

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 28, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUBJECT: Turning Around Low-Performing Public Schools

Since taking office in 1993, and with your strong leadership, my Administration has pursued a comprehensive effort to strengthen public schools. We have worked to raise academic standards, promote accountability, and provide greater competition and choice within the public schools, including support for a dramatic increase in charter schools. Moreover, we have worked to make the investments necessary to improve teaching and learning in classrooms across America, through efforts to keep our schools safe and free of drugs; to provide students who need it extra help to master the basics; to increase parental and community involvement; to recruit, prepare, and provide continuing training to teachers and reward excellence in teaching; and to make sure every school has access to and can effectively use 21st century technology.

This strategy is starting to produce results. We know that all students can learn to high standards, and that every school can succeed if it has clear instructional goals and high expectations for all of its students; if it creates a safe, disciplined and orderly environment for learning; helps parents be involved in their children's education; and uses proven instructional practices. All schools must be given the resources, tools, and flexibility to help every student reach high standards.

Yet, no school improvement strategy can succeed without real accountability for results, as measured by student achievement. Excellent schools and schools that show significant improvement must be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, schools that demonstrate persistently poor academic performance -- schools that fail to make adequate progress in educating all students to high standards -- must be held accountable. No American child deserves to get a second-class education. Instead, State and local education officials must step in and redesign failing schools, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff.

A growing number of cities and States have begun to take these steps. Cities

such as Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York, and States such as Maryland and Kentucky identify low-performing schools and take steps to intervene if these schools fail to make progress. These steps often include the implementation of school improvement plans -- providing after-school academic help to students, strengthening training and assistance for school staff, creating smaller and more personal settings, such as schools-within-schools -- and, where necessary, reconstitution of the school and replacement of the school principal and other staff.

We must encourage and help more cities and States to take up the challenge of turning around low-performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to achievement. We can do this by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that Department of Education resources are most productively used for these purposes.

In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to take the following actions within 90 days:

1. Produce and Widely Disseminate Guidelines on Effective Approaches to Turning Around Low-Performing Schools. There is much of value to be shared from the experiences of cities and States that already have successfully intervened in low-performing schools; from research and development on effective school improvement practices; and from business experience in managing high-performance organizations and in turning around low-performing companies. We know of several promising models of reform, ranging from the New American Schools designs to the Success for All program. These lessons must be summarized in clear and useable forms, and made widely available to educators, parents, State and local policymakers, business leaders, and others working to improve public education.
2. Help Cities and States Use Existing Department of Education Resources to Turn Around Low-Performing Schools. First, Department of Education programs should help and encourage more cities and States to develop and implement sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low-performing schools and help students in them get a better education. The Department should develop a plan to provide technical assistance to cities and States seeking to turn around failing schools. In addition, the Department should inform cities and States of how they can use funds from existing Department programs to support their objectives. Many programs, such as Title I, Goals 2000, the Public Charter Schools Program, and the 21st Century Schools Program, are well suited for intervening in failing schools, because they can be used to provide extra help to students during and after the school day; to support high quality professional development for teachers; and to plan and implement effective school reforms. The Department should ensure that local school districts can

easily and effectively access Federal funds from such programs and use them in an integrated fashion to support comprehensive efforts to improve low-performing schools. Where there are statutory barriers to accomplishing this purpose, such barriers should be identified so we can work with the Congress to change them.

Together, these initiatives can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools by improving teacher training, strengthening instructional practices, overhauling school management, and implementing schoolwide reforms. They can provide students who need it with extra help, during and after school hours. And they can provide students with additional choices within the public schools.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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Presidential Directive on Turning Around Low-Performing Public Schools

Draft Outline of Guide

This guide focuses on turning around low-performing schools. It will share lessons learned from successful efforts to transform schools with chronically low student performance and/or severe discipline problems to schools with concrete, dramatic, and sustained improvements in student learning. The guide will describe the challenges encountered, the pressure and support needed externally and internally to change, and what educators, parents, policy makers, and the wider community can do to enable this turnaround or transformation.

Rationale: *Why is the federal government involved in writing a guide to turning around low-performing schools? Why is such a guide important and timely?*

- Public education in the U.S. is vitally important in providing all students with the opportunity to learn in a safe school and achieve the new basics.
- The Department of Education's emphasis on successful options and alternatives for changing school climate and organization, and the way schools use resources, can help to make comprehensive school reform possible and support efforts to turn around low-performing schools.
- This guide can provide information, models, strategies, and most importantly, hope, for public schools, communities, and states that want to turn their schools around and improve student achievement.

Challenges: *What are the challenges to turning around low-performing schools?*

- Research is fairly clear in describing the features and factors that make for effective and well functioning schools, but the challenge is in identifying what it takes internally and externally to turn dysfunctional schools into high-quality, well-run schools.
- The causes for low-performing schools are complex. The task of turning low-performing schools around is formidable and takes time.
- There is an important connection of poverty (especially concentrated poverty) to low student performance and other physical, social, and psychological problems that affect student achievement and produce important challenges for educators. There are also inequities in the distribution of resources that matter (i.e., lack of high quality staff, lack of access to modern technology, and inadequate school facilities).

- A culture of failure in low-performing schools is prevalent, including low expectations of students, teacher burnout, deterioration of relationships between the school, teachers and students and between the school and the wider community, and a lack of hope and motivation among stakeholders.

Strategies: *What are some of the strategies for turning around low-performing schools that show promise? What is the process by which some low-performing schools have been able to turn around?*

- The guide will examine a continuum of school interventions, from the implementation of specific pilot programs, through comprehensive research-based strategies, to more drastic but necessary strategies including school reconstitution, that have been used to turn low-performing schools around.
- The guide will include a number of profiles of schools that have been able to turn around in a variety of settings (for example, urban and rural schools, elementary and secondary schools). School profiles will feature an examination of: key players in the process of change, where the pressure for change in turned around schools came from (top-down or bottom up, from inside the school or from the community or other external actors), challenges and resistance to school change, costs and shifts in resources to facilitate change, and evidence of concrete student achievement gains.

Recommendations: *How can schools and communities overcome challenges in order to implement strategies that will turn their schools around? What do we know about the conditions that need to be in place so that schools can make substantial and sustained changes in school performance and raise the level of academic achievement of students?*

- Certain conditions are necessary in order to turn around low-performing schools. Profiles featured in the directive will be used to illustrate what lessons can be learned from schools that have been transformed, including the importance of factors such as: leadership inside and outside the school, parent involvement and community support, establishing order and safety, teacher buy-in/support and development of a common mission, an inclusive approach (belief that all children can learn and all can contribute to the process), access to educational research and models, staff development opportunities, and support for building capacity. School size may contribute to the problem and the ability to turn around a school.
- Turning around low-performing schools isn't just about transplanting promising strategies and disseminating information about what works. Ultimately, the crucial common factor among the school profiles is not their particular intervention strategies but the common process by which each school community came to recognize and accept the need to change, began to assess student needs, and work together to transform their school with the help of various models.

November 18, 1997

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- To the extent possible, the guide will feature information on how turned around schools have been able to sustain changes and improvements over time.

Inventory of Support: *What assistance can the U.S. Department of Education and/or its technical assistance centers and research laboratories provide in helping low performing schools improve? How can states and local school districts use Department resources and assistance to support their efforts? What other resources are available to schools that want to turn around?*

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Protocol for Descriptions of Low-Performing Schools That Have Been Transformed

In response to President Clinton's directive issued on October 28, 1997, the U.S. Department of Education is developing a document on how to improve low-performing schools. Examples of schools that have been "turned-around" will be included in this report, to be presented to the President on January 26, 1998. If you have a site that might be considered as an example in this document, please read the instructions below in writing up a brief description (no more than 2 pages) of this site for consideration. If you cannot write a detailed description yourself, please provide us with at least a brief description and a contact name and number so we can follow up. **Relevant quotes are especially useful**, including from principals, teachers, parents and students.

What is a "low-performing" school? Many schools around the United States are still failing our children. As the President says, "No American child deserves to get a second-class education." Many states and cities have begun to identify those schools which are not adequately serving students and provide them with additional assistance to improve. A low-performing school would be a school that has hard evidence that student performance has been chronically and continuously low. Evidence primarily would include student test scores, but also may include such factors as high dropout or crime rates, large teacher turnover, grade retention, or other persistent problems.

What is a "transformed" school? We are looking for examples of schools that have been identified as "low-performing" and have made strides towards school improvement. Ideally, a transformed (also sometimes known as turned-around or reconstituted) school will have concrete, sustained and dramatic results showing student and/or school improvement. We are interested in schools that have achieved results without dramatically changing the nature of the student population.

In your description of the example, please address the following items:

1. Title of Site or Program

2. Overview: *Briefly* describe the school, including the size, population served (such as ethnicity and income of the students), school location (urban, suburban or rural), and the transformation that the school went through.

3. Background and Context:

-- Describe what the conditions were like before the effort to change the school began.

-- Explain what the impetus for change was, such as what the indicators of low-performance were; was there an event or crisis to prompt change?

-- How was the school identified for improvement? Was there district/city/state legislation or a court order involved, or was a community-based organization, a foundation, or an educational association involved in the identification process? Was the school identified for reconstitution?

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4. Process of Change:

- When was the process started and how long has it been going on?
- Who are the key players involved? Were there some individuals in particular who led the change? To what extent have local (including mayors), state, or federal levels of government or other external agents (such as parents, community members, businesses, researchers, assistance providers, community-based organizations, foundations, education associations, reform networks) been involved?
- What initiatives were implemented or efforts were initiated to change the school; for example, were there changes in staffing and training, instruction, school climate, special services, family and community involvement, etc.?
- Did the school put together a strategic plan for pursuing school improvement? Who was involved in the planning process (teachers, parents, students, etc.)?
- What kinds of challenges arose? Was there initial resistance to change? What specific barriers had to be handled? Was there resistance or opposition from any individuals or groups? How were these difficulties dealt with?

5. Evidence of Success:

- What kinds of evidence of success are there? How was the progress of the school assessed? How is the school holding itself accountable for improvement? Ideally this will include information on academic progress. There may also be other intermediate indicators of progress as well, such as improved attendance, promotion, and graduation rates; increased family involvement; decreased numbers of disciplinary problems; stronger partnerships with the community; college-going rates; etc.
- If the school improvement process has been going on for an extended period of time, how has the school worked to sustain the positive effort and continue to improve, especially if there has been a change in leadership?

6. Costs of Change:

- What costs were incurred in the process, beyond those associated with regular instruction or services?
- How were school or district funds reallocated to provide support for this change?
- Were any federal funds used to pay for the additional costs? Is the school using Title I or other federal funds in a different way than before? How could federal programs be more helpful in implementing school change?

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7. Site Contacts: Include a contact name and title, mailing address, phone number and fax number, Web site, and e-mail address.

