were better than us, and in science, nine countries. So this district really has set an example of what's possible.

Q But is this really a fair comparison, because what you -- I would assume in the other 40 countries -- is that

how many other countries?

MR. FORGIONE: Right.

Q That their sampling would have been taken across the board and across the country, as opposed to one affluent school district that got \$150,000 from the federal government and some sort of Department of Education -- I'm confused about that. Did you come in and coach the students on how to take the test? What was that about?

MR. FORGIONE: Well, let's take the fairness first. None of those grants happened until after the kids were tested. In the United States, we selected 13,000 kids at grade 8 to test. We picked the schools and the kids for the United States data. So we have a fair, accurate estimate of the United States grade 8 population from TIMS. We also have the same accuracy in Singapore, Germany, England -- our economic competitors that were in TIMS.

In this district, we took a sample of the children. Now the children may be of a certain type here, but this is a fair, accurate estimate of how this district does.

Q Yes, but I think the comparison could be made: It's like putting the Dream Team up against everybody else in the Olympics last summer. We blew them away. That's because we took -- we selected the cream of the crop and essentially put them on the floor. Isn't that what was done here?

MR. FORGIONE: Okay, Mike wants to --

MR. TOIV: Mike wants to answer that question. Now, we have folks here from the consortium who can answer your questions and concerns about how the test was administered and how the students

Q No, that's not my question. My question is, is this an accurate comparison to the other 40 countries where, I would assume, these tests were administered across the country as opposed to in the one single school district.

MR. FORGIONE: Look --

Q You see the point I'm getting at?

MR. FORGIONE: I understand your point completely. These districts are not representative of America. These districts are better off than most districts in America -- the Dream Team, right? The important point, though, is that this isn't basketball. This is math and science and every kid has got to learn math and science. Sure, these districts -- no, wait a

second, though. These districts did a lot better than other districts will do. There's no doubt about that. That may partly have to do with the nature of the community they come from. It also has to do with the kind of expectations that they've set. Fifty percent of the kids in this district take algebra compared to 20 percent in the rest of the country.

We know from the international studies that the curriculum throughout the country here in math and in science is far less focused, far less challenging, far less -- far less easy to learn. It's more chaotic, more unfocused, more fractured in

this country, around the country, in math and in science compared to other countries.

Now, that may be less true here than it is in other districts around the country, but those are things that can be corrected regardless of the background of the kids and regardless of the level of funding in the district. In that sense, the message here is not that they did first and is it fair or not, but other districts need to step up to the plate and benchmark themselves against the same standards so they can change the things in education over which they have control. And we know from lots of research and lots of experience that that will lead to improvements in math and science performance of those kids.

Will every district do as well as these did? Not necessarily. Can a lot of them do a lot better than they are? Absolutely.

END

1:20 P.M. CST

10-24 2:1

Report Finds 13 Percent of 15- 17-Year-Olds Held Back in School

By DEB RIECHMANN

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Thirteen percent of 15- to 17-year-old students in the nation in 1994 had been held back in school at least a year - about the same percentage as in 1980, the Census Bureau said today.

The report said 31 percent of these students were enrolled at lower than the normal grades for their ages, but 18 percent of them were older than their peers when they started school.

Therefore, the remaining 13 percent were retained at some time between the first and 12th grades, according to the report on the social and economic characteristics of students.

The 13 percent was not statistically different than the 11 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds the Census Bureau reported as being held back in 1980.

The report said most of the retentions occurred early in elementary school, and more than 28 percent of the students were enrolled below their normal grade by the time they had reached the sixth grade.

Recent efforts to raise academic standards have led educators to discuss grade retention and giving students tests before promoting them to the next grade. At a national education summit in New York earlier this year, President Clinton said: "No more social promotions. No more free passes."

Yet researchers say holding students back does not necessarily promote learning, and in some cases lowers their self-esteem and increases their chances of dropping out. Teachers say the question should not be whether to hold a student back, but how to help those who aren't making the grade.

Richard Kouri, an official with the National Education Association in Texas, says he's flunked and passed students with 69 percent averages, and students don't develop equally in nine-month school years.

