

Revised  
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**EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
For internal use only -- January 28, 1998

**Overall Questions**

**What is the purpose of the Education Opportunity Zones?**

This initiative will help accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts that are on the right track, and highlight models of success. Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Funds will be targeted to improve low performing schools, expand opportunities for student achievement, broaden choices for families, and hold schools, teachers, and students accountable for results.

**How does the Zone initiative relate to the President's other new initiatives?**

Education opportunity zones are part of a broader set of initiatives to help strengthen urban and rural schools. President Clinton has also proposed new initiatives to reduce class size in the primary grades, modernize school buildings, recruit and prepare teachers for underserved urban and rural areas, and dramatically expand the availability and quality of child care and after-school learning opportunities. These and other proposals will have a powerful impact on improving the prospects of children in some of our poorest communities.

**Are you proposing this initiative as an alternative to respond to Republican calls for vouchers?**

The President is committed to strengthening public schools, not abandoning them. Along with other new initiatives that will help raise achievement for urban and rural students, like school construction and teacher recruitment and preparation, we are proposing Education Opportunity Zones in response to the clear need for sharp improvements in the nation's poorest school districts and to encourage and expand promising school reform efforts that are taking a disciplined, effective approach centered on high standards. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. In contrast to vouchers, the Education Opportunity Zones will support effective local efforts to improve education for all students in participating districts, rather than just a few.

**This initiative clearly encourages districts to discontinue social promotion. How do you respond to criticisms of that approach?**

Every student is entitled to a high quality education that will prepare him or her for further education or employment. The President strongly believes that we shouldn't pass kids through the educational system who haven't mastered the work, because it will hurt them over the long term. This initiative is designed to hold teachers and schools accountable, as well as students. Rather than punishing kids, this initiative attempts to create the conditions under which districts

take steps to ensure that students are ready to meet standards the first time, rather than falling behind and needing remediation.

### **Qualified Applicants**

#### **What communities will be eligible for the Zone initiative?**

High-poverty urban and rural school districts will be targeted under this initiative. In order to be selected as Zones, districts will have to show that they have already begun to raise student achievement, or that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies.

#### **How many school districts will be eligible to participate?**

This initiative will target urban and rural school districts with a significant percentage or a large number of students in poverty. This means that well over a thousand districts will be eligible, including districts in every state.

#### **Will Zones be entire school districts or smaller areas within school districts?**

Entire school districts, or consortia of districts, will be designated Education Opportunity Zones. Grant funds may be for district-wide activities such as improving sound management and assessment systems, as well as to improve low-performing schools. Districts may choose to target their resources under the initiative to subsets of low-performing schools.

#### **Will large cities receive a preference for designation as Zones?**

Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that both large and smaller urban areas are selected to participate, as well as rural school districts. We expect that urban school districts will receive a substantial proportion of funding under the initiative.

#### **Will consortia of districts be eligible to apply to be Zones?**

Yes, consortia of districts will be eligible to apply. We anticipate that most consortia will be comprised of rural school districts.

#### **Will charter schools be able to participate in the program?**

Under state law, public charter schools are generally either Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) or public schools within an LEA. Charter schools that are part of an urban or rural school district designated as an Education Opportunity Zone will be able to benefit from this program. Charter schools that are considered an LEA themselves will be eligible to apply only if they meet the eligibility criteria for all LEAs. That is, they must be high poverty and serve a small town or rural community or an urban area. While charter schools may be eligible to apply, the purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a district-wide, serious approach to high standards can help raise achievement.

**Will private schools be eligible for funding under this program?**

Private schools cannot be designated as Education Opportunity Zones, but students, teachers and administrators associated with private schools within an area served by a Zone will be eligible to participate, on an equitable basis, in training programs supported by the initiative. Likewise, private school teachers and administrators will also be eligible to receive materials and information developed through the grants.

**Will schools serving Native American students be eligible to apply for funds?**

Yes. Most BIA schools and schools that serve large concentrations of Native American students will qualify as eligible applicants under this program. Many of these schools are rural and have high percentages of students from low income families. Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of grants among geographic regions of the country and to rural schools serving large concentrations of Native American students.

**Grant Size and Scope****How many grants are expected to be awarded and what will be their size?**

The Zone initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years. We expect to fund over 50 grants to urban and rural communities. Urban school districts will receive grants of \$10-25 million per year (depending on the size and proposed activities). Rural communities will receive grants of \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia) per year.

The Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001.

**Will grants be renewable?**

Grants will be awarded for 3 years. As part of their original grant award, districts will agree to a rigorous performance partnership that includes specific benchmarks for student success. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching the agreed benchmarks.

**Will districts have to provide matching funds?**

No, districts will not have to provide an explicit match. However, a successful applicant will have to show how it will use all available resources, including the new funds sought under the Education Opportunity Zones program, in order to carry out its plan to raise student achievement. Moreover, each applicant must show how it will continue to carry out its strategies using other resources at the conclusion of Zones funding. Education Opportunity Zone funding will be structured to phase out in latter years.

## **Application Process and Grant Activities**

### **What will districts have to include in their applications for funds? Must they indicate which schools they will target for improvement?**

Districts will have to demonstrate in their applications that they are using their existing funds effectively and have already begun to raise student achievement, or, at a minimum, that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies. They will also need to explain how they will address key aspects of effective local reform such as: holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, providing help to those who need it, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; ensuring students don't fall behind, by providing a rich curriculum, good teaching and extended learning opportunities; ending social promotions and requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers; and providing students and parents with expanded choice within public education.

Applicants must also demonstrate the support of all key stakeholders -- including parents and teachers. They must describe how they will use all available resources -- federal, state, local, and private -- to carry out their reform strategies and how they intend to maintain the reform effort once federal funds expire. Furthermore, successful applicants will need to describe how they will intervene in schools and how they will measure progress, including defining rigorous benchmarks for success. Finally, eligible districts often have substantial numbers of disabled and limited English proficient children, and successful applications will address how these children will be assisted to meet high standards.

### **How will Zones be selected?**

Districts or consortia will be selected under a competitive, peer-review process. Reviewers will be looking for districts which best address the purposes of the program and which demonstrate the greatest likelihood of modeling successful approaches for raising achievement in high poverty urban and rural areas.

### **What kinds of activities will the grant funds support?**

School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds to support standards-based, district-wide reforms such as: rewarding schools that make significant gains in student achievement; turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them; providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove

them if they fail to do so.

**What flexibility will districts have in the use of other resources?**

All public schools within an Education Opportunity Zone -- regardless of poverty level -- will become eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds. In other words, under the proposal, the 50% poverty threshold ordinarily required for a school to become a schoolwide project will not apply to Education Opportunity Zone schools. However, requirements pertaining to school accountability, as well as special education, health, safety, and civil rights, will continue to be met.

**What technical assistance will be available for Zones?**

The Department of Education will provide expert technical assistance to the Education Opportunity Zones through its technical assistance providers and by convening grantees to share information and ideas. It will also utilize technology to help districts consult with each other and disseminate lessons learned to urban and rural communities across the U.S.

**How will grantees be held accountable for results?**

During the negotiation of each grant award, each Zone will agree to a rigorous performance partnership with the Secretary of Education. The performance partnership must include specific, ambitious, disaggregated benchmarks in student achievement, dropout rates, and other indicators of success. Districts will receive additional financial support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching their agreed upon benchmarks.

**Mr. Clay's legislation provides for the President to direct other agencies -- beyond Education -- to assist local schools with problems like school construction. Does the President's proposal include a similar feature?**

The White House and the Department of Education are beginning to consult with other federal agencies to determine what kinds of assistance could be offered and what sort of arrangements would be most appropriate.

**Connections to other initiatives**

**How do these new Zones differ from Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities?**

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative and the EZ/EC initiative support one another, but are distinct. Education Opportunity Zones will consist of entire school districts or consortia of school districts. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are specific neighborhoods or regions that may or may not be contiguous with school districts. While both are in the spirit of bringing the community together behind focused efforts to address local challenges, Education Opportunity Zones are especially designed to address the educational needs of their communities and school districts, whereas the EZ/EC initiative is aimed at broader community revitalization strategies, which can include education but also extend to economic development, community development, and job training. Communities with a strong EZ/EC effort with a significant focus on education will be well-positioned to rally the community together behind the kinds of

effective school reforms that will be supported by Education Opportunity Zones.

**Do Zone districts have to participate in the national tests?**

No. We are pleased that 15 major city school districts have already made a commitment to take part in the national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, but participation in these tests is voluntary. However, successful Education Opportunity Zone applicants must show that they have firmly integrated challenging standards and tests (which could include state, local, or national assessments) into their strategies for raising student achievement.

**How do Zones relate to the Comprehensive School Reform Program? Do Zones have to implement comprehensive school reform programs in their schools?**

These two programs are distinct, but complementary, and both are geared to help students reach high academic standards.

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative distributes comparatively large grants from the Department of Education to a fairly limited number of competitively selected, high-poverty districts. The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a serious approach to high standards, entailing accountability for students, teachers, and schools, can help raise achievement across an entire district, or at least within a sizable portion of a district.

The Comprehensive School Reform program established during the last session of Congress provides formula funds to states which then distribute the funds competitively to a significant number of districts on behalf of individual schools. The purpose of the Comprehensive School Reform program is to get individual schools to successfully adopt tested reform models, or develop new, effective models based on research. CSR funds can help school in Education Opportunity Zones implement proven models of reform, and can help provide additional resources for Zones to use for turning around failing schools. The Education Department will encourage states to make sure these important resources are available to school districts eligible to be selected as EOZ's.

**Will Education Opportunity Zones receive a preference for other initiatives, such as school construction funding?**

At this time, there are no plans to provide additional incentives for participation beyond in the Education Opportunity Zones initiative beyond the added funding and flexibility that all Zones will receive. However, other new initiatives will include features targeting assistance on the kinds of high poverty communities that the Zones are designed to assist.

## **Process Issues**

### **What kind of support do you expect to receive in Congress?**

Improving public schools in our most disadvantaged communities should be a bipartisan national priority. Lawmakers in both parties are keen on finding tough, effective ways to address low achievement in some of our largest cities, and we expect this proposal to gain strong bipartisan support. We have been working with Congressman Bill Clay of St. Louis, Ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has submitted urban education renewal legislation which has helped to shape our own proposal.

### **How will the Administration solicit input from outside groups?**

Last winter and spring the Department hosted five meetings with experts in urban education to discuss urban needs and effective strategies for improving urban education. Many of these groups have participated in meetings throughout the year to offer advice on addressing urban education issues. Thus, the Administration's proposal already reflects more than a year of input from key groups committed to strengthening urban schools. Going forward, there will be many other opportunities for additional input as the legislation and grant competition are designed.

### **When will a bill go to Congress?**

Work is underway at the Department to prepare legislative specifications, but we plan to do additional consultations with Congress and stakeholders in the education community before transmitting our proposal to the Hill.

### **Do you anticipate that all districts cited as examples in your materials will be selected for the program?**

No. Each district cited helps illustrate one or more of the kinds of policies and activities to be supported under the Zones initiative, but no single district -- urban or rural -- best addresses each of the purposes of the program or will automatically be selected.

