

Reform (Clips)

Deke

for the report since an early version surfaced on March 15, but Superintendent Carolyn Gettridge refused them in violation of California public records law, which says such documents must be made available. She said the report would not be made public until it went to the school board. It was finally made public late Friday as part of the board's meeting packet.

"The reality is our children are not learning and we want to refocus the community's attention on that (rather than on the ebonics fight)," said Sylvester Hodges, chairman of the Task Force on the Education of African American Students, who oversaw the latest report and supports its wording.

Hodges, who left the school board at the end of last year, was among the board members who on December 18 unanimously approved an ebonics

resolution that spurred a national debate because it called ebonics the primary language of Oakland's African American students. The resolution's wording was amended in January to reflect what the school board said it meant all along — to help students learn to speak standard English while recognizing the speech patterns many students bring to school.

"Ebonics has always been just one phase of our strategy. We also want to recruit more African American teachers, operate more homework centers and train parents," Hodges said.

One aspect of the latest plan that has already raised questions from some is a proposal to hire a \$65,000-a-year "community coordinator" and a \$35,000-a-year secretary. The school district has been criticized for putting too much money in administrative or clerical positions that do not involve direct

teaching of students.

The proposal also calls for \$100,000 a year to train teachers in standard English strategies and other ways to reach its African American students, \$100,000 in materials for students and \$80,000 a year for mentors to students.

"Those salaries and benefits, \$65,000 and \$35,000, seem a bit high to me," said School Board Member Jason Hodge. But Hodge said he believes board members will have adequate time to comment before the plan is adopted, since it will not be voting on the proposals tomorrow.

Instead, the plan will be sent to various school board committees before it returns to the board for a vote, to avoid the brouhaha of last December when the board rushed to pass the proposal that included sloppy language.

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45. San Francisco Chronicle

May 6, 1997

Pact May Halt School Overhauls Tentative deal could end S.F. staff 'reconstitution' program

Nanette Asimov, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco's 15-year-old system of "school reconstitution" could come to an abrupt and surprising end next week because of a last-minute agreement signed by the city schools chief and the president of the teachers union.

The tentative agreement comes just days before Superintendent Bill Rojas is scheduled to announce which of this year's low-performing schools will be "reconstituted" — all employees fanned out to other schools and replaced by people who would presumably be more effective at helping students. Rojas has overhauled eight schools this way since 1994, and previous superintendents reconstituted schools sporadically before that.

Teachers despise the system as needlessly cruel to good instructors and students whose favorite teachers may be sent away. But Rojas regards reconstitution as a useful tool for tackling schools with the worst records, and recently completed a doctoral thesis on its benefits. Reconstitution is part of the district's 1982 federal desegregation plan.

Under the new proposal — which still requires a judge's approval — the

fix for schools would focus on replacing individual employees rather than the entire staff.

For the first time, the teachers union has agreed to support the involuntary transfer of individual teachers.

"This is revolutionary," said Joan-Marie Shelley, president of the union, United Educators of San Francisco. "I have finally become convinced that yes, teachers have rights to a job in the district, but they have no right to keep change from happening at a school where a plan for change has been developed and approved by the vast majority at the school.

"If it's clear that there are those who have signed on to an improvement plan but are dragging their feet or sabotaging it, then they will be involuntarily transferred."

Rojas, in Memphis, Tenn., for a conference on urban education, said the agreement "sets the stage for ways to improve schools significantly. This is a new partnership with the teachers union."

He and Shelley signed the one-page agreement Thursday. Shelley said the new, gentler alternative was like using a

"scalpel" instead of a meat-ax" to improve schools.

Although the proposal could wind up derailing reconstitution, several steps would have to take place first.

First, the NAACP would have to approve of it. The NAACP brought the original lawsuit against the district that in 1982 created the desegregation plan and reconstitution. If the NAACP does not like the new proposal, then Judge William Orrick is unlikely to approve it. Orrick is the federal judge who monitors the desegregation plan.

Under the new agreement, a meeting will be held no later than Saturday so that officials from the district, the union and the NAACP can create a time line for the plan and flesh it out.

As of yesterday, however, key members of the San Francisco NAACP had not been informed of the plan.

"We'd be willing to take a look at anything the superintendent is proposing," said Lulann McGriff, head of the education committee of the local NAACP and its former president. "But I haven't heard about this and can't comment."

43. Associated Press

05-05 2:12p

Tennessee gains, but still near bottom of youth-welfare ranking

brnhomwjme

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - Children in Tennessee remain some of the nation's most underprivileged, according to a study released Monday.

The state ranked 43rd in The 1997 Kids Count Study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization.

Naming the foundation after his mother, Casey's organization makes grants to help communities study the needs of children so they can find innovative, cost-effective responses.

The Kids Count study uses several different measures to determine how children fared in a given state including: percentage of low birth-weight babies; death rates of children and teens; pregnancy rate of teens; juvenile violent crime arrest rate; high school dropout rate; percentage of children in poverty and families with children headed by a single parent.

At the bottom along with Tennessee included Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Arizona and Florida.

Tennessee's ranking, however, is up from last year, which was 44th.

"We've been at least worse so we are making progress," said Linda O'Neal, executive director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

O'Neal said the Kids Count report reflects that while Tennessee has made progress in the last few years, there's still a long way to go.

"What we need to do is build stronger collaborations between the public and private sector to better meet the needs of families," she said.

"I think the message is clear that no one sector of society can address all the needs. We can't rely solely on the private sector, the churches and organizations, but we all have to work together."

Tennessee made improvements from 1985 to 1994 in infant mortality rate, child death rate, percentage of high school dropouts and the percentage of children in poverty.

Tennessee fared best in its arrest rate in the category of juvenile violent crime, ranking 18th nationally.

Continued focus on preschool programs, however, would make the greatest impact in the lives of

Tennessee's children, O'Neal said.

According to the study, about 50 percent of Tennessee children ages 3 to 5 were not enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten in 1993, compared to 40 percent nationally that year.

Tennessee was closer to national percentages, however, in other categories, including:

- 42 percent of fourth-grade Tennessee students scored below basic reading level in 1994, compared to 41 percent nationally.

- 42 percent of fourth-grade Tennessee students scored below basic mathematics level in 1996, compared to 38 percent nationally.

- 14 percent of Tennessee children living with parents were high school dropouts in 1994, compared to 15 percent nationally.

Some of the states that fared best included Montana, Utah, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Maine, Vermont and Connecticut.

The foundation was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service.■

44. San Francisco Chronicle

May 6, 1997

Oakland Schools Task Force Introduces Renamed Ebonics Plan

Lori Olszewski, Chronicle-East Bay Bureau

Although an Oakland schools task force stripped the word "ebonics" from its newest report in an attempt to quiet controversy, it still plans to dramatically increase the number of teachers who use ebonics methods with their African American students by this fall.

Right now, only a handful of Oakland teachers use the Standard English Proficiency (SEP) program, which helps African American students transform the language they speak at home and in their neighborhoods into the standard English needed to succeed at school and work.

The task force report to be discussed by the school board tomorrow still calls for the SEP program to be expanded into all preschools and elementary schools, where 53 percent or more of students are African American — but the message is now buried in the language of educational bureaucrats. It also calls for all sixth- and ninth-grade language teachers to be trained in the methods.

Those involved in preparing the latest report say they are not backing off their original plan to use ebonics to help students learn standard English. They

said they are simply eliminating the hot-point word to defuse the emotional cultural debate over the issue.

The "development of a comprehensive English language development program for African American students" is just one proposal in a \$1.95 million five-year budget and 25-page plan to improve the dismal academic record of Oakland's African American students.

Bay Area newspapers, including The Chronicle, had made numerous requests to the Oakland Unified School District

Victory for city children

■ **Baltimore schools:** *Proposed settlement recognizes need for money, better management.*

WITH AN UNDISPUTED premise — that city schools are failing to provide an adequate education to children in Baltimore — it may have seemed relatively simple to craft a solution to the various lawsuits swirling around Baltimore City's public schools. But education issues always cut close to the bone.

In this case, questions of politics, power and race complicated what might have been a smoother, faster settlement. Fortunately, those complications proved less intractable than the determination of various parties to reach an agreement.

City schools will get at least \$254 million in new funds by 2002, including an additional \$24 million for capital projects. Significantly, the settlement leaves open the possibility for a further increase in the last two years of the agreement — an incentive to the city to produce good results by that time.

Meanwhile, the city will institute crucial changes in management. No longer will school board members serve only at the pleasure of the mayor, a situation that too easily leads to patronage appointments. Instead, a nine-member board will be appointed jointly by the may-

or and the governor from a list of qualified people submitted by the State Board of Education. The city board will choose the system's new chief executive officer. Under the CEO will be a chief academic officer and a chief fiscal officer.

Had a trial gone forward, the status quo would have prevailed for several more years while the cases were argued and appealed. During that time, thousands more children would have failed to receive an education that would equip them for employment in the 21st century. So the settlement is good news for school children and for the economic health of Baltimore city. No amount of effort or money spent on economic development can surmount the damage done when middle-class families desert the city in search of effective schools, or when businesses shun the city because they cannot find a stable, competent work force.

Judges Joseph H. H. Kaplan and Marvin Garbis deserve much credit for pushing the parties in these suits toward a productive solution. And no mention of this agreement can ignore the crucial role of Baltimore City Del. Howard P. "Pete" Rawlings, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. His determination to hold schools accountable, together with his refusal to allow racial polarities to stand in the way of changes that would benefit children of all races, is a testament to courageous leadership.

Settlement Talks Delay Baltimore

Tentative Agreement Would Give More Control to State, Pump Millions of Dollars Into Ailing System

School Suit

By Paul W. Valentine
Washington Post Staff Writer

BALTIMORE, Nov. 12—A looming court battle over the management and funding of the city's public school system was halted today so attorneys could finalize a settlement that would pump \$254 million in new state aid into the ailing system in exchange for expanding state control over its operations.

The tentative agreement, outlined on the day the trial on the dispute was to begin, would abolish the present city school board appointed by Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke (D) and replace it with a nine-member panel jointly appointed by Schmoke and Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D). The settlement also would give the school system of 110,000 students a huge infusion of cash spread out over the next five years, starting with \$30 million next year.

"We'll probably have some opposition," said Del. Howard P. Rawlings (D-Baltimore), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, who participated in the agreement talks. "... But since most of this money is for the children and not for bureaucrats, I think

we'll be able to convince [opponents] that it's a good thing."

Roger W. Titus, a lawyer retained by Montgomery County to try to intervene in the case, said the money sought for

the city may be hard to find. He noted that the state already is strapped for cash. Some official estimates indicate that the state is facing a \$200 million shortfall next year.

"This case could result in massive changes in funding that could affect Montgomery County taxpayers," Titus said.

If the settlement is approved, Baltimore would join the District in facing likely additional controls by outside authorities because of low attendance, high dropout rates and a general slide in student performance.

Just today, the D.C. financial control board declared the District's schools in a state of crisis and reiterated its plan to diminish the authority of the city's elected school board.

In Baltimore, the joint state-city appointment system of school board members is a rare arrangement, one born out of urgency in the state's attempt to keep the city's schools viable, said a participant in the settlement talks. The new board would be required to impose a master plan for improving student performance that would be subject to evaluation by an independent consultant.

"It's certainly new and different," said Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman (D-Baltimore), head of the Senate's powerful Budget and Taxation Committee and a participant in the talks.

The tentative agreement outlined today grew out of three lawsuits filed in federal and state courts in recent years on behalf of schoolchildren. The city had sued the state after the American Civil Liberties Union and the Maryland Disability Law Center had sued the city. Each lawsuit sought additional funds and management changes to improve city students' performance.

The cases eventually were consolidated, and in a key ruling last month, Baltimore Circuit Court Judge Joseph H.H. Kaplan held that city students, many beset with social and health problems, "are not being provided with an education that is adequate when measured by contemporary educational standards."

A trial was set for today at which witnesses were to testify on whether the lack of adequate education was caused by the state for not providing enough funding or by the city because of poor management of classroom resources.

Hoping to head off a lengthy and acrimonious trial, Kaplan, sitting with U.S. District Judge Marvin J. Garbis, led a series of private negotiations in recent weeks that culminated in today's agreement. All parties to the dispute, including the judges, have until Dec. 2 to ratify the settlement, and because of the implications for funding, General Assembly approval is needed, as well.

Baltimore now receives \$430 million in state aid for its schools, about two-thirds of the city's annual school budget, and had sought an additional \$253 million a year, much more than it would get under the settlement.

If the settlement is approved by the General Assembly, nine new school board members would be named by Glendening and Schmoke from a list of

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Baltimore School Suit continued...

18 candidates solicited by the State Board of Education. The new city school board members then would appoint a chief executive to administer the system, much as a superintendent does, along with a chief academic officer and a chief financial officer.

"Today's agreement," Glendening said in a statement, "combines new management with increased resources, and that is very good news for the children and teachers in classrooms throughout the city."

Although officials in the Baltimore case expressed optimism with today's tentative agreement, others warned that it may meet resistance in the General Assembly.

Both Rawlings and Hoffman emphasized in interviews that the agreement does not envision a tax increase, a concern of many lawmakers monitoring the case.

"It can't be done by taking it away from any other school system," Hoffman said. "Politically, you can't do it."

A spokeswoman in Glendening's office said the governor ordered that the funds called for in the agreement be taken from existing revenue sources, not new ones.

"In every case," said the spokeswoman, Judi Scioli, "our budget department has factored in those figures for each of those years."

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

By Morton M. Kondracke

US Schools Still Flunk: Will Hill, Clinton Get Busy?

President Clinton won re-election partly on the education issue, but his second-term challenge, and Congress's, is to get the country decisively on track to having the best schools in the world.

The two latest education performance reports indicate that, despite 13 years of talk about school reform, America is still a "nation at risk" when it comes to matching global competition.

The massive Third International Mathematics and Science Study, covering half a million students in 41 countries, showed that US eighth-graders score below the world average in math and barely above average in science.

A Department of Education report on the study said it shows that the US is "far from the mark" set by President George Bush and 30 governors (including Clinton of Arkansas) in 1989 of being "first in the world" in math and science by the year 2000.

Even worse news is contained in the just-issued 1996 report of the governor-dominated National Education Goals Panel showing that reading achievement among 12th-graders ac-

Because data-gathering is slow, few of the panel's findings provide statistics to judge Clinton's first-term performance. But there's bad news for him in at least one area. Despite increases in the Head Start program, only 29 percent of three- to five-year-olds are enrolled in pre-school programs, compared with 28 percent in 1993.

Also disappointing was that in 1994, only 11 percent of 12th-graders met the goals panel's standards in history and 27 percent in geography. The percentage of high school teachers holding a degree in the subject they were teaching actually dropped from 1991 to 1994.

In practically every category of school safety and learning environment, the panel reported things getting worse: The number of tenth-graders using drugs increased from 1993 to 1995, as did the percentage reporting drugs on sale at school. Also, the percentage of tenth-graders reporting threats or injuries in school remained at 35 percent, while teachers reported an increase in threats and attacks.

Despite the education activism of his first term and his rhetoric during the 1996 campaign, Clinton can't go down in history as a true "education president" unless the country starts making real progress toward the 2000 goals during his second term.

And one major problem is that Clinton's second-term education budget is skewed toward higher education, with \$42 billion over seven years slated to be spent on tax breaks to guarantee every student at least two years of college.

Clinton's agenda is driven by reports show-

ing that post-secondary education is a dependable predictor of lifetime earning potential, and he is justifiably concerned that average wages in the US have been stagnant for 20 years.

Also, it's much easier for the federal government to have an impact on higher education than on grade schools and high schools, where decisions are primarily local.

But, as education expert Denis P. Doyle declares, "What use is it to give people two years of college if half of them need to take remedial courses when they get there?"

Doyle cites studies on state colleges, including one in California showing that 75 percent of students require some remedial help.

Clearly, Clinton needs to make educational excellence a top priority in his second term. Clinton's electoral success on the issue — it

was key to his beating Bob Dole by 54 percent to 37 percent among women — should convince Congressional Republicans to join him.

As Republican education expert Chester Finn noted in last week's *Weekly Standard*, the GOP lost the education issue because the only positive proposal it had was "vouchers."

School choice is a legitimate issue for Republicans to push. Next year, if they can't force Clinton to fund limited voucher experiments in the District of Columbia, they should make sure that his public "charter school" program is really working.

At the same time, Republicans should embrace Clinton's idea of a \$2 billion program to help parents and states ensure that every child in America can read at a third-grade level by age 8, partly by funding tutoring pro-

grams. They also should approve his \$2 billion proposal to wire every school to the Internet by 2000.

Beyond that, the goals panel cited another problem that Republicans could join with Clinton in solving: There is presently no national standard for measuring how individual states, school districts, schools, teachers, and students perform against one another.

Republicans and Democrats ought to work on that problem together — possibly transforming the current national sampling test, the National Assessment of Education Progress, into a national performance test or creating an office to calibrate various state tests.

Finally, there's the bully pulpit. Both the President and Members of Congress need to make speeches spotlighting the fact that our schools are failing and this simply can't go on.

Clinton's electoral success on the education issue should convince Congressional Republicans to join him in making excellence a top priority.

tually dropped between 1992 and 1994 and that improvements for fourth- and eighth-graders — from a low base — were minuscule.

The only national goal that the US seems to have a chance of reaching is having 90 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds in possession of a high-school diploma or its equivalent by 2000. Currently, 85 percent do, but the goal lacks meaning if only 36 percent of 12th-graders can read at a 12th-grade level.

City, state sign deal for schools

Pact settles suits
by Baltimore, ACLU
against Maryland

'The right thing to do'

State aid to increase
by \$254 million
over next five years

By JEAN THOMPSON
AND ERIC SIEGEL
SUN STAFF

With near-tearful relief and an outpouring of hope, officials signed yesterday a final agreement that ends a long-running battle and begins a new era in the management and funding of Baltimore's public schools.

The agreement, finalized barely an hour before a ceremonial court proceeding, provides the framework for reorganizing school management with a new role for the state and increasing state aid by \$254 million over the next five years.

His voice cracking with emotion, Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke told a courtroom filled with city and state officials, educators, parents and children that the struggle to improve the schools and settle three lawsuits had been "an emotional time for us," during which "some friendships have been sorely strained."

"When I came into office, I said it was my goal to make this the city that reads," said

Schmoke, who was first elected mayor in 1987. "It became clearer and clearer to me that our community could not achieve that goal without a partnership with the state."

Schmoke, so overcome by the moment that he had to step back from the podium to compose himself, said he hoped future generations of city students would remember this as [See Schools, 7A]

"the day that the adults stopped fighting one another and joined and started fighting for the children."

In an apparent reference to critics who believe the city ceded too much control to the state, Schmoke said, "I can tell you from the bottom of my heart, everything tells me this is the right thing to do."

Ovation

His remarks prompted an ovation in the courtroom as he took his seat next to Gov. Parris N. Glendening, with whom he had dined privately Monday night. The two had been close political allies, but their relationship frayed during at-times rancorous negotiations that dragged on for more than a year.

Glendening — who with the agreement's legislative architects must now shepherd the deal through the General Assembly this winter — called the quarter of a billion dollars in additional aid a good investment for all Maryland taxpayers.

"What will the city and the state be like if 108,000 kids graduate without having prepared for the 21st century?" Glendening said.

If the legislature fails to approve the funding by next May, the agreement will be voided and the city and state must go to trial.

Yesterday's agreement, overseen by U.S. District Judge Marvin J. Garbis and Baltimore Circuit Judge Joseph H. H. Kaplan, settles lawsuits brought in the last two years by the city and the American Civil Liberties Union against the state. Those suits called Baltimore's schools inadequate and demanded increases in state spending on education.

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Disabled students

In addition, the agreement settles a 12-year-old federal complaint filed by the Maryland Disability Law Center against the city on behalf of disabled students. The federal court's oversight will not end, but layers of school bureaucracy it created will be eliminated.

The first step in the reorganization will be the appointment of a three-person transition committee

that will begin soliciting recommendations for members of a new city school board to be appointed jointly by the governor and the mayor.

The new school board will take office when the state budget bill containing Baltimore's new appropriation is enacted, in early spring. It will replace the current board, which was appointed by the mayor.

Members of the new nine-member board must be city residents, according to the agreement, and the board, to the extent possible, "shall reflect the demographic composition" of the city, which is about 60 percent African-American.

Experience for board

To ensure that the new board reflects the concerns raised in the three lawsuits, the agreement specifies the experience that members must bring: four members must have a background in administrative leadership, three must have educational expertise, one must have in-depth knowledge of special education issues, and at least one must be a parent

of a city student.

The board also will have a non-voting student member and will be advised by a parent and community board.

One significant change is that the new board will have "complete control of all personnel and procurement" including negotiation of union contracts.

Currently, major expenses require approval of the city's Board of Estimates, and union matters are handled by the city labor commissioner, a mayoral appointee.

Acting City Solicitor Otho Thompson said the city charter would not have to be changed.

The city school board is to conduct a nationwide search for a chief executive officer to replace Schools Superintendent Walter G. Amprey. An interim CEO will be appointed if a permanent replacement cannot be found before next fall. The CEO would be a member of the mayor's cabinet, but the executive's salary would be set by the board.

'Continuous improvement'

The security of the CEO's job will depend on "demonstrable and

continuous improvement" in student performance, the agreement says.

The appointment of a permanent or interim CEO will signal the remarriage of the divided management of general education and special education — which were split by a federal court order in 1995. It will end the term of Sister Kathleen Feeley, the mayor's appointee as special education administrator.

The agreement includes a timetable for the drafting of citywide school reform plans: A transition plan to guide the schools through the next academic year is due Sept. 1. A master plan for reform over the five years of the agreement is due Jan. 1, 1998. The board also must draft public reports on school spending and achievement by Dec. 31 of each year.

Glendening agreed to provide \$230 million extra in school operating aid, beginning with \$30 million next year, and \$50 million in each of the next four years. Also, the city will get about \$24 million in additional school renovation money.

Fund released

Yesterday's signing of the partnership deal also will lead to the release of millions in city school aid frozen this year by legislators unhappy with the way schools were run.

The city currently receives \$430 million of its \$653 million school budget from the state, plus \$8.7 million in construction funds.

The pact says that the money must be used for programs that affect student achievement and for improving teacher salaries.

Echoing the sentiments of others during the signing ceremony, State Senator Barbara A. Hoffman and Delegate Howard P. Rawlings said they had often doubted a settlement would ever be reached.

'All excited'

"I for one did not think this day would come about," said Rawlings, a West Baltimore Democrat who heads the house appropriations committee and who has long championed school management reforms despite the political risks.

"I think, though, we are all excited about this day; there is a long journey ahead of us," he said.

JOYCE PURNICK

Metro Matters

When a Mayor Really Holds School Power

CHICAGO

IN overwhelmingly Democratic Chicago, where the outcome of the election is considered such a certainty that Presidential politics barely makes the 10 o'clock news, it is the school system that gets the headlines.

You cannot spend a day in Chicago without hearing about how the new schools chief dismissed a principal or set new standards and is so thoroughly shaking things up that admirers use the word "unprecedented" with giddy abandon.

A local story, for sure. But with relevance for New York because the man running Chicago's schools is Mayor Richard M. Daley's former budget director. And under a new state law, the Mayor appointed not only him but also Chicago's equivalent of a board of education.

For just over a year, the Mayor of Chicago has had what Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani has periodically said he wants, too — control over the schools. Conditions in Chicago and New York are not direct parallels. The Chicago school system, radically decentralized in 1988, has been among the most unstable in the country, more burdened by patronage and politics even than New York's. Another difference: Chicago's school budget does not flow through the city budget; New York mayors indirectly control the educational purse strings.

But the schools of both cities have much in common. "Mayors in cities over 300,000, we have all same problems," Mayor Daley said in an interview in his Chicago office. "When I was elected, I knew I had a major problem. The system got so bad, the middle class, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, younger people, they would say: 'I love the city and what you are doing, but I can't send my child to public school. We're leaving.'"

He complained, as have New York mayors, that he would get the blame for bad schools anyway, so why not have the responsibility? "I wanted that, if I was going to manage the city right," he said.

SKEPTICS contend that the Chicago Mayor actually preferred the status quo since it gave him a built-in excuse for poor schools. But in the summer of 1995, Illinois's Republican Legislature built a superstructure of mayoral control over the foundation of decentralization.

Accordingly, the Mayor named Paul G. Vallas — a budget expert, not an educator — to the new job of chief executive officer, and named his former chief of staff, Gery Chico, president of the board of trustees. Mr. Vallas soon made rare peace with the teachers union; expanded preschool education; eliminated automatic promotion for failing students and established mandatory summer school.

Mr. Vallas and his team also put together a financing plan for repairs and new construction; balanced the budget through 1999; cut the central bureaucracy by nearly 30 percent and removed 14 principals and almost 200 teachers and other employees for malfeasance, which would be a very difficult task in New York City.

The Chicago Teachers Union president, Thomas Reece, said he sees improvement, and not only because his union got a handsome raise. "Before, people with various political agendas were on the school board," he said. "And reform groups have been arguing about governance since 1989, but reform didn't get to the classroom. This group came in and said, 'Look, we're concentrating our resources and trying to get them into the classroom.'"

Not everybody is happy. Critics include members of the local school councils worried about their power, supporters of dismissed principals, and some nonprofit "reform" groups that say the impact of the new policies have yet to be evaluated.