Presidential Directive on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
Potential Profile Sites
(as of 11/21/97)

Most Promising Examples Submitted:

- **Ferguson Elementary School (Philadelphia, PA) -- standards-based comp. reform w/academic results
- **Bell Multicultural High School (Washington D.C.) -- standards-based reform, high school, beginning
- **Samuel Mason Elementary School (Boston, MA) -- effective schoolwide, Blue Ribbon School
- **PS 50, Clara Barton School, CSD #12 (Bronx, NY) -- effective schoolwide program, RMC
- **Middlesex Elementary School (Baltimore, MD) -- Success for All, academic results
- **Ysleta High School (Ysleta ISD, TX) -- example of districtwide effort
- **Ysleta Middle School (Ysleta ISD, TX) -- district support
- **Rusk Elementary School (TX) -- dramatic turnaround, reconstitution, highly publicized
- **Adams Elementary School (Cleburne, TX) -- good example of rural turnaround school
- **Wynnesale Academy (Corpus Christi, TX) -- exemplary magnet school, serves low-income pop. well
- **Visitation Valley Middle School (San Francisco, CA) -- reconstituted
- **Roosevelt High School (Dallas, TX) -- Joe Johnson, PSA recommend
- **Hilliard Elementary School (North Forest, TX) -- see Title I interim report, academic improvements

Other submissions:

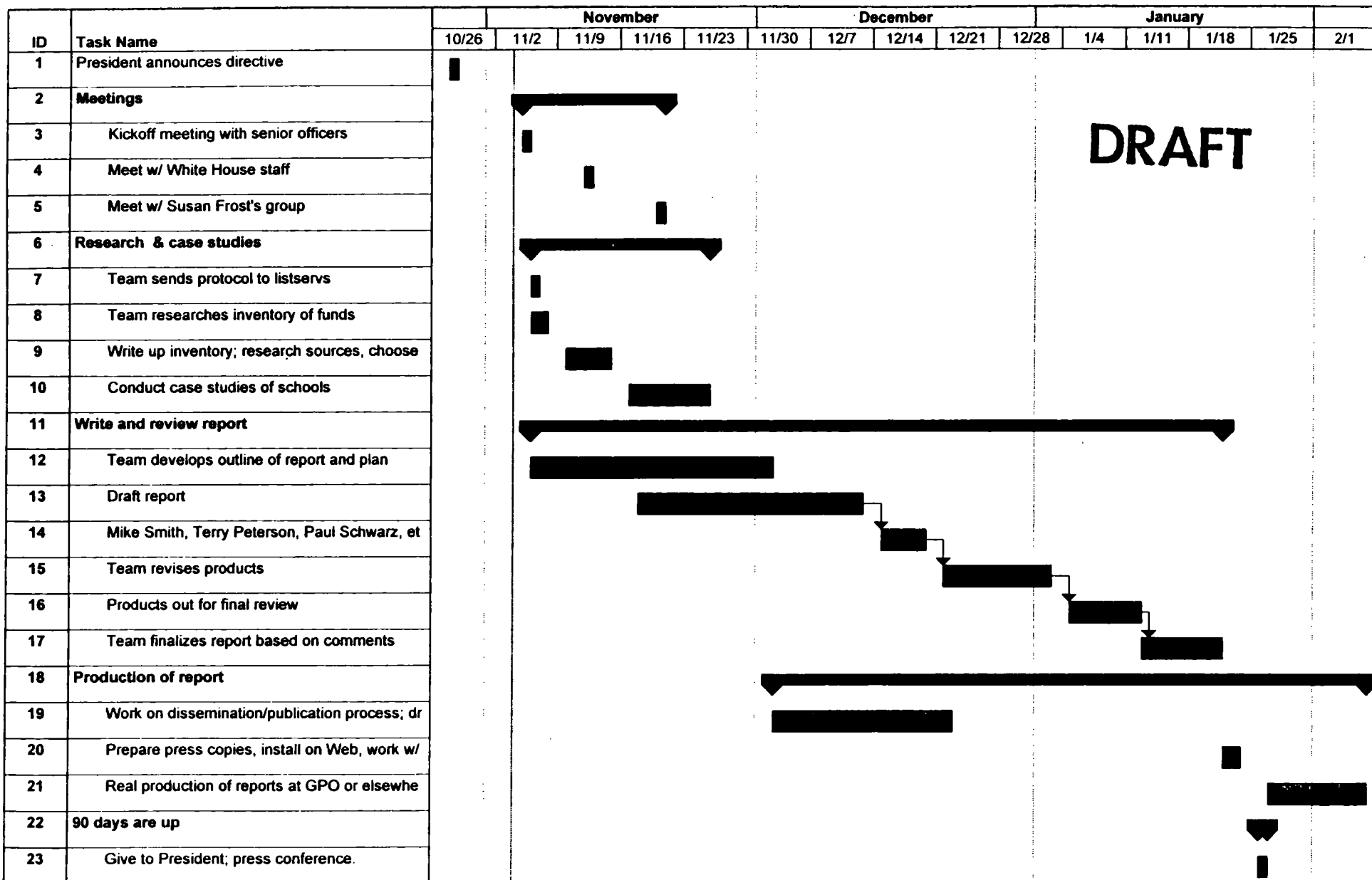
- PS 92, Harry T. Stewart School, CSD #30 (Queens, NY) -- magnet school
- Wesley Elementary School (Houston, TX) -- from AFT report
- Sussex Technical High School (DE) -- from AFT report
- Vaughn Next Century Learning Center (San Fernando, CA) -- charter school, Blue Ribbon
- Forest Lake Elementary School (Columbia, SC) -- doing well but not so much a turnaround, Blue Ribbon
- Humboldt Elementary School (Portland, Oregon) -- Success for All, just beginning
- Gov. Sanford B. Dole Intermediate School (Honolulu, HI) -- Blue Ribbon School
- Stetson Middle School (Philadelphia, PA) -- not whole school change
- Eighth Avenue Elementary School (Houston, TX) -- charter school, rated only as "acceptable" by TX
- Walker Jones Elementary School (Washington D.C.) -- OERI recommends
- Patterson High School (Baltimore, MD) -- OERI recommends
- Central East Middle School (Philadelphia, PA) -- OERI, Talent Development model
- Marshall Middle School (Houston, TX) -- OERI recommends
- Crispus Attucks Academy (Chicago, IL) -- Success for All, need info, no academic evidence provided
- Wedell Phillips Academy (Chicago, IL) -- OERI, no academic evidence provided
- Hambrick Middle School (Aldine ISD, TX) -- PSA recommends
- Reseca Middle School (Los Fresnos ISD, TX) -- PSA recommends
- Highland High School (Kern Union HSD, CA) -- PSA recommends
- Western Middle School (Louisville, KY) -- PSA recommends
- Texas High School (Texarkana, TX) -- TX rates as still "low performing"
- Canton Middle School (Baltimore, MD) -- PSA recommends
- Hines Middle School (Newport News, VA) -- PSA recommends

Hoover High School (San Diego, CA) -- PSA recommends
James P. Timilty Middle School (Roxbury, MA) -- PSA recommends
Walton High School (Bronx, NY) -- PSA recommends
Forest Park High School (College Park, GA) -- PSA recommends
East Hartford High School (East Hartford, CT) -- PSA recommends
Henry High School (Minneapolis, MN) -- PSA recommends
Pompano Beach Middle School (Pompano Beach, FL) -- PSA recommends
Thurgood Marshall Middle School (Lynn, MA) -- PSA recommends
Hueco Elementary School (TX) -- see Title I Interim Report
Woodson South (Chicago, IL) -- Jack Jennings recommends
Clark Middle (Chicago, IL) -- Jack Jennings recommends
Sylvan Park Elementary School (Van Nuys, CA) -- Success for All, met principal at Ed Trust conference
Hazelwood Elementary School (Louisville, KY) -- schoolwide project, will be featured at Title I conf.
Central Park East Secondary School -- Coalition of Essential Schools, Paul Schwarz (principal)

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- 11/17-25 Team conducts and writes up case studies of schools that have turned around.
- 11/20 Team meets with Susan Frost's Thursday afternoon group
- 12/3-15 Team drafts the report.
- 12/3-22 Team works with 1-800-USA-LEARN and Kickbush/Winters to establish dissemination process and website. Drafts Secretary's letter. Arranges graphic design, copy editing, and publication.
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- 12/22-1/5 Team revises products based on comments.
- 1/5-13 Team sends products out for final review
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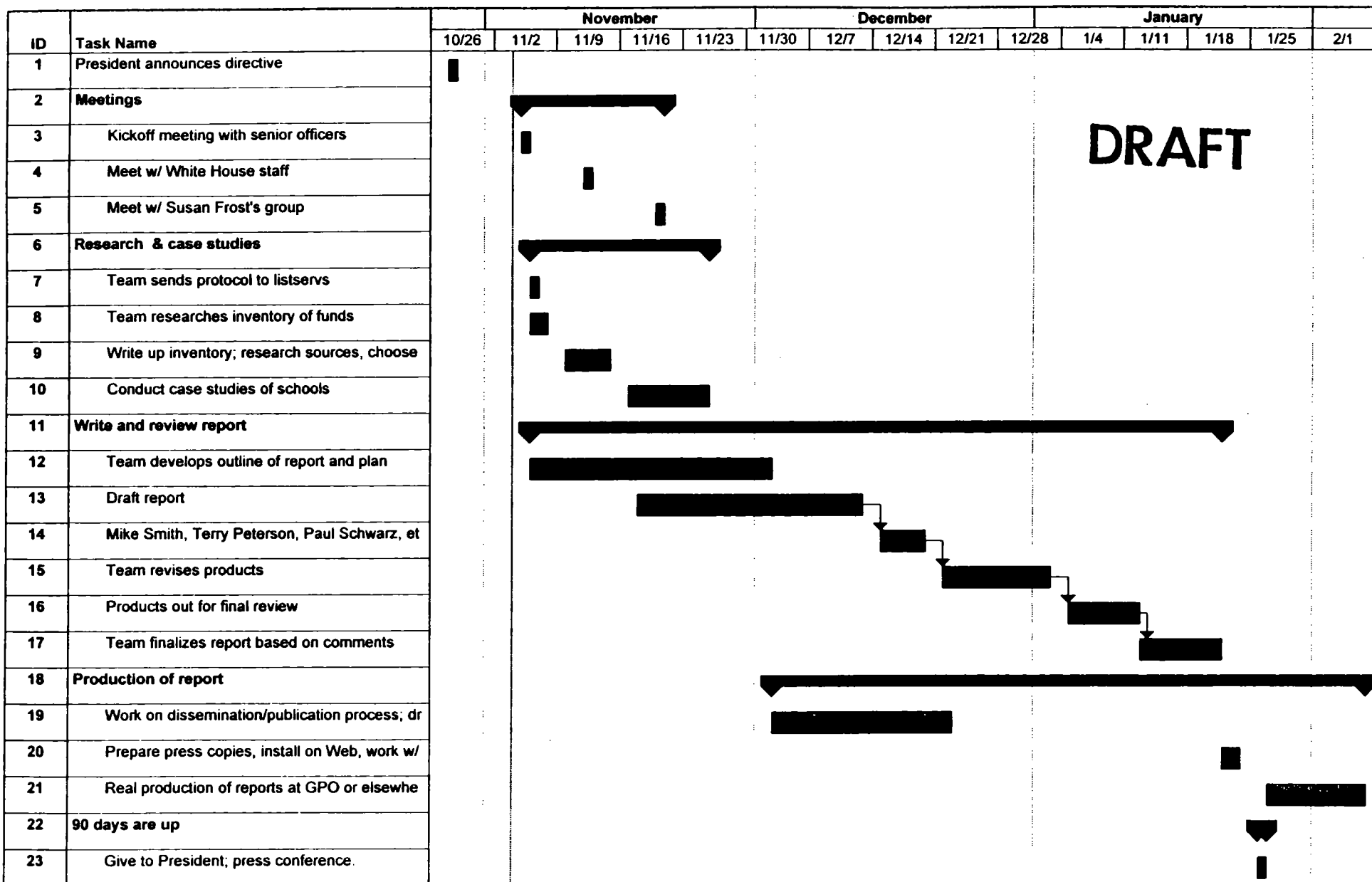
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Yet, no school improvement strategy can succeed without real accountability for results, as measured by student achievement. Excellent schools and schools that show significant improvement must be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, schools that demonstrate persistently poor academic performance -- schools that fail to make adequate progress in educating all students to high standards -- must be held accountable. No American child deserves to get a second-class education. Instead, State and local education officials must step in and redesign failing schools, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff.

A growing number of cities and States have begun to take these steps. Cities

such as Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York, and States such as Maryland and Kentucky identify low-performing schools and take steps to intervene if these schools fail to make progress. These steps often include the implementation of school improvement plans -- providing after-school academic help to students, strengthening training and assistance for school staff, creating smaller and more personal settings, such as schools-within-schools -- and, where necessary, reconstitution of the school and replacement of the school principal and other staff.

We must encourage and help more cities and States to take up the challenge of turning around low-performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to achievement. We can do this by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that Department of Education resources are most productively used for these purposes.

