



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-3290

January 14, 1998

Mr. Michael Cohen
Special Assistant to the President for Education
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mike:

We are pleased that the President is focusing on improving achievement in urban and rural schools, and shares NEA's view that additional resources are needed to meet the challenges of educating children in high poverty schools. When NEA President Bob Chase met with OMB Director Raines a short while ago, he was asked what should be the budget priorities for education in the next fiscal year. Mr. Chase answered that they are school infrastructure, Title I, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and professional development, all of which are key to the success of the new Education Opportunity Zones proposal.

When we met on December 17 to discuss the initial draft of the President's proposed Education Opportunity Zones grants, I agreed to identify those areas that we see as discordant with an effective and collaborative approach to improving low-performing schools and to alert you to areas in which the language used in the Draft has the potential for misinterpretation.

NEA recognizes that there is a serious problem, particularly in high poverty urban and rural schools, of too many students failing to receive an appropriate, high quality education. As a civil rights imperative, as well as for the nation's economic viability, there must be a response from every level of government to cooperate on improving the achievement of every child.

Also in that speech, Bob Chase acknowledged the responsibility of the union in sharing accountability for the quality of the teaching force. We do that by providing assistance to struggling teachers and counseling out of the profession those who are unable to improve and meet high standards. He also made it clear that if we do not honor the work of teachers, and if Americans don't respect the incredibly difficult and important work that public school teachers do, then we will not boost the quality of our public schools. Our members want to be, and must be, part of a collaborative decision-making and implementation process for school improvement. While teachers do not control curriculum, set funding levels, hire or fire, they do feel a responsibility and a commitment to school quality. Top-down solutions are less successful than collaborative efforts among the stakeholders of education employees, parents, community members, and students.

One excellent example of positive school change is Memphis, Tennessee, and I encourage you to visit the public schools there. Beginning in 1989, seven of the most problem-ridden inner city schools were restructured with new staff, new leadership, and a community council that used site-based decision making. Educators were energized and invited to give input in their schools. Student absentee and suspension rates dropped. While student failure rates increased, this was a result of higher standards and expectations. However, student achievement scores have steadily improved. Now all city schools are modeled on these pilot sites.

There are many in Congress who will use any opportunity to sound the alarm that public education generally is failing, and will point the finger at public school teachers. Already, the press has reported on this proposal as a way to close public schools and remove public school teachers. In light of the many battles ahead to move a pro-active, reform agenda for public education, I hope you will take into account what we regard as "red flag" language in the November 29 Draft of the Education Opportunity Zones that would undermine the spirit of the President's proposal, as described further in this letter.

Options for improving failing schools

Turning around a failing school is a complex problem that requires a collaborative, systemic focus on aligning high standards, curriculum, strong leadership, qualified teachers who have access to continuing professional development, and appropriate resources.

One of the options to deal with failing schools is to reconstitute or close down the school. Yet the approach in the Draft takes a narrow approach that ignores the multiple factors, beyond staffing, that make a school successful. In particular, the examples used in the Draft of New York City singles out the firing of teachers as the simple, single solution. Experience in those cities and elsewhere demonstrates that new staffing alone will not lead a new school to greater successes for its students.

We believe that the goal and the process is to "redesign" schools that are failing, resulting in more effective curriculum and instruction that is aligned with powerful assessments that are keyed to high standards. This cannot be accomplished simply by changing personnel. Turning around failing schools requires a collaborative and negotiated planning and implementation process that includes stakeholders ranging from school employees and leaders, parents, students and community members. It also includes continuous professional development and mentoring of teachers so that every classroom includes a qualified teacher and sufficient resources, financial and other, to help students meet high academic standards.

In New York, San Francisco and elsewhere, there was a comprehensive approach to the complex problems of failing schools. Staffing changes were one element of the new design that also included accountability measures, self-assessment, voluntary staffing for those teachers who wished to remain in the redesigned setting, and a process for including the school community in the changes. Focusing only on the punitive aspect of firing school employees sends a misleading and negative message to teachers and the public as to what will lead to whole-school, comprehensive change in a failing school.

Another option that communities and teachers have used to respond to low achieving schools or a desire for different schools is to create charter schools. NEA has developed specific criteria for the

definition of and flow of federal public tax dollars to public charter schools. In our view, charter schools are not a form of reconstituted school. They are very different approaches with a different process and goal, than redesigned public schools. The Draft, however, appears to assume that reconstituted schools can be synonymous with charter schools. Indeed, it is limiting on the creativity of educators and communities to equate reconstituted schools with public charter schools.

Supporting school improvement without undermining due process

NEA does support helping teachers earn certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and providing resources schools need to allow mentor teachers to have the time to work with low performing teachers. While the NEA does not oppose providing funds to reward schools to continue and expand improvements in student achievement, we oppose merit pay type programs. The Draft states that districts will demonstrate how they will "hold teachers and principals accountable for quality, *including rewarding outstanding teachers...*" It goes on to provide an example of providing cash awards to teachers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. This description, included under "Examples that Could Be Supported Under the Proposal," would, in our judgement, amount to a merit pay/bonus type program supported with federal funds.

Further, the Draft states that districts will demonstrate how they will hold teachers accountable by "implementing processes for fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers." The NEA believes that the removal of a teacher should be based on procedural due process procedures set forth by state law and/or collective bargaining agreements or current practice between education employees and their employers. We are concerned that these safeguards for respecting the rights of education employees not be undermined or circumvented by these grants.

Anti-public school responses to failing public schools

Unfortunately, not everyone in Congress wants to pursue a public school reform agenda in line with the vision of this Administration or public school educators. The distraction of voucher legislation will occur yet again this year. In that regard, I refer you to the section entitled "Spreading Practices Nationwide", the Draft notes that these grants "will make sure that disadvantaged students ... are not *trapped in failing schools.*"

This is the identical rhetoric used over and over by Speaker Gingrich and Rep. Arney in support of vouchers. We believe that this language, as used by Speaker Gingrich, is meant to be inflammatory and divisive so that the public believes that there has not been any progress made at the federal, state and local level in addressing low student achievement. The response of vouchers with public dollars takes the approach that singling out a few students is preferable to a solution that makes quality public education available for every child. We would strongly prefer not to speak of students as "trapped" in public schools.

Peer Assistance

The Draft describes examples of teacher peer assistance and review as an allowable use of these grant funds. This is a local matter that must be designed and implemented in the context of some type of

local agreement, such as a collectively bargained contract, between the school administration and the teachers. NEA would prefer that these grants be used for peer assistance, but not "review" or "evaluation" because of legal and policy complexity of these programs, especially with regard to federal legislation. We would add to peer assistance by explicitly allowing funds to be used to implement and expand teacher mentor programs, which have been very successful, especially with beginning teachers.

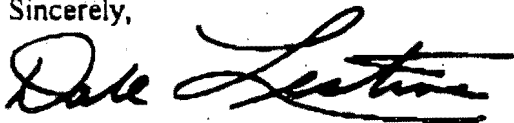
Other general concerns raised by the Draft:

How will these requirements interact with Title I requirements, particularly requirements related to technical assistance and corrective action provisions? (We would prefer that the existing Title I provisions be controlling.)

Will districts be allowed to use this grant to create a separate or substitute process to circumvent negotiated contracts and other agreements regarding teacher dismissal and tenure? (We would say it should not.)

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dale Lestina".