"This shouldn't been about punishment - 'You didn't make it so we're going to make you do it again,'" Kouri said. "This should be 'you need help and we're going to find out how to give it to you.'"

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, says it's expensive to offer remedial courses and personal tutors, but costs to society are greater if students are sent into the adult world without basic skills.

The Census Bureau report also found:

- Boys tend to start school a little later than girls. Twenty-one percent of boys were below their normal grade between the ages of 6 and 8, compared with 16.5 percent of girls.

- Boys are retained at a higher rate even after discounting students who started school later than their peers. Nearly 16 percent of the 15- to 17-year-old boys were below their normal grades in 1994, compared with 8 percent of the girls. These percentages were not statistically different from 1980, the report said.

Graduation Test Failure May Push Out High Achievers

Failing minimum competency tests required for high school graduation does not increase the likelihood of low-achieving or minority students dropping out of school, but may induce students who do well academically to drop out, new research suggests.

A study of 76,000 Florida high school students found that those with grade point averages of 3.0 appear to be 1.75 times more likely to drop out after failing the tests, compared to low-achieving students who failed them.

While low-achieving students are more likely to leave school overall, the study across 14 school districts found no statistical differences in the dropout rates between the low-achieving students who passed or failed the minimum competency tests (MCTs).

Debate about the effect of MCTs on dropout rates has centered on their possible effects on low-achieving or minority students.

"Apparently it is those students one would least expect to be affected by competency test performance who suffer the most from MCT failure—students with strong academic records," the study says.

But noting that only 12 higher achieving students dropped out in the study, its co-author, Bryan Griffin, a professor at Georgia Southern University, calls for more scrutiny.

The dropout rate for higher achieving students who failed the minimum competency tests did not differ among white, black and Hispanic students studied.

Single copies of "An Examination Of The Relationship Between Minimum Competency Test Performance and Dropping Out Of School" are available free from Outreach Department, American Educational Research Association, 1230 17th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 200036-3078, (202)223-9485. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark

State Tests for Student Promotion

Louisiana

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The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) includes state-developed criterion referenced tests at grades 3, 5, 7, 10, and 11 as well as the norm-referenced California Achievement Test (CAT-5) at grades 4 and 6. At grades 3, 5, and 7, districts are expected to consider students' LEAP scores as a major, but not sole, criterion for promotion. Districts develop their own pupil progression plans for promotion and retention. In general, districts and individual schools use LEAP scores in conjunction with grades and other indicators to determine student promotion.

Districts must provide state-funded remediation for students at any level who fail a LEAP test. Districts determine how to structure the remediation, which must focus on students' weaknesses as indicated on their individual LEAP student reports. Districts choose which students to serve and may provide services during the school year or the summer.

North Carolina

Contact: Doris Tyler
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Senior Consultant in Testing
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North Carolina administers state-developed tests at the end of grades 3 through 8 as well as end-of-course tests at the high school level. The state cut back testing this year and will administer only reading and math tests for grades 3-8 as well as high school end-of-course tests in those subjects required for graduation. Students in grades 3-8 can score from 1-4 on the end-of-grade tests; the state's goal is for all students to score at level 3 or above. The state expects districts to provide any student who scores below level 3 with some type of remedial instruction. Districts set their own promotion policies and are expected to take test scores into account along with any other relevant information.

Indiana

Contact: Rick Peters
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From 1987 to 1995, the Indiana Statewide Testing of Educational Progress (ISTEP) legally required districts to provide remediation for students who scored below a state board of education-determined level in the spring. Districts retested students after the summer remediation, and those who failed again were required to be retained in grade. However, districts requested and received such a large number of waivers that the state voted to remove the law from the books beginning in 1995-96.

State Laws on Teacher Tenure

Massachusetts

Contact: Kathy LeBlanc
Legal Division
Massachusetts Department of Education

The 1992 Comprehensive School Reform Bill removed the word "tenure" from the education code and replaced it with "professional teacher status." Unlike tenure, which was awarded by local school committees, professional teacher status is granted by district superintendents at the recommendation of school principals.