In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to take the following actions within 90 days:

1. Produce and Widely Disseminate Guidelines on Effective Approaches to Turning Around Low-Performing Schools. There is much of value to be shared from the experiences of cities and States that already have successfully intervened in low-performing schools; from research and development on effective school improvement practices; and from business experience in managing high-performance organizations and in turning around low-performing companies. We know of several promising models of reform, ranging from the New American Schools designs to the Success for All program. These lessons must be summarized in clear and useable forms, and made widely available to educators, parents, State and local policymakers, business leaders, and others working to improve public education.
2. Help Cities and States Use Existing Department of Education Resources to Turn Around Low-Performing Schools. First, Department of Education programs should help and encourage more cities and States to develop and implement sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low-performing schools and help students in them get a better education. The Department should develop a plan to provide technical assistance to cities and States seeking to turn around failing schools. In addition, the Department should inform cities and States of how they can use funds from existing Department programs to support their objectives. Many programs, such as Title I, Goals 2000, the Public Charter Schools Program, and the 21st Century Schools Program, are well suited for intervening in failing schools, because they can be used to provide extra help to students during and after the school day; to support high quality professional development for teachers; and to plan and implement effective school reforms. The Department should ensure that local school districts can

easily and effectively access Federal funds from such programs and use them in an integrated fashion to support comprehensive efforts to improve low-performing schools. Where there are statutory barriers to accomplishing this purpose, such barriers should be identified so we can work with the Congress to change them.

Together, these initiatives can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools by improving teacher training, strengthening instructional practices, overhauling school management, and implementing schoolwide reforms. They can provide students who need it with extra help, during and after school hours. And they can provide students with additional choices within the public schools.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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DRAFT

Protocol for Descriptions of Low-Performing Schools That Have Been Transformed

In response to President Clinton's directive issued on October 28, 1997, the U.S. Department of Education is developing a document on how to improve low-performing schools. Examples of schools that have been "turned-around" will be included in this report, to be presented to the President on January 26, 1998. If you have a site that might be considered as an example in this document, please read the instructions below in writing up a brief description (no more than 2 pages) of this site for consideration. If you cannot write a detailed description yourself, please provide us with at least a brief description and a contact name and number so we can follow up. **Relevant quotes are especially useful**, including from principals, teachers, parents and students.

What is a "low-performing" school? Many schools around the United States are still failing our children. As the President says, "No American child deserves to get a second-class education." Many states and cities have begun to identify those schools which are not adequately serving students and provide them with additional assistance to improve. A low-performing school would be a school that has hard evidence that student performance has been chronically and continuously low. Evidence primarily would include student test scores, but also may include such factors as high dropout or crime rates, large teacher turnover, grade retention, or other persistent problems.

What is a "transformed" school? We are looking for examples of schools that have been identified as "low-performing" and have made strides towards school improvement. Ideally, a transformed (also sometimes known as turned-around or reconstituted) school will have concrete, sustained and dramatic results showing student and/or school improvement. We are interested in schools that have achieved results without dramatically changing the nature of the student population.

In your description of the example, please address the following items:

1. Title of Site or Program

2. Overview: *Briefly* describe the school, including the size, population served (such as ethnicity and income of the students), school location (urban, suburban or rural), and the transformation that the school went through.

3. Background and Context:

-- Describe what the conditions were like before the effort to change the school began.

-- Explain what the impetus for change was, such as what the indicators of low-performance were; was there an event or crisis to prompt change?

-- How was the school identified for improvement? Was there district/city/state legislation or a court order involved, or was a community-based organization, a foundation, or an educational association involved in the identification process? Was the school identified for reconstitution?

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4. Process of Change:

-- When was the process started and how long has it been going on?

-- Who are the key players involved? Were there some individuals in particular who led the change? To what extent have local (including mayors), state, or federal levels of government or other external agents (such as parents, community members, businesses, researchers, assistance providers, community-based organizations, foundations, education associations, reform networks) been involved?

-- What initiatives were implemented or efforts were initiated to change the school; for example, were there changes in staffing and training, instruction, school climate, special services, family and community involvement, etc.?

-- Did the school put together a strategic plan for pursuing school improvement? Who was involved in the planning process (teachers, parents, students, etc.)?

-- What kinds of challenges arose? Was there initial resistance to change? What specific barriers had to be handled? Was there resistance or opposition from any individuals or groups? How were these difficulties dealt with?

5. Evidence of Success:

-- What kinds of evidence of success are there? How was the progress of the school assessed? How is the school holding itself accountable for improvement? Ideally this will include information on academic progress. There may also be other intermediate indicators of progress as well, such as improved attendance, promotion, and graduation rates; increased family involvement; decreased numbers of disciplinary problems; stronger partnerships with the community; college-going rates; etc.

-- If the school improvement process has been going on for an extended period of time, how has the school worked to sustain the positive effort and continue to improve, especially if there has been a change in leadership?

6. Costs of Change:

-- What costs were incurred in the process, beyond those associated with regular instruction or services?

-- How were school or district funds reallocated to provide support for this change?

-- Were any federal funds used to pay for the additional costs? Is the school using Title I or other federal funds in a different way than before? How could federal programs be more helpful in implementing school change?

DRAFT

7. Site Contacts: Include a contact name and title, mailing address, phone number and fax number, Web site, and e-mail address.

Presidential Directive on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools
Potential Profile Sites
(as of 11/21/97)

Most Promising Examples Submitted:

- **Ferguson Elementary School (Philadelphia, PA) -- standards-based comp. reform w/academic results**
- **Bell Multicultural High School (Washington D.C.) -- standards-based reform, high school, beginning**
- **Samuel Mason Elementary School (Boston, MA) -- effective schoolwide, Blue Ribbon School**
- **PS 50, Clara Barton School, CSD #12 (Bronx, NY) -- effective schoolwide program, RMC**
- **Middlesex Elementary School (Baltimore, MD) -- Success for All, academic results**
- **Ysleta High School (Ysleta ISD, TX) -- example of districtwide effort**
- **Ysleta Middle School (Ysleta ISD, TX) -- district support**
- **Rusk Elementary School (TX) -- dramatic turnaround, reconstitution, highly publicized**
- **Adams Elementary School (Cleburne, TX) -- good example of rural turnaround school**
- **Wynnesseale Academy (Corpus Christi, TX) -- exemplary magnet school, serves low-income pop. well**
- **Visitacion Valley Middle School (San Francisco, CA) -- reconstituted**
- **Roosevelt High School (Dallas, TX) -- Joe Johnson, PSA recommend**
- **Hilliard Elementary School (North Forest, TX) -- see Title I interim report, academic improvements**

Other submissions:

- PS 92, Harry T. Stewart School, CSD #30 (Queens, NY) -- magnet school
- Wesley Elementary School (Houston, TX) -- from AFT report
- Sussex Technical High School (DE) -- from AFT report
- Vaughn Next Century Learning Center (San Fernando, CA) -- charter school, Blue Ribbon
- Forest Lake Elementary School (Columbia, SC) -- doing well but not so much a turnaround, Blue Ribbon
- Humboldt Elementary School (Portland, Oregon) -- Success for All, just beginning
- Gov. Sanford B. Dole Intermediate School (Honolulu, HI) -- Blue Ribbon School
- Stetson Middle School (Philadelphia, PA) -- not whole school change
- Eighth Avenue Elementary School (Houston, TX) -- charter school, rated only as "acceptable" by TX
- Walker Jones Elementary School (Washington D.C.) -- OERI recommends
- Patterson High School (Baltimore, MD) -- OERI recommends
- Central East Middle School (Philadelphia, PA) -- OERI, Talent Development model
- Marshall Middle School (Houston, TX) -- OERI recommends
- Crispus Attucks Academy (Chicago, IL) -- Success for All, need info, no academic evidence provided
- Wedell Phillips Academy (Chicago, IL) -- OERI, no academic evidence provided
- Hambrick Middle School (Aldine ISD, TX) -- PSA recommends
- Reseca Middle School (Los Fresnos ISD, TX) -- PSA recommends
- Highland High School (Kern Union HSD, CA) -- PSA recommends
- Western Middle School (Louisville, KY) -- PSA recommends
- Texas High School (Texarkana, TX) -- TX rates as still "low performing"
- Canton Middle School (Baltimore, MD) -- PSA recommends
- Hines Middle School (Newport News, VA) -- PSA recommends

Hoover High School (San Diego, CA) -- PSA recommends
James P. Timilty Middle School (Roxbury, MA) -- PSA recommends
Walton High School (Bronx, NY) -- PSA recommends
Forest Park High School (College Park, GA) -- PSA recommends
East Hartford High School (East Hartford, CT) -- PSA recommends
Henry High School (Minneapolis, MN) -- PSA recommends
Pompano Beach Middle School (Pompano Beach, FL) -- PSA recommends
Thurgood Marshall Middle School (Lynn, MA) -- PSA recommends
Hueco Elementary School (TX) -- see Title I Interim Report
Woodson South (Chicago, IL) -- Jack Jennings recommends
Clark Middle (Chicago, IL) -- Jack Jennings recommends
Sylvan Park Elementary School (Van Nuys, CA) -- Success for All, met principal at Ed Trust conference
Hazelwood Elementary School (Louisville, KY) -- schoolwide project, will be featured at Title I conf.
Central Park East Secondary School -- Coalition of Essential Schools, Paul Schwarz (principal)

Fixing Low-Performing Schools

Schools need to be held accountable for results. If schools are unable to provide students with a world-class education that holds them to high standards, the nation will fail to achieve its educational goals. Yet many states and school districts lack the appropriate mechanisms to hold schools accountable for results. States, school districts, and communities must be able to overhaul any school that fails to provide an adequate education for its students. Reconstitution is one way to turn around low-performing schools.

What is reconstitution?

- Although the term's meaning varies, reconstitution of schools usually means the takeover (of daily operations, staffing, and decision-making) of a consistently low-performing school or district by a higher-level governing body. For example, a district might reconstitute a school or a state education agency might reconstitute an entire district office.
- For schools or districts to be reconstituted, they must first be identified as failing to meet expectations over an extended period of time. Such sites have already drafted and implemented a corrective action plan but have failed to meet its specifications.
- The threat of reconstitution may provide sufficient incentive for schools to change. After being identified as a low-performing school, Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland, hired a new principal who handpicked several new teachers to lead a planning effort. The school's improvement team developed a plan to increase student achievement by restructuring the school day and the way in which instruction is delivered. In 1995-96, the most recent school year for which data is available according to Maryland state and district officials, Patterson's attendance rate rose from 71 percent to 77 percent; more students passed the Maryland Functional Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics required for graduation; and a greater percentage of seniors graduated than in previous years.

How is reconstitution implemented?

- Ideally, intervention is based on an objective analysis of student performance and the extent to which the school is meeting state and/or locally established performance targets. If student performance remains chronically low, the school is then required to develop and implement an improvement or corrective action plan.

- While the school is fashioning its corrective action plan, the district or state is responsible for providing all necessary resources, including technical assistance and additional professional development for teachers. The district or state then continually assesses the school's progress to determine if student performance is improving.
- If the school's improvement targets are not met and the school remains low-performing or declines further, the district or state is authorized to replace some or all school staff and to require the new staff to develop a new improvement plan. In some extreme cases, the district or state may require all school staff to reapply for their positions. In some cases, the district or state can overrule any decision made by newly hired school staff.
- When the school's or district's improvement targets are consistently met over several years, then decision-making authority is returned to the school or district.
- Alternatively, if a state or district shuts down a failing school completely, parents and community members can learn about effective education programs with a documented record of success. One particular source of effective school designs is the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). NASDC design teams can help local teachers and parents plan for a new school, provide quality training to teachers, and assess whether the school is progressing as projected. Many families and students may not have to leave their own neighborhood or community in order to find good schools.

Where is reconstitution being implemented?