Dale Lestina,
Manager, Federal-State Relations

cc: Mary Elizabeth Teasley, Director of Government Relations

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

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.
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:

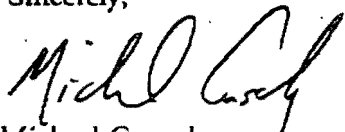
- ❖ First, we encourage these urban education initiatives to reflect the scale of the challenges themselves. We are not convinced that those challenges are adequately addressed by relying on "zones" or competitive grants. Our experience is that these approaches tend to be too piecemeal and too delimited 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.
- ❖ Second, we encourage the tone and spirit of the initiatives to reflect the optimism that you and Secretary Riley have previously voiced about urban education and its turnaround. We hear enough stereotyped and divisive rhetoric about "failing schools" in urban education from others. Many of us find such talk destructive, particularly in the context of the national conversations about race. In many ways, America has failed urban education as much as urban education has failed America. We encourage you to stress the urgency and importance of acting without demonizing the very people who have to do the work.
- ❖ 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.

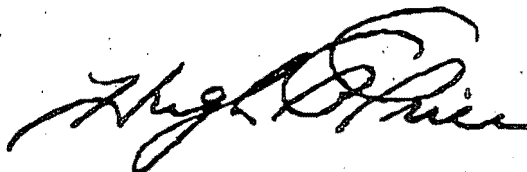
It is clear to us, after much thought and discussion, that leaders at all levels need to devise targeted and dedicated efforts and policies to ensure improved urban schools. The broader, more generic efforts at school reform are not producing results as fast as the more focused and specific ones.

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.

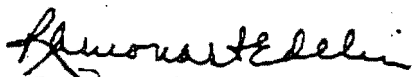
Sincerely,



Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools



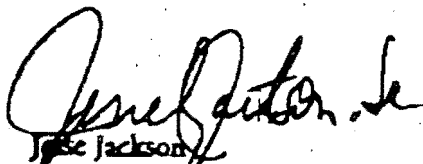
Hugh Price
President
National Urban League



Ramona Edelin
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National Urban Coalition



Thomas Cochran
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U.S. Conference of Mayors



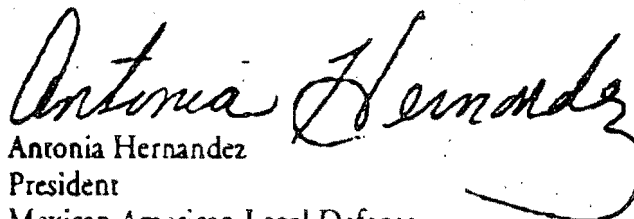
Jesse Jackson
President and Founder
Rainbow/PUSH Coalition



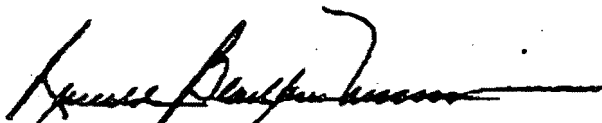
Bob Chase
President
National Education Association



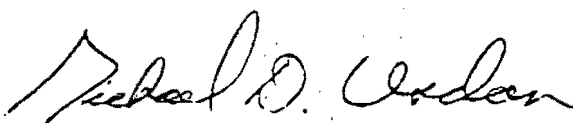
Sandra Feldman
President
American Federation of Teachers



Antonia Hernandez
President
Mexican American Legal Defense
and Education Fund



Ronald Blackburn-Moreno
President
ASPIRA, Inc.



Michael D. Usdan
President
Institute for Educational Leadership

Education Opportunity Zones — \$200,000,000 (FY 99) — 02/09/98

Goal: To assist urban and rural local educational agencies with high concentrations of children from low-income families to implement systemic reform strategies to enable all students in the district to meet challenging academic standards.

Objectives	Indicators	Source and Next Update	Strategies
1. Student achievement in schools served by EOZ grants will show improvements in the core academic subjects.	1.1 Increasing percentages of students in EOZ schools will meet or exceed the proficient and advanced levels in State and local assessments. 1.2 The percentage of students attending high schools located in EOZs who graduate will increase. 1.3 The percentage of students from high schools located in EOZs who pursue postsecondary education increases.	1.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	- Develop an application that requires grantees to demonstrate how they will use program funds and other resources to carry out standards-based, districtwide policies. - Sponsor activities such as focus groups, conferences, workshops, or communications using the Internet where participating districts can exchange information and ideas to enhance the success of program.
2. EOZs will recruit, retain, and support qualified teaching staffs.	2.1 The percentage of teachers who indicate that they are engaged in professional development that is enabling them to teach to challenging standards will increase annually. 2.2 The percentage of teachers in EOZ schools who satisfy all State licensure requirements and/or have at least a minor in the subjects they teach will increase. 2.3 The number of EOZ grantees that reward high-performing teachers and/or have developed systems for fairly and quickly removing low-performing teachers will increase. 2.4 A decrease in the percentage of certificated teachers in schools located in EOZs who leave the district.	2.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 2.2 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study; Schools and Staffing Survey. 2.3 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 2.4 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	- Disseminate the Department's Mission and Principles of Effective Professional Development. - Produce and disseminate a publication on teacher accountability systems.

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Goal: To assist urban and rural local educational agencies with high concentrations of children from low-income families to implement systemic reform strategies to enable all students in the district to meet challenging academic standards.

Objectives	Indicators	Source and Next Update	Strategies
3. Low performing schools will improve teaching and learning to raise achievement for all students.	3.1 The number of high-poverty schools in EOZ districts identified as low-performing will decrease annually. 3.2 The number of schools in EOZs in which the majority of children meet or exceed the basic level in State and local assessments will increase.	3.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 3.2 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	- Promote district efforts to improve schools by disseminating information and guidance on best practices and strategies for turning around low performing schools, implementing schoolwide programs, and best practices for teaching children who are risk of failure. - Provide assistance on leveraging all federal program funds to improve low performing schools.
4. District and school accountability systems will be focused on student learning results and will include incentives and consequences.	4.1 The number of districts receiving EOZ grants that provide incentives to schools for improved student performance will increase. 4.2 The number of districts receiving EOZ grants that have developed systems to identify and intervene in low-performing schools will increase. 4.3 The number of EOZs that require students to meet academic standards at key transition points will increase.	4.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 4.2 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 4.3 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	- Assist districts in developing and implementing aligned assessments. - Provide technical assistance on developing an accountability system that is comprehensive and fair.
5. Promote parental involvement and community involvement in student learning.	5.1 The number of districts receiving EOZ grants that provide parents with annual reports on measures of school quality will increase.	5.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	Provide technical assistance on developing an accountability system that is comprehensive, fair, and easily understood by parents.

Education Opportunity Zones — \$200,000,000 (FY 99) — 02/09/98

Goal: To assist urban and rural local educational agencies with high concentrations of children from low-income families to implement systemic reform strategies to enable all students in the district to meet challenging academic standards.

Objectives	Indicators	Source and Next Update	Strategies
6. Increasing public school choice options within EOZs.	6.1 The percentage of students in EOZ districts who attend a school by choice will increase. 6.2 The percentage of parents satisfied with their child's school will increase	6.1 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study. 6.2 Annual performance reports; grantee evaluations; national evaluation study.	• Disseminate information on strategies for expanding high-quality public school choice programs that improve student achievement. • Share lessons learned from research about public school choice. • Increase awareness and support for effective public school choice programs among government, business leaders, and community leaders, and the general public through outreach and dissemination of information.

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**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

2181 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
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December 12, 1997

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(TTY) — (202) 226-3110

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I was pleased to learn recently that you are considering a new public schools initiative that emphasizes support for locally-driven public school reform. I would like to bring to your attention a major public schools initiative I introduced on April 24th of this year that shares the same goals as the initiative you are considering.

