

1. All Things Considered

01/26/98Section: News; Domestic;

State of Education

The president is expected to address the issue of education in tomorrow night's State of the Union address. We have two reports on how local schools systems are dealing with financial problems. In the first, NPR's Claudio Sanchez looks at Philadelphia's school system — where the vast majority of students are poor. That means the city qualifies for extra federal money. School officials say they're willing to put up with federal education mandates to get federal dollars.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST: This is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Robert Siegel.

LINDA WERTHEIMER, HOST: And I'm Linda Wertheimer.

Education is one of the issues expected to be at the center of President Clinton's State of the Union Speech tomorrow night. Congress has generally supported the administration's education initiatives. Today on the eve of the president's address, we have two reports on the state of the nation's education.

Eleven million children in this country, one out of every four, attend inner city public schools. Most of these children are poor and they do not do as well academically as children in smaller and more affluent school systems.

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports on how one urban school system is facing those challenges.

SOUNDBITE OF A STREET

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ, NPR REPORTER: The public school district of Philadelphia is the fifth largest in America.

The concentration of poor school children here is remarkable, almost 80 percent of the city's 217,000 students qualify for public assistance.

This effects everything that a school does.

CARMELA GARLATTI (PH), TEACHER ABIGAIL VER (PH) ELEMENTARY: Our funding is actually based on the number of — of poverty children we have in the school. We have 94 or 95 percent are on assistance of some kind.

SANCHEZ: Carmela Garlatti has been a kindergarten teacher for 22 years at Abigail Ver Elementary in South Philadelphia. Just about all of the children here, kindergarten through 8th grade, qualify for free lunch and free breakfast programs.

GARLATTI: So, we know right off the bat it is a group of children that have strikes against them before they even come in the door.

SANCHEZ: That means children arrive not knowing their ABCs, their colors, not knowing how to count, with a very limited vocabulary and very little exposure to books. Getting these children to learn and do well isn't impossible, it's just more expensive.

SOUNDBITE OF A CROWD IN SCHOOL

BARBARA LAPUR (PH), PRINCIPAL, ABIGAIL VER ELEMENTARY: Good morning.

STUDENT: Good morning.

LAPUR: Good morning. Good morning.

SANCHEZ: Barbara Lapur is the principal and the person most often credited with the school's success.

LAPUR: We believe that our children can learn.

SANCHEZ: Students at Abigail Ver Elementary are doing well these days. They're testing at or above the 84th percentile nationally in reading and math. Small classes have made a big difference.

But the only reason the poor can afford small classes is because she \$443,000 from Chapter One, the federal government's biggest program for poor students. This is money that makes its way from Washington to the state to the city, and finally to each school. The more poor children you have, the more money you receive.

Without it, says Lapur, she could not afford extra teachers or reading centers, like this one for first graders.

SOUNDBITE OF A CROWD IN READING CENTER

LAPUR: They work on different activities for reading while the teacher instructs them in a reading book.

SANCHEZ: And they've got two computers back in that corner?

LAPUR: Yes. Every lower grade class has computers.

SANCHEZ: How many per kid, do you think?

LAPUR: Well, we have two computers in each classroom. So, yeah.

SANCHEZ: Not all schools in Philadelphia get as much federal aid as Abigail Ver Elementary. The basic budget for each of the city's 257 schools is about \$6,500 per student. Sixty percent of that comes from the state, about a third from the city, and the rest, depending on how many poor students a school has, comes from Washington.

Carmela Garlatti says this means schools that don't have a high concentration of poor kids have to make do with less.

GARLATTI: When you're talking about place that don't have books, you want the teacher to teach with no books. You want the teacher to teach with no paper. You want the teacher to teach with no supplies. That's not the poverty of the child, the problem. That's the poverty of the school.

SANCHEZ: The problem here is that Philadelphia can't raise a lot of money for schools locally. Its tax base is shrinking and education is just one of many competing interests. So, even with federal funds coming in, the city spends \$2,000 less per student than neighboring school districts, says Philadelphia school superintendent, David Hornbeck (ph).