The Education Commission of the States reports that 23 states have policies that permit the takeover of any district whose schools are low-performing. Many districts also have policies allowing takeover of low-performing schools.¹

New Jersey

- New Jersey has taken control of three public school districts under the Academic Bankruptcy Law, including Jersey City in 1989, Patterson in 1991, and Newark in 1995. These districts failed to meet a proportion of state-set standards in student performance, curriculum development, professional development, condition of facilities, and certification of teachers. Following the districts' failure to carry out

¹Because reconstitution is defined in various ways, no data on the number of districts that allow or engage in reconstitution of schools are available.

a corrective plan, the state removed the local school board members, superintendent, and key personnel serving that superintendent, and appointed a new superintendent. In each case, the new superintendent and other SEA officials became the policy-making body for the district and created a new school board. All three districts are making progress toward meeting state standards and restoring local control.

Ohio

- In March 1995, the state assumed control of the Cleveland Public Schools after a federal judge declared the district to be in a state of crisis. The state appointed a new superintendent who is working with a team of state and local administrators to manage the district's daily operations and to develop a reform plan. The reform plan, "A Blueprint for Change," gives principals, teachers, and parents more authority to make decisions. Eight "Fast Track" schools are piloting this decentralization effort, and they will serve as models for 40 "Wave 2" schools that will implement the plan in the 1998-99 school year. Changes include extended school hours, new grading systems, tutoring in basic skills by community volunteers, site-based management, and expanded professional development.
- Cleveland has taken reconstitution one step further, reconstituting two elementary schools that had failed to meet district-mandated school performance indicators. The district also discovered significant internal strife among staff members in the two schools. It reassigned the schools' principals just before the start of the 1997-98 school year and asked all teaching staff to reapply for their positions. As a result, about two-thirds of teachers at the reconstituted schools are new to the buildings this year.

Maryland

- Maryland may identify schools eligible for reconstitution based on low or declining student attendance rates, student achievement on state assessments, and high school dropout rates. After schools are identified as low-performing, they are required to develop and submit improvement plans for state approval. If schools fail to improve, the state may reconstitute the schools. Though no schools have been reconstituted, many schools identified as reconstitution-eligible have made programmatic changes. Currently, the state has identified 52 schools as low-performing, 50 of which are located in Baltimore city.
- The Maryland legislature passed into law a November 1996 agreement between the state and the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), allowing the state to exert great influence over the operation of the school district. The legislation

settled three lawsuits filed by the state and district against each other and provides \$254 million in additional funds over five years for BCPS, starting with \$30 million for the 1997-98 school year. These funds will be used to help implement the agreement between the two agencies, including a number of district-level management changes. A new nine-member board of education, selected jointly by the mayor and the governor, oversees the process and will appoint a CEO to operate the city schools. The CEO will be authorized to appoint the chief financial and chief academic officers.

- In Prince Georges County, the district recently reconstituted six schools that the state identified as low-performing, in part to avoid possible future state reconstitution. In June 1997, all staff in the six schools were required to reapply for their positions. About one-third of the original staff remain in the buildings.

Kentucky

- As part of Kentucky's school accountability program under the Kentucky Education Reform Act, schools that do not reach academic and non-academic (attendance, retention, dropout, transition to the next level of schools or the job market) accountability targets must develop their own school improvement plan. If a school fails to improve over the next two years, the state assigns a distinguished educator to provide support and advice to the school. If the school's performance continues to decline, the state can assume control. Although the state has yet to take over a school, 88 schools were recently identified as being in decline and nine have been placed in the "crisis" category. No data are available yet on the outcomes associated with reconstitution.

San Francisco, California

- San Francisco has exercised its authority to take over individual schools. Under the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, the district places low-performing schools on a probation for one year. At the end of the year, the superintendent, two assistant superintendents, and a former principal review test scores, attendance and suspension rates, student portfolios, and the improvement plan to determine if school results are significantly improving. If there is no improvement, the school is reconstituted. All staff must reapply for jobs at their school; those who are not rehired are relocated to another school in the district. The school board hires a new principal, who then hires new staff for teaching, janitorial, and cafeteria positions. The new team must develop an improvement plan to improve student academic achievement and to raise other indicators. Since the 1993-94 school year, ten schools have been reconstituted.

Chicago, Illinois

- As a part of their effort to improve the quality of education in Chicago, administrators in the Chicago Public Schools reconstituted seven high schools between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. Additionally, at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, administrators placed 115 schools on probation. Schools on probation have a history of low-performance and risk reconstitution unless they demonstrate improvement.
- In the first round of reconstitution, the district retained two principals and hired interim principals for the remaining five schools. The new principals, with the help of district administrators, interviewed teachers and support staff in order to determine who they would rehire. On average, schools retained 63 percent of their teachers and staff. Teachers and staff who were not retained were given two years to relocate, either at a different school in the district or outside of Chicago. Reconstituted schools have two years to show improvement; various factors determine a school's success, including assessment data from district and statewide standardized tests, progress toward graduation, and delinquency rates.

Atlanta, Georgia

- As of October 1997, the Atlanta Public Schools have reconstituted two low-achieving schools, Pitts Elementary School and Walden Middle School, both of which had a history of low performance on norm-referenced standardized achievement tests. At Pitts, the district rehired only two of its 38 teachers and brought in a new principal from outside the Atlanta Public Schools to redesign the school. The newly formed staff worked closely with the Executive Director of the Atlanta Public Schools and the central office staff to realign the curriculum in order to meet Georgia's standards. The two schools have five years to demonstrate adequate improvement, which the district defines as reaching the 90th percentile on any standardized measure.

What is the evidence of success?

Although most states and districts engaged in reconstitution report that it is too early to see significant progress, there are some data pointing to the success of reconstitution in some locales. Below are some of the most promising reconstitution examples.

- In *Ohio*, since the state took control of Cleveland, the district's state proficiency scores have shown a slight upward trend. For the first time in 10 years, the district is operating without a budget deficit. Cleveland has also achieved racial balance among teachers and students in its schools. The state legislature has

passed a bill turning control over to Cleveland's mayor in November, and the state has filed a petition for unitary status with the court to free the system from court supervision.

- In *Maryland*, Furman-Templeton Elementary School in Baltimore showed improvement in test scores after being identified as a low-performing school and hiring a new principal. In 1995-96, after only one year on the list, the percentage of third-grade students with satisfactory scores on the state performance examination rose 8 percent in reading, 18 percent in science, and 7 percent in writing. Fifth-graders' mathematics scores increased by 7 percent on average.
- In *New Jersey*, available data on student achievement in Jersey City indicate student gains across the board. Passing rates for eighth-grade students in 1995-96 improved to 77 percent on the reading portions of the state's Early Warning Test (EWT), a gain of 7 percentage points over 1994-95; 77 percent on the writing assessment, a gain of 2 percentage points over the previous year; and 62 percent on the mathematics assessment, a one-year gain of 10 percentage points. Gains were also impressive for eleventh-grade students, 67 percent of whom passed the reading section of the state's High School Proficiency Test, 4 percentage points more than the previous year; 79 percent, or 10 percentage points more than the previous year, passed the writing section; and 71 percent, a 7 percentage-point gain, passed the mathematics section. Student performance data from 1996-97 have not yet been made public.
- In *California*, one school in San Francisco, Visitacion Valley Middle School, has demonstrated improvement on standardized test scores across subjects and grades. The school has not only enhanced parent involvement but also restructured itself to reflect the newly adopted curriculum.
- In *Illinois*, Dr. Al Williams, head of the office of accountability for the Chicago Public Schools, explained that staff in the reconstituted schools show increased morale and that the schools seem to be "moving in the right direction." As the schools were reconstituted during summer 1997, student performance data from these schools are not currently available.

Resources for Developing Improvement Strategies

The New American Schools Development Corporation
U.S. Department of Education Regional Laboratories and Comprehensive Assistance Centers
Education Commission of the States
Council of Chief State School Officers

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October 9, 1997

Working Document

the New, New Math in a disparaging way.

EDWARDS Is there something else down the road? Will there be New, New, New math?

ROGALIN If the cycles repeats, then we'll go back to a basics and fundamentals approach and we'll do that for five, seven years and then somebody will come up with a new idea — that's been the repeating cycle. And in my opinion, the error is when you throw the baby out with the bath water and say, "All the old stuff is no good and now we're going to do this new thing." Somewhere in the middle probably addresses the maximum number of learners in the best way.

EDWARDS All this has to do with scores, doesn't it, math scores?

ROGALIN Yes. I think the real merit

in the push against an over-application of the NCTM standards is an idea that children are not going to do well on their math scores. There's a recent study, the Third International Math and Science Study came out and suggested, the first part of the study that came out was for eighth grade — and American children scored below the average out of 41 countries in mathematics. Since that time, the fourth grade results have come out and our children do better at fourth grade. Now, there's a lot of interpretation of these results — the way we teach mathematics, the nature of our diverse society versus, say, Japan where it's a more homogenous society, but it's interesting to note that fourth graders in the U.S. did better and the eighth graders did worse. So then you start looking to

the test, what exactly was tested. One example is that eighth graders were tested in geometry. In this country, there's a focus on geometry in ninth or tenth grade. So our eighth graders didn't do so well — we didn't get to it yet! And the question is, does an eighth grader have to know this or do you have to know it by the time you're sixteen? Now, that doesn't mean we couldn't do better in the earlier grades in geometry or algebra, and in fact, there is a very strong push towards doing that and our math program does that, for instance. But it's debatable; you've got to look at the test, you've got to look at the societal issues. It's very complex.

EDWARDS Roger Rogalin is president of the school division of McGraw-Hill.■

8. USA Weekend

October 10-12, 1997

Putting students to the test

Should students have to pass math and reading exams to be promoted? Chicago's tough school chief, Paul Vallas, has rocked the once-troubled system with a bold new lesson plan: If kids don't learn, they don't pass.

By Pat Ordozensky

He gives schools a chance to raise test scores, and if they don't, he shuts them down and reopens them — minus half the faculty. He dropped the mandatory school-starting age from 7 to 5, and routed out nepotism from hiring practices. He launched a rigorous after-school tutoring program for kids who needed it.

But of all the drastic changes wrought by Paul Vallas, chief executive officer of Chicago's public schools, none sends shock waves through American education like his crusade against two little words:

Social promotion.

And no wonder. In education-ese, "social promotion" means passing students on to the next grade just for putting in classroom time, regardless of what they have or haven't learned. In Chicago, ending the decades-old practice has resulted in the following: Nearly half of all eighth-graders weren't allowed to graduate last June; 40,949 underachieving students in kindergarten through 12th grade were ordered to

attend summer school; and this fall, 23,100 students who didn't make the cut after summer school were flunked and forced to repeat a grade. Radical therapy for what school chief Vallas, a former Chicago city budget director known for his bottom-line bluntness, calls "a cancer that has eaten away at the quality of education."

"People who embrace social promotion should be sued for educational malpractice," he asserts.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of his overhaul, the high-energy Vallas has galvanized a sluggish school system. Mayor Richard Daley gave Vallas, 44, total authority over Chicago's schools two years ago, naming him the system's first-ever CEO.

While some question the money man's credentials for running the USA's third-largest school system, others see him as a hard-working Mr. Fix-It. Often, he'll dash home for dinner with his wife, Sharon, an ex-cop, and their three young boys, then head back to the office and work till 11 p.m.

"Paul Vallas has created an image in

Chicago that school means something much more than it did a few years ago," says Edward Klunk, principal at Amundsen High on the city's North Side. "Private elementary school principals are calling me to get their kids enrolled. They ignored us before."

In countless classrooms nationwide, social promotion remains what critics see as education's dirty little secret: a largely unpublicized, widely used practice that sweeps students onward even when their knowledge lags behind. When Americans decry a "crisis in education," they're talking about a complex problem that no one policy can resolve. But increasingly, social promotion is singled out as a major factor. President Clinton has urged states to demand "no more social promotions, no more free passes. If you want people to learn, learning has to mean something."

Odds are the words "social promotion" are not written in your local school policy manual. But the process is "rampant," says a new study of 85 school districts by the American Federation of Teachers, because so many schools do

have explicit policies against retaining students in the same grade, and that makes social promotion inevitable.

Examples: In Orange County, Fla. (Orlando), students may be retained just once in elementary school. Houston allows retention once in primary grades and once in middle school. New Orleans and other large districts have similar restrictions.