IT is too soon to know if the new system will raise student performance and lower the abysmal dropout rate. But the signs of stability alone have drawn support from parents, teachers, students and editorial boards. Some of the credit goes to Mr. Vallas, an enthusiastic man of 43 who takes risks. And some goes to the new setup and the prominent burden it puts on the Mayor.

"The fact that he has responsibility, and

with that the potential for political liability means he's got to make sure this thing works," Mr. Vallas said. Mayor Daley is funneling more services to the schools, he said, but not using his influence to meddle.

Mr. Vallas said he thought the Chicago model could work in New York, but with a significant change. "I would institutionalize segregation of city funds," he said. "That way, schools do not become a source of subsidy for the city." He thought Mr. Giuliani would do right by the schools. "But who knows what the next guy is going to do?" he added.

Not that mayoral control is under consideration in New York. The Legislature still balks at relatively modest checks on community school boards' powers, and Mr. Giuliani has stopped asking for control of the school system now that he gets along with the nonconfrontational Chancellor, Rudy Crew.

New York's general indifference to structural change is a pity. Chicago's provocative experiment in improving public education — what Mayor Daley calls "the heart and soul of a city" — may not be transferrable. It may not even succeed. But at the least, it rates some attention.

State Declares Fiscal Emergency in Cleveland Schools

By Caroline Hendrie

Ohio declared a fiscal emergency in the Cleveland public schools late last month, just days before a citywide vote on a measure aimed at helping bail out the beleaguered district.

Under the state's recently enacted fiscal-emergency law, a special commission will be appointed to take control of the debt-ridden system's purse strings and chart a course for restoring its fiscal equilibrium.

The commission is to submit a recovery plan to the state schools chief within 60 days of its first meeting, which was scheduled for Nov. 6.

"This oversight will help return the district to financial stability and provide a basis for improving the quality of education to students," Jim Petro, the state auditor, said in declaring the state of emergency.

The move marks the latest intervention by the state in the management of the Cleveland schools. In March of last year, a federal judge ordered the state education department to take charge of the 74,000-student district, and since then it has been governed by a superintendent appointed by the state.

One of the crucial factors in triggering the new state law was the district's operating deficit, which stands at \$89.5 million this year. The district has an annual budget of about \$600 million.

Bailout Sought

A local Nov. 5 ballot measure sought to raise \$67 million a year in additional funding. The last time such a tax increase won voter approval was in 1983.

The new fiscal-emergency law was prompted by an audit unveiled by Mr. Petro last spring projecting a \$1.4 billion operating debt for the district by 2004 unless spending was curtailed.

Immediately after the law took effect in September, Youngstown became the first Ohio district to be given emergency status. The state has put five other school systems on so-called fiscal watch, a less serious type of intervention that leaves up to the district to devise its own recovery plan.

In Cleveland, the oversight commission will include both the state and district superintendents, the mayor, the state budget chief, and three local residents. It will have authority over all spending decisions, including those related to curriculum and personnel.

The commission will remain in place until the state auditor determines that the district has put its financial affairs in order.

back to basics

When the subject is education and schools, the debate is a Babel of conflicting expertise, statistics, prejudices and preconceived notions. Lost in the debate are the most elemental questions: Why do we send our children to school, and what do we expect them to learn?

By A.G. Block

"Why should my son be a scholar when it is not intended that he should live by his learning?" asked satirist Jonathan Swift in an 18th Century essay on education. "By this rule, if what is commonly said be true, that money answers all things, why should my son be honest, temperate, just, or charitable since he hath no intention to depend upon any of these qualities for a maintenance?"

Swift's taunting question was designed to mock the families of wealth, whose offspring often ended up squandering the ancestral fortune in a lifetime of sloth and idleness. But his barb serves to illustrate, in terse relief, those elements of an education that exist beyond the three "r's."

Controversies gripping the education community today would amuse Swift, for they seem to have little to do with the results of schooling and scholarship. These arguments have seethed for years over issues such as vouchers, assessment tests, funding, block schedules, charter schools, state and federal control, school bonds, integration, busing versus neighborhood schools, Eurocentric versus ethnocentric curricula, new math versus old math, whole language arts versus phonics, class size versus teacher salaries, *ad nauseum*. However important these issues, the noise they create overshadows some real basics: why we send our children to school in the first place and what we expect our schools to teach them.

To this end, Neil Postman, chairman of the Department of Culture and Communication at New York University, painted a broad stroke in his new book "The End of Education" when he wrote:

More...

Washington Post, June 13, 1996, P. 29

William Raspberry

Dangerous Talk

A speech by the wrong Supreme Court justice might confuse the kids.

"I'm glad I'm past the child-bearing age," the cabbie said. "I don't need Clarence Thomas to complicate my life."

"Obviously you mean child-rearing age," I said, "but you're also past the child-siring age. So what has the Supreme Court's slippage on reproductive rights got to do with you?"

"That was just a typo," said the cabbie, who loves to talk like us journalists. "Anyway, I'm not talking about reproduction; I'm talking about Clarence being invited to the Pullen middle school in Prince George's County. What if I had been a parent at that school? Can you imagine the problems that would have caused me?"

I agreed that he might have found it hard to take a stand, given that the invitation to Thomas had been issued, withdrawn and then issued again. "I guess you wouldn't have known whether to put on your marching shoes or just breathe a sigh of relief," I said.

"It's worse than that," the cabbie said. "I've been trying to think what I would have told my kids about the whole confusing affair."

I assured him that all right-thinking black people knew what to tell their children without any thought at all. "They knew to tell them that Clarence Thomas is a self-hating black man who, now that he has it made, wants all other black folk to fail," I said.

"I would have thought about saying something like that myself," the cabbie said, "but you don't know my kids. First crack out of the box, one of them would ask me why I thought Clarence was a self-hating black man. What would I have told them?"

"You'd have told them that Thomas is out of step with black America, that he's sold us out," I said, frustrated at

having to explain something so basic. "The brother's a conservative!"

"You mean he's against racial integration and interracial marriage—stuff like that?" the cabbie said. "Didn't I read where he was a friend of Rush's, and that his wife..."

"Okay, let me make it simple for you," I said. "The man's against affirmative action."

"That's bad, all right," the cabbie said. "I've got sense enough to know that, although sometimes it does get to be a little confusing, you know, racial preference, that kind of thing. But my kids would have wanted to know why they couldn't just listen to Thomas—after all the class had invited him to come to their school—and make up their own minds. They'd have said I let them listen to Republicans and TV hucksters, that I let them listen to Minister Farrakhan, who is not even a Baptist. They would have said they listen to me

and my wife, even though they think we're still living in olden times. Why wouldn't I let them listen to Clarence? What would I have told them?"

I explained that it wasn't about the kids' listening to Justice Thomas. It was about the school *honoring* the renegade by inviting him in the first place.

"I see," the cabbie said. "So if the class had invited Rehnquist or Scalia, that would have been fine by you?"

"Well, they are conservatives," I said, "but the last time I looked, they weren't black."

"So it's only white people who are free to have a different belief?"

"That's not what I said," I told the cabbie.

"Then I guess I missed your point," he said. "I thought you were saying the problem with Thomas is that he doesn't agree with most black people."

"Well, yes..."

"But when most white people dis-

agree with us on affirmative action, that's just conservatism. Can't black folks be conservative if they want to? Plus, are we afraid that our children's listening to Thomas for a few minutes at an awards program will undo all we've taught them over the years? By the way, did he do a good job of selling the Pullen students on his conservative principles?"

"Well, actually," I said, "he talked to them about keeping their word, standing up for their beliefs, working hard, not being rude—that sort of thing. Matter of fact, some of the kids came out of the building looking cross-eyed at those strong black people demonstrating outside. You'd have thought they were the ones in the wrong."

"I see what you mean about those conservatives," the cabbie said. "Always trying to make black folks look bad."

BACK TO BASICS, continued... (2)

"At its best, schooling can be about how to make a life, which is quite different from how to make a living." To Postman and others, we educate children for a variety of reasons, all important but all in competition for the limited time and resources allocated to schools.

Basically, schools prepare children for jobs and careers, to be involved citizens and for a lifetime of learning. Finally, and perhaps most important for California, schools provide children with a common meeting place in which to learn common values. As such, schools are the crucible where Americans are made and where children discover a heritage grown from a myriad of diverse cultures. How this is accomplished, however, is the grist for controversy.

Thomas De Quincey, a 19th Century English philosopher, suggested that there are but two kinds of literature: that of knowledge and that of power. By "literature," he meant everything, including poetry, sermons, speeches, writings, novels, textbooks, scientific tracts, encyclopedias and almanacs of data. The literature of knowledge is meant to impart information or ideas but often is ephemeral, changing as new information comes to light. The literature of power, on the other hand, is designed to move and is more likely to be eternal.

To illustrate, a 1930s history textbook taught students about, among other things, the Reconstruction era that followed the Civil War. This "literature of knowledge" faded from view, however, as new facts were unearthed and different ideas emerged. But the "literature of power," as embodied in W.E.B. DuBois' robust 1935 essay "The Propaganda of History," remains as inspirational today as when first written to discredit accepted views of Reconstruction and to celebrate what he termed the "magnificent drama" of slavery and the resurrection of an entire race.

To De Quincey, therefore, an education system was effective when knowledge and power were woven together to form a tapestry of learning.

Clearly, however, schools must give students the knowledge necessary to earn a living and to enter society. "Kids need to have the skills and abilities that allow them to compete, to earn a wage,

and support a family," says Maureen DiMarco, secretary of Child Development and Education in the Wilson administration. Those skills include the ability to read and write, to calculate and perform higher math, and to have some

understanding of the sciences.

Historically, the country moved away from the notion of church schools during the mid-19th Century precisely because of the demand for a more skilled workforce. "In 1865, we were coming off a civil war, and half the country was bankrupt and the other half was in ruins," says Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin. "Yet by the turn of the century, we were the number-one manufacturing nation on earth, and many economists believe this happened because we had compulsory public education. ... In the information age, education has an even more important role because workers have to use complicated skills." If we don't impart those skills to our children, Eastin warns, jobs and wealth will go elsewhere.

But in a world where it is estimated that students will have as many as nine different jobs over the course of a lifetime, career preparation means something different than it did 50 or 100 years ago. Consider, for instance, this passage from Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi," one of the great literary studies of education.

"If you take the longest street in New York," Twain wrote, and commit to memory every cobblestone, lamppost, building, sign and street crossings, and then add to that the knowledge of the depth of mud at every spot along that street "so accurately that you can instantly [identify where you are] when you are set down at random in that street on an inky black night, you will then have a tolerable notion" of what a Mississippi River pilot must learn. But, Twain added, your education will not be complete, not until you can take half the street signs and *change their places* once a month and still know their new positions on a dark night.

Twain attributed this accumulation of knowledge to an acute ability to memorize. But rote learning was meaningless to a pilot cruising a river that changed daily. More important were the tools of learning which allowed that pilot to understand the significance of snags, floating logs, eroding banks and sand bars. "Life on the Mississippi" is a paean to the art of learning, which serves a student in any endeavor.

"We can't just teach things," says DiMarco. "We must also teach ... attack skills. The ability to learn how to learn is far more important than preparing a

student for a specific career."

But if schools only taught job skills, this would be a nation of drones. Nor would it long be a democracy. Therefore, schools also must prepare students to be informed citizens — a role that Thomas Jefferson considered paramount.

"In every government on earth," Jefferson wrote in his "Notes on the State of Virginia" in 1781, "is some trace of human weakness, some germ of corruption and degeneracy. ... Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree."

Jefferson wanted people educated as a guard against tyranny, but others also see citizenship as a combination of responsibility and pride in a uniquely American heritage. "We must [inculcate] our students to the great principles of our nation and our founding documents," says Assemblyman Steve Baldwin (R-El Cajon), chairman of the Assembly Education Committee. "We must teach students what made America what it is."

More...

BACK TO BASICS, continued... (3)

Baldwin emphasizes teaching about our basic system of government and justice, but he also stresses teaching aspects of the American character such as independence and self-reliance.

Good citizenship also evolves from a sense of duty, something Benjamin Franklin understood when he urged the study of why governments are formed, and that youth be steeped in "the advantages of liberty, the mischiefs of licentiousness, benefits arising out of good laws and a due execution of justice..."

Yet in a place as diverse as California, preparation for jobs and citizenship must be supplemented with an understanding of what is common to all Americans, regardless of background or heritage. According to Postman, "Schools are the affirmative answer to the question: Can a coherent, stable, unified culture be created out of people of diverse traditions, languages and religions?" Schools, Postman insists, "must fashion Americans out of the wretched refuse of teeming shores." To do this, he says, they must teach, among other things, common values: restraint, social responsibility, humility, empathy, tolerance. They also teach the value of sharing, respect, fair play, collaboration, patience and the need to follow rules.

The task is daunting for a state fractured along so many ethnic fault

lines. Other places at other times have been faced with educating large numbers of immigrants, but California is unique. It is not, for example, New York at the turn of the 20th Century. True, New York schools once coped with Polish, French, German, Swedish, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian and a variety of other European tongues. But most of those languages shared a common alphabet and common roots. In addition, most of the children were white. Today, one Orange County school district alone, reports DiMarco, must deal with 89 different languages and dialects — from Russian to Laotian to Mandarin to Spanish to Hindi and points in between. And not all the faces look alike.

Yet mixing that diversity into a single, multinational culture may be the

most critical task facing schools. School is the place where the children of those cultures come together, providing an opportunity to foster tolerance and understanding. School also is the place where children first feel as though they are invested in a system common to all.

"It is really important that people think of themselves as Americans and have a stake in society," explains Dr. Diane Ravitch, former U.S. assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration and now a professor at NYU. "And one of the purposes of education up to the 1960s was to engage in assimilation — to make us all Americans."

But the 1990s are not the 1960s. Assimilation is more complicated today, says Ravitch, and schools may be part of the problem. "Schools ... have fallen in love with diversity," she warns, "and this

... probably heightens racism and the alienation of peoples toward each other. It takes us away from the notion that everyone is part of a common endeavor." Ravitch believes that society — and, therefore, schools — must get back to a time when there were no "hyphenated Americans, just Americans."

That's fine, agrees Eastin, but much of the urge to hyphenate is coming from those who feel that the education system doesn't provide for them. "In the history of this country, there were always people who were excluded, to our regret," she says. "But in the old days, the excluded wanted a world of inclusion. In the future, the excluded will be the least educated, and many of them ... seem to yearn for a world of exclusion." Eastin argues that exclusion — separatism — is the result of anger and frustration on the part of have-nots from all cultures who "have rightfully understood that they cannot participate in the ... information age" without education. "There are the seeds of real trouble."

Children from diverse cultures and backgrounds "often are trying to negotiate two different worlds," explains Morgan Appel, a senior research associate for education at the Claremont Graduate

School's Tomas Rivera Center. "The classroom world often does not reflect the home world."

"All children learn, but they learn in different ways," says Senator Diane Watson (D-Los Angeles), who has a doctorate in education. Referring to black children, Watson says that many come from "environments that are highly stimulating. Our children live in areas that are highly depressed ... and violent." Those conditions must be taken into consideration when preparing programs to educate black children, she insists. Otherwise, the risk of alienation spreads.

Appel and Watson especially worry that schools suffer from a lack of teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. "If Latino kids, for example, do not see that Latinos are represented among respected adults with authority," Appel says, "it sends a powerful message that not only the school doesn't value the contribution of Latinos, but that the system doesn't value it." He says that message translates to any culture. "Kids need to see their faces represented in that larger face of America."

The task is further complicated by the very idea of teaching common val-

ues. "The devil is in the details," says Rick Simpson, principal consultant to the Senate Education Committee. "What exactly are those common values? That's where you begin to see conflicts."

Baldwin, for one, is uncomfortable with the notion that some schools may teach that all cultures are morally equal. "I don't believe they are," he says. "I don't believe that the way women are treated in an Arab culture, where they have to cover themselves, is on the same plane, morally, with the way we treat women in the west."

"It is a challenge to balance respect for other cultures against the real need to have a buy-in to being an American," argues Eastin. "You can teach what values are held by various peoples, and teach kids to respect them, but you better bring it back to what binds us together: equality of opportunity, fairness, liberty and justice."

More...

BACK TO BASICS, continued... (4)

Can the schools inculcate children with common values and blend cultures in a balanced way — in addition to all of their other duties and mandates? —

Most observers insist that schools have no choice. If American society is to move along in harmony, schools must be a salad bowl where all the diverse cultures can be mixed into a cohesive public. "It has long been the public school that has been the institution that has created a sense of a 'public' — that is the principal value of a system of public education," says Julia Koppich, a director at the Policy Analysis for Public Education (PACE) at the University of California, Berkeley. And if that "public" is not created, she warns, "we might as well give up on being a country."

For her part, DiMarco sees great strength in diversity. "This state is sitting on the richest raw diamond find ever put on this planet," she says. "Yet, when we look out, do we see the raw diamond mine? No. We see a field of pointy sharp rocks that make it hard for us to go down our path — we think. But if we only would recognize those diamonds for what they are — something that needs to be polished and placed in the proper setting. As such, they will provide this state with a multicultural work force that will give us the chance ... to dominate the global economy."

But the only way to get to that point, DiMarco says, "is to educate people in the American culture and to circle back to that common ethic and values system. To do that, they must be educated — together." ■

No Victory Yet for Crumbling Schools

Virtually the only bright spot in New York City's do-less-with-less budget is a commitment to spend \$1.4 billion more on school repairs and construction. Given the pathetic physical state of many of the city's public schools — the leaking roofs, the 19th-century heating systems, the prewar science laboratories — the city's political leaders could not have found a better place to focus their minimal resources. Now the Mayor and City Council must prove that the money they committed will really be available, and that it will be spent efficiently on the highest-priority projects.

The deal reached this week between Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Council Speaker Peter Vallone was not nearly as desirable as Mr. Vallone's original plan to retain an about-to-expire income tax surcharge and dedicate the revenue to school building programs. That approach would not have added to the city's debt, and weary taxpayers would have been happier to know that what is in fact a tax increase was being dedicated to restoring the schools. But Mr. Giuliani wanted to use that tax money to balance his regular budget, and offered instead to pay for the school construction plan by selling bonds. Mr. Vallone assented.

The compromise will cost the city much more over the long term, at a time when the city is already loaded down with interest costs from borrowing programs of the past. It also spreads the spending out over nearly five years, as opposed to the Speaker's three-year program. That means fewer schools will get critical repairs before the buildings deteriorate further. Perhaps most problematic, it requires the State Legislature's permission to raise the local debt limit, making the city captive to Albany's whims.

It is far too soon to start celebrating, although teachers and students who live under the constant hazards of falling masonry, crumbling plaster ceilings and boarded-up windows in rotten frames at

least have reason for hope. The new budget gets repairs off to a good start. The first piece of the \$1.4 billion can be spent before the Legislature gets involved, and all parties have agreed that the money will be targeted at the crucial, though unglamorous, priorities of roofs and masonry.

But the city and the State Legislature must agree as soon as possible on a way to let the city borrow the rest of the money. The Mayor should work with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, a traditional supporter of city school needs, and the Republican State Senators from New York City, to get the needed legislation through before the lawmakers wander off for their summer recess.

The Mayor and City Council must also limit their meddling with construction priorities. Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Vallone have insisted on control over which schools will be repaired and how, citing the Board of Education's reputation for inefficiency. But the board already has a reliable priority list based on its own engineering studies. The real danger lies in not sticking to the list, and allowing the Mayor's aides or Council members to demand preference for politically sensitive districts.

Most of the new repair projects will probably be done by the School Construction Authority, which is still without a chief executive officer. Mayor Giuliani, Gov. George Pataki and Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew must fill that opening soon with a strong and experienced leader.

Even if the \$1.4 billion contained in this budget survives the political process and translates into new roofs, boilers and schoolrooms, the city's school system will remain desperately short of space and maintenance dollars. That will require another big push for school repair money a year or two from now. But if all the energy devoted to this year's effort is frittered away by political fecklessness or sloppy spending, the next mobilization will be overwhelmed by cynicism before it even begins.

Who's top?

721

Some countries seem to educate their children much better than others. Why? No comprehensive answer has emerged yet but plenty of lessons are being learnt from the tests which reveal the educational discrepancies

A CLASS has 28 students and the ratio of girls to boys is 4:3. How many girls are there? Which of the following is made using bacteria: yogurt, cream, soap or cooking oil? Simple enough questions in any language (the answers, by the way, are 16 and yogurt). But when half a million pupils from around the world were set questions like these, some countries, just like some pupils, did very well and some very badly.

The tests were set for the largest-ever piece of international education research, the Third International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS). Of the 41 nations participating in this first phase, Singapore was teacher's pet: the average scores of its pupils were almost twice those of South Africa, bottom of the class (see table 1).

East Asian countries have overtaken nations such as America and Britain which have had universal schooling for much longer. America came 17th in science and 28th in mathematics. England came 25th in maths and Scotland (whose pupils were tested separately) came 29th. The four richest East Asian economies took the first four places in maths.

Some former communist countries, notably the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria, also did significantly better than their richer western neighbours, even though they spend much less on education. Six of the top 15 places in both maths and science went to East Europeans. It seems that how much a country can afford to spend has less than you might think to do with how well educated its children are. American children have three times as much money spent on their schooling as young South Koreans, who nevertheless beat them hands down in tests.

International educational comparisons like the TIMSS study have been subjects of growing academic enthusiasm and criticism since the 1960s (for the controversies, see box on next page). Teachers, though, have been almost entirely

hostile and most governments have held themselves aloof from the arguments, fearing embarrassment. A poor showing in the league table would give political opponents ammunition, while the studies might be used to accuse ministers of starving their education system (or, possibly, of wasting taxpayers' money on a grand scale).

Now, attitudes are changing, at least among politicians. Over the past ten years or so, governments' desire to know more about how their schools compare with others, and what lessons can be learned from the comparison, have begun to outweigh fear of embarrassment. More countries took part in TIMSS than in its predecessors, and the attention paid to its findings by the world's politicians, educators and the news media was much greater than for previous studies.

Politicians do their homework

President Clinton described the test in his state-of-the-union message in February, as one "that reflects the world-class standards our children must meet for the new era." America's poor overall showing has sparked calls for the adoption of a national curriculum and national standards for school tests—including from Mr Clinton himself. These calls are based on the observation that the countries which did best in the study tended to have national frameworks of this kind.

In a television interview in December, the French president, Jacques Chirac, described as "shameful" a decision by his education ministry to pull out of an international study of adult literacy which was showing that the French were doing badly. And in Britain last year, Michael Heseltine, the deputy prime minister, brushed aside objections from officials in the Department for Education and Employment, and published the unflattering results of a study he had commissioned comparing British workers with those in France, America, Singapore and Germany—chosen as key economic competitors.

The Germans, in turn, were shocked by their pupils' mediocre performance in the TIMSS tests. Their pupils did only slightly better than the English at maths, coming 23rd out of 41 countries. In science, the English surged ahead (though not the Scots) while the Germans were beaten by, among others, the Dutch, the Russians—and even the Americans. A television network ran a special report called "Education Emergency in Ger-

2+2=?

13-year-olds' average score in TIMSS* (int average =500)

Maths	Science
1 Singapore 643	Singapore 607
2 South Korea 607	Czech Republic 574
3 Japan 605	Japan 571
4 Hong Kong 588	South Korea 565
5 Belgium (F ¹) 565	Bulgaria 565
6 Czech Republic 564	Netherlands 560
7 Slovakia 547	Slovenia 560
8 Switzerland 545	Austria 558
9 Netherlands 541	Hungary 554
10 Slovenia 541	England 552
11 Bulgaria 540	Belgium (F ¹) 550
12 Austria 539	Australia 545
13 France 538	Slovakia 544
14 Hungary 537	Russia 538
15 Russia 535	Ireland 538
16 Australia 530	Sweden 535
17 Ireland 527	United States 534
18 Canada 527	Canada 531
19 Belgium (W ¹) 526	Germany 531
20 Thailand 522	Norway 527
21 Israel 522	Thailand 525
22 Sweden 519	New Zealand 525
23 Germany 509	Israel 524
24 New Zealand 508	Hong Kong 522
25 England 508	Switzerland 522
26 Norway 503	Scotland 517
27 Denmark 502	Spain 517
28 United States 500	France 498
29 Scotland 498	Greece 497
30 Liechtenstein 493	Iceland 494
31 Spain 487	Romania 486
32 Iceland 487	Liechtenstein 485
33 Greece 484	Portugal 480
34 Romania 482	Denmark 478
35 Lithuania 477	Lithuania 476
36 Cyprus 474	Belgium (W ¹) 471
37 Portugal 464	Iran 470
38 Iran 428	Cyprus 463
39 Kuwait 392	Kuwait 430
40 Colombia 385	Colombia 411
41 South Africa 354	South Africa 326

*Third International Maths and Science Study. *Finland. *Netherlands. Source: TIMSS

More...

many", industrialists accused politicians of ignoring repeated warnings about declining standards in schools.

There are more studies to come. In December the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a club of 29 of the world's richest countries, launched its own series of annual reports. The OECD already collects data on how the governments spend their combined \$1 trillion annual education budgets, and what proportion of each nation's population reaches a given level of education. The new studies will go much further, comparing how schools, colleges and universities are run in each country and analysing the implications for policymakers.

In some countries, international comparisons are already being used as a catalyst for educational reform. The poor performance of Swedish children in maths, in one study in the mid 1980s, led to the setting up of a new programme of in-service training for teachers. The initial results from TIMSS suggest that Sweden has since pulled itself up to slightly above the international average.