Section 42 of the code was amended to give dismissed teachers with professional status the right to appeal to an independent arbitrator before the case reaches the legal system. The teacher has the right to select from among three arbitrators from the American Association of Arbitration. Although the teacher retains the right to sue the district after the arbitration hearing, most cases are resolved in arbitration.

Colorado

Contact: Carol Ruckel
Office of Professional Teacher Licensing
Colorado Department of Education

Legislation passed in 1990 removed the word tenure from the education code and replaced it with "continuing professional status." It also shortened time lines for hearings requested by tenured teachers dismissed by their districts.

The most significant change was the addition of "unsatisfactory performance" as a legitimate reason for dismissing a teacher with continuing status. Each district was required to establish standards of satisfactory performance, but these did not have to be approved either by the state or the union. All principals and administrators who rate teacher performance must now undergo 30 hours of training in personnel evaluation before they are allowed to rate any teachers. The Colorado Education Association was involved in developing these proposals and supported the final legislation.

While these changes were supposed to make it easier and cheaper for districts to dismiss incompetent teachers, state officials say that districts are reporting that the process of dismissing teachers remains as costly and lengthy as ever.

Florida

Contact: Kathy Christie
Education Commission of the States

All new teachers are hired under professional service contracts for no more than five years. The contracts are automatically renewable at the end of five years unless a teacher receives an unsatisfactory performance rating from his or her principal. In these cases, districts may make efforts to provide support to improve the teacher's performance. If these efforts do not yield improved ratings, the district may choose not to renew the contract.

All teachers employed before 1984 retained their tenure status and are exempt from the professional service contracts.

Oklahoma

Contact: Bob Mooneyham
Executive Director
Oklahoma State School Boards Association

In 1992, the legislature amended the state education code to remove the term "tenure" and to tighten the time line for the dismissal of incompetent teachers. Under the law, "career" teachers can be dismissed for willful neglect, negligence, mental or physical abuse of a child, incompetency, instructional ineffectiveness, or unsatisfactory teaching performance.

Upon receiving written notification of the district's intent to dismiss a teacher, the teacher has the right to request a hearing, which must be held between 20 and 60 days after the teacher receives the notice. If, after the hearing, the board decides to dismiss the teacher, the teacher has just 10 days to file suit in district court. If a suit is filed, the district has just 20 days to respond; the trial must be held between 10 and 30 days after the district files its response. At the conclusion of the trial, the judge has just 3 days to issue his or her ruling. The losing party must pay the legal fees of the winning party.

District Teacher Incentives

Rochester, New York

Contact: Jean Castania
Career in Teaching Program
Rochester City Public Schools

The Career in Teaching (CIT) program includes four career development stages: intern, resident, professional, and lead teacher. Assignment to the first three levels is based on teacher certification, tenure, and experience in teaching. Lead teachers are selected in an open competitive process and assume additional responsibilities in the district. Only teachers who have attained the status of Professional and have seven years of classroom experience can become Lead Teachers. They also receive a 10 percent increase of their base salary.

Lead Teachers can assume a variety of responsibilities, but the most significant one is that of mentor for new teachers. Lead teachers assigned as mentors are released from their regular classroom responsibilities for 40-50 percent of their time. Each has a caseload of four interns, each of whom is released for six full days to pursue professional growth opportunities with their mentors. Additional contact between the mentor and the intern is at their discretion.

Toledo, Ohio

Contact: Sue Yager
Communications Department
Toledo Public Schools

The career ladder program in Toledo grew out of negotiations between the Toledo Federation of Teachers and the Toledo Board of Education as a strategy for keeping outstanding teachers in the classroom. About 50 of the district's 2,500 teachers participate in the program. In order to participate in the program, a teacher must submit a project proposal to the Board of Review. Proposals can include research projects or special programs to address individual school needs. The board then reviews the proposal based on a set of criteria; these criteria become increasingly rigorous as teachers advance up the ladder. As teachers move up the ladder, their salary increases proportionally. The state funds the career ladder program through a special line item in the state budget. Toledo was the first district in the state to implement a career ladder.