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**Pathways to Progress: Clinton Administration Initiatives  
to Strengthen Education for Children in Urban Schools**  
January 7, 1998

A special issue of Education Week being released this week highlights a dozen key ideas that are being used "to help urban schools turn the corner." President Clinton has established or proposed initiatives to help urban schools make progress in virtually all of the areas identified by Education Week.

| Strategy                                                                                                  | President's Initiatives                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Status                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Raise the Bar: Set Clear, High Expectations for all Students                                              | Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Math<br><br>Goals 2000 -- supports challenging state standards for all students<br><br>Title I Reauthorization -- requires challenging standards for all Title I students in the basics | Tests to be offered under independent board in 2000<br><br>Enacted 1994<br><br>Enacted 1994           |
| Make Performance Count: Devise an accountability system based on good information                         | Title I Reauthorization -- requires accountability system with information on student achievement<br><br>Education Opportunity Zones -- must have reliable systems to measure student progress                                  | Enacted 1994<br><br>Proposed in December 1997                                                         |
| Let Leaders Lead: Create clear lines of authority and give schools freedom in exchange for accountability | Goals 2000, IASA, and School-to-Work -- all contained new authority to waive federal requirements in exchange for greater achievement<br><br>Public Charter Schools program                                                     | Enacted 1994<br><br>Enacted 1994; expansion legislation supported by President passed House fall 1997 |

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| Recruit for Success: Recruit, hire and retain teachers who can enable students to reach high standards | \$350 million Initiative on Teacher Recruitment and Preparation in High Poverty Areas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Proposed in Summer 1997                                                                                                                                                        |
| Support Your Local Teacher: Build capacity to improve teacher and learning                             | <p>Unprecedented investments in Eisenhower Professional Development funds</p> <p>Goals 2000</p> <p>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards -- help 100,000 teachers seek national certification</p> <p>America's Technology Literacy Challenge -- doubled funding to \$425 million</p> <p>E-rate -- to help schools and libraries get technology into the classroom, set up phone lines and access the Internet at a fraction of the cost.</p> | <p>Reauthorized 1994</p> <p>Enacted 1994</p> <p>\$18.5 million in FY 98 approps</p> <p>Enacted in FY 98 approps</p> <p>Enacted in Telecommunications Act; FCC implementing</p> |
| Build Strength at the Top: Create Strong Leaders at the School and District Levels                     | Education Opportunity Zones -- funds can be used to conduct principal leadership academies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Proposed December 1997                                                                                                                                                         |

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| Go the Extra Mile: Get Students the Extra Time and Attention they Need      | America Reads                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Proposed 1996-97; Over 800 colleges and universities supplying work study tutors; hundreds of other organizations involved; bill passed House fall 1997 |
|                                                                             | Head Start -- funding up 57% since 1993; program will serve an estimated 836,000 children in 1998.                                                                                                                                  | FY 98 Approps enacted 1997                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                             | Title I -- investment up over \$1 billion since 1992.                                                                                                                                                                               | FY 98 Approps enacted 1997                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                             | Education Opportunity Zones -- funds can be used for extra help after-school, weekend and summer school.                                                                                                                            | Proposed December 1997                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                                             | After-School -- provided \$40 million to support hundreds of after-school centers in rural and urban schools across the country that will provide academic enrichment, tutoring, and other learning opportunities                   | FY 98 Approps enacted 1997                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                             | Child Care Initiative -- new \$3 billion Early Learning Fund; increased investment in Head Start and double the number of children served by Early Head Start; provides after-school care for up to half a million children a year. | Proposed January 1998                                                                                                                                   |
| Reach Out: Improve the Relationship of Parents and Communities with Schools | Title I -- requires parent-school compacts                                                                                                                                                                                          | Enacted 1994                                                                                                                                            |

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|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Think Small (develop smaller schools)                   | Public Charter Schools program -- assists developers to start new (typically smaller) public schools                                                                                                      | Enacted 1994; expansion legislation supported by President passed House fall 1997 |
| Fix the Roof: Provide safe, adequate school buildings   | New School Construction Proposal                                                                                                                                                                          | Rejected by GOP 1997; will propose again in 99 Budget                             |
| Encourage Competition                                   | Public Charter Schools program -- helps start new public schools that students and parents choose                                                                                                         | Administration will be supporting over 800 charter schools by end of 1997-98.     |
| Don't Reward Failure: Close or Reconstitute Bad Schools | <p>Education Opportunity Zones -- supports districts with strong plans to intervene in failing schools</p> <p>Title I Reauthorization -- requires states/districts to intervene if persistent failure</p> | <p>Proposed December 1997</p> <p>Enacted 1994</p>                                 |

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## **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES: STRENGTHENING URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS**

January 26, 1998

*I challenge every school district to adopt high standards, to abolish social promotion, to move aggressively to help all students make the grade through tutoring, and summer schools, and to hold schools accountable for results, giving them the tools and the leadership and the parental involvement to do the job.*

*-- President Bill Clinton, October 28, 1997*

**HELPING RAISE ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH POVERTY COMMUNITIES.** President Clinton's Education Opportunity Zones initiative will strengthen public schools and help students master the basics where the need is the greatest: in high poverty urban and rural communities where low expectations, too many poorly prepared teachers, and overwhelmed school systems create significant barriers to high achievement. The Education Department will select approximately 50 high poverty urban and rural school districts that agree to: (1) use high standards and tests of student achievement to identify and provide help to students, teachers and schools who need it; (2) prevent students from falling behind by ensuring quality teaching, challenging curricula, and extended learning time; and (3) end social promotion and turn around failing schools. Added investments in these communities will accelerate their progress and provide successful models of system-wide, standards-based reform for the nation. The President's initiative will invest \$200 million in FY99, and \$1.5 billion over 5 years, to raise achievement and share lessons learned with school districts around the country.

**ENDING SOCIAL PROMOTION, AND GIVING SCHOOLS THE TOOLS TO HELP EVERY CHILD MEET HIGH EXPECTATIONS.** To be selected as Education Opportunity Zones, school districts will have to demonstrate that they are using their existing funds effectively to raise student achievement by: ■ holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; ■ holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, providing help to teachers who need it, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; ■ ensuring students don't fall behind, by providing a rich curriculum, good teaching and extended learning opportunities; ■ ending social promotions and requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers; and ■ providing students and parents with school report cards and expanded choice within public education.

**EXTRA RESOURCES TO IMPROVE TEACHING, LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP.** School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds to support standards-based, district-wide reforms such as: ■ rewarding schools that make significant gains in student achievement; ■ turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them; ■ providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; ■ building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; ■ implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; ■ providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; ■ helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board

for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and ■ implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove them if they fail to do so.

**COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO SUPPORT PROMISING MODELS.** Districts will be selected as Education Opportunity Zones under a competitive, peer-review process. A mix of large and smaller urban areas will be selected to participate, as well as rural school districts and consortia. Each urban Education Opportunity Zone will receive a 3-year grant of \$10-25 million per year (depending upon size and proposed activities), and each rural Zone will receive from \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia). Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001. Successful applicants will have broad-based partnerships to support their reforms -- including parents, teachers, local government, business and civic groups, institutions of higher education and other key stakeholders. Successful applications will show how the district will use all available resources -- federal, state, and local, as well as any business or foundation funds -- to carry out its reform strategy and maintain it once these federal funds are no longer available.

**REWARDS FOR DEMONSTRATED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS.** Each Education Opportunity Zone will agree to specific, ambitious, benchmarks for improved student achievement, lower dropout rates and other indicators of success, for districtwide performance and specific student subgroups. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching those benchmarks.

**GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN USING OTHER FEDERAL RESOURCES.** All schools in an Education Opportunity Zone school district -- regardless of poverty level -- will become eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds. Requirements pertaining to school accountability, as well as special education, health, safety, and civil rights, will continue to be met.

**ASSISTANCE TO HELP DISTRICTS FIND AND SHARE WHAT WORKS.** The Department of Education will offer technical assistance, use technology to help districts consult with each other, and disseminate lessons learned to communities nationwide. Special attention will be given to helping school districts design and implement strategies for providing students who need it with early intervention and extra help to enable them to meet promotion standards. In addition, a national evaluation of the Education Opportunity Zones will be conducted, with the results helping to inform the next reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

**BOLD ACTION TO HELP CHILDREN IN OUR CITIES AND RURAL AREAS.** Education Opportunity Zones are part of a broader set of initiatives to help strengthen high-poverty urban and rural schools. President Clinton is also proposing new initiatives to reduce class size in the primary grades, modernize school buildings, recruit and prepare teachers for underserved urban and rural areas, and dramatically expand the availability and quality of child care and after-school learning opportunities. These and other proposals will have a powerful impact on improving the prospects of children in some of our poorest communities.

**URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITY ZONES -- *EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT COULD  
BE SUPPORTED UNDER THE PROPOSAL***

January 26, 1998

**Student Assistance and Accountability:**

- In **Chicago**, many students participate in the district's Lighthouse after-school program, which features intense reading/math instruction, social, and other enrichment activities, and a meal. Students in the district who perform below minimum standards at key transition grades (3, 6, 8 and 9) are required to participate in a seven-week "SummerBridge" program and pass a test before moving on to the next grade. Over 45,000 students were served in the SummerBridge program in 1997, and over 144,000 students participated in some form of summer activity.
- The **Long Beach** school district required 1,600 third graders who had not attained reading proficiency by the end of the year to attend five-week tutorial sessions.
- In **Cincinnati**, student promotion is now based on specific standards that define what students must know and be able to do. The standards are designed to prepare students to pass the state's ninth-grade proficiency test.
- In the **Halifax County**, North Carolina School District, high school honor students are paid by the district to tutor younger students in reading one-and-a-half hours per day and the district hires retired teachers to work with struggling students.
- A before- and after-school tutoring program offered by the **Fentress County** school system in Jamestown, Tennessee provides approximately 300 students with long- or short-term assistance to address their instructional needs. The program is offered in all grades; mathematics and language arts are priorities for high school students.
- After determining that half of its middle grade students were reading below grade level, staff in the **Wilkes County** schools in Washington, Georgia made intensive reading instruction a priority. The district has worked to upgrade professional development in reading instruction and reduce class size, helping teachers work with individual students.
- In the **Rogers** and **Holland** school districts in Texas, students and teachers identify a project that utilizes technology as a primary research tool. Teachers create teams of 2 to 4 students, a mentor teacher-- and an expert who is linked via technology. The approach connects students to information sources beyond the rural communities and gets them actively engaged in learning.

**Staff Effectiveness and Accountability:**

- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg's** Benchmark Goals program gives cash awards of \$750 to

\$1,000 to teachers in schools whose students meet a range of goals that reflect improvements from previous performance. The goals are structured so that schools have an incentive to raise the achievement of their lowest performing students. The program also focuses on goals for African American students, who historically have been under-achievers in the Charlotte school system, thus ensuring that schools work to close the achievement gap between African American and white students.

- In **Cincinnati**, school district administrators' pay raises are now linked to job performance, with automatic cost-of-living adjustments and salary rates being replaced by new criteria, including performance on several measures such as student test scores and graduation rates. The district is also preparing a system for providing financial rewards to schools based on student achievement, to take effect in 1998-99.
- In **St. Paul**, the school district is collaborating with the teachers' union and the University of Minnesota on Project 20/20 to support teachers through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process. The district pays the application fees and the university and other partners develop and conduct professional support programs for the candidates.
- School districts like **Los Angeles**, where teachers will get a raise of 15%, are providing significant salary increases to reward National Board Certified Master Teachers.
- Peer review and assistance programs help beginning teachers learn to teach and help veterans who are having difficulty improve their teaching or leave the classroom without union grievances or delays. In **New York City**, for example, low-performing teachers can be assigned to an intervention program where they gain assistance from colleagues and administrators, and if unable to improve, are counseled out of the profession or removed. In **Cincinnati** and **Toledo**, which also have such programs, while most teachers improve their performance, roughly one-third of the teachers referred to intervention have left teaching by the end of the year, through resignation, retirement or dismissal. **Columbus** and **Seattle** also have aggressive peer review programs.
- In **Rochester**, expert, experienced teachers can be selected through a rigorous evaluation process as "lead teachers" and given significant salary stipends to become involved with peer counseling, or to take on other reform-related priorities such as consulting with new teachers, accepting positions in "intervention" schools, and developing curricula.
- **New York City's** Community District 2 places an unusually strong emphasis on providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to build skills and learn from one another. For example, the district enables visiting teachers to observe and practice with a highly accomplished teacher for three weeks while their classrooms are taught by another experienced teacher. District 2 registered the second highest standardized test scores in math and reading in the city.

