

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM

FROM:

SUBJECT: Community Schools Initiative

The following is a proposal for a Presidential initiative to spark development of community schools around the country. Parents, educators and community leaders continue to express strong interest in finding ways to keep schools open late in the afternoon, on weekends and during the summer as neighborhood centers and for tutoring, recreation, and other purposes.

We propose that the President convene a working meeting during the summer designed to challenge all school districts to find ways to put their school buildings to the greatest possible use. Two developments make such a meeting timely: (1) a recent change in Title I funding allows many more schools to begin using federal funds for "whole school" programs rather than only for services targeted to eligible students, and (2) the American Bar Association is completing work on a booklet dealing with liability issues that arise in using school facilities for afterschool programming.

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Elements of Presidential Action

The central element of this event would be a Presidential challenge to all school districts to keep school buildings open for afterschool programs and summer activities. The President would challenge community organizations and businesses to work with the schools to help establish such programs and challenge parents to become involved as volunteers, mentors and planners for these programs. We propose that he take three concrete actions:

- (1) Convene a working meeting that pulls together top educators, teachers, businesses, leaders of community organizations like the Y's and the Boys and Girls Clubs to explore how they can work together to make community schools a reality. The meeting would include presentations by some of the model programs from around the country as well as commitments from national leaders to work together on this initiative. The PTA, the teachers unions, the school boards would all be represented, as would the American Bar Association which could present its findings on liability discussed below.

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- (2) Issue a Guidebook from the Department of Education to schools and school districts indicating how Title I funds can now be used to support such programs, directing them to other potential funding sources, and providing assistance in structuring a self-supporting program through sliding fee scales and joining forces with other interested organizations in the community. The change in Title I, advocated by this administration, allows roughly 20-22,000 of the nation's 80,000 schools to use their funds to extend the school day or other comparable "whole school" purposes.
 - (3) Issue a booklet prepared by the American Bar Association that deals with the liability issues associated with using school buildings after hours. Liability is consistently cited as one of the reasons that these programs are not more widespread, and the ABA has prepared this booklet to help schools and communities understand how to address this issue.

We would propose that this working meeting take place by the end of July to allow it to have an impact on preparations for the fall term. The President would use the meeting as a forum not only to issue his challenge on community schools, but to reiterate his vision of American public schooling in the 21st century.