Although Japanese children have repeatedly gained high overall marks in maths tests, some studies have suggested that they are not as advanced in other things, such as analysing data, as they are in basic arithmetic. The Japanese government

as well as for individuals. It is widely believed that one of the main reasons why tiger economies like Singapore and South Korea have grown so quickly is that their governments have made determined and successful efforts to raise educational standards.

The other factor is value for money. Governments everywhere have woken up to the full economic significance of education just as they are making desperate attempts to rein in public spending. OECD countries already spend about 6% of national income on education; given the pressure to trim budgets there is no prospect that governments will chuck money at schools without checking to see whether standards are improving. Hence the enthusiasm for comparisons. If governments could discover what it is about their education system that helps growth, then perhaps, they hope, they could do better without spending more.

So do the tests help? They do not provide a sure-fire formula of exactly how much should be spent on schools, how schools should be managed and precisely how each subject should be taught.

All the same, the tests are already proving useful, especially for exposing myths. A popularly-held view has it that "opportunity to learn" is the key to educational success—ie, the more time children spend on a subject, the better they do at it. Alas, the evidence so far is not encouraging for the proponents of this theory. Taking the twelve countries which both took part in TIMSS and also had their average teaching hours measured in the OECD's recent study of school management, there seems little correlation between time spent on a subject and performance of pupils in tests (see chart 2). Young Austrians spend exceptionally long hours on maths and science lessons; for them, it pays off in higher test scores. But so do New Zealand's teenagers—and they do not do any better than, say, Norwegians, who spend an unusually short time on lessons in both subjects.

Next—and of particular interest to cash-strapped governments—there appears to be little evidence to support the argument, often heard from teachers' unions, that the main cause of educational under-achievement is under-funding. Low-spending countries such as South Korea and the Czech Republic are at the top of the TIMSS league table. High-spenders such as America and Denmark do much worse (see chart 3). Obviously, there are dozens of reasons other than spending why one country does well, another badly, but the success of the low-spending Czechs and Koreans does show that spending more on schools is not a prerequisite for improving standards.

Another article of faith among the teaching profession—that children are bound to do better in small classes—is also being undermined by educational research. As with other studies, TIMSS found that France, America and Britain, where children are usually taught in classes of twenty-odd, do significantly worse than East Asian countries where almost twice as many pupils are crammed into each class. Again, there may be social reasons why some countries can cope better with large classes than others. All the same, the comparison refutes the argument that larger is necessarily worse.

Further, the tests even cast some doubt over the cultural explanation for the greater success of East Asia: that there is some hard-to-define Asian culture, connected with parental authority and a strong social value on education, which makes children more eager to learn and easier to teach. Those who make this argument say it would of course be impossible to replicate such oriental magic in the West.

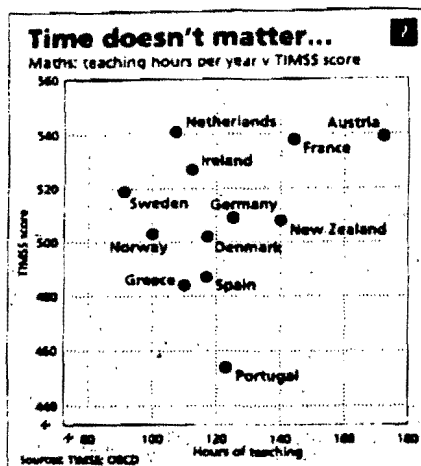
Yet the results of TIMSS suggest that this is, to put it mildly, exaggerated. If "culture" makes English children so poor at maths, then why have they done so well at science (not far behind the Japanese and South Koreans)? And why do English pupils do well at science and badly at maths, while in France it is the other way around? A less mystical, more mundane explanation suggests itself: English schools teach science well and maths badly; French schools teach maths better than science; East Asian schools teach both subjects well.

Apart from casting doubt on some widely-held beliefs, do international comparisons have anything constructive to say? So far, the conclusions are tentative, but some answers are emerging.

Teaching the teachers

As well as getting pupils to sit tests, the TIMSS researchers monitored the way lessons were taught in each country. Eventually this should point to which teaching method tends to be most successful, though the data are still being worked on. Meanwhile, other researchers have been searching for common factors among those countries whose schools seem to turn out well-educated pupils.

Julia Whitburn of Britain's National Institute of Economic and Social Research has studied the way maths is taught in Japan and Switzerland, two countries which are different in many ways but whose pupils seem to do consistently well at in the



has started using such findings to reform its national curriculum. Hungary, discovering in early studies that its children were among the world's best in maths and science but among the least literate, ordered its teachers to spend more time on reading.

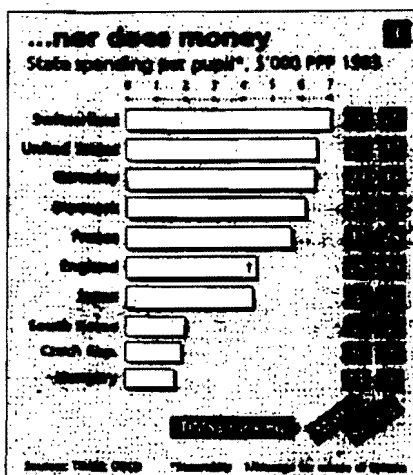
Knowledge workers

Leaving aside the results of the tests, two main factors lie behind governments' increasing willingness to take part in international education studies to begin with. The first is the growing consensus that education is the key to getting rich—for countries

More...

subject. She noted a number of common factors:

- Much more time is spent on the basics of arithmetic than on more general mathematical topics such as handling data;
- Pupils learn to do sums in their heads before they are taught to do them on paper; calculators are usually banned;
- Standardised teaching manuals, which are tested extensively in schools before being published, are used widely;
- A method known as "whole-class interactive teaching" is used widely. The teacher addresses the whole class at once, posing questions to pupils in turn, to ensure they are following the lesson. American and British schools have been criticised for letting pupils spend much of their time working in small groups, with the teacher rushing from one group to the next to see how they are doing. Ms Whitburn notes that in Japan and Switzerland this method is only used in teaching arts and crafts;



- Finally, great efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. Those that do are given extra coaching.

Learning, though, is not a one-way street. Just as western countries are busy seeking to emulate Japanese schools, schools and universities in Japan are coming under pressure from employers to turn out workers with the sort of creativity and individuality that the Japanese associate with western education. And just as American and British politicians are demanding that schools copy their more successful oriental counterparts and set their pupils more homework, the South Korean government is telling schools to give pupils regular homework-free days, so they can spend more time with their families—just like western children. Perhaps in education there is such a thing as a happy medium.

THE ECONOMIST SATURDAY MARCH 29, 1997

Answering the critics

P22

CROSS-COUNTRY comparisons have long been controversial. Among the doubts: Do tests put an unwarranted premium on certain qualities—speed of recall, mental arithmetic—while ignoring hard-to-measure ones like creative thinking? Were pupils from different countries really comparable? (For instance, in countries where children are made to repeat a year of their education if they fail to reach a certain standard, tests for, say, 13-year-olds may exclude those who have been sent to join a class of 12-year-olds.) Were pupils in some countries told that the tests were extremely important, while others were not? Did the tests give an unfair advantage to countries whose curriculum for 13-year-olds happens to include more of the topics included in them?

Wendy Keys of Britain's National Foundation for Educational Research, one of the bodies that organised the TIMSS project, says that a number of measures were taken to answer such criticisms. The score for each country was adjusted to take account of any pupils who were held back a year. Teachers everywhere were given precise instructions on how to explain the tests to pupils, and indepen-

dent monitors were sent to schools chosen at random. After the results were in, experts in each country looked at how their pupils had done on those questions which most closely matched the curriculum for children of their age.

The results? Broadly, the new study confirmed the relative positions of coun-



Much to learn from each other

tries which had taken part in earlier studies. That consistency suggested the original criticisms may have been exaggerated. However, the refinements made in the recent study may overturn one of the theories that has been used to explain why America and Britain, in spite of having had universal education for longer than most nations, do so poorly. This is that they contain an unusually large proportion of pupils who perform very badly. The comforting implication would be that ordinary pupils do reasonably well but that average scores are dragged down by a so-called "long tail of low achievers".

This explanation was given a colour of plausibility by earlier tests. In those, mediocre scores in Britain and America could be explained away by the failure of the tests to take account of countries where pupils are held back a year. The new version of the test puts that problem right—and the two countries are still doing poorly. Though the mass of results from TIMSS is still being analysed, Dr Keys says there is no sign so far of the "long tail". The implication would be that the average scores of American and British pupils are mediocre because average performance is mediocre, and not because of some peculiarity at the very bottom of the class.

34. Portland Oregonian

05/11/97; Edition: SUNRISE; Section: WIRE STORIES THE WEST; Page A21

REDUCING CLASS SIZES TESTS CALIFORNIA

By MARTHA IRVINE
The Associated Press

Summary: The state offers money to districts as incentive, but schools say it causes another set of problems

Fewer kids per teacher. It sounds like a no-brainer — especially in California, the state that consistently has led the nation in class size and ranked near the bottom in such basic skills as reading.

Parents are thrilled. Teachers and most administrators love the idea.

"I never thought I would see this in my lifetime," said Barbara Mims, principal at Oakland's Hoover Elementary School.

Still, California's incentive to reduce class size — \$667 in state money for every early elementary student in a class of 20 or fewer — is turning out to be a tricky proposition for most districts.

Most administrators say it actually costs them at least \$800 a student to implement the plan — a figure that has caused districts such as Modesto and several in Orange County to put off or slow down class-size reduction.

Gov. Pete Wilson, who proposed the plan for any three grades among kindergarten through third, wants to expand the program in the fall to all four grades from kindergarten through third.

State School Superintendent Delaine Eastin and school groups want to increase state financing to \$800 a student. But the Senate Education Committee has given a cool reception to a bill doing both. Members say results are needed before expanding the program.

Some experts say they're particularly worried about the stress that the rush to reduce class size is placing on cash-strapped urban districts that must compete for an ever-dwindling number of credentialed teachers and even a limited number of portable classrooms.

"The districts that are able to do it are probably the ones whose kids are doing better anyway," said Joan McRobbie, the California liaison for WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency based in San Francisco. "Will it be a case of further widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots?"

Good question.

Consider, for example, Oakland Unified School District. Last year, the district had to hire about 100 new teachers. Many of them were inexperienced, and many were teaching with emergency credentials.

In the fall — in part because of an early retirement plan — the district will need 600 to 800 new teachers, including many who speak Spanish or Asian languages.

It would be ideal if they were experienced or even had full credentials as teachers from the state of California.

"But that would be the world of Disney," said Sherri Willis, a spokeswoman for the Oakland district.

Consider also that Oakland sits squarely on the Hayward fault. That means most of the older, boarded-up schools that might have eased the district's growing space crunch are unusable.

"We're getting a lot of pressure from some parents," said Jean Quan, president of the Oakland School Board. "But it's not like we could go rent a church or even use the park and rec building next door. It's just not safe."

At Hoover Elementary School, on Oakland's low-income west side, principal Mims also struggles with the idea of taking up coveted playground space with four more portable classrooms.

"It seems like a little thing," she said. "But even having a little grass to play on is a big deal."

And it's not as if districts in wealthier areas are feeling no pain.

At Tahoe Valley Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe, for example, the school library, once housed in spacious, sunny quarters, now consists of shelves piled precariously high with books and crammed onto the auditorium's stage — to make room for new first-grade and second-grade classrooms.

The teacher's lounge, at least for this year, is a Coke machine squeezed into a hallway. The physical education teacher's "office" is a desk and telephone crammed behind sports equipment in a storage room.

Because teachers and staff members were enlisted to move the furniture and switch the rooms necessary to create such

cramped chaos, how do they feel about this?

"Ah!" first-grade teacher Deby Wright said, suddenly looking as wistful as a young bride, "I can't even begin to tell you. We've all wished for this forever."

When the Legislature approved the money for class-size reduction last summer, administrators at the 6,000-student Lake Tahoe Unified School District decided to hire 23 teachers, most of them with credentials but new to teaching. The new teachers spent the first 10 weeks of the school year doing intensive training, in and out of class.

Then there is the question of whether smaller classes actually benefit students. Research is inconclusive, in large part because so many other factors play a role, including the quality of the teachers and curriculum.

"By and large, parents and teachers are happy. But the big question is, will this lead to improved achievement?" WestEd's McRobbie said.

It will be difficult to track improvements because, for one, no statewide baseline data were collected before the class-size reductions, she said.

A report from the Sacramento-based Legislative Analyst's office also has posed some of the same questions, especially given the huge number of new and uncredentialed teachers being hired statewide and the loss of space for libraries, computer rooms and even performance stages.

Even with most teachers begging for class sizes to be reduced, some unions are opposing the way class-size reduction is being imposed.

The United Teachers of Los Angeles has warned legislators that the speedy implementation is compromising the quality of California public schools.

Marsha Hall, a union spokeswoman for the El Rancho Federation of Teachers, agreed.

"The parents just see 20 kids in the classroom, and yes it is better," Hall said. "But there is no handle. Is this quality education? Does the teacher know what they're doing?"

"They jumped into this without having any planning, any anything. It's created huge hardship all over the state.

This year you can't see any light at the end of the tunnel because you don't know what is going to happen."

Others think the state should hand over more money per student.

"We're just asking, pay us what it costs," said Superintendent Carlos Garcia of Sanger Unified School District. "Don't

mandate something that you're not willing to fund completely."

Still, Bertha Kelly, a second-grade teacher at Oakland's Hoover Elementary, can't help but look enviously at the first-grade classrooms in her school, some of which held more than 30 students last year.

"We look at the first-grade classes and say, 'Boy, when are we going to get that?'" Kelly said. She and other second-grade teachers will get her wish next year.

Mark Louie, a first-grade teacher at the school, said, "It's the best thing to happen to education in years." ■

35. The Plain Dealer Cleveland, OH

05/11/97; Edition: FINAL / ALL; Section: BUSINESS; Page 3E

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES PAY

By ROMEVA PRCELA

If you think the family-friendly work environment is a business fad or a "warm-and-fuzzy" personnel practice of the '90s, think again.

Workplace policies that are responsive to the rapidly evolving work force are becoming permanent fixtures in corporate culture as companies witness firsthand the rewards of being family friendly.

Working Mother magazine recently urged employers to "jump on the family-friendly bandwagon - not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it can enhance a company's bottom line through lower turnover and a more dedicated, focused work force."

The cost of attracting and retaining qualified workers is difficult to quantify, but many human resource professionals adhere to the "factor of four" multiplier when considering turnover costs.

For example, replacing a departing employee with an annual salary of \$25,000 eventually will cost the company \$100,000. This includes an employee's knowledge of the company, her efficiency, and the rapport and contacts she has established. None of these can be replaced easily or cheaply.

Recognizing this, along with the fact that the accounting profession is increasingly attracting more women, my company adopted an aggressive, visionary approach to retain its valuable female employees.

More than a decade ago (long before the Family and Medical Leave Act), Plante & Moran formed its Parenting Tightrope Action (PTA) Committee in an effort to create a workplace environment that was conducive to helping staff members fulfill their dual roles as professionals and parents.

Some of the more meaningful accomplishments of the PTA include:

A generous parental leave policy that allows employees to take off up to six months after the birth or adoption of a child.

Flextime and flexible scheduling alternatives that give parents the ability to adjust their work schedules as needed to accommodate family responsibilities. For some employees, this meant converting from full-time to part-time status or working a compressed work week rather than a traditional, five-day, 40-hour-plus week.

On-site Saturday child care during the stressful tax season.

Development of a non-traditional career opportunities policy that enables staff members working non-traditional schedules to be considered for promotions based on the same criteria as those working traditional schedules.

Periodic "parenting seminars" that address various concerns of the staff and provide helpful insights to problems that arise in trying to balance family and work obligations.

Development of the PTA "Buddy Program," which allows for committee members and/or experienced staff to meet individually with expectant staff members before, during and after parental leave to answer their questions and address their concerns.

In addition, even prior to the formation of the PTA Committee, the firm introduced a pretax dependent child-care account that allows employees to pay child-care expenses on a pre-tax basis.

As a result of this pioneering approach, not only was Plante & Moran named "One of the 100 Best Companies For Working Mothers" in 1996 by Working Mother magazine, but the company also noticed a bottom line impact on its ability to recruit new employees - men as well as women.

Today, the firm can boast that 12 percent of its partners are female - an enviable number compared with the industry average, which is about half of that. About half of the employees it recruits are women. And, more importantly, many of those women have stayed with the firm even after starting families.

We also have noticed some intangible benefits, because when companies outwardly value their employees and foster a family environment, their employees tend to speak highly of them.

Our employees feel a sense of loyalty to the firm as a result of the family-friendly benefits and schedule flexibility. As a mother, I can honestly say that Plante & Moran's family-friendly approach has given me a satisfying career that allows me to balance my work and family lives more effectively.

I can adjust my work day by an hour or two to keep commitments for my 6-year-old son's parent-teacher conferences, school picnics and friends' parties.

My suggestion to other women who want to negotiate flexible arrangements is to approach an alternative schedule as an opportunity, not a problem. Remind your employer that, as a result of the company's flexibility, it will retain a trained, valued and less-stressed employee who is able to focus all her energies on the tasks at hand.

Be sure to present a specific plan for the schedule you want to work and be ready to show how you will still be able to satisfy your job requirements.

Many companies (at least the progressive ones) have discovered that flexible working arrangements, such as flextime and compressed work weeks, can be offered for a variety of positions at no cost and minimal disruption.

Companies that don't offer a

that need to be confronted:

1) Who will provide FLES instruction: language specialists, elementary teachers or a combination of both?

2) Which language or languages will be offered?

3) What financial resources will be available to implement FLES?

4) What type of training will teachers need to implement FLES programs?

According to New Jersey regulations, elementary teachers can teach foreign languages as "non-common branch subjects" at the elementary level as long as it does not consume more than half of their total contact time.

Several problems immediately come to mind:

1) Language course work and related language teaching methodology are not currently required for elementary teaching certification.

2) Current elementary teachers will need special training in language and methodology to implement FLES.

3) Teacher preparation programs in New Jersey and other states with a FLES mandate must be revised to include language study and specialized language methods for elementary certification.

Currently, New Jersey world language teachers are certified to teach grade levels K through 12. Unfortunately, almost all teacher preparation programs concentrate on high school and college level language teaching.

The best FLES strategy will utilize both language specialists and elementary teachers to create effective FLES programs. The following steps can ensure a smooth transition to successful mandatory FLES instruction in the near future:

1) Introduce a new methods course

requirement for language teacher candidates that specifically treats FLES methods.

2) Add a language requirement for elementary teacher certification and a method of teaching FLES course or redesign the traditional "language arts" methods course to include second language teaching and learning.

3) Ensure that professional or personal growth or improvement plans for elementary teachers include language skills, the elementary second language curriculum and FLES teaching methods; for language teachers, course work or workshops dealing with FLES teaching methods need to be offered.

Careful planning based on informed decisions will guarantee that successful elementary language instruction is in place in New Jersey schools by the next century. ■

77. Richmond Times-Dispatch

May 10, 1997

Raising Achievement Requires Higher Standards and More Money

By Alan Wurtzel I, vice chairman of Circuit City Stores, is a former member of the State Board of Education and a current member of the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Virginia.

Washington — The State Board of Education recently held statewide hearings on revised Standards of Accreditation for public schools. If the Board is to be believed, we can get most students to high standards in a few years and at no additional cost. Unfortunately, outside the federally subsidized school cafeteria, there is no fast food or "free or reduced" lunch in education reform.

The Board of Education is required to promulgate Standards of Accreditation for schools "to ensure that student progress is measured and that school boards and school personnel are accountable." The Board's proposed revisions hold schools accountable for student performance by:

- * Requiring more time devoted to teaching the core academic disciplines: English, math, science, and history;

- * Raising the graduation requirements for next year's ninth-graders by requiring an extra year of math (including algebra and geometry), science, and history before they graduate in 2001;

- * Requiring high school graduates to

show that they actually learned something. Effective in 2001, in order to receive a standard diploma, students will have to pass six of the 12 exams designed to assess student mastery of the high-school Standards of Learning (SOLs). For an advanced studies diploma, the requirements are higher.

- * Publishing in 1998, on a school-by-school basis, the proportion of students who actually learned the material, as measured by the passing rates on statewide tests at grades 5, 8, and 11.

- * Removing full accreditation from any school in which the number of students who test below the acceptable level is too great a percentage of the whole. The Board is expected to implement this when test results are first announced a year from now.

Timing aside, these are admirable objectives. Once implemented, they will materially improve the educational performance of our children. Advocates of higher academic standards of both political parties and all walks of life

should welcome the accountability that these changes envision.

LAUDABLE as the Board's objectives may be, the regulations as proposed are both too loose and too rigid. Let's start with the too rigid.

- * A single bar to jump. Effective with the setting of a "cut score" next summer, future school accreditation will be based initially on each school achieving a yet-to-be determined pass rate (say, 70 percent). Wherever it is set, it will inevitably be too low for those schools where most parents have high levels of education and aspirations for their children, and too high for schools where too many children start life with serious strikes against them.

Rather than a single standard, the Board should focus on continuous improvement. If the teachers and students in a school show meaningful progress year after year, they need to be congratulated, not discouraged by removing accreditation.

- * Too fast. The Board proposed to implement these new standards in one to

five years.

Increasing the graduation course requirements makes sense. But schools need time to adjust their curricula. Adding three academic subjects affects the time available for voc-ed, the arts, and other electives, especially in those districts (14 percent of the high schools) with only six periods per day. With little loss of impact, we could make this change effective when current sixth-graders graduate (2003) instead of 2001.

Basing school accreditation on a single cut score on rigorous SOL exams that have yet to be field-tested is unduly precipitous and threatening. I propose that there be no loss of accreditation for three years after the first administration of the new tests. If, in the third year or any subsequent year, a school that was below a high pass rate (say 80 percent) failed to show progress in the third year as compared to the prior two years, it should be warned and required to develop an improvement plan. If that condition continues, loss of full accreditation, with other appropriate interventions, would be justified. Meanwhile, for those below the bar who continue to progress, we should celebrate, not repudiate, continuous improvement.

* Remediation needed. Ironically, the proposed standards are also too flexible.

In its passion to avoid unfunded mandates by telling local school boards what they must do (who is kidding whom?) the Board piously suggests to local boards that children who fail the SOL exams "should be retained and should receive needed remediation."

IN MY JUDGMENT, the state must take responsibility to ensure that all children who fail (or are at risk of failing) the SOLs receive remediation. This could include mandatory summer school, as Lieutenant Governor Beyer has proposed, as well as additional after-school or Saturday-school remedial sessions.

* Social promotions limited. By the same token, those who fail, after coaching, to jump higher should not be automatically promoted. I propose that any child who fails the SOLs in English or math be allowed only one "social promotion." They could, if the local authorities desire, advance to the next grade. But if they fail again, it is not fair to their classmates to promote a student who cannot read or write at the level of two grades below.

By the same token, the proposed graduation requirement for passing the 11th-grade SOLs might well be limited, at least initially, to English and math. Of course, with regard to promotion and graduation, special consideration is needed for students with disabilities or

for whom English is a second language.

* Quality education costs money. Contrary to the Board's assertion, the proposed higher Standards of Accreditation and improved education results will not be "revenue-neutral." While the new course requirements can theoretically be implemented by shifting school resources, many districts will be required to eliminate popular and important electives, or go to a longer school day. This will cost money.

Moreover, Virginia cannot afford — financially, politically, or morally — to put a spotlight on student achievement and then fail to provide the extra coaching needed to enable all children to jump over the higher bar. An investment in remediation to bring all students to high standards will pay large dividends in future tax revenues from a better-educated workforce.

The Board has no magic wand. Translating high standards to higher outcomes will not come automatically. By focusing on accountability and consequences, and drawing public attention to the fact that higher achievement requires time and additional resources, the Board will have created a realistic set of high expectations that Virginia educators can live with and almost all students can be expected to achieve early in the next century. ■

78. The Plain Dealer Cleveland, OH

05/11/97; Edition: FINAL / ALL; Section: EDITORIALS & FORUM; Page 3H

A FORUM OF OPINION & IDEAS

OBE SNEAKS IN THROUGH BACK DOOR

By Kevin O'Brien

If the Ohio Department of Education office in Columbus has a front door, it's a safe bet that no employee uses it.

The people who make education policy for Ohio's kids clearly prefer the back door. And if one back door is locked, they're willing to look until they find one that's ajar. Anything to avoid the front.

TD Four years after failing to sneak outcome-based education past the legislature, the department is trying again.

Those of you who have kept up with your scorecards know that OBE has gone by several names since the last time the department went jiggling out-of-the-way

doorknobs on its behalf, back in 1993. Performance-based education sounded vaguely like progress and stuck for a while. Several decades ago, when this idea failed utterly the first time, it was called mastery learning.

For the 1997 model year, the Same Old Thing has been rolled out as competency-based standards.

Anyone who has followed OBE knows that, like other diseases, it is identifiable by certain symptoms. The onset of full-blown OBE is recognizable by the abolition of the Carnegie unit - the measuring stick educators long have used to decide when enough of a subject is enough. For example, should we require high school students to take two years of

math - two Carnegie units - or three?

Right now, Ohio requires high school students to complete 18 Carnegie units - including three years of English, two years of social studies and math and one year of science.