Those policies send "a clear message to promote socially," says Sandra Feldman, AFT president. "We oppose it. It has a bad effect on all students, not just those promoted improperly."

Former U.S. Education secretary Lamar Alexander agrees. "Passing a child from grade to grade is no favor. It's [like] sending a soldier into battle unarmed. The chances of failure are enormous."

New York University educator Diane Ravitch decries the domino effect of social promotion on school quality. Students who can't keep up eventually drop out, she says, and standards and expectations drop for all students. "The end result is that 30 percent of the kids entering college need remediation." And the ripples continue: Graduates are unprepared to compete in today's increasingly technical, highly competitive workplace.

A growing clamor for higher standards and better schools — including Clinton's call for national standardized testing of fourth- and eighth-graders — is prompting school systems across the country to toughen up:

This year, Denver sent 2,359 students to mandatory summer school because their test scores were not high enough to pass.

Almost a third of Cincinnati eighth-graders are repeating the '96-97 school year because of low scores.

In Florida, at the state's urging, most school systems have stiffened graduation standards to require a C average for a diploma.

Such groundbreaking reforms inevitably spark court tests. In Johnston County, N.C., 14 parents sued school officials who used test scores to hold students back, while in Howard County, Md., an eighth-grader's parents sued to force a school to retain their son, arguing he had not learned enough to advance.

A few years ago, Chicago's public schools were considered among the nation's worst. Now, the 425,000-student system is a laboratory for bold, controversial solutions. Today in Chicago, standards for promotion are uniform, firm and clear: In third, sixth, eighth and ninth grades, students must pass reading and math tests or repeat the same grade. Kids who don't pass must go to summer school for intensive instruction in smaller-than-usual classes. At summer's end, they're tested again; if they still don't pass, it's another year in the same grade.

The Chicago Teachers Union, often a sharp critic of school leaders, backs the policy: "There are no social promotions in life," says union head Thomas Reese.

Test scores decide the fates of not just students, but also principals, teachers, even whole schools.

Schools where scores are too low go on probation. A team of administrators is sent in to turn things around, but if a school doesn't improve fast, it is "reconstituted" — shut down and reopened as a new school, whose former staff must reapply for their jobs. Seven schools have met that fate; 30-50 percent of the faculty at those schools were not rehired.

Vallas' dramatic reforms have ignited passionate criticism. U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush, a Democrat who represents part of Chicago's South Side, dismisses Vallas as "a very shrewd used-car salesman." Rush calls the new promotion rule "Draconian" and worries that "the effect of being a bad test-taker rests more profoundly on urban and, particularly, minority students than on other students. The jury is still

out on whether this is anything other than just headline-grabbing."

Critics also say a student's fate should not rest on a single set of scores. The author of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (used in Chicago), H.B. Hoover at the University of Iowa, says, "Any judgment made with one test as the ultimate criterion is not the best thing to do." Gary Marx of the American Association of School Administrators concurs, saying it is "dangerous to limit a person's future based upon a few [test score] numbers."

Other education experts say research proves retained students do not do as well in later grades. And in Chicago, two students interviewed for this article claim they passed the tests after summer school and were admitted to high school mainly because they had extra time to take the tests — something school officials say is against policy.

So far, results of Vallas' reforms have been swift and dramatic. Last spring, in the four grades where test scores are required for promotion, 38,689 (28 percent) didn't make it. After intense summer classes in their weak subjects, 16,828 of those scored high enough to move to the next grade. The rest, except 1,021 "too-old" eighth-graders, are repeating third, sixth, eighth or ninth grade. Eighth-graders 15 or older were sent to transition centers where they get concentrated instruction, in hopes of making them academically ready for high school next fall.

Insists Vallas, borrowing a metaphor from his friend Jesse Jackson, "You do not lower the basketball hoop to 9 1/2 feet" to make slam-dunking simpler. So why, he asks, "should we lower the academic hoop? ... All these kids can learn. If you raise the bar, they'll jump higher. That's the way it is."

Pat Ordozensky, a free-lance writer based in Sarasota, Fla., specializes in education issues. Associate Editor Patricia Edmonds contributed to this story. ■

RAISING STANDARDS AND STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY: KEYS TO IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 28, 1997

President Clinton visited Oscar Mayer Elementary School in Chicago, where he met with parents, students and teachers to learn firsthand of Chicago's school reform efforts. The President called for more cities and states to raise standards and work aggressively to turn around failing schools, as Chicago has done.

President Clinton Praises Chicago School Reforms. More than a decade ago, the Chicago school system was singled out for having the schools that were "the worst in America." Today, noting significant increases in test scores over the past two years, President Clinton said that Chicago is now a school system on the move. Since legislation placed the school system under the control of Mayor Daley, Chicago has installed a new management team that placed the school system on sound financial footing, invested in needed school renovations and repairs, and adopted tough discipline policies. The school system has raised academic standards and implemented new programs to help students reach them. The Chicago Public Schools have strengthened the curriculum, expanded participation in preschool programs and kindergarten, provided training to help parents succeed as their children's first teachers, and implemented after-school programs to expand learning time and provide extra help to students who need it.

A Model of Accountability: Ending Social Promotions and Intervening in Failing Schools.

President Clinton praised Chicago's tough accountability system, which holds both students and educators accountable for learning.

Chicago has ended social promotions, requiring instead that students meet academic standards at grades 3, 6, 8, and 9 before moving to the next grade level. Students who need it are given extra help to meet the standards, through extended day programs that keep schools open longer each day and provide tutoring, enrichment, and other kinds of academic help. Students who don't pass the tests at these key grade levels are required to attend summer school. Nearly half of those who attend summer school go on to meet the standards and are promoted to the next grade.

Chicago also holds schools to tough accountability standards, and takes decisive action when schools are failing. Schools with fewer than 15% of the students meeting national norms in reading are placed on probation. These schools are reviewed by a team of outside experts, which helps develop a corrective action plan that the school must follow. Schools on probation receive additional assistance and their performance is closely monitored. If the test scores fail to improve or if the school fails to implement the corrective action plan, the Chicago Public Schools can take additional steps, including requiring the principal and teaching staff to recompetete for their positions, removing the principal, or, if necessary, closing the school.

Federal Support for States and Districts Working to Turn Around Failing Schools. President Clinton challenged other cities and states to follow Chicago's lead by taking decisive steps to turn around schools with persistently low performance. The President directed the U.S. Department of Education to produce and disseminate guidelines on effective approaches to turning around failing schools, based on the experience of Chicago and other cities such as San Francisco, New York and Philadelphia, states such as Maryland and Kentucky, as well as on lessons learned from business and education research. He also directed the Education Department to develop a plan for helping local school districts use existing federal education programs and resources, such as Title I, the Charter Schools Program, America Reads, and the 21st Century Schools program, to improve or close down failing schools, and to provide the students from those schools with the extra help they need to catch up academically.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 28, 1997

October 28, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUBJECT: Turning Around Low-Performing Public Schools

Since taking office in 1993, and with your strong leadership, my Administration has pursued a comprehensive effort to strengthen public schools. We have worked to raise academic standards, promote accountability, and provide greater competition and choice within the public schools, including support for a dramatic increase in charter schools. Moreover, we have worked to make the investments necessary to improve teaching and learning in classrooms across America, through efforts to keep our schools safe and free of drugs; to provide students who need it extra help to master the basics; to increase parental and community involvement; to recruit, prepare, and provide continuing training to teachers and reward excellence in teaching; and to make sure every school has access to and can effectively use 21st century technology.

This strategy is starting to produce results. We know that all students can learn to high standards, and that every school can succeed if it has clear instructional goals and high expectations for all of its students; if it creates a safe, disciplined and orderly environment for learning; helps parents be involved in their children's education; and uses proven instructional practices. All schools must be given the resources, tools, and flexibility to help every student reach high standards.

Yet, no school improvement strategy can succeed without real accountability for results, as measured by student achievement. Excellent schools and schools that show significant improvement must be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, schools that demonstrate persistently poor academic performance -- schools that fail to make adequate progress in educating all students to high standards -- must be held accountable. No American child deserves to get a second-class education. Instead, State and local education officials must step in and redesign failing schools, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff.

A growing number of cities and States have begun to take these steps. Cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York, and States such as Maryland and Kentucky identify low-performing schools and take steps to intervene if these schools fail to make progress. These steps often include the implementation of school improvement plans -- providing after-school academic help to students, strengthening training and assistance for school staff, creating smaller and more personal settings, such as schools-within-schools -- and, where necessary, reconstitution of the school and replacement of the school principal and other staff.

We must encourage and help more cities and States to take up the challenge of turning around low-performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to achievement. We can do this by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that Department of Education resources are most productively used for these purposes.

In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to take the following actions within 90 days:

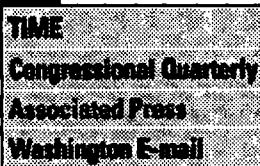
1. Produce and Widely Disseminate Guidelines on Effective Approaches to Turning Around Low-Performing Schools. There is much of value to be shared from the experiences of cities and States that already have successfully intervened in low-performing schools; from research and development on effective school improvement practices; and from business experience in managing high-performance organizations and in turning around low-performing companies. We know of several promising models of reform, ranging from the New American Schools designs to the Success for All program. These lessons must be summarized in clear and useable forms, and made widely available to educators, parents, State and local policymakers, business leaders, and others working to improve public education.

2. Help Cities and States Use Existing Department of Education Resources to Turn Around Low-Performing Schools. First, Department of Education programs should help and encourage more cities and States to develop and implement sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low-performing schools and help students in them get a better education. The Department should develop a plan to provide technical assistance to cities and States seeking to turn around failing schools. In addition, the Department should inform cities and States of how they can use funds from existing Department programs to support their objectives. Many programs, such as Title I, Goals 2000, the Public Charter Schools Program, and the 21st Century Schools Program, are well suited for intervening in failing schools, because they can be used to provide extra help to students during and after the school day; to support high quality professional development for teachers; and to plan and implement effective school reforms. The Department should ensure that local school districts can easily and effectively access Federal funds from such programs and use them in an integrated fashion to support comprehensive efforts to improve low-performing schools. Where there are statutory barriers to accomplishing this purpose, such barriers should be identified so we can work with the Congress to change them.

Together, these initiatives can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools by improving teacher training, strengthening instructional practices, overhauling school management, and implementing schoolwide reforms. They can provide students who need it with extra help, during and after school hours. And they can provide students with additional choices within the public schools.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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Clinton Seeks Education Guidelines

By **SONYA ROSS**
Associated Press Writer

CHICAGO (AP) President Clinton sought anew Tuesday to build support for national testing standards, urging more school districts to promote children on the basis of academics rather than for social reasons.

In a speech at Oscar Mayer Elementary School, the president said Chicago has been able to turn failing schools around in part because of its decision to stop advancing children from grade to grade based on their social development.

"People used to say that asking a child to repeat a grade was too high a price to pay for learning because of the damage to self-esteem," Clinton said. "We are not punishing children by making sure they know what they need to know."

He urged critics to consider the consequences of pushing children through school without adequately measuring skills.

"Think about the thousands of Americans who are sitting in GED (high school equivalency) classes today, struggling in literacy programs, standing in unemployment lines, who can tell you there is nothing more damaging to self-esteem than wanting a job and not being able to get one," Clinton said.

"If we adults send our children the right messages now their self-esteem will not be harmed by an expression of love and hope for their future that prevents that sort of problem for them later on."

Speaking in Oscar Mayer Elementary School's gymnasium to an audience mostly of adults, Clinton joked about the school's name, placing a miniature plastic car in the shape of a hot dog on the podium. The hot dog maker had a factory near the school when was built in the 1950s and donated money to help construct it.

Clinton praised reforms begun by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, who took control of the school system two years ago. Daley abolished the practice of promoting children for social reasons and required that students meet academic standards at certain grade levels.