H.R. 1436, the Public Schools Renewal and Improvement Act of 1997, allows a consortium of parents, teachers, the local education agency, and community and business leaders to submit a request to the President for a declaration that a "major public schools renewal effort is underway" in their community.

Under the bill, the consortium must prepare and submit a 3-year, locally inspired schools renewal plan that spells out certain "adverse conditions" and "assurances" about the consortium's commitment to public school renewal. Successful petitions would receive supplemental federal assistance, delivered through existing programs where possible, such as Title 1, Safe and Drug Free Schools, or Goals 2000.

As you know, there are outstanding examples of local school renewal all across the country. Whether it's the innovative Lighthouse after-school program in Chicago, the new Teaching and Learning Academy in Memphis, or the public school choice plan in Boston, we know from experience that, with a strong local commitment and adequate resources, even the most troubled school districts can create high performing, academically strong schools.

The President
Page Two
December 10, 1997

I know you share my conviction that we must help renew all our public schools. I believe a strong national partnership with communities undertaking locally inspired school reforms will help millions of our nation's school children receive a first-class public education. I am proud to note that 41 Members of the House are co-sponsors of my bill, and it has received the support of such groups as the National Parent and Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association.

I would very much like the opportunity to discuss my proposal with you personally by the middle of January. Working together, I believe we can create a powerful new tool for renewing our public schools.

Sincerely,



William L. Clay
Ranking Democratic Member
Education & the Workforce Committee

bcc: The Honorable Richard W. Riley

**Strengthening Public Schools By Raising Standards, Expanding Opportunity, and
Requiring Accountability
December 3, 1997**

OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR REACHING CHALLENGING ACADEMIC STANDARDS. The Administration is developing an Education Opportunity Zones initiative. 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 it 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**

Proposed FY 99 Budget Initiative

DRAFT -- November 29, 1997

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

OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR REACHING CHALLENGING ACADEMIC STANDARDS. The Administration is developing an Education Opportunity Zones initiative. 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 it 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. No information to be provided at this time. These initiatives have 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***

Proposed FY 99 Budget Initiative

DRAFT -- November 29, 1997

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

600 Independence Avenue, S.W. - Portals

Washington, D.C. 20202-6100

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Organization: _____

Telephone #: _____

FROM:

Catherine Jovicich, Judith Johnson & Joeline JacksonOrganization: OESETelephone #: 202-260-2012

MESSAGE:

This is a draft urban proposal. We
would love your feedback!

DRAFT 11/8/97

FIXING FAILING SCHOOLS IN URBAN DISTRICTS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

This proposal supports a grant program targeted to urban communities to help them fix failing schools. It is organized into four sections: 1) a summary; 2) issues that the grant will address; 3) how applicants will compete and be held accountable; and 4) national leadership activities.

I. SUMMARY

One of the great strengths of this nation is the promise that all individuals can successfully participate in the economy and in their communities. Education is critical, however, for ensuring that promise and sustaining the economic and democratic freedoms of this country. Our urban communities are no exception, and often have failed to deliver the education necessary to fulfill that promise.

All students should leave schools fully equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to participate as productive citizens in the 21st century. For example, the 100 largest school districts in the U.S. currently serve 22% of the nation's students; and many are not adequately meeting the needs of their students, thus diminishing their chances to become productive citizens. The problems in urban school districts are not unique, but they are magnified by their pure size and concentration. Urban schools have some of the highest concentrations of poverty, greatest shortages of qualified teachers, worst conditions for learning, and most outdated management systems in the country.

According to the latest Phi Delta Kappan poll, 70 percent of the public believes that urban school problems are severe. The momentum behind an initiative to address the problems of urban schools has been building. Over the past year, at least six major education organizations -- the Council of Great City Schools, the National Education Association, the National Urban League, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors -- have released their plans for improving urban schools. These plans have striking similarities in terms of the problems they cite and the strategies they identify for raising student achievement in urban districts.

This grant proposal targets urban communities that are committed to making substantial investments and fundamental changes in their systems in order to greatly improve student achievement. At the core of this proposal is the notion that a fundamental shift is necessary in the incentives that motivate the work ethic of all members in the school system, a shift that holds people accountable for outcomes with rewards for success and consequences for failure. Nothing in this proposal is useful unless it results in changed behavior -- in students, and their parents, teachers, and administrators.

Applicants will be asked to focus on fixing failing schools so that all students have an opportunity to achieve at high levels. Title I criteria for schools in need of improvement will be the standard

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for identification of a failing school. District proposals can identify a higher standard to be used but not a lower one. School districts that choose to compete will submit proposals describing how they will intervene in low performing schools. Their plans should describe:

- 1) ***How the district will create a high performance management system.*** In such a system all students are expected to reach high academic standards. There is a clear strategic plan that includes a powerful vision, mission, values, goals, objectives, timelines, and a budget. Each component of the system supports the strategic plan, the components are clearly connected to other parts of the system, and all are focused on teaching and learning. In such a system every employee is focused on improving student achievement, is held accountable for student results, and is in turn supported by opportunities to continually improve his or her knowledge and skills for helping all students reach high standards. Districts should demonstrate how they will pull all of the elements of their system together in ways that yield a system wholly different from any of its constituent parts. Districts will be required to track school progress, and their applications should include detailed goals and timelines for intervening in their failing schools.
- 2) ***How the district will hold schools accountable for student performance and how it will intervene in failing schools.*** This includes the development of an accountability system that is anchored on challenging academic standards and aligned assessments and is easily accessed and understood by all participants in the system. Districts are also expected to describe the types of interventions that they plan to use -- including technical assistance, professional development, and reconstitution -- for persistently low performing schools.
- 3) ***How the district will implement an incentive system -- using rewards and consequences -- that will ensure teachers and principals working in failing schools are equipped with the knowledge and skills to reach all students and are held accountable for their work.*** This includes providing ongoing professional development opportunities to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers, and strengthening instructional leadership through such activities as the development of principal academies. It also means developing an accountability system for principals and teachers that can accurately monitor the quality of their work, provide rewards, and counsel out those who are not performing.
- 4) ***How the district will implement an incentive system -- using rewards and consequences -- that will motivate students to be accountable for their achievement.*** Students need to know the academic standards that they are expected to reach. They also need effective instructional programs to ensure that they have an opportunity to reach challenging standards. But students also have a responsibility for learning and must be motivated to perform.

Applicants will also be expected to demonstrate how they will use their local, state, and federal

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funds in more creative ways to turn around failing schools and improve student achievement. They should be able to demonstrate concrete actions taken as a result of this grant, and justify where they are in implementation based upon their timelines and mileposts of progress. We expect grants to last three years, but grant renewal after the first year will be contingent upon demonstrating progress toward meeting the goals and timelines outlined in the proposal. Furthermore, successful applicants will describe how they plan to carry on their work after the grant funding period ends.

Our grant proposal outlines several options for making grant awards under this program:

1. provide a maximum of 10 urban districts 30 million dollars each to become lighthouse districts;
2. provide a maximum of 20 urban school districts up to 15 million dollars each to become lighthouse districts;
3. provide a maximum of 30 urban school districts up to 10 million dollars each to become lighthouse districts;
4. provide approximately 43 districts each 7.5 million dollars (for up to 20% percent of their failing schools) for comprehensive reform;
5. provide 70 urban sites with 4 million dollars each so that they can intervene in up to 20 of their low performing schools (approximately 1400 to 1500 schools); and
6. create a model of an urban challenge grant (modeled after the technology challenge grant): provide 50% of funding in year one to school districts that can match the allocation with local funds and who can show after year one demonstrable progress in order to be eligible for future funding. Rewards and sanctions would look something like the Urban Systemic Initiative model.