DAVID HORNBECK, PHILADELPHIA SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS: If you think of 30 kids and \$2,000 a kid, that's \$60,000 less that we have than is spent on average. And that's a lot of computers and books and after school activities for one classroom.

SANCHEZ: Hornbeck was seen as a miracle worker when he was hired three and a half years ago, because of his role in reforming schools across the country. Here, he has squeezed waste out the system, cut hundreds of non-teaching positions and reorganized schools into clusters.

For the first time, high schools are now connected to elementary and middle schools in the same neighborhood. But Hornbeck says Philadelphia's public schools are going to run out of money in the next year, and could even shut down if the state doesn't help more.

State education officials and politicians from the governor on down have called Hornbeck an alarmist, saying he hasn't done enough to cut waste. This dismissal, says Hornbeck, reflects a bigger problem.

HORNBECK: There is a very widespread opinion that — that poor kids and kids of color, and kids whose first language isn't English, and kids with disabilities can't cut it. And if you don't believe that a kid can make it, the likelihood of his doing so is diminished significantly.

SANCHEZ: What Abigail Ver Elementary and at least a third of Philadelphia's public schools have shown, says Hornbeck, is that even the poorest kids can cut it. And if they can do it, so should everybody else.

Hornbeck has taken the position that teachers and administrators in schools where school where students don't show improvement will be replaced. On this and other issues, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers has vowed to fight Hornbeck every step of the way.

Hornbeck says he needs a little bit more time to show that overall improvement in test scores this year is no fluke, but concedes that it's still going to be very tough to get more help from state and local governments in the next few years.

So Philadelphia, more than ever perhaps, is looking to Washington for support, and for good reason. Congress and the Clinton administration have done a lot to help urban schools. The president, says Hornbeck, has been especially supportive.

HORNBECK: His strong emphasis on standards, very important. I subscribe to his national voluntary tests, because standards without tests end up being meaningless.

SANCHEZ: Across the country many educators are wary of more advice, and even more money from Washington, because it implies a greater federal role in local matters. But right now, Hornbeck in

Philadelphia and schools officials in other large cities say the federal government seems to be the only one that's listening to them.

Claudio Sanchez, NPR News, Philadelphia.■

1. Philadelphia Inquirer

January 27, 1998

Clinton sketches education plans

He wants child care expanded and class size reduced. He previewed tonight's State of the Union speech.

By Dale Mezzacappa

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

President Clinton yesterday gave a glimpse of a major education initiative he plans to unveil in tonight's State of the Union address.

He announced a \$55 million foundation grant to help communities start or expand before- and after-school programs, part of a much larger effort to expand and upgrade child care.

Clinton also said that tonight he would outline a drive to recruit 100,000 teachers to reduce class size in early grades, help strapped districts repair and build new schools, and create "education opportunity zones" targeted at impoverished urban and rural schools.

Clinton talked about the proposals right before emphatically denying a relationship with Monica Lewinsky. At a subsequent news briefing, White House spokesman Michael McCurry tried to amplify them, but there was scant interest among the assembled press corps, who peppered him with more questions on the exploding sex scandal.

Before the scandal broke, education was becoming the new political battleground in Washington. The Republicans reportedly have been preparing an education agenda of their own that, unlike the Democrats', would include tax breaks or vouchers for families who send their children to private schools. Republicans also want any child-care initiative to include at-home parents.

Several weeks ago, Clinton announced he would request \$1 billion a year over the next five years to expand school-age child-care programs. That would include \$200 million in community grants for after-school activities.

This is part of a \$21.7 billion, five-year child-care initiative that, in addition to these programs, would increase subsidies to low-income parents, provide incentives to businesses to expand child care, and give tax credits to parents.

Yesterday, the C.S. Mott Foundation said it would donate \$55 million over five years to give technical and start-up assistance in communities seeking to use the federal grants.

William S. White, president of the foundation, which is based in Flint, Mich., said the money would be used to leverage public-private partnerships in after-school care and to run regional workshops for potential applicants for the federal dollars. Local communities will be expected to raise matching funds. The total \$2 billion investment, officials said, could service 500,000 children in centers in and out of schools that would offer academic enrichment and other special programs at a time of day when children tend to get into trouble, Clinton said.