"What is working in Chicago must blow like a wind of change into every city and every school in America," Clinton said. "Ending social promotion does not put children down. It gives us a chance to lift all children up. All of our children can succeed, and they deserve a chance to do it even, if all else fails, repeating a grade."

Clinton announced that he has directed the Education Department to distribute guidelines on what is working in other cities, including San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York.

He said the department also would help local districts get better access to existing federal programs and resources, such as charter schools or his "America Reads" volunteer tutoring program, "to transform schools that are not performing into world-class learning centers."

The president is at odds with Congress over what will go into the fiscal 1998 spending bill covering Education Department programs.

Clinton is advocating voluntary national tests for reading and math, and a program that allows college work-study students to tutor children in reading. Republicans in Congress have rejected the tutoring program and have approved bills that would allow using federal spending or tax breaks to pay for school vouchers.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, also in Chicago, delivered a strong defense of national testing standards, calling them "benchmarks of excellence for our children."

"We have to set high standards that every school district can measure itself against," she said in a speech to the College Board, a nonprofit organization that promotes higher education.

Clinton was in Chicago for his wife's 50th birthday celebrations. Because Tuesday's speech was considered part of his presidential duties, the government paid for the trip.

(28 Oct 1997 17:18 EST)

[Back to Headlines](#)

To Mike in Chicago

RAISING STANDARDS AND STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY: KEYS TO IMPROVING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DRAFT--October 28, 1997

President Clinton visited Oscar Mayer Elementary School in Chicago, where he met with parents, students and teachers to learn firsthand of Chicago's school reform efforts. The President called for more cities and states to ~~take advantage of research and experience on effective school reform, and to~~ work aggressively to turn around failing schools, as Chicago has done. *raise standards and*

President Clinton Praises Chicago School Reforms. More than a decade ago, the Chicago school system was singled out for having the schools that were "the worst in America". Today, noting significant increases in test scores over the past two years, President Clinton said that Chicago is now a school system on the move. Since legislation placed the school system under the control of Mayor Daley, Chicago has installed a new management team that placed the school system on sound financial footing, invested in needed school renovations and repairs, and adopted tough discipline policies. The school system has raised academic standards and implemented new programs to help students reach them. The Chicago Public Schools have strengthened the curriculum, expanded participation in preschool programs and kindergarten, provided training to help parents succeed as their child's first teacher, and implemented after-school programs to expand learning time and provide extra help to students who need it. *children's*

A Model of Accountability: Ending Social Promotions and Intervening in Failing Schools. President Clinton praised Chicago's tough accountability system, which holds both students and educators accountable for learning.

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Chicago also holds schools to tough accountability standards, and takes decisive action where schools are failing. Schools with fewer than 15% of the students meeting national norms in reading are placed on probation. These schools are reviewed by an external team, which helps develop a corrective action plan that the school must follow. Schools on probation receive additional assistance and their performance is closely monitored. If the test scores fail to improve or if the school fails to implement the corrective action plan, the Chicago Public Schools can take additional steps, including requiring the principal and teaching staff to re compete for their positions, removing the principal, or, if necessary, closing the school. *of outside experts,*

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Medicare, expose patients to higher costs and create new opportunities for billing fraud.

"The bill would allow doctors to charge much more than the Medicare fee schedule," said Representative Pete Stark, Democrat of California. "It's pure greed wrapped in the flag of freedom."

"We like to think of contracts between equals, negotiated fairly," Mr. Stark said. "But there is no equality, no fairness, in a contract with a doctor who holds your life in his

Federal spending on Medicare has been growing an average of 10 percent a year for a decade. As Congress tries to rein in costs, some doctors, especially surgeons, expect to see their Medicare fees decline in the next few years.

In view of such cutbacks, the A.M.A. says, doctors are "being forced to restrict the number of Medicare beneficiaries they take or to scale back services to these patients."

Clinton Moves to Help Improve Schools That Perform Poorly

By JOHN M. BRODER

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27 — President Clinton will order the Department of Education to help cities and states find ways to deal with failing schools, using existing programs to improve them or, as a last resort, shutting them down, Administration officials said today.

White House aides said Mr. Clinton planned to announce the edict on Tuesday at a school in Chicago, which has taken tough measures against schools that fail to meet the city's academic standards.

The President will also highlight Chicago's policy against social promotions, in which students are advanced from one grade level to the next without regard to whether they have mastered class material. The city is holding back as many as a third of its ninth graders because they cannot meet standards for advancing to high school.

Mr. Clinton's words and actions come against a backdrop of a battle with Congress over his effort to set nationwide standards for math and reading performance. The President is threatening to veto the appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education unless it provides financing of his proposal for voluntary testing of fourth and eighth graders as a way of identifying underperforming school districts.

The directive to the Department of Education will give officials there 90 days to draw up voluntary guidelines that assist communities in identifying substandard schools and recommending steps to improve them.

"We have to get more serious

about school accountability," said a White House education policy adviser who insisted on anonymity. "None of the things we're trying to do at the Federal level will work if we don't hold schools accountable for results."

The Administration is committing no new money to the failing-schools initiative. Nor does the Federal Government have the power to interfere in a local school district's decisions on personnel, curriculum or facilities.

But a draft of the directive says the Department of Education will use existing resources to "help and encourage more states and cities to develop sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low-performing schools and help students in them get a better education."

It notes that current Federal programs can be used to pay for tutoring, after-school programs, summer instruction and supplemental teacher training.

"Together, these initiatives can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools," the draft directive says.

The Presidential order draws on Chicago as a model. The city's school system, now under the authority of a chief executive appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, intervenes forcefully when it identifies a low-achieving school.

The intermediate steps range from putting a school on probation to replacing the principal. If those measures fail to improve a school's performance, the city has the authority to close it down and send students to other schools.

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and additional background material

Terry P.

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Draft
10/25

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Since taking office in 1993, and with your strong leadership, my Administration has pursued a comprehensive effort to strengthen public schools. We have worked to raise academic standards, promote accountability, and provide greater competition and choice within the public schools, especially by supporting a dramatic increase in charter schools. And we have worked to make the investments necessary to improve teaching and learning in ~~every~~ ^{improving literacy} classrooms in America, through efforts to keep our schools safe and free of drugs; provide students who need it the extra help to master the basics; increase parental and community involvement in our schools; recruit, prepare, and provide continuing training to teachers and to reward excellence in teaching; and, to make sure every school has access to and can effectively use 21st century technology.

This strategy ^{is producing} will produce results. We know for certain that all students can learn to high ^{disrupted} standards, and that every school can succeed if it has clear instructional goals and high expectations for all of its students, if it creates a safe and orderly environment for learning, helps parents be involved in their child's education, and uses proven instructional practices. All schools must be given the resources, the tools, and the flexibility to help every student reach high standards.

Yet no school improvement strategy can work without real accountability for results, as measured by student achievement. Excellent schools and schools that show significant improvement must be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, schools that demonstrate persistently poor academic performance--schools which fail to make adequate progress in educating all students to high standards--must not be ignored. ~~Instead, local and state education officials must step in and redesign failing schools, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff.~~ ^{get a second class education because we did not quickly enough to fix}

A growing number of (states and) cities have begun to take these steps. Cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York, and states such as Maryland and Kentucky identify low performing schools and take steps to intervene if the schools fail to make progress. These steps often include the implementation of school improvement or corrective action plans, providing after-school academic help to students, training and assistance for school staff, creating smaller and more personal settings, such as schools-within-schools, and reconstitution of the school and replacement of the school principal and other staff. ^{No American child deserves to fail. Their failing school.}

We ^{can} must encourage and help more cities (and states?) take up the challenge of turning around low performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to meeting high standards, by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that federal education resources are most productively used for these purposes. ^{as a last resort The.}

In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to:

students can get extra help after school.

New initiatives under consideration in Congress can also provide important help. The Balanced Budget Agreement I reached with Congressional leaders last summer commits the

OVER

Fixing Low-Performing Schools

Schools need to be held accountable for results. If schools are unable to provide students with a world-class education that holds them to high standards, the nation will fail to achieve its educational goals. Yet many states and school districts lack the appropriate mechanisms to hold schools accountable for results. States, school districts, and communities must be able to overhaul any school that fails to provide an adequate education for its students. Reconstitution is one way to turn around low-performing schools.

What is reconstitution?

- Although the term's meaning varies, reconstitution of schools usually means the takeover (of daily operations, staffing, and decision-making) of a consistently low-performing school or district by a higher-level governing body. For example, a district might reconstitute a school or a state education agency might reconstitute an entire district office.
- For schools or districts to be reconstituted, they must first be identified as failing to meet expectations over an extended period of time. Such sites have already drafted and implemented a corrective action plan but have failed to meet its specifications.
- The threat of reconstitution may provide sufficient incentive for schools to change. After being identified as a low-performing school, Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland, hired a new principal who handpicked several new teachers to lead a planning effort. The school's improvement team developed a plan to increase student achievement by restructuring the school day and the way in which instruction is delivered. In 1995-96, the most recent school year for which data is available according to Maryland state and district officials, Patterson's attendance rate rose from 71 percent to 77 percent; more students passed the Maryland Functional Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics required for graduation; and a greater percentage of seniors graduated than in previous years.

How is reconstitution implemented?

- Ideally, intervention is based on an objective analysis of student performance and the extent to which the school is meeting state and/or locally established performance targets. If student performance remains chronically low, the school is then required to develop and implement an improvement or corrective action plan.
- While the school is fashioning its corrective action plan, the district or state is responsible for providing all necessary resources, including technical assistance and additional professional development for teachers. The district or state then

continually assesses the school's progress to determine if student performance is improving.

- If the school's improvement targets are not met and the school remains low-performing or declines further, the district or state is authorized to replace some or all school staff and to require the new staff to develop a new improvement plan. In some extreme cases, the district or state may require all school staff to reapply for their positions. In some cases, the district or state can overrule any decision made by newly hired school staff.
- When the school's or district's improvement targets are consistently met over several years, then decision-making authority is returned to the school or district.
- Alternatively, if a state or district shuts down a failing school completely, parents and community members can learn about effective education programs with a documented record of success. One particular source of effective school designs is the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). NASDC design teams can help local teachers and parents plan for a new school, provide quality training to teachers, and assess whether the school is progressing as projected. Many families and students may not have to leave their own neighborhood or community in order to find good schools.

Where is reconstitution being implemented?

The Education Commission of the States reports that 23 states have policies that permit the takeover of any district whose schools are low-performing. Many districts also have policies allowing takeover of low-performing schools.¹

New Jersey

- New Jersey has taken control of three public school districts under the Academic Bankruptcy Law, including Jersey City in 1989, Patterson in 1991, and Newark in 1995. These districts failed to meet a proportion of state-set standards in student performance, curriculum development, professional development, condition of facilities, and certification of teachers. Following the districts' failure to carry out a corrective plan, the state removed the local school board members, superintendent, and key personnel serving that superintendent, and appointed a new superintendent. In each case, the new superintendent and other SEA officials became the policy-making body for the district and created a new school board. All three districts are making progress toward meeting state standards and restoring local control.

Ohio

- In March 1995, the state assumed control of the Cleveland Public Schools after a

federal judge declared the district to be in a state of crisis. The state appointed a new superintendent who is working with a team of state and local administrators to manage the district's daily operations and to develop a reform plan. The reform plan, "A Blueprint for Change," gives principals, teachers, and parents more authority to make decisions. Eight "Fast Track" schools are piloting this decentralization effort, and they will serve as models for 40 "Wave 2" schools that will implement the plan in the 1998-99 school year. Changes include extended school hours, new grading systems, tutoring in basic skills by community volunteers, site-based management, and expanded professional development.

Cleveland has taken reconstitution one step further, reconstituting two elementary schools that had failed to meet district-mandated school performance indicators. The district also discovered significant internal strife among staff members in the two schools. It reassigned the schools' principals just before the start of the 1997-98 school year and asked all teaching staff to reapply for their positions. As a result, about two-thirds of teachers at the reconstituted schools are new to the buildings this year.