- Students in the **Penasco Independent Schools** in New Mexico benefit from a districtwide plan for student success that sets standards for all district staff. The plan specifies what administrators, teachers, and support staff must do to reach the district's targeted goals in a number of areas, including academic performance, attendance, and parent involvement. The plan also includes benchmarks to help staff assess their progress toward the goals. Student performance on the New Mexico High School Competency Exam and on the portfolio writing assessment have increased over the last three years.

#### **School Improvement and Accountability:**

- In 1994, the **San Francisco Unified School District** reconstituted Visitacion Valley Middle School because of its low performance on a number of measures. The school district hired a new principal, who then hand-picked a new staff that redesigned the school's structure and program, including a new commitment to a safe atmosphere and to fostering children's educational development. The school is now a "graduate" of the reconstitution process, having shown gains in student achievement since reconstitution.
- The **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** school system distributes to parents easy-to-read student learning goals at the beginning of the school year. The district then follows up with school report cards on student attendance and performance that are distributed to parents and every household in the district, and are published in the newspaper, in part to help inform parents' decisions about the district's magnet schools.
- In **Chicago**, schools are placed on probation due to continuously low student achievement. These schools will be targeted for aggressive intervention strategies by the district, such as providing intensive help and training from expert teams of educators, or, where necessary, replacing ineffective principals and teachers. In the event of persistent failure, the district may shut down and reorganize the schools. Seven high schools were reconstituted between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years.

Chicago also recognizes a number of exemplary schools, providing financial rewards of \$5,000 and \$10,000 to the winners to become professional development centers for other schools. Seventeen schools were awarded exemplary status in the first year.

- **New York City** also has a union-district negotiated process for "redesigning" schools identified by the state as failing. Such schools can replace approximately half the incumbent teaching faculty. For example, at PS 154 in Harlem, test scores have gone up significantly since the school was reopened in the fall of 1996.
- **McCreary County, Kentucky** has taken advantage of the fact that one of its schools was designated as in need of assistance from one of Kentucky's Distinguished Educators. The Distinguished Educator introduced the school to a variety of effective instructional

strategies, which the county then disseminated to other schools in the district. Teachers have been working to align the county's curriculum with the state's standards. Schools develop their own improvement plans based on student achievement data, and use the plans to determine teachers' professional development needs. McCreary County has met its 1998 state accountability target a year early.

- The **Los Fresnos** Independent School District in Texas supplements the state assessment with local assessments -- administered three times each year -- to provide teachers with data for monitoring students' progress, and to modify timelines and instructional practices. Students who consistently perform below expectations are tutored after school by certified teachers, who receive Title I-funded stipends. In 1997, 84 percent of students tested passed all portions of the state assessment -- up from 77 percent in 1996.

#### **Public School Choice:**

- In **Boston**, all parents choose their child's public school, and have a wide array of options ranging from neighborhood schools, magnet schools, and pilot and public charter schools which operate under performance contracts that provide them with greater autonomy and accountability for results.
- The **Houston** Independent School District recently instituted an open choice program. Parents may send their children to any of the district's 258 schools provided the school is enrolled at 95 percent of capacity or below. The district is currently analyzing available space and plans to publish the information in the near future; parents will apply to the district transfer office to change schools. In addition to this choice program, the district has launched an aggressive effort to support in-district charter schools.
- **Cambridge**, Massachusetts allows every family to choose a public school for their child. The school district provides information on every school and has created parent centers to help parents learn about and choose a public school for their child. More than 90% of parents get their first choice of kindergarten for their child, and most get one of their top picks at all grade levels.
- The **San Diego** school district has helped parents, teachers, and principals create more than a dozen public charter schools that stay open only as long as they do a good job. These are all schools of choice, publicly accountable and open to students from around the school district.
- The **Zuni Pueblo** Public School District in New Mexico has public school choice, enabling families to choose among local schools, BIA and BIA-supported boarding schools. Families are well connected with the schools, for example, school conferences draw 100 percent participation from parents.

## **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

For internal use only -- January 26, 1998

### **Overall Questions**

#### **What is the purpose of the Education Opportunity Zones?**

This initiative will help accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts that are on the right track, and highlight models of success. Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Funds will be targeted to improve low performing schools, expand opportunities for student achievement, broaden choices for families, and hold schools, teachers, and students accountable for results.

#### **How does the Zone initiative relate to the President's other new initiatives?**

Education opportunity zones are part of a broader set of initiatives to help strengthen urban and rural schools. President Clinton has also proposed new initiatives to reduce class size in the primary grades, modernize school buildings, recruit and prepare teachers for underserved urban and rural areas, and dramatically expand the availability and quality of child care and after-school learning opportunities. These and other proposals still to be announced will have a powerful impact on improving the prospects of children in some of our poorest communities.

#### **Are you proposing this initiative as an alternative to respond to Republican calls for vouchers?**

The President is committed to strengthening public schools, not abandoning them. Along with other new initiatives that will help raise achievement for urban and rural students, like school construction and teacher recruitment and preparation, we are proposing Education Opportunity Zones in response to the clear need for sharp improvements in the nation's poorest school districts and to encourage and expand promising school reform efforts that are taking a disciplined, effective approach centered on high standards. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. In contrast to vouchers, the Education Opportunity Zones will support effective local efforts to improve education for all students in participating districts, rather than just a few.

#### **This initiative clearly encourages districts to discontinue social promotion. How do you respond to criticisms of that approach?**

The President strongly believes that we shouldn't promote kids who are not ready because it will hurt them over the long term. This initiative is designed to hold teachers and schools accountable, as well as students. Rather than punishing kids, this initiative attempts to create the conditions under which districts take steps to ensure that students are ready to meet standards the first time, rather than falling behind and needing remediation.

## **Qualified Applicants**

### **What communities will be eligible for the Zone initiative?**

High-poverty urban and rural school districts will be targeted under this initiative. In order to be selected as Zones, districts will have to show that they have already begun to raise student achievement, or that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies.

### **How many school districts will be eligible to participate?**

This initiative will target urban and rural school districts with a significant percentage or a large number of students in poverty. This means that well over a thousand districts will be eligible, including districts in every state.

### **Are Zones entire school districts or smaller areas within school districts?**

Entire school districts, or consortia of districts, will be designated Education Opportunity Zones. Grant funds may be used for district-wide activities such as improving sound management and assessment systems, as well as to improve low-performing schools. Districts may choose to target their resources under the initiative to subsets of low-performing schools.

### **Will large cities receive a preference for designation as Zones?**

Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that both large and smaller urban areas are selected to participate, as well as rural school districts. We expect that urban school districts will receive a substantial proportion of funding under the initiative.

### **Can consortia of districts apply to be Zones?**

Yes, consortia of districts can apply. We anticipate that most consortia will be comprised of rural school districts.

### **Can charter schools participate in the program?**

Under state law, public charter schools are generally either Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) or public schools within an LEA. Charter schools that are part of an urban or rural school district designated as an Education Opportunity Zone may benefit from this program. Charter schools that are considered an LEA themselves are eligible to apply only if they meet the eligibility criteria for all LEAs. That is, they must be high poverty and serve a small town or rural community or an urban area. While charter schools may be eligible to apply, the purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a district-wide, serious approach to high standards can help raise achievement.

### **Are private schools eligible for funding under this program?**

Private schools cannot be designated as Education Opportunity Zones, but students, teachers and administrators associated with private schools within an area served by a Zone will be eligible to participate, on an equitable basis, in training and extended learning programs supported by the initiative. Likewise, private school teachers and administrators will also be eligible to receive

materials and information developed through the grants.

**Can schools serving Native American students apply for funds?**

Yes. Most BIA schools and schools that serve large concentrations of Native American students will qualify as eligible applicants under this program. Many of these schools are rural and have high percentages of students from low income families. Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of grants among geographic regions of the country and to rural schools serving large concentrations of Native American students.

**[Can territories and outlying areas apply for this program?]**

**Grant Size and Scope**

**How many grants are expected to be awarded and what will be their size?**

The Zone initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years. We expect to fund over 50 grants to urban and rural communities. Urban school districts will receive grants of \$10-25 million per year (depending on the size and proposed activities). Rural communities will receive grants of \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia) per year.

The Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001.

**Are grants renewable?**

Grants will be awarded for 3 years. As part of their original grant award, districts will agree to a rigorous performance partnership that includes specific benchmarks for student success. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching the agreed benchmarks.

**Will districts have to provide matching funds?**

No, districts will not have to provide an explicit match. However, a successful applicant will have to show how it will use all available resources, including the new funds sought under the Education Opportunity Zones program, in order to carry out its plan to raise student achievement. Moreover, each applicant must show how it will continue to carry out its strategies using other resources at the conclusion of Zones funding. Education Opportunity Zone funding will be structured to phase out in latter years.

## **Application Process and Grant Activities**

### **What will districts have to include in their applications for funds? Must they indicate which schools they will target for improvement?**

Districts will have to demonstrate in their applications that they are using their existing funds effectively and have already begun to raise student achievement, or, at a minimum, that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies. They will also need to explain how they will address key aspects of effective local reform such as: holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, providing help to those who need it, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; ensuring students don't fall behind, by providing a rich curriculum, good teaching and extended learning opportunities; ending social promotions and requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers; and providing students and parents with expanded choice within public education.

Applicants must also demonstrate the support of all key stakeholders -- including parents and teachers. They must describe how they will use all available resources -- federal, state, local, and private -- to carry out their reform strategies and how they intend to maintain the reform effort once federal funds expire. Furthermore, successful applicants will need to describe how they will intervene in schools and how they will measure progress, including defining rigorous benchmarks for success.

### **How will Zones be selected?**

Districts or consortia will be selected under a competitive, peer-review process. Reviewers will be looking for districts which best address the purposes of the program and which demonstrate the greatest likelihood of modeling successful approaches for raising achievement in high poverty urban and rural areas.

### **What kinds of activities can the grant funds support?**

School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds for key activities such as: providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; providing bonuses to schools that make significant gains in student achievement; turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them or reopening them as charter schools; building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove them if they fail to do so.

**What flexibility will districts have in the use of other resources?**

All public schools within an Education Opportunity Zone -- regardless of poverty level -- will become eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds. In other words, under the proposal, the 50% poverty threshold ordinarily required for a school to become a schoolwide project would not apply to Education Opportunity Zone schools. However, requirements pertaining to school accountability, as well as special education, health, safety, and civil rights, will continue to be met.

**What technical assistance will be available for Zones?**

The Department of Education will provide expert technical assistance to the Education Opportunity Zones through its technical assistance providers and by convening grantees to share information and ideas. It will also utilize technology to help districts consult with each other and disseminate lessons learned to urban and rural communities across the U.S.

**How will grantees be held accountable for results?**

During the negotiation of each grant award, each Zone will agree to a rigorous performance partnership with the Secretary of Education. The performance partnership must include specific, ambitious, disaggregated benchmarks in student achievement, dropout rates, and other indicators of success. Districts will receive additional financial support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching their agreed upon benchmarks.

**Mr. Clay's legislation provides for the President to direct other agencies -- beyond Education -- to assist local schools with problems like school construction. Does the President's proposal include a similar feature?**

The White House and the Department of Education are beginning to consult with other federal agencies to determine what kinds of assistance could be offered and what sort of arrangements would be most appropriate.