After the announcement, Hillary Rodham Clinton visited a successful after-school program in Harlem in New York City.

According to the **Department of Education**, Clinton will propose a \$12 billion, seven-year initiative to reduce class size to an average of 18 in grades one through three. The funds, to help local school districts hire and pay the salaries of an additional 100,000 teachers, upgrade teacher training, and implement the best methods for reading, would target the most disadvantaged districts. Those districts however, would be required to come up with some matching funds, hire only fully certified teachers, and prove that their students are indeed making progress, especially in reading.

The proposal also would include \$10 billion to encourage school modernization by leveraging \$22 billion in bonds to build and renovate schools. Half the bond authority would be allocated to the 100 school districts with the largest number of low-income children, which would include Philadelphia.

In another program, impoverished rural and urban school districts could compete to be designated among 50 Education Opportunity Zones by agreeing to tough standards of accountability. These would include: The end of social promotions (the practice of moving children ahead based on age rather than achievement). Rewards for schools that show progress and intervention in schools that don't. Strong plans to reward successful teachers and remove ineffective ones. Reports to parents and the public on the progress of each school.

The educational opportunity grant money — \$200 million in fiscal 1991 and \$1.5 billion over five years — could be used to support districtwide reforms, including expanded public-school choice.

Each urban zone selected would get a three-year grant of \$10 million to \$25 million a year; and each rural zone, from \$250,000 to \$3 million.■



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

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January 7, 1998

The Honorable Bill Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations urge you to apply your commitment to public education and your passion for racial justice where both converge, the nation's inner city public schools.

There is new and hopeful evidence that the nation's urban public schools are beginning to make a comeback due to the considerable efforts of many. But accelerating and sustaining this progress requires more vigorous assistance at the national level. Certainly, there has never been a time when the urban school challenges were more acute or the stakes so high. And there has rarely been a time when the economy was so good and the deficit so low that helping urban schools was not only right but also affordable. We believe that now is the time to act.

Many of these urban school systems stood with you earlier this summer to announce that they would take the Voluntary National Tests, a development that you called "historic, astonishing and wonderful." Some agreed with their decision to participate, some did not; but all are in accord on one simple fact: Urban school students can meet the high standards that national tests symbolize when they have the same opportunity for success afforded everyone else.

The painful truth, however, is that they do not. A recent analysis by the Council of the Great City Schools showed that students in school districts described as "First in the World" on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study had nearly two times more spent on their education than the average child in urban America. These inequities permeate the nation's public education system and undergird many of the gaps we see in performance. In this way, urban public education has become the last frontier of the democratic ideal. We need your leadership to help close these gaps and give all the nation's children an equal opportunity to learn, then to compete in the world of work.

We encourage you to initiate new legislation that will speak to these concerns and that will spur urban school standards-based reform and equity as cities are pursuing their work in urban economic development and finance:

1. Raising Urban School Standards—The undersigned organizations strongly urge you to initiate legislation that will assist urban school districts in America to implement

Page 1

JAN 12 1998

challenging standards for all students. Standards can provide a clear vision that transcends individual interests. If the standards are uniformly high, are based on a strong belief that all children can meet them, are developed with parents and the community, are concrete and translatable at every grade level and are comprehensive; then they form the basis for consistent improvement. For several years, many urban schools have been striving—with little help—to “scale up” proven effective programs to reach district-wide implementation. However, in order for districts to succeed, they need not only technical assistance but resources to develop their own capacity to modify curricula, align assessment practices, purchase and integrate technology, train teachers and staff, build community support and implement these practices at the classroom level. If we can make faster headway in the cities on these issues, then the standards movement will be spurred and the optimism for its success will be renewed.