In the competency-based incarnation of OBE that the Ohio State Board of Education will vote on tomorrow, the Carnegie unit disappears. It would be replaced by a system requiring that at some point before they are handed a diploma, students must show that they are "competent" in 10 subject areas - English, math, social studies, science, foreign language, art, technology, business, family and consumer sciences and health/physical education.

issue and the price issue are not addressed in this bill."

Mr. Bowen said he did not believe the state-mandated admissions policy would significantly change the makeup of A&M's freshman class. Already, about 50 percent of the 6,200 freshmen are in the top 10 percent of their class.

At A&M, 1,261 Hispanics and 382

blacks have been offered admission for the coming fall. At UT, 1,333 Hispanics and 314 blacks have been offered admission.

Several other bills aimed at increasing minority enrollment were introduced during the legislative session but probably now will not be

taken up.

"This bill had the most support and accomplishes what we wanted to accomplish," said Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas, who had written a similar proposal.

By Sylvia Moreno / The Dallas Morning News

50. Associated Press

05-09 5:02a

Lawmakers submit education reform bill to challenge governor's plan

By MARTHA BELLISLE
Associated Press Writer

CARSON CITY (AP) - A \$24.6 million education accountability, standards and assessment program authored by lawmakers to challenge the governor's education reform plan has been outlined in the Senate Finance Committee.

SB379, discussed Thursday, includes many of the same education reforms covered in four separate bills proposed by Gov. Bob Miller.

But one main sticking point is the Senate bill's plan for a legislative committee on education, made up of eight members, four appointed by the Senate majority leader and four by the Assembly speaker.

The committee would review accountability programs, finance education and assess the condition of education - apparently duplicating many of the functions currently assigned to the state Board of Education or the Department of Education that it oversees.

"What's really behind this is a concern to not hurt the state board, but they've been vacillating and can't make decisions because they're too worried about the election process," said Sen. Ray Rawson, R-Las Vegas, who helped draft the Senate bill.

"This is an attempt to decisively

create a high standard, then move over and let the board have it again," he added.

But Sen. Lawrence Jacobsen, R-Minden, said he's concerned that the new committee would conflict with the Board of Education.

"It would be like a dictatorship, creating another board to perform the same responsibilities and circumvent the state board," Jacobsen added.

Richard Urey, Gov. Miller's press secretary, said it looks like lawmakers want more control over the executive branch, adding, "The reasonable reaction is to ask whether this encroaches on the foundations reserved for the executive branch."

"All of the key concepts in the governor's plan are reflected in this bill," Urey said. "The differences appear to be not what needs to be done but how it should be done."

Finance Chairman Bill Raggio, R-Reno, said the measure attempts to deal with the poor state of Nevada's education system.

"This has been worked on since the start of the session," Raggio said. "It represents a consensus on how to deal with the critical issues of education."

"Education Week" magazine recently graded states on their education systems and gave Nevada a "C" on standards and assessments, "C-"

on quality of teaching and a "D" on school climate.

The study pointed out that Nevada has one of the highest dropout rates in the nation. It also stated that Nevada remains the only state still developing a set of standards for its schools.

Both of the education reform plans outline procedures for developing strict academic standards programs and both create a panel or council that would be assigned that job.

And both the governor's bills and Raggio's measure demand that the panel or council assess student achievement. Both plans describe the need for testing and for the addition of science and other studies to expand reading and writing.

Another critical component in the two reform plans is an accountability program.

The governor's plan requires the reporting of average daily attendance of students and teachers, while Raggio's proposal focuses on the number of students taking the state-mandated norm-referenced exams.

Miller's bills don't spell out corrective steps to be taken, while Raggio's bill requires schools that show poor performance to take steps assigned by the new Legislative Committee on Education.

51. Associated Press

05-09 1:56a

New England fears loss of leadership in education

By JON MARCUS
Associated Press Writer

BOSTON (AP) - First daughter Chelsea Clinton, who chose Stanford over several New England schools, is not the only student rejecting the region's tradition-soaked, brick-and-ivy colleges.

New England's proud tradition of importing a disproportionate number of the nation's college students is eroding, along with its share of higher education research spending. Officials blame the expensive tuition and increasing competition from public universities in other regions.

"We're still No. 1, but by a smaller and smaller margin," said John Hoy, president of the New England Board of Higher Education. "We're not going down the tubes, but we are losing our preeminent share."

Enrollment on New England's 260 campuses has fallen from a high of 827,300 in 1992 to 806,193 in 1994, the last year for which the figures are available. Four out of five schools in the region still had room in their freshman classes after the application deadline closed last year. And New England's total share of all U.S. students fell from a peak of 6.5 percent in 1985 to 5.7 percent in 1994.

A New England education is the most expensive in the country. Tuition

at four-year private colleges here averages \$13,641, compared with \$12,432 nationally. When room and board is added in, attending a New England college costs an average of \$21,492 per year.

At public colleges in New England, tuition and mandatory fees for in-state residents average \$3,720, compared with \$2,860 nationally.

"I wouldn't be here if I didn't think it was worth it, but it is a little overpriced," said Shane Riches, a Boston College sophomore from Phoenix.

Some price-conscious students, who may have chosen a pricey New England school in the past, are staying close to home and paying low tuition at improving public universities, experts said.

"New England is caught between two pincers," said Jim Howell, a member of the Boston University Board of Trustees and president of the Howell Group, an economic analysis firm. "On one side is the improved quality of education around the country. And on the other side is the fact that most of those educational improvements around the country have been in public higher education, and that's highly price-competitive."

Sarah Pitts, a Georgian who will graduate this month from Boston

College, said, "You can get as good an education at a public as a private (university). I think the public institutions are beginning to strengthen the quality because they had to compete with the private educations."

Competition from other regions also has been battering New England's leadership in research and development spending. New England's share of national university research and development expenditures has dropped from 10 percent in 1985 to 8.6 percent in 1994.

The area relies heavily on federal aid, a target of congressional budget cutters. Out of every dollar of New England university research spending, the government pays 67 cents.

"We earned that dependence, and that goes back 50 years," Hoy said. "Now we may be victims of our own success."

Still, the area conducts an impressive \$1.8 billion a year in research.

"The research is being done here and we have been educating the people who know what to do with it," Hoy said. "My hope is that when you have, as we do, the most highly educated workforce of any region in the U.S. and the most significant concentration of R&D dollars, that you will be able to sustain that historic dominance." ■

52. Associated Press

05-09 3:59a

State NAACP leaders join in discrimination complaint

SYLVESTER, Ga. (AP) - State leaders of the NAACP joined a local representative in voicing concerns to the Worth County School Board about complaints of racial discrimination in the district.

Walter C. Butler Jr., president of the state National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Jean Guy, director of the Fair Employment Project of the Southeast Regional Office of the NAACP, joined

the Rev. John Swan of the Worth County NAACP at the board's monthly meeting Thursday night.

Most of about 50 people in the audience applauded them at the end of their remarks.

The local NAACP filed a formal complaint Jan. 8 with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. On April 8, federal officials from Atlanta came to Sylvester

to gather facts and mediate a solution. A draft report of recommendations from the department has not been made public by the school board.

Butler said the complaints - including harsher discipline for blacks and bias in grouping students - "are very serious and the board should give very careful consideration to these complaints and do something responsive." ■

Board President Steve Fruecht said the visit was moved back from Thursday so board member Marcia Pierce could participate. Job obligations kept her from making the visit Thursday.

Pierce said Tuesday she wanted to go after she heard concerns about a newspaper report of a federal civil rights investigation into the district where Hyland is superintendent.

"I want to be able to answer questions about it," said Pierce, the only black member of the School Board. "We will look more closely at that situation now."

A member of a Chicago law firm

representing black parents in Champaign said the **Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education** is examining the district's practices on a range of subjects.

The Office of Civil Rights initially chose Champaign for a compliance review of whether minority students are overrepresented in special education classes and underrepresented in programs for the gifted and talented.

The government expanded its review to include issues raised by the parents' complaint in May 1996.

"The parents are concerned about discrimination in student assignments, discipline, staff hiring and assignments

and tracking," the attorney, Carol Ashley, said Tuesday.

Rodger Murphey, a Department of Education spokesman, said the agency is "very close to coming to closure, but we have some more data analysis to do and information to gather."

Fruecht said the School Board members "are comfortable that Champaign is cooperating fully with the OCR investigation, and that it will end with a favorable agreement that Champaign will comply with. We also are comfortable that they have made great strides in attracting minority staff members in the same ratio as the minority population." ■

35. Columbus Dispatch

May 8, 1997

Plan would hit schools harder

By Catherine Candisky Dispatch Statehouse Reporter

Proposed academic standards for Ohio pupils aim to boost performance by increasing the requirements for graduation and requiring schools to be more accountable for their performance, Ohio Department of Education officials said yesterday. The State Board of Education will consider the proposal Monday at its monthly meeting at the Ohio School for the Deaf. If approved in principal by the 19-member board, changes in Ohio law needed to implement the plan would be sought from the Ohio General Assembly. After that, the board would hold public hearings before voting on the proposal and, if approved, send it back to lawmakers for ratification. "Simply put, we want better results from our students. We want better results from our schools," said Gene Harris, assistant state superintendent in charge of curriculum. The proposal could work into the new funding method for Ohio schools being developed by Gov. George V. Voinovich and other state leaders who support tying performance to school funding. School financing is being revamped under order of the Ohio Supreme Court, which in March ruled the current system unconstitutional.

During a briefing for reporters yesterday, Harris said the governor's task force has asked for more information about the proposal and appears particularly interested in performance requirements for school districts. The 103-page proposal lays out the basic skills pupils should have and leaves it up to school districts to determine how they acquire them. It would replace 1983 rules based on credits that dictate how much time students must spend learning certain subjects. Harris said the proposal requires every district to have a plan for continuous improvement, and sets new graduation requirements and new performance standards for schools. To graduate, students would have to demonstrate competency in the six subject areas in which they now must earn credits — English, health, physical education, mathematics, science and social studies — as well as arts, foreign language and technology. Harris said competency levels will be determined later with the goal of assuring consistent learning throughout the state. "We want to assure that algebra in one district is the same as algebra in another," Harris said, adding that districts could go beyond state

competency levels if desired. Under new performance standards, schools would be required to have passing rates of 75 percent or better on proficiency tests, a maximum dropout rate of no more than 3 percent, a minimum graduation rate of 90 percent and average daily attendance of at least 93 percent. Districts that fail to make progress toward the goals or fall below the requirements would be subject to intervention by the Department of Education.

Based on statistics from last year, 82 of Ohio's 611 school districts — about 13 percent — would meet all performance standards. In Franklin County, they were Bexley, Canal Winchester, New Albany-Plain Local, Upper Arlington, Westerville and Worthington.

For the rest, math portions of state proficiency tests were the most common deficiency. If approved this year, the new standards would be phased in beginning in fall 1998. Officials said the cost is difficult to calculate, but the department has estimated the new standards translate to an additional \$13 million annually to schools. ■

from April 14-26. In 95 out of 100 cases, the statewide averages will be accurate to plus or minus 3.3 percentage points.

Those surveyed rank smaller classes above other options as the No. 1 way any new money should be spent. Education experts often cite smaller classes as an expensive - but effective - reform.

"The public is oftentimes very wise when it comments about an issue that it knows something about, and education is one of those issues," said Alfred J. Tuchfarber, director of UC's Institute for Policy research, which conducts the poll.

"What the public is saying is they know the system has to change."

Thirty percent said reducing class sizes by hiring more teachers should be the highest spending priority, 20 percent listed equipment, such as computers, 19 percent opted for buying new textbooks and 18 percent listed building repairs and construction, according to the poll.

The poll results come as legislative leaders and Gov. George Voinovich are trying to craft a new method of funding public schools. The Ohio Supreme Court, which ruled that the current system is inadequate and unconstitutional, gave legislators until next March 24 to recommend a new system.

House Speaker JoAnn Davidson, R-Reynoldsburg, says the biggest challenges is crafting a system that improves accountability.

"What some of the experts are saying is maybe we should look more at outcomes," she said. If a school is getting good results with larger classes, for example, then smaller classes might not be needed.

If schools are not achieving the proper results, state policy makers need to find a cost-effective way to improve

results - without punishing the schoolchildren, she said.

Overall, Ohioans grade the quality of public schools as C-plus, but grade their local schools somewhat higher with a B-minus, according to the poll.

Just 3 percent say the quality of education provided in public schools is excellent. Thirty-seven percent say it is good, 40 percent rate it fair, 15 percent say it is poor, 2 percent called it very poor and 4 percent had no opinion.

Cincinnati Federation of Teachers President Tom Mooney said he is encouraged by the poll results.

"The public is smart," he said. "They recognize the scope of the problem and they're getting behind solutions."

Several other states already are paying for smaller classes, he said, and perhaps the public will convince Ohio leaders to do the same.

A coalition of Ohio school districts that successfully sued the state has proposed reforms that research shows do make a difference. They include a longer school year, smaller classes and all-day kindergarten.

A separate group of business, education and community leaders, known as Ohio's BEST, advocates many of the same measures, which they would tie to equitable funding and more efficient school operations.

Republican leaders have suggested that any tax hikes or other funding changes go before voters.

While some Democrats have said the GOP wants to abdicate its responsibility to lead, the poll shows voters want the final say.

An overwhelming majority - 93 percent - support a statewide vote on any new spending plan. The remaining seven percent oppose the idea.

Fifty-nine percent said they oppose any plans to prevent teachers from unionizing and striking for higher wages, while 39 percent supported the

idea and 2 percent had no opinion.

Along with new funding and accountability options, legislators are debating the future of Ohio's experimental school voucher program, which a court of appeals struck down as unconstitutional just last week.

Under the program, low-income parents in Cleveland can receive \$2,500 scholarships in taxpayer money to send their children to private and parochial schools.

Ohio's program is being watched nationally because it is the first that offers taxpayer money for tuition at church-affiliated schools.

Despite the court's unanimous ruling, 64 percent of those surveyed said they support school vouchers, 31 percent oppose them and 5 percent don't know.

Mr. Mooney, an avid opponent of vouchers, said other polls show vouchers are opposed by strong majorities when those surveyed learn money is taken from public schools to pay for private schools.

Ohio's pilot program is funded by money that otherwise would go to the financially troubled Cleveland Public Schools.

In a CFT-commissioned poll last summer, 72 percent of Cincinnati school district residents surveyed said they disapproved of the state paying private-school tuition if it takes money from public schools. That poll also was done by UC's Institute for Policy Research.

Ohio Attorney General Betty Montgomery Wednesday asked the court to allow the voucher program to continue during an appeal. The written brief notes that the decision will affect 2,000 Cleveland school children.

Mr. Voinovich has pledged not only to keep the program, but to see it expanded in the current budget, now pending in a Senate committee. ■

34. Indianapolis Star

May 7, 1997

Civil rights case alters Lawrence board's trip

By Howard M. Smulevitz / The Indianapolis Star/News

INDIANAPOLIS (Wed. May 7, 1997) — Four Lawrence Township School Board members have delayed a trip to the home district of their top

choice for superintendent, Timothy Hyland.

The trip to Champaign, Ill., planned for Thursday, has been rescheduled for

Friday so all five board members can attend and include in their scrutiny a civil rights complaint against the school district.

To be fair, no one denies that the expansion of gambling in Minnesota will make money. According to one of the governor's boys, gambling revenues could bring in enough money to build them a new stadium, repair the old one, lure a hockey team back to the state and construct a coliseum for their skating games.

Managed correctly, billions of dollars could pour into state coffers.

But consider the possible changes ahead for Minnesota. Senators are already talking about using the old Union Depot in downtown St. Paul as the site of a casino. Why not casinos in Windom, Park Rapids or Grand Marais? How about a Dollars for Jocks theme park in Ely?

Meanwhile, outstate schools would continue to shrivel from lack of support. Inner-city districts, shamed by their low test scores, would grow more timid in the rising debate about "vouchers." What standing would they have, branded as failures and punished with diminishing education revenues?

Throughout the state, teachers would continue to burn out under the high-power criticism of well-placed state leaders. And the volatile enterprises of casino gambling would flourish, rich with all the corruption and decadence involved.

It won't happen in my lifetime. Minnesota citizens won't allow it. There's too much at stake.

As this stadium issue fizzles under its valueless premise, life will go on as usual. All over Minnesota, mothers will rise early, make the school lunches and mix bowls of Rice Krispies for their sleepy children. Fathers will hurry home to drive the kids to softball practice, eat a quick dinner and hurry off to the next PTA meeting. Miss the Twins? Wish they could go play a hand of Black Jack? I don't think so.

And as for Prince Carl and the governor, who knows what will happen to them?

Let the dead bury the dead.

— Kristine Holmgren is a writer, broadcast commentator and Presbyterian pastor. ■

61. Minneapolis Star Tribune

May 7, 1997

Students who know so little

By Katherine Kersten

Every day, it's getting harder to dodge the question: What accounts for the fact that we pour more money into public education each year, but seem consistently to come up with abysmal results?

The latest debacle, of course, is the 91 percent failure rate of Minneapolis black students on basic skills tests — which occurred despite the half billion dollars spent to raise achievement over the last six years. But the top half of the class is also doing poorly.

Nationally, the number of high achievers — kids scoring over 600 on the verbal SAT — has fallen precipitously since 1972. As history professor Daniel Singal pointed out in an eye-opening article in the *Atlantic Monthly* several years ago, freshmen now "enter college so badly prepared" they are often at "the point of functional disability."

Today, writes Singal — even at Ivy League schools — most students have limited vocabularies, and poor reasoning and writing skills. Not surprisingly, their ability to comprehend what they read is equally limited. "So much escapes them," laments Singal; "even those of above-average ability absorb no more than a dusting of detail from a printed text." Frustrated, professors routinely

assign only half the books per course that they did 25 years ago, and these "better be short texts, written in relatively simple English."

But most striking, Singal observes, is contemporary students' "extraordinary dearth of factual knowledge." Where history is concerned, for example, "they are aware that someone oppressed someone else, but they aren't sure exactly what took place and they have no idea of the order in which it happened."

The reasons for this woeful educational performance across the demographic spectrum are complex. Among college-bound youth, family breakdown, and the lure of TV and the youth culture play a role. And among urban black children, the strong families necessary to support learning are simply not forming — in 1995, 76 percent of black births in Minneapolis were out-of-wedlock.

But the fact remains that schools have our children seven hours a day, and overwhelming resources to do the job entrusted to them. It's hard to avoid concluding that the main reason they turn out students who know so little is that today's educators often have little use for knowledge themselves.

I saw this in a recent encounter with a teacher, whom I asked why he

instructed his sixth-grade history students "not to bother about" learning dates. "We don't encourage rote memory work," he replied. "Our goal is to make students lifelong learners, so we focus on something more important — sophisticated critical thinking and problem solving skills. After all, knowledge is doubling every five years, so we teach kids how to look up the information they need."

This vision of education — that it's about teaching vague, all-purpose learning "tools" rather than a specific, coherent body of knowledge — has been educational orthodoxy since the late 1960s. But it flies in the face of everything science tells us about how learning, and thinking, actually take place.

As E.D. Hirsch explains in his insightful new book, *The Schools We Need*, there are really no such things as "critical thinking" or "problem solving" skills that operate independently of factual knowledge. A broad, integrated "data base" of knowledge is the intellectual scaffolding — the "mental Velcro" — that enables us to make sense of new information, by relating it to what we already know.

Reading, it turns out, is a kind of information processing in which the

mind selects what it wants to know from the printed page, and files it away for future use. In selecting, interpreting and storing information, a reader constantly relies on his previous fund of knowledge as a crucial frame of reference.

Even if a new detail is both interesting or important, a person finds it almost impossible to remember and retrieve unless he can place it in some kind of larger context. Today's students find it hard to absorb detail because they lack a context into which to fit what they read, so it quickly flows out of their minds.

Why do so many educators disparage the acquisition of in-depth knowledge as dry, robotic "rote learning?" They tell us their focus on "skills" is progressive — indeed, the latest in educational reform. In fact, it is based on two ideas — articles of faith in colleges of education — whose roots lie in the 19th-century Romantic movement.

The first of these ideas is that the

highest aim of education is to nurture the unique, creative spark supposed to lurk in every child. This assumption leads teachers to emphasize "creativity" and spontaneity ("write about your feelings"), at the expense of logic and acquired knowledge ("gather evidence to support your conclusions").

The second idea is that education is a "natural" process, which "unfolds" most effectively when unencumbered by rules, regimentation or tedious effort. Kids don't need arithmetic fact drills — let them solve "real-world" math problems in cooperative groups. (Our math scores are among the lowest in the industrialized world.) Learning to read is as easy as learning to talk — if we immerse kids in good stories, they will somehow "absorb" the skills they need. (Forty percent of American children can't read by third grade.) Yearlong history survey courses rely too much on boring lectures — social studies classes organized around "projects" or "themes" are more "involving." (In a major survey, 67 percent of our

high school students couldn't place the Civil War in the correct half-century.)

The truth is unavoidable: It takes knowledge to make knowledge. Sadly, the students who pay the greatest price for the education establishment's failure to grasp this are the urban poor. Unlike their middle-class neighbors, they have few resources outside of school to help them fill in crucial gaps in their information data base.

America has been "a nation at risk" for 30 years now, and promises to remain so for the foreseeable future. What better argument could there be for giving poor, urban parents the chance to choose a school — public or private — that gives top priority to producing graduates who know a lot, and so are prepared to learn a lot more?

— Katherine Kersten is chair of the Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis and a commentator for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

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62. Washington Post

May 9, 1997

Deceptive Budget Deal

By Phil Gramm

Friday, May 9 1997; Page A25
The Washington Post

After two years of partisan confrontation on the budget, the president and Congress have reached a bipartisan deal that appears to be all things to all people. The president gets more social spending, Republicans get a tax cut, and the American people get a balanced budget. If it all seems too good to be true, that's because it is.

Because the budgeting arms of both the administration and Congress assumed — before the budget debate even started — that the strong economy we now enjoy would produce sustained growth beyond the year 2002, the amount of deficit reduction required to achieve a balanced budget immediately declined from \$642 billion over the next five years to \$330 billion. Then it got even better. At the very moment of impasse in the budget negotiations, the Congressional Budget Office discovered that even its previous estimates of an improving economy

understated the revenue windfall expected in the next five years and predicted that windfall alone would lower the deficit another \$225 billion. Negotiators then rolled up their sleeves and assumed \$15 billion of additional savings from lower consumer prices and \$77 billion in additional savings from the even stronger economic growth that would be generated by balancing the budget.

The net result is that before a single change in public policy became part of the budget compromise, deficits of \$317 billion — 96 percent of the total deficit — had simply been assumed away. Only \$14 billion, or 4 percent of deficit reduction in the budget compromise, comes from actually changing policy.

The most distinctive feature of the budget compromise is the size of domestic discretionary spending increases. While it is fashionable for Republicans to claim that this budget deal achieves the goals of the Contract With America, in reality it spends \$216

billion more on domestic discretionary programs than the contract contained. The compromise increases domestic discretionary spending by \$193 billion above the 1997 budget resolution and by \$79 billion above President Clinton's actual budget request for 1997. In fact, if you look at the president's 1998 budget as scored by the Congressional Budget Office, the budget deal actually gives the president \$5 billion more in discretionary spending than his own budget would have provided.

The most permanent feature of the bipartisan budget compromise is an increase in domestic spending on social programs, which the president has rightly compared to the explosion of social spending that occurred in the 1960s.

In addition to these increases in discretionary spending, the budget compromise contains new entitlement benefits in Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps and SSI, and it overturns part of the one major reform of the 104th

walking home from the polls with my family and seeing a minivan drive past. On its back was a bumper sticker saying, "My Child Is An Honor Student" and naming a local school.

Surely you've seen the like, our educational palliative of choice. How many bumper stickers can \$51 billion buy?

Samuel G. Freedman, author of 'The

Inheritance: How Three Families and America Moved from Roosevelt to Reagan and Beyond' and a finalist for the 1997 Pulitzer Prize, is a member of USA TODAY's board of contributors. ■

65. Investor's Business Daily

05/13/97 Page A28

Arizona Leads The Way On School Reform

By ELIE PIEPRZ

Washington may have its so-called "education president," but if you want to see real hope for schools, you'll have to look a couple of thousand miles to the west.

Last month, Arizona Gov. Fife Symington signed a bill passed by the Republican-led Legislature that ushers this country into a new chapter in the fight for school choice. The new law allows Arizona's taxpayers to take a \$500 credit from their income taxes if they contribute to scholarship funds for private schools. The contribution would not go for a specific child's tuition but would make private schools more affordable to all parents.

Tax credits for public purposes are nothing new, but Arizona is breaking ground by using them to build up the private school system. And its program, which avoids some of the tough political and constitutional issues of direct voucher plans, should encourage other states to follow.

Most Americans recognize that our educational system is not adequately preparing our children for their future. Recent U.S. Education Department studies indicate that the average elementary school student is reading below the "proficient" level. And of the 1990 class of public high school freshmen, fewer than 70% graduated in 1994.

Since high schools are not doing their jobs, the two primary college entrance exams had to be altered in order to boost scores. Statistic after statistic shows that

the current school system doesn't serve the nation's children well.

A recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll indicates that the American people have lost faith in the public school system and now favor new options.

By a huge majority - 94% - they want significant change in our public education system. Three-quarters believe that fixing the problems of our schools is not a responsibility of the federal government. Nearly as many - 69% - want parents to have more control over all aspects of education.

The taxpayers have spent plenty of money to improve the public schools, with poor results. Nowhere is this truer than in Arizona. By any measure, the public school system there is an expensive failure.