Finally, this grant proposal includes ideas for national leadership activities. One of the key benefits of an urban initiative to turn around failing schools is that lessons can be shared nationwide. If districts can succeed in their most difficult schools, then they will offer lessons and inspiration to schools everywhere in the country. Our proposal includes setting aside funds for providing substantial technical assistance to districts that receive these grants. Technical assistance should be tailored to meet the unique needs of each grantee, and it should also include opportunities to bring districts together to share ideas and lessons learned. Also, we propose using technology to create a "virtual office" to help districts consult with each other and with experts about overcoming obstacles. A final component of national leadership is documenting progress and lessons learned from these grantees and disseminating that information nationwide.

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II. ISSUES THAT THIS GRANT WILL ADDRESS

ISSUE 1: CREATING HIGH PERFORMING SYSTEMS.

One of the fundamental premises of this proposal is that failing schools cannot be turned around in isolation. Substantially improving failing schools will require changes in the systemic supports for those schools. Districts must be willing to make improvements in how they manage and support schools in order to truly support their improvement.

Lessons learned:

- *Districts must address the way the entire system works in order to improve schools.* A decade of experience in school reform tells us that the key to school improvement is changing the way the entire system works -- from standards to curriculum to assessment to management to accountability. Recent experience has shown that school-by-school improvement efforts ultimately stall without district level support and encouragement. For example, the Annenberg Foundation poured \$500 million into school efforts. Reports now suggest modest effects of these efforts. They were targeted to individual schools and research projects, without supporting capacity building in urban school systems. Also, the New American Schools Development Corporation (NAS) recognized after just two years of implementing research-based design models for whole school change in schools that the key to success would be district-level efforts in addition to their school-by-school approach. NAS is now supporting 10 district-wide activities in an attempt to build district capacity to sustain school change. Schools need the support of a high performance management system that provides more than dollars, but also clear standards and assessment, useful technical assistance and professional development, and meaningful accountability.
- *A clear, meaningful accountability system is critical.* Research on high performing organizations indicates that all players in the system -- students, parents, teachers, and administrators -- must know the measures of success and stakes for performance, including rewards and consequences. (Tucker and Coddling, unpublished 1997) According to Elmore, Abelman, and Fuhrman, an effective accountability system has three components: 1) a focus on student performance; 2) the use of standards and an assessment aligned to standards as a basis to measure student achievement; and 3) a system of rewards, penalties and intervention strategies to introduce incentives for individual and collective improvement.

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Our proposal:

District applications should address how the district plans to become a high performing system and how its plan will improve student achievement. Grant funds could support bringing funds into a coherent plan for school improvement and building some of the supports for turning around failing schools.

- ***Building a high performing system.*** Districts should develop a plan for fixing failing schools to support increased student achievement. Such a plan should include an expectation that all students are to reach high academic standards. The plan should have a powerful vision, mission, values, goals, objectives, timelines, and a budget. It should include mechanisms to ensure that all schools have powerful, challenging academic programs that are based on high standards, are supported by meaningful assessments, and have aligned research-based instructional strategies delivered by high quality teachers and principals. Each component of the system should in turn support the strategic plan, and the components should be clearly connected to other parts of the system and all be focused on teaching and learning. In such a system every employee is focused on improving student achievement, is held accountable for student results, and is, in turn, supported by opportunities to continually improve his or her knowledge and skills for helping all students reach high standards. Such a high performing system collects and analyzes data to document school progress and make mid-course adjustments as necessary. It also uses data to drive instruction, management, and accountability decisions.
- ***Drawing upon all federal, state, and local resources to improve the system.*** Urban school districts often have the elements of a high performing system that will be necessary to turn around failing schools, but they are not coherent parts of a comprehensive plan to improve student achievement. The road to creating a coherent system is rocky, and urban districts need support in the transformation process. Funds from such federal programs as Title I, Eisenhower, Goals 2000, and School-to-Work, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act can be used to strengthen urban academic programs. In addition, several Administration initiatives are under consideration to support academic and school infrastructure programs. (See Appendix A.) Districts should consider all of these programs, as well as their own in rethinking how resources are used to support their schools.

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ISSUE 2: HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE AND INTERVENING IN FAILING SCHOOLS.

Schools must be held accountable for student results and districts must be held accountable for turning around those schools that do not meet student needs. Districts are taking increasingly tough measures to improve schools, but need assistance to strengthen their accountability systems and mechanisms to intervene in failing schools.

Lessons learned:

- *High poverty, inner city schools can work.* The Title I Special Strategies Study provided several key findings related to successful schoolwide programs in high poverty schools. It found that a key to successful school turn-around is a thorough assessment of school strengths and areas in need of improvement before implementing a schoolwide program. As the school selects research-based strategies that meet its needs, it must be sure that it has full and active district, school administration, and faculty commitment. An effective principal and committed faculty is also important. Long-term, targeted technical assistance and professional development tied to school-specific needs is often key to program implementation. Finally, sustained commitment to the core design features of a school improvement strategy is critical. Successful schools in this study sustained high student achievement.
- *Intensive technical assistance and professional development is necessary.* Researchers such as Susan Fuhrman of CPRE have begun to conclude that intensive assistance is necessary to help failing schools overcome their legacy of failure and turn around.
- *Direct interventions, including school reconstitution, seems to be having an effect in some districts.* If a school does not improve after significant technical assistance and support, then a district must take more drastic interventions such as reconstituting a failing school. San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, all have examples of successful school intervention efforts, including reconstitution.

Our proposal:

Districts must demonstrate their commitment to implementing a rigorous and fair accountability system and intervening in failing schools.

- *Building systems of rigorous and fair accountability:* An urban grant should support the design and implementation of an effective school performance and information system, including district and school report cards, in order to hold teachers, principals, and schools accountable for student achievement. Systems should be anchored on challenging academic standards and assessments aligned with those standards, along with high quality, disaggregated data on student and school progress toward achieving tougher standards,

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and other measures such as improved attendance, discipline, safety, and drop-out rates. Districts could use part of their grant funds to consult with other districts regarding effective indicators of school performance. They could also use these funds to disseminate information on their accountability system to parents, teachers, and school administrators. Specific assistance should be provided to low performing schools that will be most affected by a rigorous accountability system, so that they are prepared to fully participate in the accountability process.

- *Assisting failing schools and schools in decline:* The bulk of these grant funds should be used to intervene in failing schools, including reconstituting or closing failing or unsafe schools, consistent with State and district accountability efforts. Districts could use grant support to provide technical assistance to failing schools or to newly reconstituted schools on issues such as conducting their needs assessment, selecting research-based instructional programs for their schools, and providing intensive professional development and curriculum improvements. Grant funds could go to schools that are implementing comprehensive school reform programs for the start-up costs of these efforts (current estimates are approximately \$50,000 per school for the first year). Grant funds could also be used for the start-up of charter schools that can provide alternatives for students who currently attend failing schools.

ISSUE 3: SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS AND HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS

In order to turn around failing schools and manage a high performing urban school system, urban districts must ensure that they attract, retain and continually develop high quality teachers and school principals. This will require ongoing, sustained professional development opportunities for new and veteran teachers and principals, as well as a meaningful accountability system that rewards competence and intervenes or sanctions poor performers.