Maryland

- Maryland may identify schools eligible for reconstitution based on low or declining student attendance rates, student achievement on state assessments, and high school dropout rates. After schools are identified as low-performing, they are required to develop and submit improvement plans for state approval. If schools fail to improve, the state may reconstitute the schools. Though no schools have been reconstituted, many schools identified as reconstitution-eligible have made programmatic changes. Currently, the state has identified 52 schools as low-performing, 50 of which are located in Baltimore city.

The Maryland legislature passed into law a November 1996 agreement between the state and the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), allowing the state to exert great influence over the operation of the school district. The legislation settled three lawsuits filed by the state and district against each other and provides \$254 million in additional funds over five years for BCPS, starting with \$30 million for the 1997-98 school year. These funds will be used to help implement the agreement between the two agencies, including a number of district-level management changes. A new nine-member board of education, selected jointly by the mayor and the governor, oversees the process and will appoint a CEO to operate the city schools. The CEO will be authorized to appoint the chief financial and chief academic officers.

• In Prince Georges County, the district recently reconstituted six schools that the state identified as low-performing, in part to avoid possible future state reconstitution. In June 1997, all staff in the six schools were required to reapply for their positions. About one-third of the original staff remain in the buildings.

Kentucky

- As part of Kentucky's school accountability program under the Kentucky

Education Reform Act, schools that do not reach academic and non-academic (attendance, retention, dropout, transition to the next level of schools or the job market) accountability targets must develop their own school improvement plan. If a school fails to improve over the next two years, the state assigns a distinguished educator to provide support and advice to the school. If the school's performance continues to decline, the state can assume control. Although the state has yet to take over a school, 88 schools were recently identified as being in decline and nine have been placed in the "crisis" category. No data are available yet on the outcomes associated with reconstitution.

San Francisco, California

- San Francisco has exercised its authority to take over individual schools. Under the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, the district places low-performing schools on a probation for one year. At the end of the year, the superintendent, two assistant superintendents, and a former principal review test scores, attendance and suspension rates, student portfolios, and the improvement plan to determine if school results are significantly improving. If there is no improvement, the school is reconstituted. All staff must reapply for jobs at their school; those who are not rehired are relocated to another school in the district. The school board hires a new principal, who then hires new staff for teaching, janitorial, and cafeteria positions. The new team must develop an improvement plan to improve student academic achievement and to raise other indicators. Since the 1993-94 school year, ten schools have been reconstituted.

Chicago, Illinois

- As a part of their effort to improve the quality of education in Chicago, administrators in the Chicago Public Schools reconstituted seven high schools between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. Additionally, at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, administrators placed 115 schools on probation. Schools on probation have a history of low-performance and risk reconstitution unless they demonstrate improvement.
- In the first round of reconstitution, the district retained two principals and hired interim principals for the remaining five schools. The new principals, with the help of district administrators, interviewed teachers and support staff in order to determine who they would rehire. On average, schools retained 63 percent of their teachers and staff. Teachers and staff who were not retained were given two years to relocate, either at a different school in the district or outside of Chicago. Reconstituted schools have two years to show improvement; various factors determine a school's success, including assessment data from district and statewide standardized tests, progress toward graduation, and delinquency rates.

Atlanta, Georgia

- As of October 1997, the Atlanta Public Schools have reconstituted two low-achieving schools, Pitts Elementary School and Walden Middle School, both of which had a history of low performance on norm-referenced standardized achievement tests. At Pitts, the district rehired only two of its 38 teachers and brought in a new principal from outside the Atlanta Public Schools to redesign the school. The newly formed staff worked closely with the Executive Director of the Atlanta Public Schools and the central office staff to realign the curriculum in order to meet Georgia's standards. The two schools have five years to demonstrate adequate improvement, which the district defines as reaching the 90th percentile on any standardized measure.

What is the evidence of success?

Although most states and districts engaged in reconstitution report that it is too early to see significant progress, there are some data pointing to the success of reconstitution in some locales. Below are some of the most promising reconstitution examples.

- In *Ohio*, since the state took control of Cleveland, the district's state proficiency scores have shown a slight upward trend. For the first time in 10 years, the district is operating without a budget deficit. Cleveland has also achieved racial balance among teachers and students in its schools. The state legislature has passed a bill turning control over to Cleveland's mayor in November, and the state has filed a petition for unitary status with the court to free the system from court supervision.
- In *Maryland*, Furman-Templeton Elementary School in Baltimore showed improvement in test scores after being identified as a low-performing school and hiring a new principal. In 1995-96, after only one year on the list, the percentage of third-grade students with satisfactory scores on the state performance examination rose 8 percent in reading, 18 percent in science, and 7 percent in writing. Fifth-graders' mathematics scores increased by 7 percent on average.
- In *New Jersey*, available data on student achievement in Jersey City indicate student gains across the board. Passing rates for eighth-grade students in 1995-96 improved to 77 percent on the reading portions of the state's Early Warning Test (EWT), a gain of 7 percentage points over 1994-95; 77 percent on the writing assessment, a gain of 2 percentage points over the previous year; and 62 percent on the mathematics assessment, a one-year gain of 10 percentage points. Gains were also impressive for eleventh-grade students, 67 percent of whom passed the reading section of the state's High School Proficiency Test, 4 percentage points more than the previous year; 79 percent, or 10 percentage points more than the previous year, passed the writing section; and 71 percent, a 7 percentage-point gain, passed the mathematics section. Student performance data from 1996-97 have not yet been made public.

- In *California*, one school in San Francisco, Visitacion Valley Middle School, has demonstrated improvement on standardized test scores across subjects and grades. The school has not only enhanced parent involvement but also restructured itself to reflect the newly adopted curriculum.
- In *Illinois*, Dr. Al Williams, head of the office of accountability for the Chicago Public Schools, explained that staff in the reconstituted schools show increased morale and that the schools seem to be "moving in the right direction." As the schools were reconstituted during summer 1997, student performance data from these schools are not currently available.

Resources for Developing Improvement Strategies

The New American Schools Development Corporation
U.S. Department of Education Regional Laboratories and Comprehensive Assistance Centers
Education Commission of the States
Council of Chief State School Officers

Author: Judith Johnson at WDCJ01
Date: 10/27/97 5:45 PM
Priority: Normal
TO: Sarah Lichtman at WDCB02
CC: Catherine Jovicich at WDCJ03
CC: Jackie C. Jackson at WDCJ03
CC: Gerald N. Tirozzi
CC: Sarah Lisenby at WDCJ02
Subject: Reaction to White House Directive

----- Message Contents -----

We have gone over the draft White House directive and have a few comments.

1. We are unclear about the scope of the first directive. We agree with the idea of widely disseminating effective practices. But does the White House mean effective models for school change, or broader district intervention policies? (e.g. Does the White House want guidance on effective strategies for reconstituting schools.)

2. The second item on the directive makes a lot of sense to us. It confirms for us much of our work that is currently underway and this could support our activities.

3. A few editorial notes: In the second sentence indicate that our programs "provide greater competition and choice within the public schools through charter schools and magnet schools." Delete the phrase "especially by supporting a dramatic increase in charter schools."

In the first paragraph, balance the emphasis on teachers with a comparable emphasis on school instructional leadership.

In the fifth paragraph, break up the first sentence -- period after standards. Add "We can do this by making widely available information..."

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment.

- Judith Johnson, Jackie Jackson and Catherine Jovicich

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUMMER BRIDGE

**HELPING CHICAGO'S PUBLIC
SCHOOL STUDENTS BRIDGE THE GAP**

Introduction

During the past two years, the Chicago Public Schools has brought forth a number of initiatives to transform the school system. Financial stability has been restored, capital improvements are underway, and the *Children First* Education Plan has addressed a wide variety of educational problems. The increase in student achievement scores throughout the Chicago Public Schools during the 1996-97 school year shows that these efforts are making a difference. A fundamental driver of performance, the new CPS promotion policy is one of the most important aspects of Chicago school reform.

New Promotion Policy

The new promotion policy is designed to focus the resources of the system on performance standards and student achievement, and to add value to a Chicago Public Schools diploma. The new policy establishes new standards of promotion in grades three, six, and eight in the elementary schools and ends the practice of social promotion. As a result, students are better prepared for success at the high school level. The policy for high schools requires students to achieve minimum scores on tests of achievement, as well as earn traditional units of credit. Decisions to promote or retain elementary students are based on their successful completion of the curriculum, their attendance, and their scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS).

The Summer Bridge Program

An Overview

Several prominent features of the Summer Bridge are:

- A standard curriculum, with the same high-quality instructional materials used in every school
- Common daily lesson plans based on the instructional materials, emphasizing skills development and test-taking preparation
- Instruction at grade level
- Small class size
- Teacher training on lesson plans and instructional materials
- Regular monitoring of classrooms to ensure adherence to the lesson plans

At the conclusion of the Summer Bridge, students are re-tested. Those who achieve the minimum grade-equivalent scores on the ITBS in reading and mathematics are promoted. Those who do not are given additional support and must repeat the grade level.

Impact of the Summer Bridge on Student Achievement

After only six weeks of summer instruction (seven for ninth-graders), students made significant improvements in their ITBS grade-equivalent scores. Grade-equivalent scores show student progress in terms of grade level and months. For example, 6.8 describes a score that is the national average for students taking the test in the eighth month of 6TH grade. The tables below reflect ITBS grade-equivalent scores in the 1997 Summer Bridge.

ITBS READING SCORES

	BEFORE BRIDGE	AFTER BRIDGE	AVERAGE GAIN	PROGRESS IN MONTHS
3 RD GRADE	2.03	2.47	0.44	4-5
6 TH GRADE	4.41	5.11	0.70	7-8
8 TH GRADE	5.88	6.87	0.99	8-10
9 TH GRADE	6.32	7.04	0.78	7-8

ITBS MATH SCORES

	BEFORE BRIDGE	AFTER BRIDGE	AVERAGE GAIN	PROGRESS IN MONTHS
3 RD GRADE	2.29	2.98 ✖	0.68	6-7
6 TH GRADE	4.58	5.20	0.62	6-7
8 TH GRADE	6.25	7.04	0.78	7-8
9 TH GRADE	6.69	8.03	1.34	13-14

After the Bridge

The final test results for the 1996-97 school year show that the vast majority of Chicago Public Schools students have demonstrated higher achievement. Over 80% of all students have met promotion criteria. The total represents a combination of the percentage of students who had met the promotion criteria as of June along with the numbers of those who achieved required minimum scores on the ITBS during the Summer Bridge. The charts on the following pages illustrate the number of students meeting promotion criteria before and after the Summer Bridge.

Chicago Public Schools students have demonstrated academic improvement for the second year in a row. This improvement is largely attributable to high standards, high expectations, more accountability, and a structured curriculum.