Its spending has increased 164.4% (in real dollars) since 1970 and now consumes over 60% of the state's \$5.1 billion budget. It has the third-highest ratio of pupils per teacher at 21.1 (as of 1994), and its high school dropout rate, now at 36.4%, has been increasing at the third-fastest rate in the country.

At the same time, every Arizonan has been paying 8% of his or her per-capita income of \$23,709 toward public education. It costs taxpayers \$6,100 annually, with fixed costs included, to pay for the education of one public school student. But at long last, the new Arizona law will give parents the power they demand and deserve.

The tax credit means more Arizonans will be able to opt out of the public

system, saving the taxpayer about \$3,000 for each student that leaves.

A study by the Arizona Department of Education in early April concluded that the law will likely result in the transfer of \$50 million from the state treasury to private school scholarship funds. That would allow 100,000 taxpayers to use their tax obligation to support real education - not a government bureaucracy. One such fund is the Arizona School Trust Fund, which has been sending children to private schools for years.

Studies have shown that parental involvement in the educational process is the clearest path to success. The ASTF fosters that idea by paying for only half of the tuition for a private school student, thereby having parents make their own financial commitment to their child's education. ASTF recognizes that the way to improve our students is not through finetuning a bureaucratic system, but through engaging parents.

If the American system of education is really focused on the welfare of our children, private schooling must play a larger role. Arizona's school superintendent, Lisa Graham Keegan, in arguing for increased capital funding for schools, says, "Put simply, the money should follow the student." It is just that simple.

Educators must remember that the money is for the student, not the system.

Elie Pieprz is state projects coordinator for Americans for Tax Reform. ■

66. Detroit News

May 14, 1997

Accountability already strains charter schools

By Sen. Dick Posthumus and Rep. Ken Sikkema

It is the ultimate irony that the House Education Committee today is expected to report House Bill 4395, calling for greater accountability in Michigan's public school academies. Providing for greater accountability in public education was the reason these schools were established in the first place.

Public school academies are not simply a new program, demonstration project or innovative experiment. They are the deliberate result of legislation that sought to fundamentally alter the way that education is delivered in Michigan by injecting educational options and competition into the public sector.

Public school academies - also referred to as charter schools - are independent public schools that are open to all, chosen by families rather than populated by involuntary assignment, paid for by educational foundation grants for public schools, accountable to public authorities for pupil performance and managed by diverse groups of operators.

Education historian and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch recently described charter schools as "a license to educators with a dream."

Public school academies (PSAs) are held to a much higher standard of accountability than traditional schools.

First, PSAs are public schools and are subject to the same laws that govern traditional public schools (plus a few others). For most purposes, they can be thought of as a public school district with a single school. The state's Department of Education has a nine-page list of legal

citations summarizing the myriad laws with which public school academies must comply, including everything from federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to the state Open Meetings Act. In addition, PSAs are subjected to added reporting and oversight requirements in the form of special reports to the Legislature.

Second, public school academies have performance contracts that are negotiated with an authorizing agency. They may be closed by their authorizer or by the State Board of Education for criteria ranging from failure to meet academic goals to financial mismanagement to failure to comply with the law.

Traditional public schools may be operated in virtual perpetuity, regardless of whether or not they do their job. If all schools were subject to the same level of oversight imposed on public school academies, some districts would have been closed years ago for financial mismanagement, and more than a handful of schools across the state would be going through academic bankruptcy.

Third, PSAs are constantly under the microscope of the media, as well as that groups in Lansing with a vested interest in maintaining the existing system they helped to create.

The level of scrutiny PSAs receive in the press and the amount of dust kicked up by lobbyists for the education establishment is remarkable given that these schools serve less than 1 percent of all students in Michigan. This constant examination creates another layer of

public accountability beyond that of the traditional public school system.

Finally, and most important, not one child is compelled to attend a public school academy.

Every PSA student is there because parents made a choice for them. If the school is not serving the needs of families, students may leave. If enough students were to become dissatisfied, the school would close, like any other unsuccessful enterprise.

Quite the opposite has happened. Nearly every one of Michigan's 79 public school academies has a waiting list. This situation would normally lead thoughtful people to ask why so many people are embracing PSAs. Instead, some legislators seem to have succumbed to their compulsive instinct to regulate the new schools into bureaucratic submission, threatening to recreate the exact problem public school academies try to solve.

Calls for "greater accountability" in PSAs are a smoke screen. A recent commentary in Education Week magazine, "The False Friends of Charter Schools," rightly sums up the intentions of those on the House Education Committee calling for more charter school oversight:

"Many such constraints are there on purpose, imposed by enemies of charter schools who, unable to strangle this infant reform in its crib, have done their utmost to keep it from growing big and strong."

We can't let that happen. ■

67. Kansas City Star

May 14, 1997

New program helps seniors prepare to be leaders again

By JEAN HALEY
of the Editorial Board

Older adults are resources.

They're community treasures. Only a foolish society squanders the wisdom, experience and skills of its hundreds of

thousands of older persons.

Those are the ideas we give lip service to regularly. But do we mean what we say?

As more and more Americans live to ever older ages with the post-retirement stage very often longer than childhood/adolescence, how do we apply

much new aid, if any. Yet their wealthiest constituents, and their most generous political contributors, will be providing the bulk of the "new" money.

So is it a soak-the-rich plan?

The answer depends, again, on how our state's wealthy regard their

self-interest. If they pause to consider that Illinois is now a relatively low-tax state, and that spending more on schools may be cheaper in the long run than spending more on welfare and jails, than the well-to-do might accept this plan or something like it. If their attitude is "I've

got mine, you go scratch." they'll fight this thing as only the wealthy can.

Whatever the weeks ahead may bring, there is now a plan on the table for all to consider. Credit Gov. Edgar for pushing it this far. Now let's see if the legislature sides with the wealthy or with the kids. ■

56. Chicago Sun-Times

May 11, 1997

School reformers see bad things in good news

By Dennis Byrne

You can't claim to be a real reformer unless you can look good news in the eye and declare it to be bad.

Which is how some school reformers reacted to the dramatic, even stupendous, test score gains recorded by Chicago's public high schools.

For most people, it was great, good news that the schools literally turned around their dismal slide, as just about every regular public high school, for the first time in memory, recorded improved test scores. Of the 62 schools, 61 increased their math scores over the previous year, and the percentage of students scoring at or above the national norm in math was the highest since the 1980s. Double-digit percentage increases in math were recorded in 22 of the schools.

But this terrific development was greeted by the city's school reform establishment with assorted doses of apathy, skepticism and even hostility. Improved test results in the past were good enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of their version of decentralized school reform. But they're supposedly not good enough when they demonstrate the effectiveness of reform wrought by a central office tied to Mayor Daley.

Schools Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas says he has heard the good news dismissed by reformers in several ways: The students studied for the tests; teachers "taught to" the tests; teachers and principals were threatened that if

they didn't improve test scores their schools would be put on probation; students (presumably the poor ones) were discouraged from taking the tests.

I'm as dumbfounded as Vallas that anyone would think that forcing students, teachers and principals to take the tests seriously is a bad thing. "If [putting schools on probation] caused teachers to work a little harder or a little better, if students did more homework and study, I think that this is a good thing," he said.

If teaching to the test "means students were taught the material they were to be tested on, I can only suggest that the logic of doing so seems evident. Why would you want to test them on material they had not been taught? If the critics are suggesting that students studied test-taking skills, that is also true and also a sound strategy. If they are suggesting something dishonest, they had better have some evidence to support it." And no, Vallas said, poor students weren't kept from taking the tests; the number of test takers actually went up, not down.

That's not the only thing that's up at the schools. Enrollment over two years is up by 16,000 students; average daily attendance is up over three years, exceeding 90 percent; ACT scores are the highest since 1991-92, and last year's elementary school test scores were the highest in decades.

What's going on in the schools? Vallas ticks it off: Students are reached earlier, through preschool and

kindergarten programs; they have more time in school, learning critical subject areas; they are helped when they fall behind, through after-school tutoring and special reading programs; they are promoted based on performance, not age; they are presented with a consequence for non-performance, such as attending summer school, and their teachers and other adults set high standards.

"Children," Vallas said, "will respond when adults say, 'I know you can do it.'"

"The improvements seen in the high school test scores are real and they are significant," he said. "Yes, we have a long way to go, but these results show that we're on the right road."

I've been one of the most ardent supporters of decentralized school reform. But I'm not so choked up on my own pride, or dependent on the next foundation grant to prove my case, that I'm willing to be blind to the fact that something is working for the children of Chicago.

If the reformers are as dedicated as they say to the good of Chicago's schoolchildren they should be in Springfield during these critical days of the school funding debate, pounding legislators with the good news that Chicago's schools are dramatically better. And to remind them that Chicago is doing its job; now it's time for lawmakers to do theirs.

Dennis Byrne is a member of the Sun-Times editorial board. ■

57. San Diego Union-Tribune

May 13, 1997

Leading schools into the 21st century

By Ron Ottinger

When I first was elected to the school board in 1992, I asked a friend who was a keen observer of local government what he thought about the board. "Well, everyone knows the mayor and City Council are in charge of setting policy at the city, and the Board of Supervisors is in charge at the county, but at the school district, the elected school board seems to work for the superintendent rather than the superintendent working for the board. That's the way it has always been."

As a young, idealistic school board member, I was determined to fulfill the promises I made to the voters. I collaborated with my colleague, John de Beck, and supported the "Zero Tolerance" policy that he wrote for weapons and fighting. I wrote the "Classrooms First" policy that resulted in a landmark reallocation of \$6 million from the central office back to classrooms to significantly reduce class size in the early grades.

I learned in these two policy initiatives why it is so rare for board members to take charge of significant policy change. Because neither policy change was initially supported by district staff, and because school board members have no professional staff, de Beck and I had to write the policies ourselves. Even with public sentiment on our side and with proposals that appeared relatively simple, we fought uphill battles to overcome the complex policy-implementation issues and organizational resistance with few tools at our disposal.

Over the course of my first four years on the school board, it became very clear to me as well as to many community advocates working for better schools that the board had too many obstacles placed in its path to assume its legal role of establishing policy for the district's 130,000 students and 12,000 employees.

In my first term, I most often felt that I was a rubber stamp for superintendents — both for Tom Payzant and Bertha Pendleton — rather than an elected leader. I found that on major policy issues such as revamping special education or increasing math and science graduation requirements, the board was

not involved in shaping policy but was simply asked to review and approve policies that district staff and others had developed.

While those drafting the policies were well intentioned and competent, the school board could provide little leadership because we had to rely on information that was filtered by district staff — rarely did we have the full picture that is augmented by independent information. Board members most often felt frustrated that our views as the elected representatives of the taxpayers and voters were not heard up-front and along the way in the policy-drafting process.

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OTTINGER is president of the Board of Education, San Diego City Schools. ■

67. San Francisco Chronicle

May 10, 1997

Historic Agreement On Teacher Transfers

SAN FRANCISCO schools chief Bill Rojas may be the nation's leading advocate of "reconstitution" — the extreme act of completely overhauling low-performing schools that do not show an improvement in academic achievement by a fixed deadline.

In the past three years, Rojas has notified 24 schools that they must turn around or face reassignment of all its staff.

One indicator that the program has had some success is that all but eight of those schools — most of which for years had allowed mediocrity and worse to persist — met the challenge.

But the anger from the teachers' union, United Educators of San Francisco, has not been unwarranted. Reconstitution is, as union leaders say, a "meat-ax" approach that demoralizes teachers by throwing out the good with the bad. It also wastes time and energy by transferring every seasoned teacher and administrator and leaving an all-new, often inexperienced staff that must necessarily start from square one.

Responding to that anger last year,

Rojas said he understood some of the complaints but asserted that no one had found a better alternative to reconstitution as a way to prod long-complacent schools into positive action.

Until now.

In an historic meeting of the minds that reflects great credit on both Rojas and UESF President Joan-Marie Shelley, that "better alternative" has been found.

Last week, Rojas and Shelley signed an agreement that aims at reducing the need for reconstitution and that for the first time allows an "involuntary transfer process for staff" who undermine or refuse to implement a mutually agreed-upon school reform plan.

That means that teachers who do not embrace a school improvement program adopted by most of their colleagues will be moved to another school whether they consent or not. And, unlike under current procedure, they will not be able to file a union grievance charging that the transfer is punitive.

"I have finally become convinced that, yes, teachers have rights to a job in

the district, but they have no right to keep change from happening at a school where a plan for change has been developed and approved by the vast majority of the school," said Shelley.

The agreement would eliminate the very real pain of "meat-ax" reconstitution that deflates teacher morale while often creating a school of neophyte teachers and administrators. It recognizes that innovation, high expectations and rigor are required to serve San Francisco students, some of whom are allowed to slide because of studies showing that economic background and parents' educational attainment are the main predictors of school success. Rojas said he had never heard of such a transfer agreement in his 30 years in education. Shelley called the pact "revolutionary."

They do not exaggerate its significance. Such an agreement, which still requires NAACP and court approval, reflects a union commitment as much to improving the schools as to protecting teacher benefits and rights. ■

much new aid, if any. Yet their wealthiest constituents, and their most generous political contributors, will be providing the bulk of the "new" money.

So is it a soak-the-rich plan?

The answer depends, again, on how our state's wealthy regard their

self-interest. If they pause to consider that Illinois is now a relatively low-tax state, and that spending more on schools may be cheaper in the long run than spending more on welfare and jails, than the well-to-do might accept this plan or something like it. If their attitude is "I've

got mine, you go scratch." they'll fight this thing as only the wealthy can.

Whatever the weeks ahead may bring, there is now a plan on the table for all to consider. Credit Gov. Edgar for pushing it this far. Now let's see if the legislature sides with the wealthy or with the kids. ■

56. Chicago Sun-Times

May 11, 1997

School reformers see bad things in good news

By Dennis Byrne

You can't claim to be a real reformer unless you can look good news in the eye and declare it to be bad.

Which is how some school reformers reacted to the dramatic, even stupendous, test score gains recorded by Chicago's public high schools.

For most people, it was great, good news that the schools literally turned around their dismal slide, as just about every regular public high school, for the first time in memory, recorded improved test scores. Of the 62 schools, 61 increased their math scores over the previous year, and the percentage of students scoring at or above the national norm in math was the highest since the 1980s. Double-digit percentage increases in math were recorded in 22 of the schools.

But this terrific development was greeted by the city's school reform establishment with assorted doses of apathy, skepticism and even hostility. Improved test results in the past were good enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of their version of decentralized school reform. But they're supposedly not good enough when they demonstrate the effectiveness of reform wrought by a central office tied to Mayor Daley.

Schools Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas says he has heard the good news dismissed by reformers in several ways: The students studied for the tests; teachers "taught to" the tests; teachers and principals were threatened that if

they didn't improve test scores their schools would be put on probation; students (presumably the poor ones) were discouraged from taking the tests.

I'm as dumbfounded as Vallas that anyone would think that forcing students, teachers and principals to take the tests seriously is a bad thing. "If [putting schools on probation] caused teachers to work a little harder or a little better, if students did more homework and study, I think that this is a good thing," he said.

If teaching to the test "means students were taught the material they were to be tested on, I can only suggest that the logic of doing so seems evident. Why would you want to test them on material they had not been taught? If the critics are suggesting that students studied test-taking skills, that is also true and also a sound strategy. If they are suggesting something dishonest, they had better have some evidence to support it." And no, Vallas said, poor students weren't kept from taking the tests; the number of test takers actually went up, not down.

That's not the only thing that's up at the schools. Enrollment over two years is up by 16,000 students; average daily attendance is up over three years, exceeding 90 percent; ACT scores are the highest since 1991-92, and last year's elementary school test scores were the highest in decades.

What's going on in the schools? Vallas ticks it off: Students are reached earlier, through preschool and

kindergarten programs; they have more time in school, learning critical subject areas; they are helped when they fall behind, through after-school tutoring and special reading programs; they are promoted based on performance, not age; they are presented with a consequence for non-performance, such as attending summer school, and their teachers and other adults set high standards.

"Children," Vallas said, "will respond when adults say, 'I know you can do it.'"

"The improvements seen in the high school test scores are real and they are significant," he said. "Yes, we have a long way to go, but these results show that we're on the right road."

I've been one of the most ardent supporters of decentralized school reform. But I'm not so choked up on my own pride, or dependent on the next foundation grant to prove my case, that I'm willing to be blind to the fact that something is working for the children of Chicago.

If the reformers are as dedicated as they say to the good of Chicago's schoolchildren they should be in Springfield during these critical days of the school funding debate, pounding legislators with the good news that Chicago's schools are dramatically better. And to remind them that Chicago is doing its job; now it's time for lawmakers to do theirs.

Dennis Byrne is a member of the Sun-Times editorial board. ■

57. San Diego Union-Tribune

May 13, 1997

Leading schools into the 21st century

By Ron Ottinger

When I first was elected to the school board in 1992, I asked a friend who was a keen observer of local government what he thought about the board. "Well, everyone knows the mayor and City Council are in charge of setting policy at the city, and the Board of Supervisors is in charge at the county, but at the school district, the elected school board seems to work for the superintendent rather than the superintendent working for the board. That's the way it has always been."

As a young, idealistic school board member, I was determined to fulfill the promises I made to the voters. I collaborated with my colleague, John de Beck, and supported the "Zero Tolerance" policy that he wrote for weapons and fighting. I wrote the "Classrooms First" policy that resulted in a landmark reallocation of \$6 million from the central office back to classrooms to significantly reduce class size in the early grades.

I learned in these two policy initiatives why it is so rare for board members to take charge of significant policy change. Because neither policy change was initially supported by district staff, and because school board members have no professional staff, de Beck and I had to write the policies ourselves. Even with public sentiment on our side and with proposals that appeared relatively simple, we fought uphill battles to overcome the complex policy-implementation issues and organizational resistance with few tools at our disposal.

Over the course of my first four years on the school board, it became very clear to me as well as to many community advocates working for better schools that the board had too many obstacles placed in its path to assume its legal role of establishing policy for the district's 130,000 students and 12,000 employees.

In my first term, I most often felt that I was a rubber stamp for superintendents — both for Tom Payzant and Bertha Pendleton — rather than an elected leader. I found that on major policy issues such as revamping special education or increasing math and science graduation requirements, the board was

not involved in shaping policy but was simply asked to review and approve policies that district staff and others had developed.

While those drafting the policies were well intentioned and competent, the school board could provide little leadership because we had to rely on information that was filtered by district staff — rarely did we have the full picture that is augmented by independent information. Board members most often felt frustrated that our views as the elected representatives of the taxpayers and voters were not heard up-front and along the way in the policy-drafting process.

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administrators accountable for their students' performance.

We couldn't agree more.

The agreement between the Portland Public Schools board — led by Lucious Hicks — and community activists sets up an accountability system for schools in North and Northeast Portland. Good schools and teachers will be rewarded under this system and poor ones will be penalized. The strength of the plan is that it contemplates a partnership between parents and the schools.

If the school district holds up its end of the bargain and parents keep open minds, the plan could replace years of distrust with a partnership that makes Portland better.

It is easy to forget in all of this discussion of student achievement (and of the poor financial situation that faces the Portland school district) that the rules have changed for Oregon students. The bar has been raised for students and for schools.

In two years, students who have not achieved initial and advanced mastery of basic educational skills will not receive high school diplomas. Obviously, this changes the standard for students. Less obviously, it changes the standard for schools and teachers.

No longer will a district be able to point exclusively to overall averages as a measure of success or failure. The emphasis will, and should, shift to

whether each student has achieved the basic levels of academic skill set out in the state's school-reform law.

Not that these levels are so high, but there are plenty of students of all races who could not meet the standards today. In two years, those failures will be far more graphic and traumatic than anything we've seen so far in Oregon. If schoolteachers and administrators think they're under pressure now, they haven't seen anything yet.

It is not likely that parents, taxpayers or legislators will accept schools that routinely fail to boost their students over the minimal standards set by the school reform laws. But then, there isn't any reason they should. ■

65. Sacramento Bee

May 13, 1997

Class-size reduction redux

For the second spring in a row, Gov. Pete Wilson finds himself in the enviable position of having unanticipated revenues to spend from a fast-growing economy. Under the requirements of Proposition 98, he must devote the bulk of the windfall, which could be as much as \$2 billion, to the public schools. As he did last year, the governor wants to spend it on further reducing class sizes in the primary grades.

The proposal likely will be popular among legislators of both parties, school districts that have been begging for more financial assistance to implement the costly program and parents who are clamoring for it. But the picture isn't all rosy: Fostering more class-size reduction inevitably will increase the significant pressures — a growing shortage of qualified teachers and classroom space — that existed even before any expansion was envisioned.

Wilson proposes to spend another \$230 million on reducing class size in kindergarten through third grade by the fall of 1998, expanding the program by one grade. He'd also "fully fund" the initiative by increasing the amount that districts receive for the smaller classes from \$650 per student to \$800, which

school districts say will enable them to shrink classes in the primary grades without taking money from their general funds. That will at least stop class-size reduction from edging out other important priorities, such as guidance counselors and extracurricular programs at the high school level.

But it won't solve what has become a problematic and potentially crippling byproduct of this bonanza. More than 18,000 teachers were hired this school year to accommodate class-size reduction, on top of the 16,000 hired to fill normal replacement and growth needs. One-quarter of those hired for class-size reduction are without teaching credentials and are working with an emergency permit. Expanding the program to four grade levels in all school districts would necessitate the hiring of 16,500 more teachers. With substitute-teacher pools already depleted, and only a few thousand new teachers receiving credentials in this state annually, it may be too much, too fast.

And then there is the space problem: The governor proposes to let districts with space shortages use some of the new monies to add portable classrooms or to remodel existing buildings to create more

classrooms. That will help, but Wilson is also betting on passage of a \$2 billion school-facilities bond initiative, which has yet to be placed on the statewide ballot by the Legislature, much less to be approved by the voters. He'd like to see half of that bond set aside to add classrooms for the primary grades. But that necessarily reduces the amount available to the rest of the K-12 system, which has huge needs — an estimated \$12 billion to \$33 billion in construction and renovation over the next decade — that have gone too long unaddressed.

These snags have the potential to undermine the whole intent of the initiative, which is presumably to improve the classroom environment, to heighten the quality of instruction and ultimately to increase achievement. In that light, the governor and the Legislature ought not to rush to expand the program to another grade. They should focus first on what they've started, ensure that all those first-year teachers get solid on-the-job training and support, and establish an assessment to measure whether this massive investment, which would grow to \$1.8 billion over two years as now proposed, is paying off.

■

66. Orlando Sentinel

May 12, 1997

A role for business

An elementary school might seem far removed from life's hustle and bustle. What more appropriate place, though, to begin to explain about what's happening in the real world?

The earlier children begin to connect what they are doing with how that will apply in the business world, the better. That's the thrust of Central Florida's school-to-work efforts — teaching lessons to undergird a lifetime.

School-to-work efforts aim to build a stronger work force by teaching essential skills and establishing school-business partnerships. That's not merely a useful exercise. It's a matter of protecting the nation's future economic health. Why?

Because students will be better prepared to compete with students from other countries who are learning the same skills. Successful competition is a key to playing and winning in the global economy.

This second in a series of three editorials about forging school-to-work links evaluates public-school programs in Orange, Osceola, Lake, Seminole and Volusia counties.

Some critics of school-to-work efforts view them as undermining the goals of a conventional education, which they describe as developing people's minds and exposing them to knowledge. They interpret school-to-work efforts as emphasizing a practical education at the expense of broadening the mind.

That couldn't be further from the truth.

School-to-work efforts emphasize the development of knowledge and make that knowledge relevant to the students' interests and to the changing needs of the work force. The goal is to end up with students who have a knowledge base; can reason and analyze; and can perform and adapt to changes in the work world.

That's downright sensible.

One of the most important elements of school-to-work efforts is the business community. According to some experts — including Donald Chaiker, co-author of *World Class Schools* and *World Class Elementary Schools* — businesses in the

United States have not bought as strongly into their role in educating children as have their counterparts in other countries. That must change.

That's already happening in Central Florida. Some type of school-to-work activity goes on in many public schools, at all levels, with the most-developed programs in high schools. That's appropriate; many of those students shortly will enter the work force.

School-to-work programs include internships, job-shadowing, guest speakers, cooperative education, business field trips, apprenticeships, Junior Achievement, focused classroom exploration of topics, mentoring, career planning and tech-prep programs. But, as good as they appear to be, are those efforts accomplishing enough?

Hardly. If a student listens to a guest speaker, for example, that counts as school-to-work exposure. That's fine, but it can't be nearly as effective as internships, apprenticeships and the like, which provide real-world work experience.

Actually, less than 10 percent of the region's 76,000 high-school students have work-based opportunities. Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties combined offer a handful of apprenticeships. Lake and Volusia counties, though, offer none. The region's numbers are only somewhat better for internships and cooperative education.

Even if you include tech-prep programs — which in some cases have work components — barely more than two-fifths of area high-school students are benefitting. Tech-prep programs combine high school and two years of college education, emphasizing mathematics, communication, science and technical skills — key knowledge areas for the future marketplace.

Some parents don't like tech-prep and related approaches, believing that they lead students into second-class employment. Just the opposite. They lead students toward good jobs. In fact, the average Florida tech-prep graduate earns about 17 percent more than the average

four-year-degree holder.

You would think that businesses would want to enhance the tech-prep experience by opening work sites to those students. The advantages of more business involvement are clear. Businesses are able to make an essential connection with their future employees, learn more about education and add to the content of education.