Lessons learned:

- *Students need good teachers who provide enriching programs.* Student learning is clearly affected by the qualifications and experiences of their teachers. (Webster, 1988) When students are asked to identify "the one change" that would be most important in helping them learn more, "having good teachers" was at the top of the list. Students are hungry for structure, discipline, and more rigorous standards. (Public Agenda, 1997).
- *Teacher accountability makes a difference.* Teachers are more effective when they are treated as professionals who are empowered to use their skills, rewarded for good work, and sanctioned for incompetence. In contrast, the failure of school administrators to take action against teacher incompetence results in decreased student achievement, low teacher morale, diminished confidence in schools, teacher and administrator liability, and increased

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litigation (McGrath, 1993). A study of the Kentucky performance-based accountability system also found that the accountability system motivated teachers and resulted in school improvement. (Kelley, 1997)

- *Effective principals are critical for school success.* Principals as instructional leaders are the linchpin of systemic reform in the classroom. School leaders are expected to make sense of programs, provide instructional leadership, keep buildings safe and functional, manage and develop a mix of students, parents, community members and classified and non-classified staff, and allocate and administer shrinking budgets while sharing decision-making authority. According to Kotter, effective principals are instructional leaders who have the knowledge and skills and ongoing professional development experiences to: implement research-based, dynamic models of school change; provide meaningful supervision that focuses on constructive analysis of the instructional climate; guide staff as adult learners; provide opportunities for staff to collaborate and learn from practice during the school day; and use data to support planning for ongoing student achievement
- *School principals must also be held accountable for student performance.* Outstanding schools have outstanding principals. Districts consistently tell us that they need good principals. For example, in District 2 in New York, the superintendent found that principals were so critical to school improvement that he replaced 20 principals of the roughly 30 schools in the district as he implemented a school reform plan. (Elmore, 1996)

Our proposal:

We propose that an urban grant be used in conjunction with other funds to develop a meaningful accountability system for teachers and school administrators that includes ongoing professional development opportunities as well as rewards and sanctions based on student performance. Developing rigorous accountability measures will take an investment of time, money, and professional development to ensure that it is fair, is based on incentives that really matter to the teachers and principals of a district, and is understandable to all participants.

- *Rewarding Good Teachers:* We must retain good teachers in urban schools. Rewards do not necessarily have to be financial, but could include intrinsic rewards such as greater decision making authority and continuous learning opportunities. For example, teachers could be rewarded with continued opportunities to remain in the classroom and school, rather than moving up and out of classrooms. Career ladders can be modified to provide creative and experienced teachers the power, prestige, and salaries that will keep them actively engaging students. Teachers are continuous learners, and can be supported by administrators who encourage them to try out new teaching methods and help generate new ideas for work in the classroom.

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- ***Counseling Out Incompetent Teachers:*** One of the most intractable problems in schools is removing incompetent teachers. Districts could use a federal grant to work cooperatively with unions and administrators to develop programs of ongoing mentoring and support that include mechanisms to counsel incompetent teachers out of the classroom. Clear sanctions for continually low-performing teachers could be developed to help schools release incompetent teachers.
- ***Providing ongoing professional development opportunities to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers:*** If urban districts are going to turn around their failing schools, they must ensure that new teachers are supported and that veteran teachers have ongoing, sustained professional development opportunities. We propose that a district receiving an urban grant, demonstrate how it will comprehensively and systemically approach professional development for its teachers in a way that is tailored to meet the unique demands of their school programs.
- ***Strengthening instructional leadership:*** School principals and other instructional leaders are critical for raising student achievement. If meaningful change is going to occur in urban schools, leadership must go beyond the traditional management training of most principals to the kind of visionary leadership that will impact curriculum and instruction and build capacity throughout the school district. An urban education grant should support State, local, and higher education initiatives that provide instructional leaders with the knowledge and skills and ongoing professional development experiences to implement research-based, dynamic models of school change and to provide instructional leadership and supervision for teachers.
- ***Holding principals accountable:*** Principals are ultimately accountable for student learning in their schools. Their leadership enables teachers to meet diverse student learning needs. Districts must have in place mechanisms to select, hire, and retain principals on the basis of their ability to learn and implement the district's overall strategy. They must also have mechanisms to remove ineffective principals. In exchange, principals should be able to recruit, hire, nurture, retain and fire or counsel-out teachers in their schools which requires that they be able to evaluate and support teachers in the classroom based on a strong foundation in content and good pedagogy.

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ISSUE 4: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR LEARNING

The bottom line of a good school accountability system is student performance. Measuring student progress against challenging academic standards provides critical information to teachers, parents and students about how students are doing and where they need additional assistance. Schools should be responsible for providing the supports necessary for every student to reach high standards. In return, students must come to school motivated to learn.

Lessons learned:

- *Schools can support the intrinsic motivation and accountability of students.* There have been numerous studies examining the impact of particular educational interventions on the social and moral development of children. They largely show that moral development and the personal desire to succeed is influenced not only by what is taught, but how it is taught and how the classroom and school is structured. (Berman, 1997) Evidence collected on effective school-wide practices suggest that fundamental changes in school life, organization, and culture linked to achievement can improve student learning and foster in students the intrinsic motivation to achieve school success. (Wang, and Reynolds, 1997) In such settings students are held accountable for their performance and recognize the implications of rewards and consequences.

Our proposal:

- *Strengthen accountability for student behavior to support learning.* Standards of conduct must be clear for students. Consequences for violent and disruptive behavior must be swift and meaningful. Districts could use this grant opportunity to rethink their student accountability system.
- *Hold students accountable for learning.* Many urban schools are plagued by a peer culture that discourages academic achievement. Urban districts could use funds to support initiatives to change that culture through such programs as recognition of outstanding peers, highlighting popular role models, and mentoring. Students can also be held accountable for high stakes assessments paired with rich academic supports for those students who do not move on in grade.

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III. HOW APPLICANTS WILL COMPETE AND BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

This section of our proposal outlines what would be required to receive an urban education grant under this program.

The Department proposes highly competitive, three-year grants to urban school districts committed to raising student achievement by building high performance systems, and focusing on turning around the most troubled schools. These grants should support the development of a strong accountability system with targeted interventions in failing schools, and rewards and sanctions for principals, teachers, and students. We anticipate districts will develop comprehensive grants to describe how a variety of fiscal and human resources will be used in conjunction with these funds, to meet their stated goals to turn around the district's most troubled schools.

Eligible Applicants:

Urban Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or consortia of LEAs in partnership with businesses, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, parent organizations, teacher unions, community collaborative, and/or service providers. Categories are:

- Large urban LEA Category---urban LEAs administering schools with a total enrollment of 100,000 or more elementary and secondary students.
- Medium-sized urban LEA Category--- urban LEAs administering schools with a total enrollment of 50,000 but less than 100,000 elementary and secondary students.
- Small urban LEA Category--urban LEAs administering schools with a total of enrollment of less than 50,000 students.

Estimated Grant Size:

The Department currently has a \$320 million placeholder in its FY 99 budget request for an urban education initiative. The large urban LEA grants would be based upon enrollment and identified needs. The range would probably be from 5 to 15 million dollars.

Selection Criteria/Application Requirements:

It is understood that districts may be in different stages of implementing their reform plans. Therefore these grant funds may be tailored to meet the unique needs of individual school districts, as long as those activities are tied to an overall plan for improving student performance. Applicants would be asked to provide information to support the following elements.