Promotion Summary - 1996-97 School Year

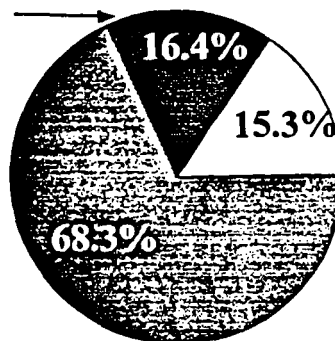
Grades 3 and 6

3rd Grade

	<u># of Students</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Total Enrollment - June 1997	33,336	100%
Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997	22,767	68.3%
Students meeting promotion criteria in August, 1997, after attending the Summer Bridge	4,519	13.6%
Students meeting promotion criteria as a result of the Waiver process	933	2.8%
Students meeting promotion criteria in 1996-97	28,219	84.7%

Students meeting promotion criteria after attending the Summer Bridge including waivers

Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997



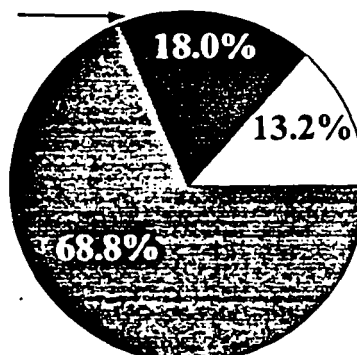
Students not meeting promotion criteria

6th Grade

	<u># of Students</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Total Enrollment - June 1997	29,769	100%
Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997	20,471	68.8%
Students meeting promotion criteria in August, 1997, after attending the Summer Bridge	4,691	15.8%
Students meeting promotion criteria as a result of the Waiver process	665	2.2%
Students meeting promotion criteria in 1996-97	25,827	86.8%

Students meeting promotion criteria after attending the Summer Bridge including waivers

Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997



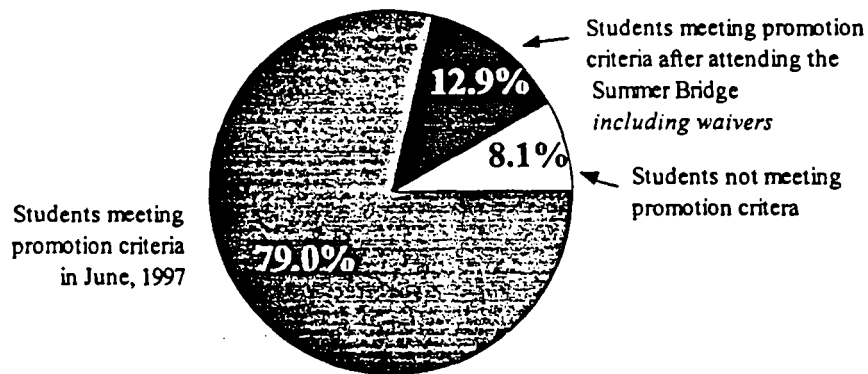
Students not meeting promotion criteria

Promotion Summary - 1996-97 School Year

Grade 8

8th Grade

	<u># of Students</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
<i>Total Enrollment - June 1997</i>	27,779	100%
Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997	21,948	79.0%
Students meeting promotion criteria in August, 1997, after attending the Summer Bridge	3,035	10.9%
Students meeting promotion criteria as a result of the Waiver process	561	2.0%
Students meeting promotion criteria in 1996-97	25,544	91.9%

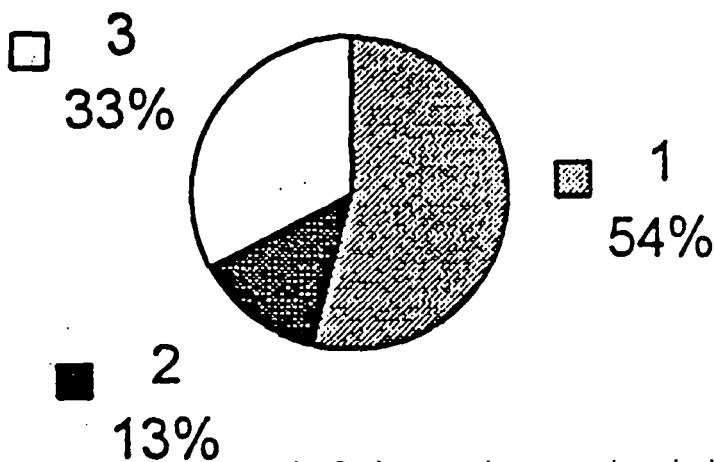


Promotion Summary - 1996-97 School Year

Grade 9

9th Grade

	# of Students	% of Total
Total Enrollment - June 1997	31,077	100%
Students meeting promotion criteria in June, 1997	16,790	54%
Students meeting promotion criteria in August, 1997, after attending the Summer Bridge	4,030	13%
Students meeting promotion criteria as a result of the Waiver process		
Students meeting promotion criteria in 1996-97	20,820	66.9%



1 = Students meeting promotion criteria in June 1997

2 = Students meeting promotion criteria after attending summer bridge

3 = Students not meeting promotion criteria

Standards and Accountability in Chicago Public Schools: Ending Social Promotions and Intervening in Failing Schools

As part of its comprehensive approach to school improvement, the Chicago Public Schools have developed and implemented a particularly strong approach to holding students and schools accountable for student achievement, based on a set of academic standards and measures tied to them.

Ending Social Promotions: Chicago's new promotion policy requires students at grades 3, 6, 8 and 9 to meet academic and attendance standards, and earn passing grades in reading and math in order to be promoted. Students who are not promoted are required to attend the Summer Bridge program, a 5-6 week highly structured summer school. Students are retested at the end of the summer program. Those meeting the standard are then promoted, while those who don't must repeat the previous grade.

In addition to summer programs, the Chicago Public Schools have extensive after school programs to provide students with extra help in preparation for meeting the standards. The programs vary from school to school, and include tutorial academies, social centers, extended learning time programs, and after school academics. Many schools use trained, volunteer tutors, drawn from the corporate community and college students majoring in education.

While this is a tough policy deserving the praise it has received, the academic standards that anchor it are not especially challenging. The standards are simply minimum scores students must earn on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, reported as grade level equivalents. For examples, in order to be promoted, 3rd graders must score at the 2.8 equivalent (second grade, eight month), a full year below grade level. By 8th grade, students must achieve at the 7.2 equivalent, more than a year and a half below grade level. Last year the Chicago Public Schools adopted new, more challenging, district-wide academic standards. Examinations geared to these standards are under development now.

In the past school year, between 68% and 78% of 3rd, 6th and 8th graders met promotion standards by June, and an additional 10% - 13% of the students met the standards after the summer program. Between 8% and 15% were retained in grade. The picture was significantly worse at the 9th grade level, where only 54% of the students met the standards initially, and only 67% by the end of the summer. Accordingly, nearly a third of the 9th graders were held back.

Note that the failure rates would be much higher if Chicago were to use the national tests in reading and math for promotion purposes. For example, nationwide, approximately 40% of the 4th graders are unable to read at the basic level of achievement on NAEP, and only xx% read at the more demanding proficient level, the target set by NAEP. Given Chicago's demographics, we would expect even smaller percentages of students to initially meet the national standards. And, for these reasons, it is unlikely that Chicago or other cities that have signed up for the tests are likely to use them for "high stakes" promotional purposes.

Intervening in Failing Schools: Chicago also has a significant effort to intervene in persistently low performing schools. Schools with fewer than 15% of the students reading at national norms are placed on "probation", which means that a team of educators assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the school and designs a set of steps intended to improve the school. The schools is required to implement these corrective actions, and is monitored by an external team. If the school fails either to implement the improvement plan or to make significant progress in terms of student achievement, then the district may take additional steps, such as reconstitution, intervention or school closure. Under these more severe steps, the principal and school staff can be removed or required to reapply for their positions. In addition, the school receives additional assistance and monitoring from the central office.

Schools can be removed from the probation list if at least 20% of the student read at national norms.

In the 1996-97 school year, 109 schools (38 high schools and 71 elementary schools) were placed on probation. Of these, 9 were removed from probation because of improvements in student performance. In June, Superintendent Paul Vallas announced that seven high schools would be reconstituted.

These accountability initiatives, coupled with other management and financial reforms, and curricular and programmatic improvements, have been paying off. Test scores in Chicago Public schools, on the Iowa tests, state tests and the ACT tests have shown significant gains over the past two years.

Draft
10/27

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Subject: Turning Around Low-Performing Public Schools

Since taking office in 1993, and with your strong leadership, my Administration has pursued a comprehensive effort to strengthen public schools. We have worked to raise academic standards, promote accountability, and provide greater competition and choice within the public schools, including support for a dramatic increase in charter schools. Moreover, we have worked to make the investments necessary to improve teaching and learning in every classroom in America, through efforts to: keep our schools safe and free of drugs; provide students who need it extra help to master the basics; increase parental and community involvement in our schools; recruit, prepare, and provide continuing training to teachers and reward excellence in teaching; and, make sure every school has access to and can effectively use 21st Century technology.

This strategy will produce results. We know for certain that all students can learn to high standards, and that every school can succeed if it has clear instructional goals and high expectations for all of its students, if it creates a safe and orderly environment for learning, helps parents be involved in their child's education, and uses proven instructional practices. All schools must be given the resources, the tools, and the flexibility to help every student reach high standards.

Yet no school improvement strategy can work without real accountability for results, as measured by student achievement. Excellent schools and schools that show significant improvement must be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, schools that demonstrate persistently poor academic performance -- schools which fail to make adequate progress in educating all students to high standards -- must not be ignored. Instead, local and state education officials must step in and redesign failing schools, or close them down and reopen them with new, more effective leadership and staff.

A growing number of states and cities have begun to take these steps. Cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York, and states such as Maryland and Kentucky identify low performing schools and take steps to intervene if these schools fail to make progress. These steps often include the implementation of school improvement plans -- providing after-school academic help to students, strengthening training and assistance for school staff, creating smaller and more personal settings, such as schools-within-schools -- and, where necessary, reconstitution of the school and replacement of the school principal and other staff.

We must encourage and help more cities and states take up the challenge of turning around low performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to meeting high standards, by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that Department of Education resources are most productively used for these

purposes.

In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to:

- 1. Produce and disseminate widely guidelines on effective approaches to turning around low performing schools.** There is much of value to be shared from the lessons and experiences of cities and states that already intervene in low performing schools, as well as from education R&D on effective school improvement practices, business experience in managing high performing organizations and in turning around low performing companies, and other sources. These lessons must be captured in clear and useable formats, and made widely available to educators, parents, state and local policymakers, business leaders and others working to improve public education.
- 2. Review existing Department of Education programs to determine how they can best be used to support state and local efforts to turn around low performing schools, and whether to provide incentives so that additional states and cities will strengthen accountability.** Department of Education programs should help and encourage more states and cities to develop sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low performing schools and help students in them get a better education, and, once developed, should support their implementation. In particular, the Education Department should develop a strategy to ensure that funds provided to state and local education systems under its existing programs can easily and effectively be used to support efforts to turn around failing schools. Second, the Education Department should develop a strategy, in collaboration with states and cities, to provide appropriate research, dissemination and technical assistance resources to support state and local initiatives. Third, the Education Department should consider whether additional federal incentives could effectively increase the number of states and cities that adopt rigorous accountability policies and effective strategies to intervene in failing schools.

Many Education Department programs are already well suited for these purposes, because they provide funds that can be used to provide extra help during and after the school day to students who need it, high quality professional development for teachers, and resources to plan and implement effective school reforms. The Education Department should develop a plan for enabling local school districts to access the funds and use them in an integrated fashion to support their comprehensive efforts to improve low performing schools. Where there are statutory barriers to accomplish this purpose they should be identified so we can work with the Congress to change them.

A number of existing Department of Education programs, including Title I and Goals 2000, require participating states and school districts to hold schools accountable for results, and provide resources that can be used for these purposes. Other existing programs also provide resources that can be used to help turn around low performing schools, such as the Eisenhower professional development program. In addition, the Public Charter Schools Program can be used to provide start-up funds to replace failed schools with new charter schools, and/or to provide students in low performing schools with additional choices within the public schools. The 21st

Century Schools program can help keep schools open longer hours and provide a setting in which students can get extra help after school.

New initiatives under consideration in Congress can also provide important help. The Balanced Budget Agreement I reached with Congressional leaders last summer commits the Congress to enacting an early reading program consistent with the principles of my America Reads initiative. When enacted, this program will help mobilize an army of one million volunteer tutors to give students who need it extra help in order to learn to read independently by the 4th grade. These volunteers can be especially helpful for students in low performing schools. The bipartisan Comprehensive School Reform program under consideration right now by the Appropriations Committee will, if funded, provide funds that will help schools implement proven practices for improving student learning. This can be particularly helpful to low performing schools.

Together, these programs can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools by providing teacher training, strengthening instructional practices, overhauling school management and implementing schoolwide reforms. They can provide students who need it extra help, during and after schools. And they can provide students with additional choices within the public schools.



Bruce N. Reed
10/27/97 06:33:06 PM

Record Type: Record

To: William R. Kincaid/OPD/EOP

cc:

Subject: tomorrow's speech

You should beef up the directive part of the speech with a few sentences on what Chicago does.

One minor point: the sentence "If the response in Chicago has been unusual" doesn't make sense right after a sentence thanking Mayor Daley for his early support of high national standards.