Students gain, as well. They develop self-esteem, learn to discard stereotypes of businesses, begin to understand how the economy operates and learn the skills and behaviors necessary to succeed.

Consider the Junior Achievement experience. You could call Junior Achievement — which has been in the region since 1961 — one of the oldest school-to-work efforts. It operates at all levels. Junior Achievement is a national, nonprofit undertaking to encourage young people to understand business and prepare for the work force.

A program in a fifth-grade class at Audubon Park Elementary School in Orange County helps to illustrate. For the past several weeks, students have been studying the business world. And you know what?

They've picked up an amazing amount of practical knowledge! One example is their ability to distinguish among sole proprietorships, partnerships and corporations. Students also have engaged in role-playing. Eleven-year-old Chantia Bulla and 10-year-old Anthony Meder in the accompanying photo are practicing job-interviewing skills.

It would be ideal to have Junior Achievement in every classroom in Central Florida. Unfortunately, as the accompanying chart shows, fewer than 16 percent of public-school students are being reached.

The workplace in the 21st century will require lifelong learning, flexibility and the willingness to develop new skills to keep pace with changes in technology and methods. A foundation for equipping students with the right stuff is found in more business-school links. Expanding those efforts should be a top priority. ■

Triefenbach, assistant superintendent of Belleville Elementary District 118. It would see \$1.9 million more to educate its 3,700 children in grades K-8. The district spends about \$13 million from state and local sources now.

Property taxes in District 118, which essentially covers the city of Belleville, would drop about \$1.1 million under the plan. But the third piece of the equation - how much more income tax would be paid there - was not figured for each school district.

In St. Clair County, where local and state taxes pay \$185 million for primary and secondary education now, the proposal would add \$17 million in aid. Residents would pay \$20 million more in income tax and get \$13 million back in property tax cuts.

In Madison County, where \$166 million is spent now, aid would increase by \$15.8 million. Residents would pay \$26 million more in income taxes and get back \$15.6 million in property taxes.

"We'd be glad to have it," said Harry Briggs, the county's regional school superintendent. But he warned that the state has got to get it right the first time or risk losing support of a wary public.

"If they fumble, it would take 20 years to get the public's attention again," Briggs suggested.

Asked to define "fumble," Briggs said: "It can't all be for salaries for teachers and administrators. If you do that, you lose the trust of the public."

He added that educators in many cases do deserve better pay, but that needs of better technology and infrastructure also are critical.

Republicans Wary

Mark Boozell, director of the Illinois Department of Insurance, spoke Wednesday for the "Committee of Eight," appointed by the governor to achieve harmony with lawmakers.

"This is not a piece of legislation to be voted on," Boozell said. "This is to narrow down the topic. A lot of things will probably change in this package before it is voted on."

The committee plans to make a formal presentation of the package to Edgar and legislators today.

The legislative leaders within Edgar's own party - Senate President James "Pate" Philip of Wood Dale and House Minority Leader Lee Daniels of Elmhurst - did not immediately embrace the plan.

Philip raised his frequent concern about raising income taxes.

"If you would do the governor's plan, it would be the largest single increase in taxes in the history of Illinois," he said. "I don't think the majority of my caucus is for that."

Statewide, it would increase school spending by \$606 million, to \$10.3 billion. The income tax increase would raise \$1.45 billion, and the property tax reductions would absorb \$1.2 billion of it.

The plan falls more than \$340 million

short of balancing. That probably would be made up from the State Board of Education budget, streamlining of internal processes and economic growth, said Al Grosboll, senior adviser of special projects for Edgar.

The complex plan also would provide special "poverty grants" to especially distressed schools.

The income tax increase would be applied to individuals but not corporations. Its impact is easily calculated person-by-person: the 3 percent rate would go to 3.75 percent.

The property tax relief would be available only to homeowners and farmers - not to businesses. It would be a 30 percent homestead exemption applied against the operating fund tax rate of each school district. The effect varies depending upon the value of land owned and the tax rate of each district. A provision also is being discussed to give a break to renters.

Reformers included discussion of a separate \$50 million-a-year expenditure to finance a 50 percent state match on up to \$1 billion in school construction. It would be funded separately, possibly by a tax on casinos.

Aware of public concerns about ensuring a good return for the dollar, the panel provided a list of accountability options that included stronger training and stiffer licensing standards for teachers. ■

49. Baltimore Sun

May 8, 1997

City students tell council their concerns

They describe struggles interfering with education

By Jean Thompson

SUN STAFF

Orderly classrooms, stricter teachers, safer hallways, smaller classes, better college-preparatory counseling.

These are among the urgent needs of Baltimore's public schools, 21 students told the Baltimore City Council's Education and Human Resources Committee at a public hearing last night.

"We are getting a substandard education," said Keon Gerow, 16, enrolled in the law academy at Lake Clifton-Eastern High School.

The students, ages 9 to 17, described

their struggles to learn while others disrupt classes, concerns about physical safety, favorite classes and teachers, and ideas for improvements.

"Sometimes I think it takes more time for the teachers to get their kids [settled down] and in a mode to learn" in middle-school classes with 30 and 40 students, said April Ruffin, 12, of Hamilton Elementary-Middle School.

The students' testimony during the committee's first "Student Speak Out" elicited cheers and gasps from the

audience. The hearing will be broadcast on City Cable at 10 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. today.

"I do not feel safe," said Keon, responding to a question from a council member. He described an incident in which a student was robbed of gold jewelry in the school.

Keon urged city leaders to ensure that the planned changes in school management produce results rather than "more talk." He said only selected students at his school receive

college-preparatory, counseling and advice about the SAT.

Council members peppered the students with questions, especially about school discipline, seeking to find what works and what doesn't.

Suspensions are not always the answer because many children come from

difficult family circumstances, some students said. Others called for programs that provide mentors and role models; one said students need adult leaders who discipline firmly but "with love."

Should all city students wear uniforms?

Disagreeing with others who prefer uniforms as a way to curb fights that erupt over fashions, Dennis Hilton, 10, of Montebello Elementary School, said, "I don't think it matters if you wear a uniform or another type of clothing as long as you get your education." ■

50. Newsday

05/07/97; Section: NEWS

Ruling: No Bias Against Principal

By Peggy Brown
STAFF WRITER

A black elementary school principal was not discriminated against when she was fired by the Lawrence public school district in 1994, according to a decision by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

When she was fired from Number One Elementary School on July 5, 1994, Betty Wilson was the only black principal in the Lawrence school district. In a complaint filed with the Office for Civil Rights, she charged that "the District discriminates on the basis of race and color." She said she was fired in retaliation for calling special education classes "a dumping ground" for black students.

Wilson, who was hired as principal in 1992, also contended that the Lawrence public schools' hiring practices discriminated against minorities.

In a seven-page decision issued last

Wednesday, the Office for Civil Rights rejected her claims, saying the district "has provided a legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason for the complainant's termination: concerns regarding her performance." The agency also found "insufficient evidence" that the Lawrence school district's hiring practices discriminated.

Wilson, who is living outside New York State, could not be reached for comment.

Lawrence Superintendent Stewart Weinberg said he felt vindicated by the decision. "We never felt that we had done anything that was discriminatory in nature," he said. "We treat each individual as an individual, regardless of their ethnic and racial backgrounds, and I'm not going to tolerate mediocrity or inappropriateness from anyone who works within the school district."

School officials said Wilson was fired for failing to establish positive

relationships with parents and staff, failing to evaluate teachers and being ineffective in leading the school. She was fired during her three-year probationary period.

To investigate the complaint, the federal agency reviewed district policies and interviewed Wilson, district personnel and other witnesses.

Dale Pike, who was co-president of the school's Parent-Teacher Association when Wilson was principal, said that she was "very pleased" by the determination because "there certainly was no discrimination."

"She just seemed to be lacking the administrative experience," Pike said. "I don't feel she was visible enough. . . . On a personal level, she was a lovely lady, but it just wasn't the job for her."

The district now has one black principal, Yvonne Nicholas, of Number Four Elementary School. ■

51. Baltimore Sun

May 8, 1997

Five finalists selected for Teacher of the Year

TOWSON — The county school system has announced five finalists for the position of Teacher of the Year for 1997-1998.

Brenda Benson, of Fifth District Elementary; Kathy Gerwig, of Warren Elementary; Deborah Phelps, of Southwest Academy; Diane Richmond,

of Owings Mills Elementary; and Terri Walls, of Sparrows Point High, will compete for the title, to be announced May 21. ■

yesterday by committee spokesman Ari Fleischer, was that "the constitution says power to write the tax laws originates in the House — and not the White House."

Yesterday's agreement allows both sides in that dispute to claim a victory of sorts. It calls for a net tax cut of \$85 billion over the next five years, and \$250 billion over the next 10 years. White House officials touted the fact that the document commits the Republican leadership to supporting a budget resolution that specifically promises \$35 billion in tax breaks for education, Clinton's marquee proposal in the 1996 campaign. Republicans, however, boasted yesterday that the agreement says nothing about what form the education cuts will take.

Rubin said Republicans had pledged in budget talks that the education deductions and credits "would be along the lines of the president's provision."

But the budget accord leaves to the tax writing committees the job of designing the structure and size of all the other tax provisions, including tax breaks for families with children and cuts in the capital gains tax rate.

As proof that Archer stood his ground in this week's tussle, GOP sources

produced a two-page of list of highly detailed provisions Treasury officials had unsuccessfully pressed Republican negotiators to accept as recently as Thursday night.

The list suggests the White House tax team wanted assurances from the Republican leadership that the final tax package would:

Include both a \$1,500 tax credit and a \$10,000 tax deduction for college students.

Limit the total cost of the estate tax and capital gains provisions sought by Republicans to \$22 billion over the next five years and \$47 billion over next five years.

Include Clinton's proposal for capital gains reduction for homeowners and Senate Minority Leader Thomas Daschle's proposal for loosening estate taxes for farmers.

Make no reductions in the earned-income credit for the working poor, and include no new cuts in federal housing credits for low-income families.

The list also indicated that the accord should include a welter of other smaller tax measures — many of them so arcane that some members of Clinton's budget

negotiating team could not fully explain them.

Rubin said yesterday that the document was only a "list of things for discussion, but not things we were particularly focused on."

The administration's inability to persuade Archer to agree on the final shape of the education tax cuts leaves Clinton in a potentially awkward political spot. Although Clinton's proposed education tax breaks won applause along the campaign trail, they have been widely criticized by higher education experts and economists who argue that they would heap windfall benefits on middle-income students likely to attended college anyway.

Moreover, the measures have little support among congressional Democrats — let alone Republicans.

Rep. Charles Rangel (N.Y.), the ranking Democrat on the Ways and Means Committee, has made no secret of his disdain for Clinton's proposed education tax breaks. In a statement yesterday he warned of the budget agreement, "The people who benefit from the tax cuts are not my constituents." ■

15. The Washington Post

05/04/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A01

Educators Taking Drastic Steps to Solve Dire Problems

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer
First of two parts

PHILADELPHIA -- Every morning here at Fairhill Elementary School, about two dozen young mothers leave their nearby tenements, rush past the sad drunks and cocky drug dealers who litter their streets, and report for duty.

They are not volunteers. The public school, a windowless fortress in one of this city's poorest neighborhoods, is so desperate to get parents of children there more interested in education that it pays the women \$250 for every 100 hours of help they give teachers and students. A new team of parents replaces them every few months.

The tactic is just one of many Fairhill relies on to get parents involved. Small bribes are another tool: Parents who visit classes are rewarded with free product samples — detergent, soap — that the school collects. Those who bring along

other parents with them to meet teachers receive extra gifts.

"We try to do more every year with every little thing we can think of," said Mary Lou DeNicola, Fairhill's principal. "But it only seems to get harder."

That lament is resounding throughout the nation's urban public schools.

Today, in one large city after another, public education is in shambles. Record numbers of poor students, many of them young immigrants who speak only limited English, are crowding city classrooms. The exodus of middle-class parents to suburbs or private schools is unrelenting. Student violence is rising, and so is student transience. Exemplary teachers who are willing to take on those challenges are hard to hire.

To a degree, urban schools always have shouldered the toughest problems in education. But in recent years their burdens have become quite different, and even more extreme.

In many cities, there is little doubt that public schools are still often undermined by poor management, but a core problem is not of their making. More than ever, schools are being overwhelmed by waves of demographic and social changes that are forcing them to play fundamentally new roles — as surrogate parents and social workers to deeply disadvantaged children and their families — that extend far beyond the traditional teaching of years past. Many schools are hardly equipped, and were never designed, for the daily tasks they now face, and it makes classroom success harder to achieve.

The evidence of academic decline in urban public schools is glaring.

In reading, the average scores of urban students from disadvantaged homes on the National Assessment of Progress, an exam given every few years in schools nationwide and widely used to judge their progress, have fallen steadily since

four months of negotiations came when Clinton became personally engaged in

the process several days ago. Until then, he said, "everybody was holding back.

Nobody was putting real numbers up." ■

13. The Washington Post

05/05/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A06

Bipartisan Concern About Medicare, Social Security; Administration Officials, Top Republican Pledge Effort to Avert Long-Term Problems

By Barbara Vobejda

Washington Post Staff Writer

Clinton administration officials and a top Senate Republican said yesterday they intend to pursue a bipartisan effort to solve the long-term fiscal problems facing Medicare and Social Security.

Speaking on separate television interview shows, White House Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles and Office of Management and Budget Director Franklin D. Raines said now that GOP congressional leaders and the White House have agreed on a balanced budget plan, President Clinton wants to go forward with a "bipartisan process" to propose long-term solutions for the nation's major entitlement programs.

But neither official was specific about what form the process would take, nor was Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.), who on CNN's "Late Edition" also backed "a bipartisan process" to deal with long-term problems in Medicare and Social Security.

The agreement reached Friday would balance the budget by 2002, eliminating the deficit for the first time since 1969. It also would cut taxes, provide expanded

health care for low-income children, restore some welfare benefits for legal immigrants and give tax breaks to middle-income families with children in college.

Several Republicans and administration officials praised the budget deal yesterday and predicted it would win passage in Congress.

The agreement would reduce by \$115 billion over the next five years the cost of Medicare, which provides health care for 37 million elderly and disabled Americans. Under current projections, the part of Medicare that pays for hospital care will go bankrupt in 2001. If the balanced budget deal is enacted, that date would be postponed until 2008, according to official estimates.

Economists and other fiscal experts, however, have warned that the budget plan does not solve the longer-term problems facing Medicare and Social Security when the huge baby boom generation begins retiring early in the next century. When baby boomers — those Americans born between 1946 and 1964 — are all eligible for retirement in 2030, there could be just two Americans

of working age for every retiree — compared with about five workers per senior in 1960.

On NBC's "Meet The Press," Bowles said Clinton envisioned a "two-step process."

"Now, having solved the short- and intermediate-term problems with Medicare," Bowles said, "we do have to face the generational problems and go forward with some kind of bipartisan process that really will solve the long-term problems associated with Medicare and Social Security."

Asked if that would take the form of a commission, Bowles said, "I don't know about a commission, but a bipartisan process, for sure."

But assessments of the budget deal were not totally favorable yesterday. On CNN, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) said he thought the agreement relied too much on favorable economic assumptions and too little "on fiscal restraint." And Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), also on CNN, said the budget agreement invests too little in the needs of children, education and job training and cuts taxes for the well-to-do too much. ■

14. The Washington Post

05/03/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A13

Tax Dispute Reflects Fundamental Divide; Split Centers on Power to Create Law

By Clay Chandler

Washington Post Staff Writer

The heated tax dispute that threatened briefly to scuttle yesterday's budget deal was as much a good old-fashioned turf war as it was an argument over policy.

Whatever the other differences between budget negotiators from the

White House and the Republican leadership about the size and shape of the tax cut in yesterday's accord, the last-minute tussle reflected a fundamental disagreement about who should have the power to dictate the specifics of federal tax law.

Clinton officials, at the urging of

Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin, pressed for a budget agreement between the White House and the Congress that would have included a lengthy list of specific tax provisions.

But Bill Archer (R-Tex.), the Ways and Means Committee's chairman, would have none of it. His view, summed up

the late 1980s — after rising for nearly two decades. The reading scores of disadvantaged urban eighth-graders nationally have fallen this decade to levels lower than they were 25 years ago.

The gap in scores between white and minority students — most of whom attend urban schools — also is widening again, after closing for the past two decades. In math, the difference in scores between white and black eighth-graders on the national test last year was 39 points, 7 points more than it was in 1990. The gap between white and Hispanic students on the same test is 31 points, 5 more than it was seven years ago.

Cities are groping to find remedies to improve academic achievement, but the crises in which many urban schools are trapped keep going from bad to worse. The plight of a school like Fairhill, and its unorthodox responses, are hardly unusual anymore.

"All of it has a terrible impact on learning," said Paul Vallas, the new chief executive officer of Chicago's public schools, who last year put more than 100 schools on notice to improve dismal academic records or face major faculty shake-ups. "We are clearly not reaching as many of these children, or their parents, as we need to be."

In Philadelphia, where less than half of the city's 215,000 students have mastered basic reading skills, the number of families on public assistance and with children in public schools has increased by 14 percent in the past four years alone. It has declined by 6 percent in the rest of Pennsylvania's public school districts.

In Los Angeles, where nearly half the public school enrollment speaks only limited English, about 40 percent of students do not finish the academic year in the same school where they started it and have little, if any, continuity to their education.

In Chicago, where one-third of students are from families whose head of household is unemployed, educators are reporting alarming new trends in the readiness of many young children to begin school. In recent evaluations, only about 30 percent of incoming Chicago kindergartners could draw a circle. Only about 20 percent could distinguish basic colors like green or blue. Both figures are new lows.

The search for solutions to dire problems like those is becoming ever more desperate. Cities are being pressured to experiment with an array of

radical ideas, such as choosing leaders from outside the education establishment, or letting private companies run schools, or giving parents publicly paid vouchers to attend private schools.

In the past two years, state officials have taken over the public school systems of Cleveland and Newark. In Illinois, lawmakers have given Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley unprecedented authority over the city's schools. His management team — some of whom are not educators — has fired 1,700 employees and forced about 100,000 students to attend summer school. In New York City, schools are embarking on their biggest change in management since the 1960s. A new state law has stripped the city's 32 schoolboards of power and given most of it to schools Chancellor Rudy Crew.

In Philadelphia, the academic work of students at a few high schools is so poor that the system is taking the extraordinary step of trying to oust nearly the entire faculty.

A retired Army general, Julius W. Becton Jr., is running Washington's beleaguered public schools, with the city's elected school board reduced to an advisory panel. Seattle also has a former military general in charge of its public schools.

In many cities, parents and business leaders are exasperated with the political habits of school boards that disrupt education programs by constantly hiring, then soon firing, superintendents. The average tenure of urban superintendents is less than three years. Since the early 1970s, Washington has had seven school superintendents. Taxpayers nationwide also are loathe to keep giving urban school systems more money, at least until they cut bureaucratic waste and show better academic results.

"Time is appropriately running out for business-as-usual responses," said Robert Peterkin, a Harvard education professor who directs a training program at the university for urban superintendents. "People are tired of excuses and letting generations of students slip by while they figure out how to make schools work. Today, if a plan for schools seems focused and strong, a lot of people don't care where it comes from."

Many urban school districts also are being pressured to break the culture of low expectations and inflated grades that pervade classrooms nationwide by raising academic standards — some

schools have begun teaching algebra earlier, for example — or by working harder and years in advance to prepare more disadvantaged students for college.

In Cleveland, a private nonprofit group, Cleveland Scholarship Programs Inc., is dispatching its own paid counselors to high schools, covering the costs of college applications for students, and awarding scholarships to needy students to attend college. Similar initiatives are underway in 20 other cities, including Baltimore.

Officials with the Cleveland group said that disadvantaged students often are prepared too late to take college entrance exams. And at times some of those students are steered away from study in fields such as computer technology or science.

"By the time we see them, a lot already have been tracked into non-college courses," said Tina Milano, the executive director of Cleveland Scholarship Programs Inc. "We have to change that attitude. Education is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity."

In subjects such as reading, hundreds of urban schools also are trying to adopt comprehensive new teaching programs that have been developed at some of the nation's most prestigious universities. One of them is "Success for All," designed by educators at Johns Hopkins. It focuses on low-achieving elementary school readers, targets them with intensive phonics, writing work and tutoring, then tests their progress every two months. Fairhill has begun using it, and its low reading scores are improving.

In Milwaukee, high school students cannot graduate unless they pass a new math exam that forces them to demonstrate reasoning on problems, not just answer multiple-choice questions. Nine of the nation's largest urban school systems also are sharing more than \$150 million, a gift from billionaire Walter H. Annenberg, to improve teaching.

Some educators are encouraged by the blitz of ideas. "So much of what you see in urban schools now are serious attempts at whole-school change, which has been lacking over the years," said Samuel Stringfield, an education professor at Johns Hopkins.

"I am reasonably certain that we've never had a time when there has been so much activity directed at trying to solve these problems than there is now."

In many ways, the subtle and urgent adjustments that many urban schools are making are transforming the very

definition of education reform.

Here at Fairhill, in a north Philadelphia community that once flourished with factory jobs but now has a high unemployment rate, principal DeNicola is spending nights and weekends trying to learn Spanish. Enrollment at the school has doubled in the 12 years she has been on the job. Many of her new students are Puerto Rican.

DeNicola is also diverting 10 percent — \$25,000 — of the federal aid the school receives each year to educate its poorest children to train and hire their parents to work in classes. Once a week, the school also hosts workshops to help parents with life skills — everything from training them on computers to showing them how to use cosmetics.

Many parents are jobless, or rely on sporadic work picking blueberries in farm fields of New Jersey. They are poorly educated and often too intimidated to set foot inside of the school. "You want to help your child, but you feel bad if you don't know how," said Viterlina Camacho, who has two children at Fairhill. "Some parents are afraid to ask."

The school is battling that problem by helping some parents improve their reading and writing. The last time that teachers created a short book of student poems and stories, they included similar work from parents. Teachers also advise parents on their rights as tenants; that helps them from being suddenly displaced and switching schools.

Nationwide, many educators say they doubt that even the best classroom reforms will take hold without involving parents much more in schooling. But winning their trust and help is among the most difficult jobs facing many urban schools.

"Just getting them into the building can be so difficult," DeNicola said. "But we don't have a choice anymore."

One way that Fran Martin, a reading teacher at Fairhill, tries to build better relations with the parents of her students is by giving them maps with routes that she has outlined to Philadelphia markets that sell discount food and clothing.

"That's the sort of little thing that makes them more comfortable," she said. "The more they get to know you, the more they get interested in education."

Some teachers also have begun after-school "homework clubs," on their own time, to help students who live in crowded tenements. Police officers who

patrol nearby have told faculty that they have seen a few students now and then doing class work outside, under street lights, because they said the electricity in their homes had been cut off.

The school even has tacit agreements with neighborhood thugs, who tend to keep their distance — at least during class hours. DeNicola recalled an incident a few years ago in which faculty meeting shortly after school heard a few gunshots. Outside, a wounded teenager lay near the school. His assailants shouted an apology as they fled.

"They said, 'Sorry, we didn't think people were still inside the building,'" DeNicola said. "It was very strange. But that's what we deal with."

The task of educating needy children has fallen mostly to urban public school systems for nearly a century; there never were good old days. Indeed, educators argue that some classroom problems have not changed nearly as much as the public expectations for what schools should accomplish, even with the most difficult students.

Generations ago, city schools were filled with middle-class children and had a relatively good public image. There were hardly national uproars over student dropouts, for example, even though the rate in some cities often was twice as large as it is now.

But the decline of industry in many cities left dropouts and low-achieving students with dwindling options for good jobs, shrunk the tax base, and put much more pressure on public schools to succeed — at times with less money — in a way that they never had.

Meanwhile, the growth of suburbs and the tumultuous era of school desegregation — and later forced student busing — began to change student enrollment radically. In many cities, busing programs designed to integrate schools by race and class had the opposite effect. White families fled in droves, and poor minority students became more isolated.

Even by the mid-1950s, the image of urban schooling had taken a sharp turn for the worse. In 1955, the popular movie "The Blackboard Jungle" featured a city teacher struggling to win the respect of unruly students.

"The notion that these schools are in trouble is quite an old one," said Larry Cuban, an education historian at Stanford University. "But they have never been asked to play a larger role for children than now. They have become the default

option for society."

Today, many of the predicaments schools face are far more serious than they were even 15 years ago — violence, for example. Back then, security at high schools in Chicago only required a few aides patrolling the halls. Now, most students enter high schools through metal detectors, and grounds are guarded by two police officers.

In a recent survey, about 60 percent of urban school boards reported that student violence had "increased significantly" in the past five years. In the District, Becton considers safety the schools' biggest problem.

In Seattle, Superintendent John Stanford is offering high school classes \$100 for every month that passes without a violent incident. Classes can earn up to \$1,000 for field trips or parties. But they lose \$100 when there is a serious incident, and lose it all if there is a weapons offense. Stanford wants the rewards to entice students to police themselves. "But I'm having trouble giving the money away," he said.

Recruiting teachers, particularly minority ones, is also getting harder. Many suburban schools can offer more money and less classroom strife. And several recent studies show that poor and minority students are more likely to have teachers who lack a college major, or full certification, in their primary classroom subject.

A report last year by the Education Trust, a nonprofit group, showed that in high schools where more than half of the students were disadvantaged, 40 percent of math teachers lacked a college degree in that subject. In schools with fewer disadvantaged students, 28 percent of math teachers lacked a degree in that subject.