**Connections to other initiatives****How do these new Zones differ from Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities?**

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative and the EZ/EC initiative support one another, but are distinct. Education Opportunity Zones will consist of entire school districts or consortia of school districts. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are specific neighborhoods or regions that may or may not be contiguous with school districts. While both are in the spirit of bringing the community together behind focused efforts to address local challenges, Education Opportunity Zones are especially designed to address the educational needs of their communities and school districts, whereas the EZ/EC initiative is aimed at broader community revitalization strategies, which can include education but also extend to economic development, community development, and job training. Communities with a strong EZ/EC effort with a significant focus on education will be well-positioned to rally the community together behind the kinds of effective school reforms that will be supported by Education Opportunity Zones.

**Do Zone districts have to participate in the national tests?**

No. We are pleased that 15 major city school districts have already made a commitment to take part in the national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, but participation in these tests is voluntary. However, successful Education Opportunity Zone applicants must show that they have firmly integrated challenging standards and tests (which could include state, local, or national assessments) into their strategies for raising student achievement.

**How do Zones relate to the Comprehensive School Reform Program? Do Zones have to implement comprehensive school reform programs in their schools?**

These two programs are distinct, but complementary, and both are geared to help students reach high academic standards.

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative distributes comparatively large grants from the Department of Education to a fairly limited number of competitively selected, high-poverty districts. The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a serious approach to high standards, entailing accountability for students, teachers, and schools, can help raise achievement across an entire district, or at least within a sizable portion of a district.

The Comprehensive School Reform program established during the last session of Congress provides formula funds to states which then distribute the funds competitively to a significant number of districts on behalf of individual schools. The purpose of the Comprehensive School Reform program is to get individual schools to successfully adopt tested reform models, or develop new, effective models based on research. CSR funds can help school in Education Opportunity Zones implement proven models of reform, and can help provide additional resources for Zones to use for turning around failing schools. The Education Department will encourage states to make sure these important resources are available to school districts eligible to be selected as EOZ's.

**Will Education Opportunity Zones receive a preference for other initiatives, such as school construction funding?**

At this time, there are no plans to provide additional incentives for participation beyond in the Education Opportunity Zones initiative beyond the added funding and flexibility that all Zones will receive. However, other new initiatives will include features targeting assistance on the kinds of high poverty communities that the Zones are designed to assist.

## **Process Issues**

### **What kind of support do you expect to receive in Congress?**

Improving public schools in our most disadvantaged communities should be a bipartisan national priority. Lawmakers in both parties are keen on finding tough, effective ways to address low achievement in some of our largest cities, and we expect this proposal to gain strong bipartisan support. We have been working with Congressman Bill Clay of St. Louis, Ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has submitted urban education renewal legislation which has helped to shape our own proposal.

### **How will the Administration solicit input from outside groups?**

Last winter and spring the Department hosted five meetings with experts in urban education to discuss urban needs and effective strategies for improving urban education. Many of these groups have participated in meetings throughout the year to offer advice on addressing urban education issues. Thus, the Administration's proposal already reflects more than a year of input from key groups committed to strengthening urban schools. Going forward, there will be many other opportunities for additional input as the legislation and grant competition are designed.

### **When will a bill go to Congress?**

Work is underway at the Department to prepare legislative specifications, but we plan to do additional consultations with Congress and stakeholders in the education community before transmitting our proposal to the Hill.

### **Do you anticipate that all districts cited as examples in your materials will be selected for the program?**

No. Each district cited helps illustrate one or more of the kinds of policies and activities to be supported under the Zones initiative, but no single district -- urban or rural -- best addresses each of the purposes of the program or will automatically be selected.

## **A NATIONAL EFFORT TO REDUCE CLASS SIZE: SMALLER CLASSES WITH QUALIFIED TEACHERS**

January 26, 1998

**REDUCING CLASS SIZE IN GRADES 1-3 TO NATIONWIDE AVERAGE OF 18.** In his State of the Union address, President Clinton will propose a \$12 billion initiative over 7 years (\$7.3 billion over 5 years) to help local schools provide small classes with qualified teachers in the early grades. This will help make sure that every child receives personal attention, gets a solid foundation for further learning, and learns to read independently by the end of third grade. The new initiative will reduce class size in grades 1-3 to a nationwide average of 18, by providing funds to help local school districts hire and pay the salaries of an additional 100,000 teachers. States will receive funds for teacher training, and new teachers will be required to pass state competency tests.

**Small Classes Make a Difference.** Studies confirm what parents and teachers know from experience--small classes promote effective teaching and learning. In a landmark four-year experimental study of class size reduction in grades kindergarten through 3 in Tennessee, researchers found that students in smaller classes earned significantly higher scores on basic skills tests in all four years and in all types of schools. The effects of smaller classes were largest for students in inner-city classes. Follow-up studies have shown that these achievement gains continued after the students returned to regular-size classes after third grade. Teachers in the study reported that they preferred small classes in order to better identify student needs, provide more individual attention, and cover more material effectively.

**A Competent Teacher in Every Classroom.** To master the basics and learn to read well, students need teachers who are qualified to teach. President Clinton's class size reduction initiative will help provide qualified teachers in grades 1-3 by:

**Requiring State Basic Skills Testing for New Teachers:** States would be required to implement basic skills testing for new teachers, to ensure parents that new teachers have basic reading and math skills. Each state would select the tests it determines is most appropriate for this purpose. Most states have such tests. Participating states and school districts would also be required to ensure that individuals hired to fill these new positions be either fully certified, or making satisfactory progress toward full certification. School districts could use funds to provide teachers with the additional training needed to meet certification requirements.

**Providing Funds for Teacher Training and Testing:** 10% of the funds in this initiative can be used to promote high quality teaching by (1) training teachers in proven practices for teaching reading and in effective practices in small classes; (2) providing mentors or other support for newly hired teachers; (3) providing incentives to recruit qualified teachers to high poverty schools; and (4) testing new teachers before they are hired and developing more rigorous tests for beginning teachers.

**Encouraging States to Adopt Rigorous Professional Tests and Upgrade Teacher Certification Requirements.** Teachers should be able to demonstrate that they know the subject to be taught and have the necessary knowledge and skills to help their students reach challenging state academic standards. States would be encouraged to use a portion of their funds to toughen teacher certification requirements and to require new teachers to demonstrate competence. For example, states could use these funds to develop rigorous tests of subject matter expertise and professional knowledge that prospective teachers would be required to pass before they start teaching.

**Holding Schools Accountable for Results.** School districts receiving these funds would be required to show that each school is making measurable progress in improving reading achievement within 3 years, or take necessary corrective actions -- such as providing additional teacher training, revising the curriculum, or implementing proven practices for teaching reading. School districts could lose funding if there is no subsequent improvement in reading achievement in those schools. School districts would also be required to publish an annual school report card, providing parents and taxpayers with clear information on student achievement, class size, and teacher qualifications.

**Targeting Funding.** Funds for the President's class size reduction initiative will be distributed to states on the basis of the Title 1 formula. Within the state, each high-poverty school district would receive the same share of these funds as it received under Title 1, and the remaining funds would be distributed within the state based on class size. Matching funds would be required from participating school districts, on a sliding scale ranging from 10-50%, with high-poverty districts contributing the least. Once a state has reached an average class size of 18 in grades 1-3, it could use these funds to further reduce class size in the early grades, or it could extend its efforts to other grades.

**Providing Facilities for Additional Classrooms.** In order to help school systems meet the need for additional classroom space, the President is (1) proposing a \$10 billion school modernization initiative over 10 years, that will provide incentives for communities to invest in local school facilities by leveraging \$22 billion in bonds during 1999-2000; (2) ensuring that changes to facilities in order to accommodate class size reductions is an allowable use of school modernization funds; (3) allowing for phased-in implementation of class size initiative to enhance state/local planning.

**Building on Successful Reforms in Arkansas.** As part of his comprehensive education reforms while Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton reduced class size in Arkansas to 20 in kindergarten and 23 in grades 1 through 3. His 1983 education reform plan also included a statewide intensive training program for elementary teachers and principals to improve teaching of reading, as well as basic skills testing for new teachers and basic skills and subject matter testing for experienced teachers.

## **Class Size Q's and A's**

**1. How much does this proposal cost, and how will it be paid for?**

This initiative will cost \$12 billion over 7 years, and \$7.3 billion over 5 years. It fits within the President's commitment to send Congress a balanced budget. Funding for this initiative will come from funds provided to states as part of comprehensive tobacco legislation.

**2. What is class size in grades 1-3 now?**

The nationwide average is 22, though many communities have classes much larger than that.

**3. How does this proposal to hire 100,000 teachers compare with other Congressional proposals to hire additional teachers that have recently been announced?**

A number of members in both Houses and both sides of the aisle have developed their own proposals to help school districts recruit or hire additional teachers. The President's proposal is the only one that is specifically aimed at providing smaller classes in the early grades. We do note that Rep. Paxon has announced a proposal that would also hire 100,000 teachers. While there are important differences between the President's proposal and Mr. Paxon's (Paxon's is not focused on reducing class size, and it is funded by eliminating Goals 2000, Americorps, the NEA), we hope that Paxon's proposal indicates that this is an area in which we can achieve bipartisan cooperation.

**4. Gov. Wilson in California has launched his own initiative to reduce class size. Does the President's duplicate California's effort?**

No. First, the President is proposing to reduce class size to an average of 18, whereas California's objective is 20. So this initiative can help California go further. Second, participating states like California will need to maintain their own efforts, and not simply use federal funds to substitute for state dollars. Third, we've learned from the experience in California in designing our proposal-- school districts need qualified teachers, adequate space for smaller classes, and the time to plan for lowering class size. The President's proposal takes care of all of these requirements.

**5. Gov. Gilmore in Virginia ran on a platform of hiring more teachers. Has the President stolen Gov. Gilmore's idea?**

No. In 1983 when he was Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton reduced class size in kindergarten to 20 and in grades 1-3 to 23. He also instituted teacher training programs in reading, and teacher testing. This national initiative to reduce class size draws on the

President's decades-long leadership and experience in education; not from recent initiatives of any governor.

**6. Will the teachers unions oppose the President's call for competency tests for teachers?**

We hope not. Teachers have as great an interest as anyone in making sure that new teachers are well prepared to teach, and the unions have expressed a strong commitment to making sure new teachers are prepared to teach well.

**7. This is a massive new funding program. Is this an effort to "buy" the support of the education establishment for the President's testing program?**

This program is a significant new investment in education, as are his School Modernization and Education Opportunity Zones initiatives. Together they reflect his deeply held view that education is his top priority, and must be the top priority for the nation. His budget reflects his priorities. They are part of an overall strategy to set very high standards and give students, teachers and schools the support they need to reach those standards.

Revised

**EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
For internal use only -- January 26, 1998

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Applicants must also demonstrate the support of all key stakeholders -- including parents and teachers. They must describe how they will use all available resources -- federal, state, local, and private -- to carry out their reform strategies and how they intend to maintain the reform effort once federal funds expire. Furthermore, successful applicants will need to describe how they will intervene in schools and how they will measure progress, including defining rigorous benchmarks for success. Finally, eligible districts often have substantial numbers of disabled and limited English proficient children, and successful applications will address how these children will be assisted to meet high standards.

### **How will Zones be selected?**

Districts or consortia will be selected under a competitive, peer-review process. Reviewers will be looking for districts which best address the purposes of the program and which demonstrate the greatest likelihood of modeling successful approaches for raising achievement in high poverty urban and rural areas.

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School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds to support standards-based, district-wide reforms such as: rewarding schools that make significant gains in student achievement; turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them; providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and

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The Department of Education will provide expert technical assistance to the Education Opportunity Zones through its technical assistance providers and by convening grantees to share information and ideas. It will also utilize technology to help districts consult with each other and disseminate lessons learned to urban and rural communities across the U.S.