2. School Infrastructure Repair and Renovation—We also strongly urge you to re-initiate federal legislation in next year's budget to repair and renovate the nation's public schools, particularly its inner city schools. Our urban schools simply cannot meet “world class” standards in “third world” facilities. The extent of the problem has now been well documented, \$112 billion by the General Accounting Office two years ago. Fixing our crumbling school buildings not only provides a greater opportunity for students, but it offers a better working environment for teachers, provides a wide variety of jobs in the building trades, strengthens public confidence of quality inside the buildings, and helps keep the economy strong. Your leadership in pursuing legislation closer to what is needed should be a major component of an urban education agenda for the nation. ✓
3. Urban Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development—We also encourage you to include the recruitment and professional development of teachers as a centerpiece of an urban school improvement agenda. The shortage of teachers in cities has been estimated at 2.5 times the national average, with particularly acute needs for math and science, special education and bilingual teachers. The need is particularly severe in our settings because of enrollment increases and higher retirement rates. We need help providing incentives for teachers to teach in our urban schools. But just as important, the standards we need help in developing are not very useful if they do not influence teaching. We need better training and professional development in implementing new standards in the classroom, in teaching methods to match the standards and the needs of an extraordinarily diverse student body, in curriculum and assessment design, and in classroom management. In addition, many of our urban school systems could use stronger assistance in improving management. P.D. + memo
4. Postsecondary Education Linkages—The organizations we represent also strongly encourage you to initiate legislation that would provide for better linkages between urban schools and the higher education community. Universities and community colleges are resources in our cities that are often disconnected with the needs of our children, but which could be mobilized to provide more partnering in addition to better mentoring, tutoring, and support. There are numerous examples of how this is being done locally, but assistance is needed at the national level to spur its progress. In addition, we encourage you to help strengthen the institutions and programs that prepare our urban teachers and administrators. One of the best ways to turn around “failing schools” is to ✓

prevent them from failing in the first place. Building better teacher and administrator preparation programs would help do that. Other important linkages for city schools include those for better utilization of technology, more comprehensive community-linked childcare and stronger after-school programming.

We would also like to offer a number of thoughts about the preliminary proposal released by the White House on the heels of the Town Hall Meeting on Race held in Akron, i.e., "Strengthening Public Schools by Raising Standards, Expanding Opportunity, and Requiring Accountability". We understand that the document and initiatives are at the first stage of an evolutionary process. We would encourage you, however, to incorporate a number of concepts into the document as it nears completion:

- ❖ First, we encourage these urban education initiatives to reflect the scale of the challenges themselves. We are not convinced that those challenges are adequately addressed by relying on "zones" or competitive grants. Our experience is that these approaches tend to be too piecemeal and too delimited to offer real hope for long-term success. Much of our current problem in urban education is bringing good ideas and programs "to-scale," not in creating more small-scale efforts. Instead, we urge you to be bold in how solutions are conceived. *
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- ❖ Finally, our organizations strongly encourage renewed emphasis on accountability in urban education. However, this renewed emphasis must not ignore the inextricably linked challenge of providing opportunity for achievement. Urban schools' volunteering for the National Tests demonstrated that they were willing to risk a great deal to demonstrate their commitment to high standards and accountability. We encourage you to retain your emphasis on accountability; to renew your commitment to expanding opportunities for achievement; and to help us design and build new accountability mechanisms into all levels of the system.

We have been meeting for nearly a year exploring the needs and challenges of our nation's inner city schools. These discussions have included representatives from the U.S. Department of Education, Congress, business, the community, teachers, media, foundations, higher education and urban education itself. Recently, the groups culled themselves to those critical few whose efforts in urban education have been most longstanding, consistent and undiluted.

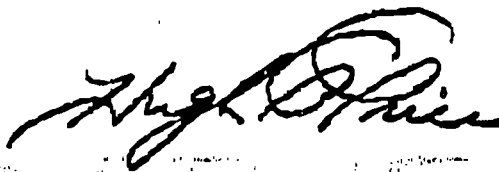
It is clear to us, after much thought and discussion, that leaders at all levels need to devise targeted and dedicated efforts and policies to ensure improved urban schools. The broader, more generic efforts at school reform are not producing results as fast as the more focused and specific ones.

We would also request a meeting with you at your earliest opportunity to discuss the Administration's proposal, the additional issues we raised in this letter, and how best to work together for the improvement of urban public education. Thank you.