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- ***How the district will create a high performance management system.*** The grant proposal should include information about the district's strategic plan for school improvement across the district and include research-based strategies for school improvement. The plan should be based on challenging academic standards and aligned assessments that produce current, reliable data on students' academic performance and that provide accurate and timely school-based indicators in such areas as attendance, discipline, and drop-out rates. Proposals must also demonstrate widespread commitment to education reform and include commitments from the mayor, parent associations, community groups, business, and the local teachers' union.
- ***How the district will hold schools accountable for student performance and how it intervene in failing schools.*** The proposal should describe a data system, or a proposed system, tied to student achievement that will be used to assess school progress over time. Such a system must be used to show evidence of progress for the whole school, disaggregated by student population, including students with special needs. The accountability system should include clear interventions or sanctions for low performing schools, such as targeted supports, personnel changes, technical assistance, and reconstitution. Applicants must demonstrate how this grant will work in conjunction with other funds to improve student academic performance in the most troubled schools.
- ***How the district will implement an incentive system -- using rewards and consequences -- that will ensure teachers and principals, working in failing schools are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to educate all students successfully and are held accountable for their work.*** A system of incentives and consequences should be developed that includes input from teachers, principals, community, business, and parent groups. Districts would be able to use these grant funds to design and implement these accountability measures.
- ***How the district will implement an incentive system -- using rewards and consequences -- that will motivate students to be accountable for their achievement.*** An incentive system that does not honor social promotion should be developed with input from students, parents, teachers, community, and business groups. Districts would be able to use these grant funds to design and implement these accountability measures.

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IV. NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Urban communities could benefit greatly from opportunities to share lessons learned and from technical assistance. National leadership activities could support such efforts. In addition, national leadership could document progress and lessons learned in grant recipients and disseminate effective strategies and lessons to cities nationwide. We propose reserving a portion of the urban grant funds for such national activities. These activities might include:

- ***A White House conference regarding urban education issues.***
We propose a White House conference in the spring of 1998 that focuses on urban education. In particular, the conference should focus on effective strategies for turning around failing schools and sessions on building meaningful accountability systems that hold schools, principals, teachers, and students accountable for student learning.
- ***Technical Assistance To Be Provided By The Department***
The department proposes to offer technical assistance to the participating districts and will make available all the appropriate resources needed to support their efforts. The technical assistance efforts will be documented and available for future replication. Each of the department's program offices will collaborate to offer districts the opportunity to acquire new knowledge, identify barriers to their success and provide the department with continuing opportunities to determine how these barriers can be overcome. In addition, department staff and the staff in the Technical Assistance Centers and Regional Education Laboratories will be available to provide appropriate support.

The Department will also use technology to provide technical assistance to grantees. Grantees will need on-demand access to emerging research findings, evaluation data and the experiences of other districts pursuing comprehensive school reform. The traditional opportunities for access to this body of data have usually required time away from the school day and travel, often across the continent, to educational conferences and forums. The advent of technology offers tremendous promise for bringing together needs and resources. We are proposing the establishment of a virtual office that will use human and technology resources to serve the needs of school districts seeking access to research findings and opportunities for problem solving. Using technology, the Department can set up networks of urban educators, researchers, and technical assistance providers to support school reform efforts.

- ***Documentation and Information dissemination.***
The department will guide the gathering of data resulting from the ongoing research conducted at the district sites. A major emphasis will be on identifying the most promising practices that improve student learning. The data will be analyzed and disseminated using existing and new communication systems.

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APPENDIX A

CURRENT INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT URBAN EDUCATION

The Clinton Administration has proposed several major initiatives that would strengthen urban schools. These initiatives should be a central part of an overall urban strategy.

Pending Legislation:

- School Construction: The infrastructure of many urban schools poses serious health and safety hazards. In addition, they require improvements in order to install new technology equipment. Our FY 99 budget proposal includes a school construction proposal for a one-time infusion of \$5 billion that will stimulate \$20 billion in school construction and renovation over the next four years. Through this program, schools could obtain financing to make emergency repairs, to correct health and safety problems, to make technological upgrades, to improve energy efficiency, to ensure access for individuals with disabilities, and to build new schools needed to accommodate growing enrollments. Funds under this program would pay for half of the interest costs on school construction bonds or similar financing mechanisms. Half of the funds available under this program would be targeted to the nation's largest 100 cities. Cities would also be eligible to compete with other districts for the other half of the funds available under this program. Our legislative proposal for this program has been introduced.
- Title V Reauthorization Proposal for Professional Development: The quality and quantity of teachers in urban school districts must be increased if all children are to reach challenging academic standards. The professional development programs included in the Administration's higher education reauthorization proposal would greatly benefit urban school efforts to improve their teaching force. The proposal includes a program to recruit new teachers for underserved areas. This will greatly help urban school systems which traditionally have difficulty recruiting certified teachers and are often forced to rely on a large pool of uncertified teachers. Our proposal for lighthouse partnerships for professional development could also benefit urban districts. Both programs include provisions to support training for paraprofessional educators to become certified teachers. Since a great number of paraprofessionals are in urban districts, this would help increase the ranks of certified teachers in urban schools. It may also increase the diversity of the urban teaching pool since a majority of paraprofessionals come from racial and ethnic minority groups.
- America Reads: Reading will play a critical role in improving the education of urban children -- 47% of whom scored below the basic level on the 1994 NAEP. The Administration has proposed legislation for a \$260 million initiative for FY 98 that would support early interventions and individualized tutoring programs after school, on weekends, and in summers. Tied to this initiative, the Administration is encouraging

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colleges and universities to send 100,000 students into their communities as reading tutors. Colleges and universities are being asked to devote half of their new Federal Work-Study money to community service jobs, and the Department is waiving the requirement for local agencies to match the Federal investment. The President's budget also includes a major expansion of Head Start to reach one million pre-school children in 2002 so that they will enter school ready to learn.

- Reauthorization of the Vocational and Adult Education Acts: Aligning all federal programs to support increased student achievement is critical for helping urban districts comprehensively address the needs of their schools. The Administration's proposals for vocational education and adult education reauthorizations contain provisions to target resources to communities and populations with the greatest need. Our proposals to target formulas to high poverty areas would benefit urban school districts. Our proposals are designed to improve student academic achievement, school-to-work opportunities, welfare reform, and family literacy. The reauthorizations also support program improvement by establishing priorities for quality programs, and creating links between these acts and planning and services under other Federal education programs. The proposal for vocational education encourages each State to use those funds for activities in the State school-to-work plan, Goals 2000 plan, and other reform efforts, including schoolwide programs.

Authorized Programs, Pending Funds:

- 21st Century Learning Centers: Students in failing urban schools will need additional support to master challenging academic material. The FY 98 budget request includes a \$50 million program that would support extended learning time for youth in inner city and rural schools. Grants would be used to establish community learning centers in local public schools that offer stimulating, safe, supervised, and cost-effective after school, weekend or summer havens for children and youth. Recent research shows that a stimulating environment of this type can improve thinking skills and language skills of participating children and youth. These programs would have a focus on offering learning activities.
- National Research Center on School Leadership: Effective instructional leaders are essential for fixing failing schools. The Department's FY 99 budget request includes funding for a national research center on school leadership which would focus on improving district and school leadership as well as the support systems that must operate in a coherent manner to provide improved teaching and learning.
- Title I Comprehensive School Reform: Efforts to improve low performing schools must include the implementation of research-based strategies for improving teaching and learning in those schools. The FY 98 budget includes a new \$145 million program to

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support comprehensive school reform efforts using research-based models. These funds would support \$50,000 competitive grants to as many as 4,000 schools to start-up research-based models of whole school reform. These schools will focus on implementing challenging academic standards, engaging teachers, and strengthening parental and community support. This program, however, is open to all schools, and does not have an urban focus.