**How will grantees be held accountable for results?**

During the negotiation of each grant award, each Zone will agree to a rigorous performance partnership with the Secretary of Education. The performance partnership must include specific, ambitious, disaggregated benchmarks in student achievement, dropout rates, and other indicators of success. Districts will receive additional financial support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching their agreed upon benchmarks.

**Mr. Clay's legislation provides for the President to direct other agencies -- beyond Education -- to assist local schools with problems like school construction. Does the President's proposal include a similar feature?**

The White House and the Department of Education are beginning to consult with other federal agencies to determine what kinds of assistance could be offered and what sort of arrangements would be most appropriate.

**Connections to other initiatives**

**How do these new Zones differ from Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities?**

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative and the EZ/EC initiative support one another, but are distinct. Education Opportunity Zones will consist of entire school districts or consortia of school districts. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are specific neighborhoods or regions that may or may not be contiguous with school districts. While both are in the spirit of bringing the community together behind focused efforts to address local challenges, Education Opportunity Zones are especially designed to address the educational needs of their communities and school districts, whereas the EZ/EC initiative is aimed at broader community revitalization strategies, which can include education but also extend to economic development, community development, and job training. Communities with a strong EZ/EC effort with a significant focus

on education will be well-positioned to rally the community together behind the kinds of effective school reforms that will be supported by Education Opportunity Zones.

**Do Zone districts have to participate in the national tests?**

No. We are pleased that 15 major city school districts have already made a commitment to take part in the national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, but participation in these tests is voluntary. However, successful Education Opportunity Zone applicants must show that they have firmly integrated challenging standards and tests (which could include state, local, or national assessments) into their strategies for raising student achievement.

**How do Zones relate to the Comprehensive School Reform Program? Do Zones have to implement comprehensive school reform programs in their schools?**

These two programs are distinct, but complementary, and both are geared to help students reach high academic standards.

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative distributes comparatively large grants from the Department of Education to a fairly limited number of competitively selected, high-poverty districts. The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a serious approach to high standards, entailing accountability for students, teachers, and schools, can help raise achievement across an entire district, or at least within a sizable portion of a district.

The Comprehensive School Reform program established during the last session of Congress provides formula funds to states which then distribute the funds competitively to a significant number of districts on behalf of individual schools. The purpose of the Comprehensive School Reform program is to get individual schools to successfully adopt tested reform models, or develop new, effective models based on research. CSR funds can help school in Education Opportunity Zones implement proven models of reform, and can help provide additional resources for Zones to use for turning around failing schools. The Education Department will encourage states to make sure these important resources are available to school districts eligible to be selected as EOZ's.

**Will Education Opportunity Zones receive a preference for other initiatives, such as school construction funding?**

At this time, there are no plans to provide additional incentives for participation beyond in the Education Opportunity Zones initiative beyond the added funding and flexibility that all Zones will receive. However, other new initiatives will include features targeting assistance on the kinds of high poverty communities that the Zones are designed to assist.

## **Process Issues**

### **What kind of support do you expect to receive in Congress?**

Improving public schools in our most disadvantaged communities should be a bipartisan national priority. Lawmakers in both parties are keen on finding tough, effective ways to address low achievement in some of our largest cities, and we expect this proposal to gain strong bipartisan support. We have been working with Congressman Bill Clay of St. Louis, Ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has submitted urban education renewal legislation which has helped to shape our own proposal.

### **How will the Administration solicit input from outside groups?**

Last winter and spring the Department hosted five meetings with experts in urban education to discuss urban needs and effective strategies for improving urban education. Many of these groups have participated in meetings throughout the year to offer advice on addressing urban education issues. Thus, the Administration's proposal already reflects more than a year of input from key groups committed to strengthening urban schools. Going forward, there will be many other opportunities for additional input as the legislation and grant competition are designed.

### **When will a bill go to Congress?**

Work is underway at the Department to prepare legislative specifications, but we plan to do additional consultations with Congress and stakeholders in the education community before transmitting our proposal to the Hill.

### **Do you anticipate that all districts cited as examples in your materials will be selected for the program?**

No. Each district cited helps illustrate one or more of the kinds of policies and activities to be supported under the Zones initiative, but no single district -- urban or rural -- best addresses each of the purposes of the program or will automatically be selected.

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## **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES: STRENGTHENING URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS**

January 26, 1998

*I challenge every school district to adopt high standards, to abolish social promotion, to move aggressively to help all students make the grade through tutoring, and summer schools, and to hold schools accountable for results, giving them the tools and the leadership and the parental involvement to do the job.*

*-- President Bill Clinton, October 28, 1997*

**HELPING RAISE ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH POVERTY COMMUNITIES.** President Clinton's Education Opportunity Zones initiative will strengthen public schools and help students master the basics where the need is the greatest: in high poverty urban and rural communities where low expectations, too many poorly prepared teachers, and overwhelmed school systems create significant barriers to high achievement. The Education Department will select approximately 50 high poverty urban and rural school districts that agree to: (1) use high standards and tests of student achievement to identify and provide help to students, teachers and schools who need it; (2) prevent students from falling behind by ensuring quality teaching, challenging curricula, and extended learning time; and (3) end social promotion and turn around failing schools. Added investments in these communities will accelerate their progress and provide successful models of system-wide, standards-based reform for the nation. The President's initiative will invest \$200 million in FY99, and \$1.5 billion over 5 years, to raise achievement and share lessons learned with school districts around the country.

**ENDING SOCIAL PROMOTION, AND GIVING SCHOOLS THE TOOLS TO HELP EVERY CHILD MEET HIGH EXPECTATIONS.** To be selected as Education Opportunity Zones, school districts will have to demonstrate that they are using their existing funds effectively to raise student achievement by: ■ holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; ■ holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, providing help to teachers who need it, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; ■ ensuring students don't fall behind, by providing a rich curriculum, good teaching and extended learning opportunities; ■ ending social promotions and requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers; and ■ providing students and parents with school report cards and expanded choice within public education.

**EXTRA RESOURCES TO IMPROVE TEACHING, LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP.** School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds to support standards-based, district-wide reforms such as: ■ rewarding schools that make significant gains in student achievement; ■ turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them; ■ providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; ■ building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; ■ implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; ■ providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; ■ helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board

for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and ■ implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove them if they fail to do so.

**COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO SUPPORT PROMISING MODELS.** Districts will be selected as Education Opportunity Zones under a competitive, peer-review process. A mix of large and smaller urban areas will be selected to participate, as well as rural school districts and consortia. Each urban Education Opportunity Zone will receive a 3-year grant of \$10-25 million per year (depending upon size and proposed activities), and each rural Zone will receive from \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia). Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001. Successful applicants will have broad-based partnerships to support their reforms -- including parents, teachers, local government, business and civic groups, institutions of higher education and other key stakeholders. Successful applications will show how the district will use all available resources -- federal, state, and local, as well as any business or foundation funds -- to carry out its reform strategy and maintain it once these federal funds are no longer available.

**REWARDS FOR DEMONSTRATED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS.** Each Education Opportunity Zone will agree to specific, ambitious, benchmarks for improved student achievement, lower dropout rates and other indicators of success, for districtwide performance and specific student subgroups. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching those benchmarks.

**GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN USING OTHER FEDERAL RESOURCES.** All schools in an Education Opportunity Zone school district -- regardless of poverty level -- will become eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds. Requirements pertaining to school accountability, as well as special education, health, safety, and civil rights, will continue to be met.

**ASSISTANCE TO HELP DISTRICTS FIND AND SHARE WHAT WORKS.** The Department of Education will offer technical assistance, use technology to help districts consult with each other, and disseminate lessons learned to communities nationwide. Special attention will be given to helping school districts design and implement strategies for providing students who need it with early intervention and extra help to enable them to meet promotion standards. In addition, a national evaluation of the Education Opportunity Zones will be conducted, with the results helping to inform the next reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

**BOLD ACTION TO HELP CHILDREN IN OUR CITIES AND RURAL AREAS.** Education Opportunity Zones are part of a broader set of initiatives to help strengthen high-poverty urban and rural schools. President Clinton is also proposing new initiatives to reduce class size in the primary grades, modernize school buildings, recruit and prepare teachers for underserved urban and rural areas, and dramatically expand the availability and quality of child care and after-school learning opportunities. These and other proposals will have a powerful impact on improving the prospects of children in some of our poorest communities.

**URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITY ZONES -- *EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT COULD  
BE SUPPORTED UNDER THE PROPOSAL***

January 26, 1998

**Student Assistance and Accountability:**

- In **Chicago**, many students participate in the district's Lighthouse after-school program, which features intense reading/math instruction, social, and other enrichment activities, and a meal. Students in the district who perform below minimum standards at key transition grades (3, 6, 8 and 9) are required to participate in a seven-week "SummerBridge" program and pass a test before moving on to the next grade. Over 45,000 students were served in the SummerBridge program in 1997, and over 144,000 students participated in some form of summer activity.
- The **Long Beach** school district required 1,600 third graders who had not attained reading proficiency by the end of the year to attend five-week tutorial sessions.
- In **Cincinnati**, student promotion is now based on specific standards that define what students must know and be able to do. The standards are designed to prepare students to pass the state's ninth-grade proficiency test.
- In the **Halifax County**, North Carolina School District, high school honor students are paid by the district to tutor younger students in reading one-and-a-half hours per day and the district hires retired teachers to work with struggling students.
- A before- and after-school tutoring program offered by the **Fentress County** school system in Jamestown, Tennessee provides approximately 300 students with long- or short-term assistance to address their instructional needs. The program is offered in all grades; mathematics and language arts are priorities for high school students.
- After determining that half of its middle grade students were reading below grade level, staff in the **Wilkes County** schools in Washington, Georgia made intensive reading instruction a priority. The district has worked to upgrade professional development in reading instruction and reduce class size, helping teachers work with individual students.
- In the **Rogers** and **Holland** school districts in Texas, students and teachers identify a project that utilizes technology as a primary research tool. Teachers create teams of 2 to 4 students, a mentor teacher-- and an expert who is linked via technology. The approach connects students to information sources beyond the rural communities and gets them actively engaged in learning.

**Staff Effectiveness and Accountability:**

- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg's** Benchmark Goals program gives cash awards of \$750 to

\$1,000 to teachers in schools whose students meet a range of goals that reflect improvements from previous performance. The goals are structured so that schools have an incentive to raise the achievement of their lowest performing students. The program also focuses on goals for African American students, who historically have been under-achievers in the Charlotte school system, thus ensuring that schools work to close the achievement gap between African American and white students.

- In **Cincinnati**, school district administrators' pay raises are now linked to job performance, with automatic cost-of-living adjustments and salary rates being replaced by new criteria, including performance on several measures such as student test scores and graduation rates. The district is also preparing a system for providing financial rewards to schools based on student achievement, to take effect in 1998-99.
- In **St. Paul**, the school district is collaborating with the teachers' union and the University of Minnesota on Project 20/20 to support teachers through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process. The district pays the application fees and the university and other partners develop and conduct professional support programs for the candidates.
- School districts like **Los Angeles**, where teachers will get a raise of 15%, are providing significant salary increases to reward National Board Certified Master Teachers.
- Peer review and assistance programs help beginning teachers learn to teach and help veterans who are having difficulty improve their teaching or leave the classroom without union grievances or delays. In **New York City**, for example, low-performing teachers can be assigned to an intervention program where they gain assistance from colleagues and administrators, and if unable to improve, are counseled out of the profession or removed. In **Cincinnati** and **Toledo**, which also have such programs, while most teachers improve their performance, roughly one-third of the teachers referred to intervention have left teaching by the end of the year, through resignation, retirement or dismissal. **Columbus** and **Seattle** also have aggressive peer review programs.
- In **Rochester**, expert, experienced teachers can be selected through a rigorous evaluation process as "lead teachers" and given significant salary stipends to become involved with peer counseling, or to take on other reform-related priorities such as consulting with new teachers, accepting positions in "intervention" schools, and developing curricula.
- **New York City's** Community District 2 places an unusually strong emphasis on providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to build skills and learn from one another. For example, the district enables visiting teachers to observe and practice with a highly accomplished teacher for three weeks while their classrooms are taught by another experienced teacher. District 2 registered the second highest standardized test scores in math and reading in the city.