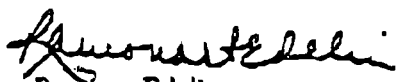
Sincerely,



Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools



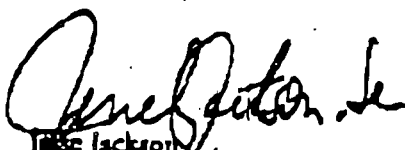
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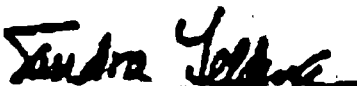
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Executive Director
U.S. Conference of Mayors



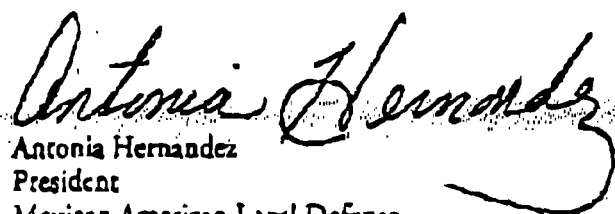
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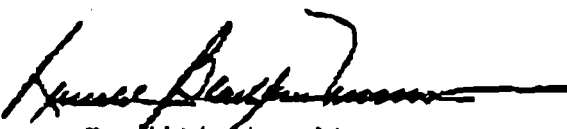
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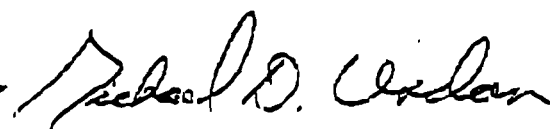
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Date: January 7, 1998

To:

Name: Mike Cohen

Organization: Domestic Policy Council

Fax: 456-5581

From:

Name: Michael Casserly

Notes:

Pages: 5 (including this one)

Council of the Great City Schools

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004
(202) 393-2427 ♦ (202) 393-2400 (fax)

<http://www.cgcs.org>

January 7, 1998

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President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

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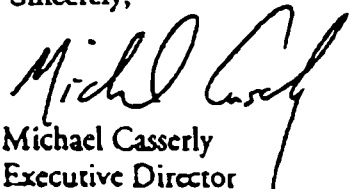
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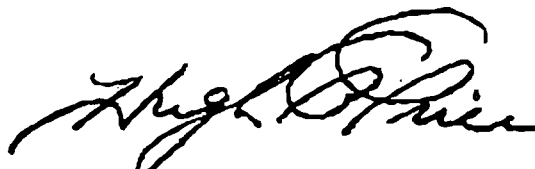
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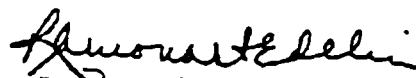
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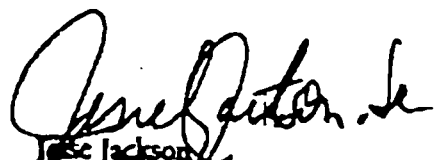
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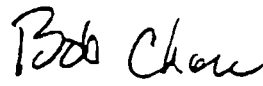

Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools


Hugh Price
President
National Urban League

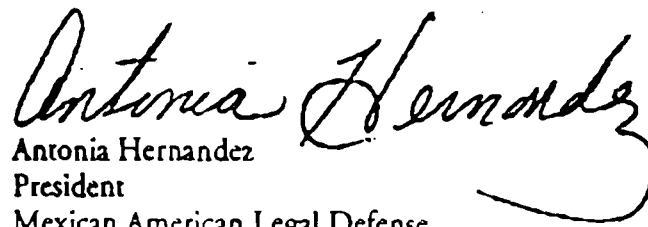

Ramona Edelin
President
National Urban Coalition


Thomas Cochran
Executive Director
U.S. Conference of Mayors

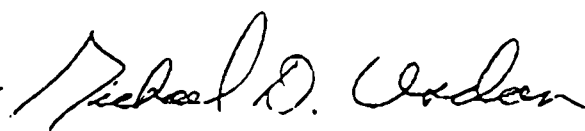

Jesse Jackson
President and Founder
Rainbow/PUSH Coalition


Bob Chase
President
National Education Association


Sandra Feldman
President
American Federation of Teachers


Antonia Hernandez
President
Mexican American Legal Defense
and Education Fund


Ronald Blackburn-Moreno
President
ASPIRA, Inc.


Michael D. Usdan
President
Institute for Educational Leadership