Current Initiatives with a Clear Urban Focus:

- New American High School Reform Initiative: High schools should not be neglected in school improvement efforts. In the spring of 1995, the Department began encouraging high school reform efforts that focus on helping all students achieve high levels of academic skills and prepare for college and careers, especially through whole school reform. The Department identified five urban high schools to receive assistance in expanding and promoting their reforms and serve as models for other districts. We are working with these schools to revamp their curriculum, improve teaching methods, and raise expectations for both students and teachers. They are creating smaller, safer learning environments, and building partnerships with community leaders, businesses, and parents. The Department is expanding this initiative to 30 schools this year.
- Urban-Rural School-to-Work Opportunities Grants: Exposing students to the world of work and relating their academic experiences to the demands of the workplace and postsecondary education have proven effective in motivating and educating students. A total of 46 grants have been awarded to urban areas to assist in establishing comprehensive school-to-work systems. These grants are made directly to local school-to-work partnerships that serve areas of concentrated poverty.
- Educational Technology: Technology can be a powerful tool for opening urban classrooms to the rest of the world. The new E-rate put forward by the FCC as part of the Universal Services provision of the Telecommunications Act provides essential support to urban school districts so they can access Internet services at heavily discounted rates for both wiring schools and connecting to the Internet. Educational technology offers a powerful tool to improve teaching and learning and bring all children into the Information Age. This Administration has made significant investment into expanding access to educational technology through both discounted rates and through grants such as the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund and the Technology Innovation Challenge Grants.
- NSF Urban Systemic Initiative: The National Science Foundation funds grants to urban school districts for comprehensive reforms to improve student achievement in math and science.

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Specifications for Education Opportunity Zones Initiative1. Findings

-- Children in high-poverty schools begin school academically behind their peers in other schools and are often unable to close the gap as they progress through school.

-- Many children who attend high-poverty schools lack access to the challenging curricula, well-prepared teachers, and high expectations that make better achievement possible.

-- Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show large gaps in the achievement of students in high-poverty and low-poverty. High-poverty schools will face special challenges in preparing their students to succeed on new and more challenging national and State assessments, such as voluntary national tests and the assessments States are developing under the Goals 2000 and Title I programs.

-- Graduates of urban and rural high schools are more likely than comparable graduates of suburban high schools to be unemployed.

-- High-poverty rural schools, because of their isolation, small size, and low level of resources, face particular challenges. For example, teachers in rural districts are nearly twice as likely as nonrural teachers to provide instruction in 3 or more subjects.

-- Some urban and rural local educational agencies with large concentrations of students from poor families are beginning to make progress in preparing children to meet high standards and can serve as models for other districts desiring to improve the academic achievement of their students. The Federal Government can spur more local educational agencies in this direction by providing targeted resources for urban and rural districts willing to carry out solid plans for improving the educational achievement of all their children.

2. Purpose

It is the purpose of this title to assist urban and rural local educational agencies with high concentrations of children from low-income families to implement educational reform strategies that will enable all their students to meet challenging educational standards.

3. Authorization of Appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated \$200 million for FY 1999, \$318 million in FY 2000, \$386 million in FY 2001, \$359 million in FY 2002, and \$272 million in FY 2003. [These are the

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amounts included in the budget request.]

4. Definitions

The term "local educational agency" has the meaning given that term in section 14101 (18) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

An "urban locality" is a locality that is a: (1) central city of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) (2) any other locality with an MSA if such MSA has a population of at least 400,000 or a population density of a least 6,000 persons per square mile.

A "rural locality" is a locality is not within an MSA and has a population of less than 25,000.

A "high-poverty local educational agency" is an LEA in which the percentage of children, ages 5-17, from families with incomes below the poverty level is 20 percent or greater or the number of such children exceeds 10,000.

5. Eligibility

A local educational agency shall be eligible to receive a grant under this program if it is: (1) a high-poverty LEA; and (2) located in either an urban locality or a rural locality.

6. Applications

In order to receive a grant under this program, eligible local educational agencies or consortia of eligible districts shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such form, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

The application shall include:

-- An assurance that the local educational agency developed the application after extensive public discussions with ~~State education officials~~, affected parents, students, teachers, and representatives of teachers and school employees; administrators; higher education officials; other educators; and business and community leaders, and that the LEA will work in partnership with those individuals in implementing its grant under this program; [Note: this language comes largely from the Clay bill. That bill includes not only an assurance that the applicant has consulted with the various entities, but also a requirement that grants go to consortia of pretty much the same entities. That seemed confusing. The above is an attempt to incorporate some of the Clay language, as well as the language in the White House fact sheet saying that "Successful applicants will have broad-based partnerships to support their reforms."]

-- Evidence that the local educational agency or consortia of such agencies have begun to raise student achievement, as measured through the assessments States are developing under ESEA Title I or comparably rigorous State or local assessments (and such evidence

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Charter Schools

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shall include data disaggregated to show the achievement of students in different racial and groups, by gender, and for students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency), or

-- Evidence that the local educational agency or consortia have put (or are putting) into place effective reform policies, including policies to:

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-- Hold schools accountable for helping students reach high 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 identifying, working with, and, if necessary, fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers;

-- Require students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their careers; and

-- Provide students and parents with expanded choice within public education; and

-- Evidence that the local educational agency is using its existing local, State, and Federal funds effectively to implement educational reforms and raise student achievement.

The application shall also include a description of how the local educational agency or consortia of such agencies will use the grant made available under this part, including descriptions of:

-- How the district will use all available resources -- Federal, State, local, and private -- to carry out its reform strategy;

-- How the district will use those resources to provide students with a rich curriculum tied to high standards, good teaching, extended learning opportunities, and expanded educational choices;

-- How the applicant will use its grant to strengthen educational accountability, including holding teachers and principals accountable for helping all students (including those with disabilities or limited English proficiency) achieve to high standards, and holding students accountable for their behavior and educational achievement;

-- The benchmarks the applicant proposes to establish to determine ~~whether it is making adequate progress in implementing its reforms~~, and raising educational achievement, by the third year of the grant; and

-- A description of how the applicant will continue the activities carried out under the grant after the grant has expired.

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[Note: We have tried to incorporate, in the application requirements, everything that seems to be called for in the White House fact sheet; see in particular the list of 4 items, in the first paragraph of the fact sheet, that are supposed to characterize EOZ districts; the five items that, according to the second paragraph, districts would have to demonstrate in order to be selected, and the statements in the 4th paragraph about 3 or 4 other things applicants will have to "have" or "show." But we've also tried to minimize, where possible, the number of application requirements. Although we've omitted some things, the listing still seems pretty long. Comments are welcome.]

7. Selection of Applications

The Secretary shall, using a peer review process, select applicants to receive funding based on:

- Evidence that: (1) the applicant has made progress in improving student achievement, at least in some of its schools that enroll concentrations of children from low-income families, or (2) the applicant has put (or is putting) into place effective reform policies as described in #6 above; and
- The applicant's plan for carrying out activities under the grant, as set forth in the application

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The Secretary shall make the selections through a two-stage process. In the first stage, local educational agencies desiring to be an education opportunity zone shall submit a "pre-application," incorporating such of the requirements of #6 above as the Secretary prescribes. The Secretary shall designate the most promising of the pre-applicants to submit full applications. The local educational agencies would then prepare final applications incorporating all of the elements of #6. [Note: This is more or less what we put in the HEA Title V bill, where we anticipated a situation similar to what we predict here. (Lots of applications for very few awards.) We could do the same thing administratively, but it may a good idea to signal what the process would be.]