- Students in the **Penasco** Independent Schools in New Mexico benefit from a districtwide plan for student success that sets standards for all district staff. The plan specifies what administrators, teachers, and support staff must do to reach the district's targeted goals in a number of areas, including academic performance, attendance, and parent involvement. The plan also includes benchmarks to help staff assess their progress toward the goals. Student performance on the New Mexico High School Competency Exam and on the portfolio writing assessment have increased over the last three years.

### **School Improvement and Accountability:**

- In 1994, the **San Francisco** Unified School District reconstituted Visitacion Valley Middle School because of its low performance on a number of measures. The school district hired a new principal, who then hand-picked a new staff that redesigned the school's structure and program, including a new commitment to a safe atmosphere and to fostering children's educational development. The school is now a "graduate" of the reconstitution process, having shown gains in student achievement since reconstitution.
- The **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** school system distributes to parents easy-to-read student learning goals at the beginning of the school year. The district then follows up with school report cards on student attendance and performance that are distributed to parents and every household in the district, and are published in the newspaper, in part to help inform parents' decisions about the district's magnet schools.
- In **Chicago**, schools are placed on probation due to continuously low student achievement. These schools will be targeted for aggressive intervention strategies by the district, such as providing intensive help and training from expert teams of educators, or, where necessary, replacing ineffective principals and teachers. In the event of persistent failure, the district may shut down and reorganize the schools. Seven high schools were reconstituted between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years.

Chicago also recognizes a number of exemplary schools, providing financial rewards of \$5,000 and \$10,000 to the winners to become professional development centers for other schools. Seventeen schools were awarded exemplary status in the first year.

- **New York City** also has a union-district negotiated process for "redesigning" schools identified by the state as failing. Such schools can replace approximately half the incumbent teaching faculty. For example, at PS 154 in Harlem, test scores have gone up significantly since the school was reopened in the fall of 1996.
- **McCreary County**, Kentucky has taken advantage of the fact that one of its schools was designated as in need of assistance from one of Kentucky's Distinguished Educators. The Distinguished Educator introduced the school to a variety of effective instructional

strategies, which the county then disseminated to other schools in the district. Teachers have been working to align the county's curriculum with the state's standards. Schools develop their own improvement plans based on student achievement data, and use the plans to determine teachers' professional development needs. McCreary County has met its 1998 state accountability target a year early.

- The **Los Fresnos** Independent School District in Texas supplements the state assessment with local assessments -- administered three times each year -- to provide teachers with data for monitoring students' progress, and to modify timelines and instructional practices. Students who consistently perform below expectations are tutored after school by certified teachers, who receive Title I-funded stipends. In 1997, 84 percent of students tested passed all portions of the state assessment -- up from 77 percent in 1996.

#### **Public School Choice:**

- In **Boston**, all parents choose their child's public school, and have a wide array of options ranging from neighborhood schools, magnet schools, and pilot and public charter schools which operate under performance contracts that provide them with greater autonomy and accountability for results.
- The **Houston** Independent School District recently instituted an open choice program. Parents may send their children to any of the district's 258 schools provided the school is enrolled at 95 percent of capacity or below. The district is currently analyzing available space and plans to publish the information in the near future; parents will apply to the district transfer office to change schools. In addition to this choice program, the district has launched an aggressive effort to support in-district charter schools.
- **Cambridge**, Massachusetts allows every family to choose a public school for their child. The school district provides information on every school and has created parent centers to help parents learn about and choose a public school for their child. More than 90% of parents get their first choice of kindergarten for their child, and most get one of their top picks at all grade levels.
- The **San Diego** school district has helped parents, teachers, and principals create more than a dozen public charter schools that stay open only as long as they do a good job. These are all schools of choice, publicly accountable and open to students from around the school district.
- The **Zuni Pueblo** Public School District in New Mexico has public school choice, enabling families to choose among local schools, BIA and BIA-supported boarding schools. Families are well connected with the schools, for example, school conferences draw 100 percent participation from parents.

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**EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES**  
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

January 25, 1998

**What is the purpose of the Education Opportunity Zones?**

This initiative will help accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts that are on the right track, and highlight models of success. Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Funds will be targeted to improve low performing schools, expand opportunities for student achievement, broaden choices for families, and hold schools, teachers, and students accountable for results.

**How does the Zone initiative relate to the President's other new initiatives?**

Education opportunity zones are part of a broader set of initiatives to help strengthen urban and rural schools. President Clinton has also proposed new initiatives to reduce class size in the primary grades, modernize school buildings, recruit and prepare teachers for underserved urban and rural areas, and dramatically expand the availability and quality of child care and after-school learning opportunities. These and other proposals still to be announced will have a powerful impact on improving the prospects of children in some of our poorest communities.

**Are you proposing this initiative as an alternative to respond to Republican calls for vouchers?**

The President is committed to strengthening public schools, not abandoning them. Along with other new initiatives that will help raise achievement for urban and rural students, like school construction and teacher recruitment and preparation, we are proposing Education Opportunity Zones in response to the clear need for sharp improvements in the nation's poorest school districts and to encourage and expand promising school reform efforts that are taking a disciplined, effective approach centered on high standards. The fact is that 90% of our students attend public schools, and our primary responsibility, especially with limited federal resources, is to make sure that the public schools they attend are among the best in the world. This means concentrating our time and money on raising academic standards, improving teaching, providing schools with technology and other up-to-date learning tools, and creating charter schools and other forms of choice within the public school system. In contrast to vouchers, the Education Opportunity Zones will support effective local efforts to improve education for all students in participating districts, rather than just a few.

**This initiative clearly encourages districts to discontinue social promotion. How do you respond to criticisms of that approach?**

The President strongly believes that we shouldn't promote kids who are not ready because it will hurt them over the long term. This initiative is designed to hold teachers and schools accountable, as well as students. Rather than punishing kids, this initiative attempts to create the conditions under which districts take steps to ensure that students are ready to meet standards the first time, rather than falling behind and needing remediation.

**What communities will be eligible for the Zone initiative? How many school districts will be eligible to participate?**

This initiative will target urban and rural school districts with a significant percentage or a large number of students in poverty. In order to be selected as Zones, districts will have to show that they have already begun to raise student achievement, or that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies. Well over a thousand districts will be eligible, including districts in every state.

**How many grants are expected to be awarded and what will be their size?**

The Zone initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years. We expect to fund over 50 grants to urban and rural communities. Urban school districts will receive grants of \$10-25 million per year (depending on the size and proposed activities). Rural communities will receive grants of \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia) per year.

The Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001.

**How do these new Zones differ from Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities?**

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative and the EZ/EC initiative support one another, but are distinct. Education Opportunity Zones will consist of entire school districts or consortia of school districts. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are specific neighborhoods or regions that may or may not be contiguous with school districts. While both are in the spirit of bringing the community together behind focused efforts to address local challenges, Education Opportunity Zones are especially designed to address the educational needs of their communities and school districts, whereas the EZ/EC initiative is aimed at broader community revitalization strategies, which can include education but also extend to economic development, community development, and job training.

**Do Zone districts have to participate in the national tests?**

No. We are pleased that 15 major city school districts have already made a commitment to take part in the national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, but participation in these tests is voluntary. However, successful Education Opportunity Zone applicants must show that they have firmly integrated challenging standards and tests (which could include state, local, or national assessments) into their strategies for raising student achievement.

**What kind of support do you expect to receive in Congress?**

Improving public schools in our most disadvantaged communities should be a bipartisan national priority. Lawmakers in both parties are keen on finding tough, effective ways to address low achievement in some of our largest cities, and we expect this proposal to gain strong bipartisan support. We have been working with Congressman Bill Clay of St. Louis, Ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has submitted urban education renewal legislation which has helped to shape our own proposal.

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**EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

For internal use only -- January 26, 1998

**Overall Questions**

**What is the purpose of the Education Opportunity Zones?**

This initiative will help accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts that are on the right track, and highlight models of success. Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Funds will be targeted to improve low performing schools, expand opportunities for student achievement, broaden choices for families, and hold schools, teachers, and students accountable for results.

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The President strongly believes that we shouldn't promote kids who are not ready because it will hurt them over the long term. This initiative is designed to hold teachers and schools accountable, as well as students. Rather than punishing kids, this initiative attempts to create the conditions under which districts take steps to ensure that students are ready to meet standards the first time, rather than falling behind and needing remediation.

## **Qualified Applicants**

### **What communities will be eligible for the Zone initiative?**

High-poverty urban and rural school districts will be targeted under this initiative. In order to be selected as Zones, districts will have to show that they have already begun to raise student achievement, or that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies.

### **How many school districts will be eligible to participate?**

This initiative will target urban and rural school districts with a significant percentage or a large number of students in poverty. This means that well over a thousand districts will be eligible, including districts in every state.

### **Are Zones entire school districts or smaller areas within school districts?**

Entire school districts, or consortia of districts, will be designated Education Opportunity Zones. Grant funds may be used for district-wide activities such as improving sound management and assessment systems, as well as to improve low-performing schools. Districts may choose to target their resources under the initiative to subsets of low-performing schools.

### **Will large cities receive a preference for designation as Zones?**

Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that both large and smaller urban areas are selected to participate, as well as rural school districts. We expect that urban school districts will receive a substantial proportion of funding under the initiative.

### **Can consortia of districts apply to be Zones?**

Yes, consortia of districts can apply. We anticipate that most consortia will be comprised of rural school districts.

### **Can charter schools participate in the program?**

Under state law, public charter schools are generally either Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) or public schools within an LEA. Charter schools that are part of an urban or rural school district designated as an Education Opportunity Zone may benefit from this program. Charter schools that are considered an LEA themselves are eligible to apply only if they meet the eligibility criteria for all LEAs. That is, they must be high poverty and serve a small town or rural community or an urban area. While charter schools may be eligible to apply, the purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a district-wide, serious approach to high standards can help raise achievement.

### **Are private schools eligible for funding under this program?**

Private schools cannot be designated as Education Opportunity Zones, but students, teachers and administrators associated with private schools within an area served by a Zone will be eligible to participate, on an equitable basis, in training and extended learning programs supported by the initiative. Likewise, private school teachers and administrators will also be eligible to receive

materials and information developed through the grants.

**Can schools serving Native American students apply for funds?**

Yes. Most BIA schools and schools that serve large concentrations of Native American students will qualify as eligible applicants under this program. Many of these schools are rural and have high percentages of students from low income families. Proposed legislation will direct the Secretary to seek to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of grants among geographic regions of the country and to rural schools serving large concentrations of Native American students.

**[Can territories and outlying areas apply for this program?]**

**Grant Size and Scope**

**How many grants are expected to be awarded and what will be their size?**

The Zone initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years. We expect to fund over 50 grants to urban and rural communities. Urban school districts will receive grants of \$10-25 million per year (depending on the size and proposed activities). Rural communities will receive grants of \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia) per year.

The Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001.

**Are grants renewable?**

Grants will be awarded for 3 years. As part of their original grant award, districts will agree to a rigorous performance partnership that includes specific benchmarks for student success. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching the agreed benchmarks.

**Will districts have to provide matching funds?**

No, districts will not have to provide an explicit match. However, a successful applicant will have to show how it will use all available resources, including the new funds sought under the Education Opportunity Zones program, in order to carry out its plan to raise student achievement. Moreover, each applicant must show how it will continue to carry out its strategies using other resources at the conclusion of Zones funding. Education Opportunity Zone funding will be structured to phase out in latter years.