The same report showed that the gap in achievement between white students and minorities is still substantial. It had closed somewhat during the 1970s and 1980s, but this decade it has stalled or slipped in some subjects. Some educators blame that trend on the growing poverty in urban schools, or on the persistent habit of school leaders to focus too much on the best students instead of helping the neediest children learn.

"Poor children can learn — the last two decades shattered the myth that they can't," said Kati Haycock, the director of the Education Trust. "But we have to make them a priority again. Otherwise, we're sentencing them to lives permanently on the margin."

Urban schools are making some progress. For the first time, black and white students are graduating from high school at virtually the same rate, and that is not only because more minorities are attending suburban schools. The dropout rate in cities has declined slightly over the past 15 years. But for every stride, there are other ominous signs. For example: Hispanic students, the fastest-growing group in urban public schools, are now twice as likely as black students to drop out of high school.

"The costs of that are going to be huge if it doesn't change," said Stringfield, of Johns Hopkins. "Poor kids have always dropped out of school, for all kinds of reasons. But we simply don't have anything for them to do anymore."

NEXT: The middle-class exodus

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING IN A CITY SCHOOL

Keeping order as children bring weapons to school and violence increases.

School districts that say violence increased in last five years

Capturing time with parents when many have to manage households alone.

Percent of children who do not live in a two-parent family, 1994

Total: 24.5%

Central cities: 37%

Effectively teaching the relatively large number of students who require special services.

Percent of students receiving services in 1993-94

Communicating with students who have limited English ability.

U.S. students with limited English proficiency, in millions
score: 500)

1994-95: 3.2 million

1985-86: 1.5 million

As these challenges have intensified, academic performance by some measures has peaked.

Average reading proficiency score for disadvantaged urban children (highest possible test score 500)

SOURCES: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, National School Boards Association, Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress

16. The Washington Post

05/05/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A01

A City's Drive to Keep Middle-Class Students; Efforts in Seattle May Offer Example

By Rene Sanchez

Washington Post Staff Writer

Second of two articles

SEATTLE -- There goes John Stanford again, charging up and down the hills of this city in his old red Mustang convertible, rumpled map draped across the steering wheel, searching for another school to surprise with an inspection.

He works alone. No driver, no staff. Just the latest chief of Seattle's beleaguered public schools, a retired Army general with no prior experience in education, on a mission with long odds: to restore public trust in the city's schools and keep what's left of the middle class from fleeing to the suburbs.

"You can't keep going if you have a school system that only serves the poor," Stanford says as he wheels toward a middle school on the edge of town. "We have to get other families to stay or come back. If we fail, this city dies."

In many urban schools, that battle is all but lost. Families that can afford other options for education are long gone or packing up. The problem, unchecked for decades, has had corrosive effects on public schools. Today, few tasks in urban public education are more difficult than stopping, even slowing, the middle-class exodus.

By now, some large cities, such as Philadelphia, have so little hope of reversing the trend that they are focused instead on getting poor parents more involved in the education of their children — trying, in essence, to make the most of what they have. But Seattle is embarked on a new drive to keep its classrooms from becoming ever more poor.

Poor students are not necessarily bad students or without devoted parents. But research has long shown that the conditions often linked to affluence — two-parent families with more time to help their children or parents with college degrees and a personal sense of the value of education — tend to cultivate more academic success in students.

Also, it is the bedrock support of the middle class — and its tax dollars — that cities need most to strengthen neighborhoods and support schools. Otherwise, educating the children who have no other choice but public education only gets tougher.

The troubles in Seattle's schools are hardly the worst in the nation. Other cities — Los Angeles, Detroit — face education crises that are at once more severe and potentially more intractable. But the predicaments unfolding here

closely resemble those in many other mid-size urban school systems, from Denver to Baltimore, that also are contending with dramatically changing student and family demographics.

A growing number of Seattle students come from disadvantaged homes. More than 40 percent, the most ever, qualify for free or reduced-price lunches because of their family's income. Many more students also speak only limited English. In the last decade, the number of Seattle students who need bilingual training has nearly tripled to 14 percent, an increase higher than in many other urban school districts.

Other chronic classroom problems here — mediocre academic achievement, money shortages, student violence — have shattered the faith that many parents once had in the city's school system. But there have been a few recent signs that schools are stabilizing and that more middle-class parents are giving them another chance.

Sustaining that trend would be a rare feat in urban education — one that could serve as an important example to other school districts.

"Seattle could offer strong lessons," said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, which represents the nation's largest

urban districts. "It's a good microcosm for many of the challenges in urban schools."

In their fight to keep the middle class, some urban educators have scaled down their expectations. The best they hope for now is to keep those parents for the few years their children are in elementary grades, when threats of violence are minor and worries about college are distant. Accepting that point of demarcation, however, means losing legions of talented students and motivated parents. And often they travel just a few blocks from the public school they abandoned to a private or Catholic school. In Chicago, for example, one-fourth of the highest-achieving students leave the public system before high school. School leaders there are turning to Catholic officials for advice on improving academic standards and attracting more parents.

"There's a direct relationship between the exodus and academic excellence," said Paul Vallas, the new chief executive officer of Chicago's schools. "People accuse me of trying to replicate what parochial schools do — guilty as charged. We have to create stronger academic models for students, or parents will just continue to leave."

Seattle, like many other urban systems, has serious academic problems: Student test scores are low compared with national averages. In reading and math, the scores of eighth-graders rank just below the midpoint nationally and have been flat for the past few years. Also, the scores of minority students in those subjects still lag well behind whites. The student dropout rate is about 15 percent, comparable to the national average for urban schools. Most classes are crowded with about 30 students per teacher.

About half of Seattle's high school seniors take the Scholastic Assessment Test, the nation's primary college entrance exam, and their scores on both the math and verbal portion of it hover right at the national average. More than 60 percent of seniors here say they plan to attend either two- or four-year colleges.

Although there have been a few hints of progress — some test scores, including the SAT, have inched upward — the list of academic crises has scared off many parents.

To improve student performance, the school system is rushing to revamp curricula, improve teaching and hold

principals accountable to specific, individualized goals.

Next fall, for example, every Seattle student in third, fifth, eighth and 11th grade will be required for the first time to take a new exam in core subjects such as language and math in order to get promoted. Teachers are being retrained to emphasize writing more in all of their classes and to integrate reading into every subject. The school system has opened an office to identify and assist potential dropouts.

It also is giving each of Seattle's 97 schools a distinct set of criteria on which they will be judged. Some schools have to reduce the incidents of violence or raise student attendance to specific levels. Others are being evaluated on how well they improve student scores in a particular subject, or on how deeply they involve parents.

The city cannot afford to lose many more of them.

The middle-class exodus and the rising number of poor students here are creating new burdens at a time when cash is scarce and many voters are reluctant to support spending increases. Seattle faces the same quandary as many other cities: It is trying to squeeze more tax money for education out of the same parents and property owners who have given up on public schools and no longer have a direct stake in their success.

In some cities, that task is hopeless. In others, it is getting ever more difficult. In Los Angeles, where more than 400 public schools are at least 40 years old, it took city officials two elections to persuade enough voters to support a \$2.4 billion bond measure to repair school buildings. The measure finally passed last month.

Twenty years ago, Seattle had nearly 60,000 students in its public schools. Today, it has about 47,000 students, even though the birth rate in the city over that time rose steadily. The enrollment decline is hardly a mystery: White families left. In 1977, Seattle's schools were 66 percent white. Today, the figure is 41 percent.

But the exodus is hardly just a matter of race anymore. As the black middle class has grown nationally, many of those families also are examining the predicaments of urban school systems and starting to send their children elsewhere, too.

"The fight to keep the middle class is over in many cities," said Alex Molnar, an education professor at the University

of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "So many people are so cynical now about urban public schools. It's such a difficult mind-set to change."

Seattle has handed that huge task to Stanford, its new superintendent. He is no ordinary choice: A retired Army general who spent 30 years in the military, helped command troop logistics in the Persian Gulf War, then had a stint managing the government of Fulton County, Ga. Stanford, 58, had never worked in public education. But cities nationwide — including Washington, where retired Gen. Julius W. Becton Jr. is running the public schools — are turning to unconventional leaders for help.

Stanford took charge only 18 months ago, and his agenda is still taking shape. It is hardly certain yet whether it will revitalize Seattle's schools and offer guidance for how other urban districts can improve, or fail just as many others have.

But his bold ideas and intense style — he lifts weights and rebuilds car engines in his spare time — already has made public education a dominant issue in the city again. Critics fault him at times for trying to do too much, too fast. Stanford takes that as a compliment. "We've wasted enough time not educating children," he says.

He has appointed new principals at dozens of schools. He also has proposed ending the city's race-based student busing policy, which Seattle voluntarily began 24 years ago. Stanford contends that it has created hassles for many parents, and led others to leave the school system, without improving minority achievement.

He is giving principals more power, urging schools to adopt uniforms and shifting more money to classes that have the most disadvantaged students. He converted what had been one of the city's most troubled middle schools into a magnet school for the arts and science, with many new faculty members. Now it has a waiting list of students.

A few times each week, Stanford also sets off alone in the car he rebuilt from scratch and makes surprise tours through schools. During a visit to a Seattle middle school not long ago, he leaned over so many times to pick up litter strewn in the halls that the principal, who was guiding him to classes, pleaded with him to stop.

"Please, John, we have people who can do that," he said faintly.

Later, Stanford saw problems that are

77. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

May 5, 1997

Teachers Turn Against The NEA

By Mona Charen Copyright Creators Syndicate, Inc.

Nobody knows better than your local teachers' union how to play upon your sympathies. As educators, they are for children, right? And to oppose them is to be anti-child, isn't it?

Well, the National Education Association and other teachers unions spent more than \$50 million in the 1996 election cycle to convince us of that. Their arguments, as Sol Stern summarizes in his excellent article in the spring issue of the *City Journal*, tend to go like this: To attract good people in a competitive market, we must drive up teacher salaries, reduce class sizes and provide better working conditions.

This argument, or variants of it, has held sway for the past several decades. As Stern points out, between 1965 and 1990, average annual per-pupil spending in the United States increased from \$2,402 to \$5,582 in inflation-adjusted dollars. Student/teacher ratios also declined from 24.1 to 17.3. The percentage of teachers with post-graduate degrees increased from 23.2 to 52.6, and average teacher salaries increased by 20 percent.

Now, that is what even the most die-hard liberal would have to label a "commitment" to education.

And what were the results in terms of student performance? Well, during that same period, SAT scores declined by about 10 percent, dropout rates in inner-city schools accelerated and American students fell behind those of other industrialized nations on standardized tests.

Teachers unions alone cannot take all of the responsibility for America's

declining schools, but it is safe to say that they have made a significant contribution.

In the first place, teachers unions have done what all unions attempt to do - protect their members' jobs at all costs. Private-sector unions seek to do the same but are constrained by the marketplace. If worker productivity declines too much, the company will lose market share and, eventually, the workers will lose their jobs.

But in the public sphere, there is no market discipline. Accordingly, teachers and other public unions have been able to negotiate cushy agreements with cities and counties. One of the things they've managed to enshrine in law practically everywhere is ironclad teacher tenure. It is almost impossible to fire an incompetent teacher.

One frank New York City principal told Stern that an effort to fire a truly "dysfunctional" teacher in his high school had already taken more than 100 hours (out of school) over two years in grievance sessions, arbitration and meetings at the Board of Education. Though each of the principal's negative evaluations of the teacher had been upheld on appeal, it was still going to take at least another year before the teacher might face a disciplinary hearing.

The unions have also used their enormous resources and political clout to block education reform, as advocates of school choice in several states have found to their dismay.

Americans remain devoted to the public schools because they believe in a

system for Americanizing every student in the land. Vouchers are often feared for their divisive potential - one school for black nationalists, another for vegetarians. So, it is ironic that the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, is fully in thrall to the multicultural agenda.

The NEA supports "the movement toward self-determination by American Indians-Alaska Natives" and recommends "the infusion of Afrocentric curricula into the curriculum." The NEA opposes efforts to make English the official language, favors gay and lesbian rights, and supports a single-payer health-care system.

The NEA is not only far to the left of the American electorate, it is also to the left of most of its own members. Teachers in 20 states have founded alternative unions, including the Association of American Educators, and have taken advantage of the federal law requiring that members who request it be refunded the amount of their dues that were spent on activities other than collective bargaining. The alternative unions typically charge much lower dues and provide benefits like liability insurance.

The Alexis de Toqueville Institution of Arlington, Va., has published a pamphlet titled "What Teachers Don't Know About the NEA." If you would like to read it yourself, call the institute at (703) 351-4969. If more teachers did know the truth about the NEA, its grip on America's schools might loosen considerably. ■

78. Minneapolis Star Tribune

May 5, 1997

Commentary: We're willing to work to make schools better

By Bill Green

The Minneapolis African-American community is outraged over graduation test scores. Only 9 percent of black

eighth-graders passed both reading and math tests. Over the last six years the school district received nearly \$500 million in federal, state and local funds

earmarked to improve student performance, Gary Sudduth of the Urban League points out. And for what? For a 9 percent passing rate? How has all that

money been spent? he asks. Who was responsible? "Show me the money!"

An accounting for those dollars tells the history of drastic transformation of the school district — and the community. Three years ago the district adopted a long-overdue focus on a single goal: student achievement. At that time our student population was undergoing a major transformation. We had to respond to massive change, not with piecemeal solutions, but with a complete overhaul — and we did.

We created a system of community and magnet schools. We had to make it easier for families and communities to reinvolve themselves in their children's education.

We reduced class sizes, to respond to the desire of the community, and to deal with rising enrollment (an average of 1,000 additional students a year for the last six years.) We hired 600 more teachers, bought books, equipment and portable classrooms.

We expanded Limited English Proficiency classes and tutoring. There are now 6,300 children in our schools who do not speak English as their first language — roughly 4,000 more than there were three years ago. If they were their own school district, they'd be the state's 28th largest. They speak 70 languages. Many are immigrants traumatized by war, famine and family disruption.

We established standards that identify what every student in every grade needs to know in every subject. Now we are training our teachers to meet these teaching standards.

We hired social workers to help students who struggle to keep up in school while dealing with poverty, violence and drugs in their families or communities. Family instability, which is often related to poverty, continues to rise. Many children get off the bus every

morning already in crisis.

Sudduth asks how we have used \$500 million in federal, state and local funds to improve the achievement of students of color. We invested it in these improvements, to strengthen the performance of all children in our district — two-thirds of whom now live in poverty, two-thirds of whom are of color. We also allocated funds to individual schools based on a formula weighted to give more resources to schools with more children in poverty.

(A word about the compensatory education funds we receive from the state: They are based on poverty rates. But because they are capped by state law, Minneapolis schools receive funds for only 67 percent of their poor children, while schools in districts with low levels of poverty receive funding for all of them.)

What were the results of our investments? Although the scores of eighth- and ninth-graders on the state Basic Standards tests were poor, we did show other improvements. Most significantly, students who stay continuously enrolled in our schools are showing more progress than they did three years ago. The longer students of all races stay in Minneapolis schools, the better they perform.

This finding suggests two things. First, our new investments are bearing fruit with continuously enrolled students. Second, the district must find ways to meet the needs of students who move frequently. Student turnover in the last six years has been around 50 percent. Approximately 10 percent of our students change schools every year — many of them several times, with disastrous effects on their ability to learn.

Last week we held a very productive meeting with Sudduth and other leaders of the African-American community. We identified specific ways to work together

to make the schools better places for our children to learn. The meeting dramatized for all of us that Minneapolis Public Schools need the community — the entire community — to play a role in educating our youth. After all, our children only spend 20 percent of their time in school.

We are now making plans for next year. They include ensuring that all students can read by third grade. We can help schools accomplish that goal by teaching all primary teachers to be teachers of reading, and by creating individualized learning plans for all K-3 students. We need to strengthen our instruction for students with limited English proficiency. We need to adopt the new research-based teaching methods. We need to improve the way we intervene in schools where students are not meeting goals. We invited Sudduth, and we invite other community members, to discuss these and other strategies with us as we develop next year's district improvement agenda.

The Minneapolis Public Schools are willing to say we need to change, willing to do things differently, willing to do things better. We need you to help us. We need parents to check daily homework, citizens to attend board meetings and join school leadership teams. We need the news media to promote summer school, businesses to make success in school a condition of employment, retired people to tutor students, corporations to support a reading crusade.

Now is the time to come together around the children in our public schools with a sense of urgency — and with a sense of hope and enthusiasm. Together we need to make support of the public education of our 47,000 Minneapolis public school children a top priority.

— Bill Green is chair of the Minneapolis School Board. ■

79. Chicago Tribune

05/04/97; Edition: CHICAGOLAND FINAL; C; Section: COMMENTARY; Page 23

FOR KIDS, LEARNING DOESN'T START IN SCHOOL

By Joan Beck.

Memo to Gen. Colin Powell, Volunteer-in-Chief:

You know better, I hope. You just misspoke, I am sure. But getting it right

is so important that the problem needs to be called explicitly and urgently to your attention.

There you were in Philadelphia last week at a three-ring, three-day

Presidents' Summit for America's Future, with four U. S. presidents, five wives of presidents, two possible presidents and Oprah Winfrey with a C-Span full of photo opportunities, pushing

said John Ralph, the NCES program director for data development.

For information on ordering the report, call the National Library of

Education at (800) 424-1616. Copies are expected to be available through the Government Printing Office at (202)

512-1800, and on the department's World Wide Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/NCES/> ■

Education Week

April 30, 1997

Teachers Need Nuts, Bolts of Reforms, Experts Say

By Lynn Olson

When researchers asked teachers in Memphis recently what they thought about some of the school reforms they were being asked to try out, the academic experts got an earful.

Teachers complained, in particular, about approaches that required them to rewrite the entire curriculum or create instructional materials themselves.

Said one frustrated teacher: "There is no model for me to make a prediction about. How can we put into practice a design that has not been developed, explained, or modeled for us?"

They can't, a growing number of experts have come to believe. Teachers, they say, need more than philosophy if they are to overhaul the way their schools work and the way they do their jobs.

"It is unfair and unrealistic to expect America's overburdened teachers to reinvent their roles and redesign their organizations without providing explicit and proven means of doing so," said John A. Nunnery, an associate research scientist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, who worked on the Memphis study.

Mr. Nunnery is one of many researchers who are beginning to question the usefulness of reforms that fail to provide teachers with the nuts and bolts. Reforms work best, they argue, when they come with explicit teaching techniques, curriculum materials, and instructional tools attached.

"Reform strategies that work are curriculum-based, have extensive and ongoing professional development that helps teachers deal with classroom instruction, and have clear goals that are well-matched to school goals," Mr. Nunnery said.

To improve student achievement markedly requires changing what happens in classrooms every day, said Samuel C. Stringfield, a principal research scientist with the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns

Hopkins.

"You basically have to replace what's going on and make it more difficult for teachers to go back to what they were doing before," he said. "There has to be specificity about what the teacher does on Tuesday morning, if you want to change what happens on Tuesday morning."

Implementation Varied

Mr. Stringfield was the lead researcher for the Special Strategies Studies, a Congressionally mandated effort that tried to determine which of 10 popular school reform strategies work best for poor children.

The study focused on 25 schools as models for their particular reform programs, ranging from the School Development Program, a whole-school strategy developed by Yale University psychiatrist James P. Comer, to tutoring programs designed by individual schools.

The study found a wide variation in how faithfully schools carried out reforms, with the greatest variety in quality coming among programs that provided guiding principles but expected teachers to fill in most of the details.

Those findings are echoed by the RAND Corp., the Santa Monica, Calif.-based research organization, in a study it is conducting of how schools are implementing the designs sponsored by New American Schools. NAS, a nonprofit group based in Arlington, Va., supports the dissemination of seven reform designs in communities across the country.

Seeing It Clearly

Susan Bodilly, the social scientist in charge of the RAND analysis, said schools have had the most difficulty carrying out designs that expect teachers to construct their own curriculum and instructional strategies.

"They need strong curriculum models, and they need people who can show them how to use those models, and who will

be available to do follow-up with them," she said.

"Some of it is 'seeing is believing,'" Ms. Bodilly added. "But some of it is that teachers need to see what they're supposed to be doing in very clear terms—and then they can take it, innovate with it, and be adaptive on their own."

A smaller study on the use of whole-school designs in Memphis, by researchers at Johns Hopkins and the University of Memphis, reached similar conclusions.

During the first few months the designs were in use there, the researchers found, the four that teachers viewed most positively also had the lowest percentage of teachers who complained that their training lacked explicit techniques or sample instructional materials.

Designs that required teachers to rewrite the curriculum and develop new pedagogy had by far the largest proportion of teachers who reported feeling overwhelmed.

'Focused Creativity'

Stanley Pogrow, an associate professor of educational administration at the University of Arizona, has accused the education policy and research community of lacking interest in finding "effective, focused tools" to improve schools.

Mr. Pogrow—the creator of HOTS, or Higher Order Thinking Skills, a supplemental curriculum for middle school students—has argued that too many reforms are based on small-scale experiments, a reaction to failed innovations of the past, and the philosophical leanings of their designers.

He contrasts such approaches with a handful of programs—including his own—that were extensively field-tested and that give teachers specific tools and techniques to use in the classroom.

"The problem with the 'teacher proof' curricula of the 1960s is that they were terrible," he said in a recent interview.

"But that doesn't negate the use of tools."

To illustrate the point, he compares teachers using such tools to actors reciting written dialogue: "The existence of a preset script does not deter human creativity. Rather, it allows for focused creativity."

Wanted and Needed

That message has not been lost on the American Federation of Teachers. In the past few years, union leaders have met with Mr. Pogrow, Robert E. Slavin, and E.D. Hirsch Jr. —all of whom have relatively well-structured reform programs to sell.

"We think they have specifics based on research, and our people have needed and wanted that," said Eugenia Kemble, a spokesperson for the union. "What teachers really don't want is to reinvent the wheel."

The union devoted the winter edition of its journal, *American Educator*, to schools that use the Core Knowledge approach developed by Mr. Hirsch, a professor of English at the University of Virginia who is best known for advancing the idea of "cultural literacy." Core Knowledge schools use a specific, sequenced curriculum.

'A Dynamic Environment'

One of the programs that have taken the heaviest hits for providing schools with only vague reform principles is the Coalition of Essential Schools, the high school reform network pioneered by Theodore R.Sizer.

Though the coalition has reported

some positive effects on student outcomes such as attendance and graduation rates, several studies have suggested that the amorphous nature of its guiding principles makes it difficult to carry out.

None of the five coalition high schools examined in the Special Strategies Studies, for example, had achieved more than partial implementation of its ideas.

Coalition officials have argued that schools and communities must be free to adapt its principles —such as making learning more personalized, teaching fewer subjects in more depth, and awarding diplomas based on demonstrated performance —to fit local needs.

They also say that teachers need to craft reforms in order to feel ownership of them.

The 5 Percent Solution

But researchers such as Mr. Slavin, an education professor at Johns Hopkins, question whether many schools have the capacity to create so much innovation from the ground up.

Mr. Slavin is the founder of Success For All, a relatively structured program for raising achievement in the elementary grades.

He argues that only a handful of schools —perhaps less than 5 percent of elementary or secondary schools in the entire country —have the capacity to translate reform guided by general principles into reality.

Kenneth G. Wilson, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist who wrote a 1994 book called *Redesigning Education*, compares the need to develop specific technologies for schools with recent advances made in science and technology.

"If you look at the Fortune 500 companies, in the 1980s they all developed their own software systems to support their companies," he said in an interview. "But now, they all buy it from outside."

"And the reason is that even the Fortune 500 companies couldn't afford the constant improvement that goes on with operating systems or with word-processing software," Wilson added.

But at least some experts suggest that schools need a larger vision to give meaning to the more structured, specific approaches.

"You need to have an underlying philosophy," said Michael Fullan, the dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Ontario in Canada. "But coupled with that you need to be much more specific about the nature of the work and about your own practices and be able to explain it to others."

"Schools don't have the luxury of poking around with some general guidelines," he said, given the increased pressures on them to improve. "They have to be a lot more articulate about what they're doing." ■

LOCAL

Newsday

05/01/97; Edition: NASSAU AND SUFFOLK; Section: VIEWPOINTS; Page A52

Jocelyn Elders Still Has a Prescription

By Sheryl McCarthy

JOCELYN ELDERS hasn't changed.

She stood onstage at New York University's Vanderbilt Hall the other night, and you recognized the Navy blue suit, those familiar eyeglasses and the fluffy brown hair. And, as always, the former surgeon general gave her audience a piece of her mind about what she thinks is wrong with this country.

"Our society is sick," Elders said. "It's been sick for a long time and it shouldn't be sick. Because we have the technology, the resources and the know-how."

Three years ago, she was fired from the Clinton administration because she had the habit of saying what she really thought about things, not just what was politically expedient. In a town full of people who do and say only what will advance their careers, she blew in like a fresh wind.

Now she's back in Arkansas practicing medicine and teaching at the University of Arkansas Medical School.

But she still beats the bushes, saying what others are afraid to say. "I loved being your surgeon general," she told a

crowd that was obviously on her side. "I did the very best job I knew how to do. If I had to do it all over again, I would do it exactly the same way."

As surgeon general, Elders called for frank sex education for young people in school, only to be accused of wanting to teach kids how to have sex. When she urged people to act responsibly in their decisions about sex and procreation, she was accused of encouraging abortion.

When she suggested that the government take a hard look at the way it was handling the drug problem,

children's suggestions.