In making the selections, the Secretary shall seek to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of grants among geographic regions of the country, to varying sizes of urban local educational agencies, and to rural schools, including rural schools serving concentrations of Indian children.

8. Presidential Declaration

yes

The President shall designate each local educational agency, or consortium of agencies, selected by the Secretary to receive a grant under this program as an "Education Opportunity Zone" and shall instruct Federal agencies to provide grant recipients with such technical assistance as those agencies can make available to enable the recipients to carry out their activities under the program. [Based on Clay bill; do we want this?]

9. Length and Amount of Grants/Conditions on Continuations

OK Very short

In determining the amount of a grant, the Secretary shall take into consideration such factors as the number of students in the district who are from low-income families, the number of low-performing schools in the district, and the number of children in the district scoring below grade level on assessments.

Each grant shall be for a period of up to five years. The Secretary may increase the amount of a grant in the second year, in order to permit full implementation of grant activities. However:

- The amount of a second-year award shall be no more than 140 percent of a year 1 award.
- The amount of a third-year award shall be no more than 80 percent of the year 2 award
- The amount of a year 4 award shall be no more than 70 percent of a year 2 award.
- The amount of a year 5 award shall be no more than 50 percent of a year 2 award.

In the initial year of their participation in the program, recipients would develop and adopt, with the approval of the Secretary, specific benchmarks in the areas of : (1) student achievement; (2) dropout rates; (3) attendance; and (4) such other areas as may be specified by the Secretary. Each grantee would agree to be held accountable for achieving those benchmarks. The Secretary shall make continuation awards for years 4 and 5 only after determining that the grantee is reaching its benchmarks.

10. Uses of Funds

Local educational agencies selected to receive grants shall use their grants for [some or all of? need to think about, particularly for rural districts that may not be able to do much in areas like expanding choice] the following purposes:

- Providing students with expanded choice and increased curriculum options within public education, through such means as schools within schools, magnet schools, charter schools, distance learning programs, and opportunities for secondary school students to take postsecondary courses;
- Designing and implementing school performance information systems to measure the performance of schools in educating their students to high standards, maintaining a safe school environment, and achieving high school attendance and graduation rates;
- Developing and implementing district accountability systems that reward schools that raise student achievement and provide assistance to, and ultimately sanctions for, schools that fail to do so;
- Developing and implementing programs to provide recognition and financial rewards to teachers who demonstrate outstanding capability at educating students who achieve to

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high standards, including monetary rewards for teachers who earn certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards;

-- Developing and implementing financial incentives for schools to make progress against the goals and benchmarks the district has established for the program;

-- Developing procedures for identifying ineffective teachers, providing them with assistance to improve their skills, and if there is no improvement, fairly and expeditiously removing such teachers from the classroom.

-- Developing procedures for selecting, and retaining principals who have the ability to provide the school leadership needed to raise student achievement;

-- Developing and carrying out procedures to intervene in schools that are failing to teach children to high standards, including such activities as technical assistance as technical assistance on school management and leadership, intensive professional development for the school staff, or institution of new instructional programs that are based on reliable research, or the reconstitution of the school;

-- Providing extended learning services to students who are failing, or are at risk of failing, to achieve to high standards, such as after-school, weekend, and summer programs;

-- Providing ongoing professional development opportunities to teachers, principals, and other school staff that are tailored to the needs of individual schools and to the objectives of the program carried out under the grant;

-- Establishing programs to improve the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, including the use of financial incentives to encourage individuals to teach in different schools in the district;

-- Carrying out activities to build stronger partnerships between schools and parents, businesses, and communities; and

-- Assessment of activities carried out under the grant, including the extent to which the grant is achieving its objectives.

11. Flexibility --this is very much a first cut; need input from OGC

Each school operated by a local educational agency receiving funding under this authority shall be considered as meeting the criteria for eligibility to implement a schoolwide program as described in section 1114 of ESEA. All schools in the local educational district that qualify for eligibility for a schoolwide program based solely on the district's receiving funding under this authority and wish to carry out a schoolwide program shall:

-- Develop a plan that satisfies the requirements of section 1114 (b)(2); and

-- Develop a program that includes the components of a schoolwide program described in section 1411(b)(1).

Amendment to PL 103-227 -- In section 311(e)(2), delete "not more than 6..." [Note: This would remove the 6-State cap on Edflex. May also need conforming language to the 1996 Omnibus Appropriations Act, which raised the cap to 12.]

12. Participation of Private School Students and Teachers

Include in the bill language similar to ESEA section 14503 that: (1) provides for equitable participation of private school students and teachers in special educational services or other benefits under the program, after timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate private school officials; (2) requires that all such services be secular, neutral, and nonideological; and (3) provides for public control of the funds used to provide such services.

13. Evaluation

The Secretary shall carry out an evaluation of the program supported under this part. The evaluation shall address such issues as:

- The extent to which student achievement in local educational agencies receiving support increases;
- The extent to which local educational agencies receiving support expand the choices for students and parents within public education; and
- The extent to which local educational agencies receiving support develop and implement systems to hold schools, teachers, and principals accountable for student achievement.

14. National Activities

The Secretary may reserve up to 5 percent of the appropriation for:

- Peer review of applications;
- Evaluation of the program as called for under #9, and measurement of its effectiveness in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act;
- Conferences of grantees, and other entities, in order to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among the participating local educational agencies and other institutions, agencies, and individuals who are interested in raising student achievement in high-poverty urban and rural school;

-- Dissemination of research findings, evaluation data, and the experiences of other districts implementing comprehensive school reform; and

-- Technical assistance to grantees.

Applications

The Application should include:

- Evidence of a track record for improving student achievement (as measured by state or local assessments for Title 1, Goals 2000 or comparable assessments), on a district wide basis or in selected schools which have participated in a deliberate school improvement strategy.
- Evidence that the district has set high standards (or is using state standards), has or is developing tests that are aligned with the standards, and is implementing a comprehensive education improvement strategy (...)designed to help all kids meet the standards.
- Evidence of a partnership involving the LEA, educators, parents, community groups, employers and higher education focused on the implementation of the district's standards-based strategy for improving education.
- Evidence that the district has (or is putting in place) accountability policies that:
 - Hold schools accountable for results, including rewarding schools that succeed and intervening in schools that fail to make progress. The application should describe the district's approach to helping schools that fail to make progress improve, and the evidence that this approach works (can work?).
 - Requiring students to meet academic standards at key transition points in their schooling career before being promoted to the next grade level or graduating. The application should describe the district's strategy for (1) providing students with qualified teachers, challenging curriculum, small classes, etc.???; (2) for identifying early students who need help and providing them with needed help; and, (3) for providing students who do not meet the standards with extra help after school or in summer school, so that students are able to meet the standards and be promoted rather than retained.
 - Holding teachers and principals accountable for quality, including providing incentives for teachers to gain certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and (in cooperation with teachers organization) procedures for identifying, helping and if necessary fairly and quickly removing ineffective teachers.
 - Provide students and parents with expanded choice within public education.
- A description of the resources under this grant, as well as other federal resources, will be used to support the strategy described above.
- A description of the applicants plans for using local, state or other federal resources to continue the activities carried out with grant funds after the grant has expired.

- The specific measures the applicant will use to determine progress in improving student achievement (including the subject areas and grade levels to be included), and the gains on each measure that will constitute adequate (annual? 3-year?) progress? These measures and gains will be used to determine if the applicant will receive continued funding in years 4 and 5, and are subject to negotiation with and the approval of the Secretary, based on the recommendations of peer reviewers.

Uses of funds

Anything consistent with the purposes of the program and the application submitted.