## **Application Process and Grant Activities**

### **What will districts have to include in their applications for funds? Must they indicate which schools they will target for improvement?**

Districts will have to demonstrate in their applications that they are using their existing funds effectively and have already begun to raise student achievement, or, at a minimum, that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies. They will also need to explain how they will address key aspects of effective local reform such as: holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, providing help to those who need it, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; ensuring students don't fall behind, by providing a rich curriculum, good teaching and extended learning opportunities; ending social promotions and requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers; and providing students and parents with expanded choice within public education.

Applicants must also demonstrate the support of all key stakeholders -- including parents and teachers. They must describe how they will use all available resources -- federal, state, local, and private -- to carry out their reform strategies and how they intend to maintain the reform effort once federal funds expire. Furthermore, successful applicants will need to describe how they will intervene in schools and how they will measure progress, including defining rigorous benchmarks for success.

### **How will Zones be selected?**

Districts or consortia will be selected under a competitive, peer-review process. Reviewers will be looking for districts which best address the purposes of the program and which demonstrate the greatest likelihood of modeling successful approaches for raising achievement in high poverty urban and rural areas.

### **What kinds of activities can the grant funds support?**

School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds for key activities such as: providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; providing bonuses to schools that make significant gains in student achievement; turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them or reopening them as charter schools; building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; implementing sound management practices and accountability systems; providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; and implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove them if they fail to do so.

**What flexibility will districts have in the use of other resources?**

All public schools within an Education Opportunity Zone -- regardless of poverty level -- will become eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds. In other words, under the proposal, the 50% poverty threshold ordinarily required for a school to become a schoolwide project would not apply to Education Opportunity Zone schools. However, requirements pertaining to school accountability, as well as special education, health, safety, and civil rights, will continue to be met.

**What technical assistance will be available for Zones?**

The Department of Education will provide expert technical assistance to the Education Opportunity Zones through its technical assistance providers and by convening grantees to share information and ideas. It will also utilize technology to help districts consult with each other and disseminate lessons learned to urban and rural communities across the U.S.

**How will grantees be held accountable for results?**

During the negotiation of each grant award, each Zone will agree to a rigorous performance partnership with the Secretary of Education. The performance partnership must include specific, ambitious, disaggregated benchmarks in student achievement, dropout rates, and other indicators of success. Districts will receive additional financial support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching their agreed upon benchmarks.

**Mr. Clay's legislation provides for the President to direct other agencies -- beyond Education -- to assist local schools with problems like school construction. Does the President's proposal include a similar feature?**

The White House and the Department of Education are beginning to consult with other federal agencies to determine what kinds of assistance could be offered and what sort of arrangements would be most appropriate.

**Connections to other initiatives****How do these new Zones differ from Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities?**

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative and the EZ/EC initiative support one another, but are distinct. Education Opportunity Zones will consist of entire school districts or consortia of school districts. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are specific neighborhoods or regions that may or may not be contiguous with school districts. While both are in the spirit of bringing the community together behind focused efforts to address local challenges, Education Opportunity Zones are especially designed to address the educational needs of their communities and school districts, whereas the EZ/EC initiative is aimed at broader community revitalization strategies, which can include education but also extend to economic development, community development, and job training. Communities with a strong EZ/EC effort with a significant focus on education will be well-positioned to rally the community together behind the kinds of effective school reforms that will be supported by Education Opportunity Zones.

**Do Zone districts have to participate in the national tests?**

No. We are pleased that 15 major city school districts have already made a commitment to take part in the national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, but participation in these tests is voluntary. However, successful Education Opportunity Zone applicants must show that they have firmly integrated challenging standards and tests (which could include state, local, or national assessments) into their strategies for raising student achievement.

**How do Zones relate to the Comprehensive School Reform Program? Do Zones have to implement comprehensive school reform programs in their schools?**

These two programs are distinct, but complementary, and both are geared to help students reach high academic standards.

The Education Opportunity Zones initiative distributes comparatively large grants from the Department of Education to a fairly limited number of competitively selected, high-poverty districts. The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that a serious approach to high standards, entailing accountability for students, teachers, and schools, can help raise achievement across an entire district, or at least within a sizable portion of a district.

The Comprehensive School Reform program established during the last session of Congress provides formula funds to states which then distribute the funds competitively to a significant number of districts on behalf of individual schools. The purpose of the Comprehensive School Reform program is to get individual schools to successfully adopt tested reform models, or develop new, effective models based on research. CSR funds can help school in Education Opportunity Zones implement proven models of reform, and can help provide additional resources for Zones to use for turning around failing schools. The Education Department will encourage states to make sure these important resources are available to school districts eligible to be selected as EOZ's.

**Will Education Opportunity Zones receive a preference for other initiatives, such as school construction funding?**

At this time, there are no plans to provide additional incentives for participation beyond in the Education Opportunity Zones initiative beyond the added funding and flexibility that all Zones will receive. However, other new initiatives will include features targeting assistance on the kinds of high poverty communities that the Zones are designed to assist.

## **Process Issues**

### **What kind of support do you expect to receive in Congress?**

Improving public schools in our most disadvantaged communities should be a bipartisan national priority. Lawmakers in both parties are keen on finding tough, effective ways to address low achievement in some of our largest cities, and we expect this proposal to gain strong bipartisan support. We have been working with Congressman Bill Clay of St. Louis, Ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who has submitted urban education renewal legislation which has helped to shape our own proposal.

### **How will the Administration solicit input from outside groups?**

Last winter and spring the Department hosted five meetings with experts in urban education to discuss urban needs and effective strategies for improving urban education. Many of these groups have participated in meetings throughout the year to offer advice on addressing urban education issues. Thus, the Administration's proposal already reflects more than a year of input from key groups committed to strengthening urban schools. Going forward, there will be many other opportunities for additional input as the legislation and grant competition are designed.

### **When will a bill go to Congress?**

Work is underway at the Department to prepare legislative specifications, but we plan to do additional consultations with Congress and stakeholders in the education community before transmitting our proposal to the Hill.

### **Do you anticipate that all districts cited as examples in your materials will be selected for the program?**

No. Each district cited helps illustrate one or more of the kinds of policies and activities to be supported under the Zones initiative, but no single district -- urban or rural -- best addresses each of the purposes of the program or will automatically be selected.

## EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES:

Strengthening Urban and Rural Public Schools by Raising Standards,  
Expanding Choice, and Strengthening Accountability  
REVISED DRAFT -- January 15, 1998

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**ACCELERATING PROGRESS IN HIGH POVERTY URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS.** More than half the students in our nation's city schools are failing to master the basics in reading, math, and science -- the building blocks of all the skills they will need to succeed in the 21st Century. However, in a number of urban areas across the country, school districts are beginning to make progress in helping students reach high standards. In Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, and other districts with strong leadership, challenging academic standards, a clear emphasis on getting kids the help they need, and a strong focus on results, urban districts are beginning to show progress in increasing student achievement. Schools in our nation's poor, rural areas often face many of the same challenges, and are adopting similar strategies for improvement.

President Clinton has proposed to accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts, and highlight models of success, by designating approximately 50 school districts as Education Opportunity Zones. In order to be chosen, a school district will have to demonstrate a strong commitment to holding schools, principals and teachers, and students accountable for academic performance, as well as a track record of improving academic achievement (districtwide, or at least in schools specifically targeted for intervention). The President's initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years, in raising achievement and sharing lessons learned with school districts nationally.

**A SHARP FOCUS ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS.** Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Therefore, under this initiative, funds will be targeted from the outset to school systems with significant poverty that can show that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies and have already begun to raise student achievement. Moreover, districts that succeed in raising achievement over the first three years of the grant will qualify for continued funding into the fourth and fifth years.

**GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT HIGH STANDARDS.** To be selected as Education Opportunity Zones, school districts will have to demonstrate how they will address some key aspects of effective local reform efforts: → holding schools accountable for helping students reach high academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress; → holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, and fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers; → requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic

careers; → and providing students and parents with expanded choice within public education.

**EXTRA RESOURCES TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING.** School districts will use Education Opportunity Zone funds for key activities such as: → providing extra help to students who need it to meet challenging standards, through after-school, Saturday, and/or summer school programs; → providing bonuses to schools that make significant gains in student achievement; → turning around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, or closing them down and reconstituting them or reopening them as charter schools; → building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; → providing intensive professional development to teachers and principals; → helping outstanding teachers earn master teacher certification from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards and giving them bonuses when they do; → and implementing programs to identify low performing teachers, assist them to improve, and remove them if they fail to do so.

**COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO SUPPORT PROMISING MODELS.** Districts or consortia (including districts serving Native American students) will be selected as Education Opportunity Zones under a competitive, peer-review process. Each urban Education Opportunity Zone will receive a 3-year grant worth up to \$10-25 million per year (depending upon size and proposed activities), and each rural Zone could receive from \$250,000 to \$3 million (for consortia). Zones will be selected in two rounds, the first in FY 1999, and the second in FY 2001. Successful applicants will demonstrate the support of all key stakeholders -- including parents, teachers, and show how the district will use all available resources -- federal, state, and local, as well as any business or foundation funds -- in order to carry out its reform strategy, and how it intends to maintain the reform effort once federal funds are no longer available.

**REWARDS FOR DEMONSTRATED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS.** Each Education Opportunity Zone would agree to a rigorous performance partnership with the Secretary of Education, agreeing to specific, ambitious, disaggregated benchmarks in student achievement, dropout rates and other indicators of success. Districts may receive further support in years 4 and 5 only if they have demonstrated success in reaching the agreed benchmarks.

**FLEXIBILITY IN USE OF OTHER RESOURCES.** Education Opportunity Zones will be given the authority to combine all district-level federal funds (other than special education funds) to carry out activities that support the district's plan to raise achievement for all students in the district. In addition, Education Opportunity Zones will be given the option of making all schools in the district -- regardless of poverty level -- eligible for schoolwide flexibility in the use of federal education funds.

**ASSISTANCE TO HELP DISTRICTS FIND AND SHARE WHAT WORKS.** In order to help Education Opportunity Zones maximize the impact of all their resources, and assist many other districts to learn from their efforts, the Department of Education will offer technical assistance, use technology to help districts consult with each other, and disseminate lessons learned to urban and rural communities across the U.S. In addition, a national evaluation of the Zones will be conducted, with the results helping to inform the next reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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## DRAFT

### **Strengthening Public Schools By Raising Standards, Expanding Opportunity, and Requiring Accountability**

**OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR REACHING CHALLENGING ACADEMIC STANDARDS.** In a number of urban areas across the country, school districts are beginning to make progress in their efforts to help students reach high standards. In Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, and other districts where there is strong leadership, challenging academic standards, a clear emphasis on getting kids the help they need, and a strong focus on results, urban districts are beginning to show progress in increasing student achievement.

The Administration is developing a new initiative to help accelerate and expand such progress, and highlight models of success, by designating a number of high-poverty urban and rural school districts as Education Opportunity Zones. This competitive challenge grants program is aimed at demonstrating comprehensive, coordinated and effective approaches to expanding opportunities for students in high poverty urban and rural school districts, coupled with a balanced approach to increased responsibility for results for schools, educators and students themselves. High-poverty school districts will be eligible for additional Federal funding *if* (1) they now adopt tough reform measures -- like those adopted in Chicago -- that make administrators, principals, teachers, and students truly accountable for success or failure, and (2) in time, show real improvements in student achievement.

To receive funds, local school districts will demonstrate how they will:

- provide students and parents with choice within the public school system;
- hold schools accountable for helping students reach academic standards, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress;
- hold teachers and principals accountable for quality, including rewarding outstanding teachers, and implementing processes for fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers.
- require students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their academic careers.

School districts can use Education Opportunity Zone funds to:

- provide extra help to students in need in order to meet challenging standards, through after-school or Saturday tutoring programs and/or summer school.
- provide bonuses to schools that make significant gains in student achievement, and turn around failing schools by implementing proven reform models, providing intensive teacher training, building stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses and community-based organizations, or closing down failing schools and reopening them as charter schools.

- provide needed training to teachers and principals; reward outstanding teachers by helping them earn certification as master teachers from the National Board for Professional Teaching standards and providing them with financial incentives when they do; and implement programs to identify low performing teachers, providing them help to improve, and removing them fairly and quickly if they don't.

**Examples of Local School Districts Using These Approaches.** (See Attachment)

**Spreading Practices Nationwide.** These are the kinds of approaches that must be replicated everywhere in order to strengthen public schools. The President's Education Opportunity Zones challenge grants will help demonstrate how they can work and spread them to cities and rural communities with students that can benefit from them the most. They will help make sure that our most disadvantaged students are held to high academic standards and helped to reach them. They will help make sure that disadvantaged students can choose among good public schools, and are not trapped in failing schools. They will help reach the President's goal of having at least one Master Teacher in every school, which is particularly important for students in high poverty schools, because these schools often have the least well prepared teachers.

**Budget.** This initiative has not yet been finalized. Consultation with the education community, state and local officials, higher education, community groups and others is still underway. Final budget numbers will not be determined until the FY 1999 budget process is completed.

**CHALLENGE GRANTS FOR URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITY ZONES -- *EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT COULD  
BE SUPPORTED UNDER THE PROPOSAL***

**Student Assistance and Accountability:**

- In **Chicago**, many students participate in the district's Lighthouse after-school program, which features intense reading/math instruction, social other enrichment activities, and a meal. Students in the district who perform below minimum standards at key transition grades (3, 6, 8 and 9) are required to participate in a seven-week "SummerBridge" program and pass a test before moving on to the next grade. Over 45,000 students were served in the SummerBridge program in 1997, and over 144,000 students participated in some form of summer activity.
- This summer **Denver** served approximately 2,400 students in grades 3, 5, and 8 who were required to attend summer school to address subpar reading scores.
- The **Long Beach** school district required 1,600 third graders who had not attained reading proficiency by the end of the year to attend five-week tutorial sessions.
- In **Cincinnati**, student promotion is now based on specific standards that define what students must know and be able to do. The standards are designed to prepare students to pass the state's ninth-grade proficiency test.
- As part of the superintendent's focus on reading, the **Houston** school district is hiring 150 reading coaches. The coaches, mainly college students tutor about 1,000 children on a one-to-one basis at \$10 an hour. Designed by the University of Texas at Dallas, the program will use an intensive approach. The university is training the tutors and the district is funding the program from the general budget.

**Staff Effectiveness and Accountability:**

- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg's** Benchmark Goals program gives cash awards of \$750 to \$1,000 to teachers in schools when their students meet a range of goals based on their previous performance. The goals are structured so that schools have an incentive to raise the achievement of their lowest performing students. It also focuses on goals for African American students, who historically have been under-achievers in the Charlotte school system, ensuring that schools work to close the achievement gap with white students.
- In **Cincinnati**, school district administrators' pay raises are now linked to job performance, with automatic cost-of-living adjustments and salary rates being replaced with new criteria, including performance on several measures such as student test scores and graduation rates. The district is also preparing a system for providing financial rewards to schools based on student achievement, to take effect in 1998-99.

- In **St. Paul**, the school district is collaborating with the teachers' union and the University of Minnesota on Project 20/20 to support teachers through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification process. The district pays the application fees and the university and other partners develop and conduct professional support programs for the candidates.
- States like **North Carolina** and **Kentucky**, and school districts like **Los Angeles**, are providing significant salary increases to reward National Board Certified Master Teachers.
- Peer review and assistance programs help beginning teachers learn to teach and help veterans who are having difficulty improve their teaching or leave the classroom without union grievances or delays. In **Cincinnati**, for example, low-performing teachers can be assigned to an intervention program where they gain assistance from colleagues and administrators, and if unable to improve, are counseled out of the profession or removed. In Cincinnati, as well as **Toledo**, while most teachers improve their performance, roughly one-third of the teachers referred to intervention have left teaching by the end of the year, through resignation, retirement or dismissal.

In **Rochester**, expert, experienced teachers can be selected through a rigorous evaluation process as “lead teachers” and given significant salary stipends to become involved with peer counseling, or to take on other reform-related priorities such as consulting with new teachers, accepting positions in “intervention” schools, and developing curricula. **Columbus** and **Seattle** also have aggressive peer review programs.

- **New York City's** Community District 2 places an unusually strong emphasis on providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to build skills and learn from one another. For example, the district enables visiting teachers to observe and practice with a highly accomplished teacher for three weeks while their classrooms are taught by another experienced teacher. District 2 registered the second highest standardized test scores in math and reading in the city.
- In 1996, **Memphis** opened its new Teaching and Learning Academy, which coordinates professional development opportunities for all teachers in the district. The Academy offers workshops in all major areas of school reform including leadership, core content, performance assessment, and uses of technology.

#### **School Improvement and Accountability:**

- **The San Francisco** Unified School District places low-performing schools on a one-year probationary period, during which they are expected to improve student performance. If there is no improvement, the school is reconstituted. All staff must reapply for jobs at their school, and the Board hires a new principal, who in turn hires a new teaching staff and support staff. The new team must then put together an improvement plan to raise student achievement. Since the 1993-94 school year, ten schools have been reconstituted.
- The **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** school system distributes to parents easy-to-read student

learning goals at the beginning of the school year. The district then follows up with school report cards on student attendance and performance that are distributed to parents and every household in the district, and are published in the newspaper, in part to help inform parents' decisions about the district's magnet schools.

- In **Chicago**, schools can be placed on probation due to low student achievement. These schools will be targeted for aggressive intervention strategies by the district, such as providing intensive help and training from expert teams of educators, or, where necessary, replacing ineffective principals and teachers. In the event of persistent failure, the district may shut down and reorganize the schools. Seven high schools were reconstituted between the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years.

Chicago also recognizes a number of exemplary schools, providing financial rewards of \$5,000 and \$10,000 to the winners to become professional development centers for other schools. Seventeen schools were awarded exemplary status in the first year.

- 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. The state also rewards schools that have demonstrated substantial progress by distributing \$27 million to 502 schools in 1997.
- Late last summer, **Cleveland** reconstituted two elementary schools that had failed to meet district-mandated school performance indicators and where there had been significant internal strife among staff members. The district reassigned the schools' principals 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. And earlier this year **Denver**, working closely with the teacher's union there, reconstituted two elementary schools, replacing nearly the entire staff at each.
- **New York City** also has a union-district negotiated process for "redesigning" schools identified by the state as failing. Such schools can replace approximately half the incumbent teaching faculty.
- In **Memphis**, since 1995, about half of all schools have adopted a "break-the-mold" reform model, including several of the models developed by the New American Schools Development Corporation.

## Public School Choice:

- In **Boston**, all parents choose their child's public school, and have a wide array of options ranging from neighborhood schools, magnet schools, and pilot and public charter schools which operate under performance contracts that provide them with greater autonomy and accountability for results.
- The **Houston** Independent School District recently instituted an open choice program. Parents may send their children to any of the district's 258 schools provided the school is enrolled at 95 percent of capacity or below. The district is currently analyzing available space and plans to publish the information in the near future; parents will apply to the district transfer office to change schools. HISD will not transport students to schools outside their attendance area. In addition to this choice program, the district has launched an aggressive effort to support in-district charter schools.
- **Cambridge** allows every family to choose a public school for their child. The school district provides information on every school and has created parent centers to help parents learn about and choose a public school for their child. More than 90% of parents get their first choice of kindergarten for their child, and most get one of their top picks at all grade levels.
- The **San Diego** school district has helped parents, teachers, and principals create more than a dozen public charter schools that stay open only as long as they do a good job. These are all schools of choice, publicly accountable and open to students from around the school district.
- In August 1997, **Denver** opened its first charter school as the Pioneer Charter School (PCS). PCS is a joint effort of the school district and the University of Denver (DU), enrolling 320 students from throughout Denver in grades Pre-K-5, with priority given to students residing in specific economically depressed communities. The school is to serve as an incubator for practices to support high achievement for urban students. The school features a personalized instruction plan for each student; a year-round calendar (an additional 20 days each year and 45-day instructional periods with 15-day intersession breaks); an extended day that begins at 7:30 AM and ends at 6 PM; and access to basic health care, community and social and education services for students and their families.

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## **EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ZONES:**

Strengthening Urban and Rural Public Schools by Raising Standards,  
Expanding Choice, and Strengthening Accountability

REVISED DRAFT -- January 15, 1998

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President Clinton has proposed to accelerate and expand progress in high-poverty urban and rural school districts, and highlight models of success, by designating approximately 50 school districts as Education Opportunity Zones. In order to be chosen, a school district will have to demonstrate a strong commitment to holding schools, principals and teachers, and students accountable for academic performance, as well as a track record of improving academic achievement (districtwide, or at least in schools specifically targeted for intervention). The President's initiative would invest approximately \$200 million in FY 99, and \$1.5 billion over five years, in raising achievement and sharing lessons learned with school districts nationally.

**A SHARP FOCUS ON ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS.** Education Opportunity Zones will demonstrate how a serious approach to high standards benefits all students. Therefore, under this initiative, funds will be targeted from the outset to school systems with significant poverty that can show that they have begun to put into place credible and effective improvement policies and have already begun to raise student achievement. Moreover, districts that succeed in raising achievement over the first three years of the grant will qualify for continued funding into the fourth and fifth years.

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## DRAFT

### **Strengthening Public Schools By Raising Standards, Expanding Opportunity, and Requiring Accountability**

#### **OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR REACHING CHALLENGING**

**ACADEMIC STANDARDS.** In a number of urban areas across the country, school districts are beginning to make progress in their efforts to help students reach high standards. In Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, and other districts where there is strong leadership, challenging academic standards, a clear emphasis on getting kids the help they need, and a strong focus on results, urban districts are beginning to show progress in increasing student achievement.

The Administration is developing a new initiative to help accelerate and expand such progress, and highlight models of success, by designating a number of high-poverty urban and rural school districts as Education Opportunity Zones. This competitive challenge grants program is aimed at demonstrating comprehensive, coordinated and effective approaches to expanding opportunities for students in high poverty urban and rural school districts, coupled with a balanced approach to increased responsibility for results for schools, educators and students themselves. High-poverty school districts will be eligible for additional Federal funding *if* (1) they now adopt tough reform measures -- like those adopted in Chicago -- that make administrators, principals, teachers, and students truly accountable for success or failure, and (2) in time, show real improvements in student achievement.

To receive funds, local school districts will demonstrate how they will:

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**Examples of Local School Districts Using These Approaches. (See Attachment)**

**Spreading Practices Nationwide.** These are the kinds of approaches that must be replicated everywhere in order to strengthen public schools. The President's Education Opportunity Zones challenge grants will help demonstrate how they can work and spread them to cities and rural communities with students that can benefit from them the most. They will help make sure that our most disadvantaged students are held to high academic standards and helped to reach them. They will help make sure that disadvantaged students can choose among good public schools, and are not trapped in failing schools. They will help reach the President's goal of having at least one Master Teacher in every school, which is particularly important for students in high poverty schools, because these schools often have the least well prepared teachers.

**Budget.** This initiative has not yet been finalized. Consultation with the education community, state and local officials, higher education, community groups and others is still underway. Final budget numbers will not be determined until the FY 1999 budget process is completed.