"I heard child after child talk about being encouraged to read. Children need to be able to read and need to love to read. The responsibility falls on all members of society," she said.

She said reading needs to become

more ingrained into society and children need to see more examples of adults reading.

After the hourlong discussion, each child who participated was given a new book and a chance to get Schwartz's autograph.

The answers collected in the town hall meeting at SLU and the 49 others throughout the country were collected and compiled into a national report that was presented to the Clinton administration during RIF's Reading is Fun Week. ■

21. Orlando Sentinel

Tuesday, May 6, 1997

Officials find results easy to read: 10th-graders are writing better

By Linda Kleindienst and Catherine Hinman of The Sentinel Staff

TALLAHASSEE — Florida's 10th-graders are writing better.

Results of a standardized writing test released Monday show that 10th-graders throughout the state — including those in Central Florida — continue to outdo their predecessors.

"This year's results show significant improvement," Education Commissioner Frank Brogan said about Florida Writes!, a statewide writing assessment program started five years ago.

Statewide, writing scores for 10th-graders rose 9 percent from 3.3 to 3.6.

Test scores range from a low of 1 to a high of 6.

All 10th-grade scores of Central Florida students reflected the same upward trend as the state average, and some had even bigger percentage increases. In Orange County, for example, 10th-grade writing scores improved almost 13 percent from 3.1 to 3.5.

The results indicate the level of importance now placed on writing in every classroom at every grade, school district administrators say.

"The schools are just really focusing in on writing and making sure the students understand the components of good writing," said Nicki Junkins, director of student achievement and program accountability in Volusia County. "The students should not only write in English class, but in science class and history class... Writing is a life skill."

Administrators credit the test with Florida's progress in writing achievement.

"The teachers are continuing to adapt their instruction using these test scores," said Barry Farley, program specialist for testing in Lake County.

Two counties — Orange and Osceola — are showing improvement but still have scores that are below the state average at each grade level the test is given.

Joe Joyner, associate superintendent of secondary education for Orange County, said a number of new elective courses in language arts have been created to help struggling students but the county has more work to do.

"We want to strive to be at the state average and above," he said. "I'm happy with the five-year trends, but we still need to get much better."

The writing exam was given in January and February to 395,218 fourth-, eighth- and 10th-graders in the state.

The test measures how well fourth-graders explain and tell a story. Eighth- and 10th-graders are judged on their abilities to explain an issue and persuade a reader.

This year, fourth-graders were asked to explain why everyone should know how to read. Then they were asked to write a story about going back in time and traveling on a horse-pulled wagon.

The test for eighth-graders required students to explain one change that would make the United States a better place in which to live. They were then told to write an essay about convincing a friend not to drop out of school.

Tenth-graders were asked to explain which school year was their best. In their persuasive writing sample, they were to convince readers about whether high

school students should hold jobs during after-school hours.

Counties will be able to analyze their scores when they receive individual school results later this week. The year-to-year comparisons are often difficult because of the test's subjective nature. Sometimes questions are easier for students in one year than the last.

In 1996, for example, middle-schoolers were the star performers in the writing test. Last year, statewide scores for eighth-graders leapt from 3.1 to 3.5. This year, those state scores fell slightly to 3.4. In Orange County, Joyner said he was pleased to have maintained the same average eighth-grade score this year as last year.

Although the combined scores for eighth-graders dipped by one-tenth of a point this year over last, Brogan, the education commissioner, said fourth-graders did better than the year before.

All three grade levels have made significant improvements during the past five years. In a test like this one, testing officials say, the trend is the most important indicator of progress.

Eighth-graders, for example, who dipped from an average score of 3.5 last year to 3.4 this year, started out at 3.0 in 1993.

Also, out of the 395,218 students who took the test this winter, 30 percent scored a 4 or better — compared with 28 percent in 1996.

"That's a very good quality score," said Brogan, adding he hopes to see the day when a 4 is considered a minimum. ■

22. Associated Press

05-06 2:50a

What's on the school menu? Check the Web

By JENNIFER C. YATES
Associated Press Writer

ESSEX, Md. (AP) - With the support of the country's top corporations, President Clinton this year issued a challenge to communities to join in public-private partnerships to help educate children.

Maryland answered the call Monday.

Gov. Parris N. Glendening and state Education Secretary Nancy Grasmick signed Maryland up as the first state to answer Clinton's "Call to Action for American Education." The endorsement came as AT&T and the Family Education Co. announced a plan to customize Web sites for all schools in the state.

Under the program, students and parents will be able to go to their home computer to find out what's on the school lunch menu, get homework assignments and read minutes from the most recent school board meeting.

"The president wants to make

education the top priority as we move into the next century. Maryland will make education the priority," Glendening said.

The governor and Grasmick signed a pledge setting priorities for education in Maryland, including establishing standards in core subjects, modernizing school buildings and connecting all schools to the Internet by the year 2000.

As part of the partnership with AT&T and the Family Education Company, schools' Web pages will be connected to the Family Education Network, where students, parents and anyone else in the community can find out when Christmas vacation begins or when the next parent-teacher meeting is. The companies expect to have up to one third of Maryland schools on-line by the fall.

In a second partnership announced Monday, the Social Security Administration will donate thousands of 5,000 to 6,000 used computers to public

schools across the state.

"The Internet is fast becoming a way to bring people together in support of their children, their schools and their communities," said U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley, who was at Eastern Technical High School in Essex for the announcement.

The Family Education Network will also be a one-stop shop for education information, said Johnathan Carson, co-founder and president of the Family Education Co. Once at the Web site, computer users will have access to individual schools, education experts and thousands of pages of information on topics such as college, family learning and learning disabilities.

The company now has trial Internet sites for individual school districts in cities in California, Massachusetts and Washington. Maryland will be the first state to participate in the program. ■

One-on-one reading tutoring program attracting growing interest in Maryland

BALTIMORE (AP) - A reading tutorial program in which teachers spend 30 minutes a day with individual students is getting rave reviews from educators and attracting interest from a growing number of Maryland school districts.

"Reading Recovery" was designed for low-performing first graders who typically have had little preschool experience or who have not been read to much at home.

Prince George's County was the first Maryland school district to start using the program four years ago, and has since been joined by Anne Arundel and Frederick counties. Howard County is set to start a program next fall, and Montgomery County has preliminary plans to begin in some schools at the same time.

"It's phenomenal," said Janet Richardson, who trains teachers in Reading Recovery methods. "Children who could barely write their names are becoming independent readers."

The teaching time, however, is the greatest drawback. Thirty minutes per student is an unusually long commitment of teacher time. Having teachers spend half the day instructing just four students is beyond what's feasible in most elementary schools.

But many educators say the results are worth it. More than eight of 10 low-achieving first graders end the program reading at or above grade level, research shows.

"Look at the costs for students who don't end up learning to read early on. Retention, special education, dropouts, even jail. In the long run, it seems to be a much cheaper way to go," said Joseph Czarnecki, coordinator of reading and language arts for Anne Arundel County.

Usually, elementary students learn to read in groups of 10 or more students, often getting little or no individual attention.

But Reading Recovery, which was developed 20 years ago by New Zealand educator Marie Clay, gives students daily one-on-one tutoring during which teachers diagnose and correct the reasons students can't read. Most tutorials last for about 12 weeks or until the student brings his or her reading skills up to grade level.

The program relies on a mix of visual clues and on using letter sounds to decipher words.

Supporters of the program say more than 80 percent of low-achieving first graders emerge from the tutorials as independent readers and stay that way.

"The evidence is quite strong in support of the program because of the extensive training given to teachers and the time teachers spend tutoring students one-on-one," said Robert E. Slavin of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.

'Our national mission'

Education chief urges volunteer testing, tutors

By Doug Cumming
STAFF WRITER A3

Echoing President Clinton's "call to action" on education two weeks ago, the U.S. secretary of education Tuesday invoked war-time images of school improvement as "our great patriotic cause, our national mission."

Richard Riley, at the Carter Center in Atlanta for his fourth annual State of American Education address, said the time is right to focus attention on teaching the nation's youth, because "our country is prosperous and at peace." And, he noted, Democrats and Republicans seem at relative peace for the first time in years on the issue of education.

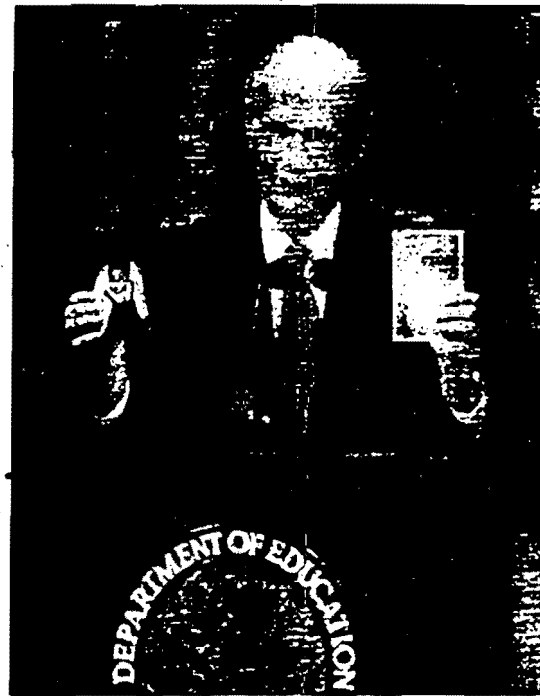
Shying away from anything that hints of a national curriculum or federal standards, Riley pushed Clinton's plan to ask states to voluntarily accept national fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math tests to show whether students have mastered challenging material.

Based on sample testing from recent years, such tests, paid for by Washington the first year, probably would show that Georgia's students are doing worse today than the current standardized tests lead people to believe.

Gov. Zell Miller, who was praised again by Riley for the HOPE scholarship and prekindergarten programs, said he would support such national tests in Georgia.

Riley, pushing Clinton's crusade for a million volunteer reading tutors, announced that four religious denominations in Atlanta and Georgia will be marshaling volunteers for this effort. The 500 African Methodist Episcopal churches in Georgia, for example, would be used for after-school tutoring by church members.

Riley's 50-minute speech, introduced by former President Jimmy Carter, touted all 10 points of Clinton's 1997 education agenda, including \$5 bil-



W.A. BRIDGES JR. / Staff

Showing off photos of his latest grandchildren, Education Secretary Richard Riley opens his State of American Education address Tuesday at the Carter Center.

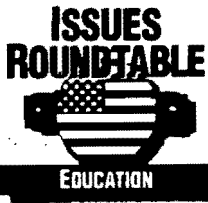
lion in federal school-construction funds. He mentioned the fast-growing Gwinnett County school system as needing such aid.

Riley also won applause by talking tough on bad schools and burned-out teachers. Close down or reconstitute those schools, he said, and give those teachers "a fair chance to leave the profession."

He criticized tax vouchers for private schools, which are being proposed in Congress and in the Georgia Legislature, but praised charter schools and other innovations within the public system.

Riley will visit Atlanta's Inman Middle School today.

Education: Voters' No. 1 issue in '96



Four years ago the economy worried voters. This year, education tops their issues list. Bob Dole says the federal government interferes too much and schools are weighed down by federal rules. He wants to give parents and students vouchers that allow even low-income families to send children to private schools. President Clinton opposes vouchers, saying they would take money from public schools. He wants to hook public schools to the Internet, reduce regulations and create experimental 'charter schools.' USA TODAY invited four experts to talk about education.

Derek McGinty: Today we will talk about education. Both Bob Dole and President Clinton have lined up squarely on the side of more education. Now, this is a little more interesting than it might sound at first because while both men give lip service to the idea that public education is at itself a state and local function, they have their own visions as to what the federal government ought to do about it. Governor Alexander?

Lamar Alexander: Well, I think there actually are two very clear visions of what schools should look like in the new century.

Sen. Dole's view and the Republican view is of independent neighborhood schools, both public and private, that are safe and drug-free, that have high academic standards, and among which parents may choose the best one for their children — helped by vouchers to pay part of their tuition costs. These schools might be open all day, all year. They might be at the place where people work. They might be publicly managed or privately managed. There could be many different kinds of schools. That's one vision.

President Clinton and the teachers unions by and large want schools with a new name, but schools that look a lot like what we have today. Our version, Sen. Dole and the Republicans would say, to achieve our vision of the schools we want to put more control with the school boards, the communities, the classroom teachers, the moms and the dads. The other vision means more government control, more union control, more court regulation, more federal programs.

McGinty: Secretary Smith, I can imagine you don't see it that way.

Marshall "Mike" Smith: What Sen. Dole says is that public schools aren't doing their job at all when in fact they are. When in fact (students' test) scores are going up,

and more people are graduating now than have ever graduated before. When our population is far more diverse than it's been, the schools are meeting the challenge.

That doesn't mean schools have met all the challenges, and there's a great deal more to do. And that's exactly what President Clinton is trying to do. He's trying to put money into the basics. He realizes that high school was enough for the '60s, but you've got to have at least two years of college for the '90s, and he's proposed the Hope scholarship, which covers that.

McGinty: The big thing you didn't address there, Mr. Secretary, is that Gov. Alexander talks about the issue of who is in control of these schools.

Smith: I don't think that we're talking about a more centralized system at all. Both the president and (Education) Secretary (Richard) Riley were governors of small states. They recognize and honor the 10th Amendment, which gives the responsibility for schooling to the states and to locals.

McGinty: Let me get Bob Chase in.

Bob Chase: There are a lot of similarities between what Gov. Alexander spoke to and what the National Education Association (NEA) says. We believe in accountability, in safe and drug-free schools. We believe in high standards for schools and teachers.

The difference comes in as to whether or not these will be public or private schools. When we look at the proposals that have come forth from Sen. Dole, there have been two main thrusts. One is the closing of the Department of Education, and the second one has been vouchers. Both of those we disagree with. I also need to say that this concept or idea of union control is really a fallacy. We do not control schools. We don't hire, fire. We don't establish curriculum.

McGinty: Jerry Jasinowski, as someone who is not a partisan in this debate, at least not so far, what's your take on the kind of product that the schools are producing?

Jerry Jasinowski: You know, you asked the question in exactly the right way: what kind of product? It's important to ask the customers, what kind of product are we getting? Are we getting the quality, the standards, the performance? If you look at the new economy, where there's so much emphasis on quality, so much emphasis on improving technology and on additional knowledge, it's clear to us that we have skill shortages in the private sector that the (public) school system is not delivering.

More...

Now, that's not to say there aren't very good public and private schools. But the problem is too often the product, the quality, is not satisfactory to the customer. So I can appreciate both points of view, but I'm inclined to side with Gov. Alexander in the sense of saying this: That you've got to encourage more competition in the educational system, grades K through 12. And one of the advantages of the voucher system, whether you go all the way with it or not, is that you begin to force more competition.

McGinty: Bob Chase, are you scared of a little competition?

Chase: I'm not scared of competition. But when you talk about competition, you're talking about winners and losers. When we're talking about children's education, we can't afford any losers.

Jasinowski: I think we are talking about winners and losers to some extent. But Bob, there can be far more winners if there's enough competition there to raise the standards of quality.

McGinty: I am curious about this voucher program. Mr. Chase, is there nothing good about the idea of allowing parents a little

more say in where their kid is going, giving them a chance to take advantage of some of these private education programs?

Chase: We think that it's very, very appropriate for parents to have a say in what public school their child goes to at public expense. If they choose to go to private school, then it should be a private expense.

We also must take into consideration the number of private schools there are in this country. There are very few. Around 10% of the students in this country go to private schools. There is not enough private school opportunity even if you agreed with vouchers to enable anyone who wanted to have a choice to go to private school to go.

Jasinowski: I am disappointed Bob has been so unequivocal about trying some experimentation with vouchers that would allow some private school choice. It's not as if people are suggesting that we turn the system over, the public school system over, and privatize it entirely. But if I listen to you carefully, Bob, you said you weren't for it at all.

Chase: That's right.

Jasinowski: It seems to me that's a very extreme position.

Chase: No, I'm for all the other kinds of experimentation we have talked about.

McGinty: How can you rule out vouchers?

Chase: You're taking funds away from public schools. You're not serving most students. It's only a few students. It's not ruling it out. What it's saying is let's take those funds, let's get the kind of cooperative relationship between all segments of community to spend that time, that effort, and to improving public education, so all students will have a good opportunity within the public school sector.

Smith: I think those are all good reasons, but there is another fundamental reason.



These are public funds and in my view, in the administration's view, they should go to public schools. You can have a lot of choice within the public school system.

Smith: 'Public funds ... should go to public schools.'

going to be very blunt about this, even though it's not always pleasant, is Mr. Smith and Mr. Chase are really providing cover for the union's agenda here.

Chase: That's just not true.

Alexander: Their charter schools are not independent of union rules.

Chase: That's just not true.

McGinty: Governor, I'm trying to get a handle. When you say union rules, do you mean the pay that the teachers get, the lunch hour? How late they have to work?

Alexander: I'll be glad to answer. Number one, let's pay some teachers more than others. When I was the governor of Tennessee, I fought with the NEA for a year and a half to put in the only program in the country that pays some teachers more than others.

Better teachers get more money; that's number one. A second program would be that the school might be open until 6:00 in the evening, all day, all year. A third might be that classes be 90 minutes long instead of 60.

Another might be that some classes would have 50 students and some classes might have six. Those involve union rules.

McGinty: I'm glad you laid that out. Makes sense. Secretary Smith, what do you say to that?

Smith: Well, I would agree with most of those provisions that Gov. Alexander just set out. I think there are two issues, though, that are very important.

I think it is really up to the chartering board, in this case the school board. It is really up to them to make the decisions about the nature of the rules that should be applied.

Now, in many cases, you're getting the kinds of relaxation of rules that you have just talked about. In fact, in many schools around the country — all you have to do is go to New York City and you can find dozens of schools with the exact characteristics you just talked about: wide-ranging class sizes depending on needs; they are open all day, late at night, etc.; that kind of flexibility.

Chase: I'd be glad to spend a few days with the governor and show him schools throughout this country where in fact there are classes that are 90 minutes long or two hours long. A school in Ohio that I happened to visit that is worked by unionized teachers and has two full sessions that go until 10 at night. I'll be glad to show you places all over this country.

The merit pay issue, let me tell you, it's been tried in this country four times in the last century, and each time it has failed. It's failed for a whole host of reasons. And I guess I would have to ask the governor to show me how the proposal that he put into place in Tennessee improved the educational opportunities of the young people in Tennessee. What kinds of test results can he show me that it did?

Alexander: Well, Bob, reading and math scores in Tennessee over the last 10 years are up some, but I would never say that one change like that was responsible for all the difference — nor would I say I'm very satisfied with the progress we've made.

The program has now been in for 10 years and I think it's created a more professional and independent teaching corps, which I think is an essential part of a good school system of the future.

More...

McGinty: What about eliminating the skills gap Jerry was talking about?

Smith: It seems to me there are two major solutions to it. One is you do what Jerry and Gov. Alexander have been talking about doing within the schools themselves: that is, raise the standards. That's what we've been trying to do.

Finally, what we're doing is we're making it possible for students to go on to college throughout their lifetime. As you know, President Clinton is proposing a tax deduction — a \$10,000 deduction — that each of us could take if we make under \$80,000, to take a course in a community college, to go to a graduate school, to do whatever it is that's going to improve our lot, to improve our opportunity to go on and get a better job.

McGinty: Gov. Alexander, you used to be secretary of Education. Is it your take that the department needs to go completely?

Alexander: That's exactly right. You see, I don't think we'll ever have the kind of independent public neighborhood schools with high standards among which parents can choose unless we put the responsibility squarely on the school board, the classroom teachers.

McGinty: Secretary Smith? Your job's on the line here.

Smith: Right. Well, I think we've defended the department in many different places, and I think the American public believes that there needs to be a department.

We too believe that we shouldn't be meddling in the affairs of the people at the state and local level, but we also believe that there is a national responsibility to help improve the quality of education throughout this country for all children.

Jasinowski: I hope the debate about the Education Department will lead to an analysis after the election about what is the federal role in education and how we can focus it so it makes more sense.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1996 • USA TODAY

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A question of control: 2 opinions

There were sharp differences of opinion between former Tennessee governor and Education secretary Lamar Alexander and National Education Association President Bob Chase over several issues. An exchange between the two, with moderator Derek McGinty in between.

Alexander: We would like to have dramatic changes in the schools and much less control from Washington and from Congress. Let me give some specific examples.

Sen. Dole's proposal is based on the idea that nobody's child should be made to go to a bad school. So he says "why don't we give \$6 billion of federal and state money to the moms and dads of 4 million middle- and low-income children?" Let them choose among the schools, public and private, they think best meet the needs of that child. ...

We prefer to give the money to the moms and dads rather than spend it on bureaucratic programs. That's a major difference

between our vision of helping middle- and low-income kids have a choice of the best schools and what the Democratic Party and the teachers union's vision is.

Chase: It's unfortunate, governor, that you characterize schools as bureaucratic and use those kinds of words that have an emotional impact. It's really unfortunate.

As you know, the teachers union is involved right now in six different states to create charter schools that will in fact give more opportunity for teachers, parents, the community and so on, to be involved in determining what schools offer.

McGinty: Why not take federal money in the way Gov. Alexander is proposing?

Chase: Two points. First, you're talking about state matching grants and we have no idea what kind of state monies would be available. But even if it were available, you

are in fact taking money away from public schools. There's no question about that. That's what's happened in the past. That's what will happen in the future. It's bad public policy. Second, you're talking about a small number of students being able to move. For example, the proposal that was recommended in the Senate this year...

Alexander: We're talking about 4 million children as an experiment.

Chase: Excuse me, sir. Excuse me, sir. The proposal that was recommended here in the District of Columbia this year was that 2,000 children be allowed to go and take money to go to private school. What about the other children? What about the other tens of thousands of children? What programs were being proposed to assist and improve the other schools in the District of Columbia? What it was doing was abandoning public schools. That's unfortunate.

More...

NO. 1 ISSUE, continued... (4)

Panelists bring different views to the table

The Issues Roundtable this week was a 60-minute session about education. Participants all have worked on the issue:

► **Lamar Alexander**, 56, was secretary of Education in the Bush administration and is a former governor of Tennessee. He was a candidate for president in the Republican primaries this year, ending his campaign in the early spring. He is a strong advocate of government-funded vouchers that would help low-income families pay for tuition at private schools. He participated by phone from San Antonio.

► **Bob Chase**, 53, is president of the National Education Association (NEA). A middle school social studies teacher from Danbury, Conn., he was elected president this year. Chase and the NEA strongly oppose vouchers — arguing they would drain tax money from public schools.

► **Jerry Jasinowski**, 57, is president of the National Association



At the table: From left, moderator Derek McGinty with participants Jerry Jasinowski, Bob Chase and Marshall 'Mike' Smith.

of Manufacturers, which represents large and small manufacturers. He is an economist and former assistant secretary at the Commerce Department in the Carter administration. Jasinowski is co-author of *Making it in America: Proven Paths to Success from 50 Top Companies*. He supports experiments such as vouchers that spur competition among schools.

► **Marshall "Mike" Smith**, 59, is acting deputy secretary at the Department of Education. He serves as the department's chief operating officer and principal adviser to Secretary Richard Riley on education pol-

icy. Smith and the Clinton administration oppose vouchers but favor allowing parents choice among public schools.

► **Derek McGinty**, 37, hosts a radio show for National Public Radio. He moderated the session.

Highlights on this page have been edited for clarity and length.

Schools must be 'relevant' to a new economy

Economist and manufacturing expert Jerry Jasinowski talks about what businesses see as the most important issues involving education:

What I would like to introduce into the discussion — and it bears on what's going on in kindergarten through 12th grade — is the relationship of all of this to the workplace itself and what people are going to do in the jobs in the real world.

There is the customer as a parent. But businesses are also customers and they need skilled workers to compete in today's economy. But too much of our school system is still detached and not closely enough related to the extraordinary changes occurring in the global economy.

That has implications for how we organize schools, K through 12. But there's a separate question of improving the linkages between the workplace and education. And there I think that schools individually, businesses, the educational

unions, the Education Department, all have to be working at trying to make what we're teaching in schools relevant for this new economy. . . .

The point that I would make, Derek, is that the skill gap now between what we're turning out as students and what is needed in the modern workplace is huge. It is first of all at the level of things like history, arithmetic and reading, and problem solving, but it goes far beyond that. We are now talking about needing kids to go beyond just high school and to have community college and university educations.

Consider this: The average autoworker today makes over \$30,000 a year, and many (workers) in Silicon Valley make far more than that. They are not using brawn to get the jobs done. They are running computers and information-processing equipment and a whole host of things, which in the schools, private or public, they don't know about. We need workers who know those things.



Jasinowski: Improve 'linkages' between workplace, education

A model for reform in education

It is built around small classes, a lot of one-on-one and five basic questions

By BILL GRAVES

of The Oregonian staff

In 1985, Deborah W. Meier, a former kindergarten teacher, helped create a small public high school called Central Park East Secondary School in New York City's East Harlem.

The school, organized in three divisions, serves about 450 inner-city students in grades seven through 12. It has become a national model among education reformers of how change can dramatically improve learning.

Though it cost no more than other public schools, Central Park East is organized so each teacher sees no more than 40 students a day and stays with those students during their two years in a division. The school focuses on essentials of learning; almost all resources go into teachers and students.

The curriculum is organized around five questions that foster what Meier calls habits of mind. They are as follows: How do we know what we know? Who's speaking? What causes what? How might things have been different? Who cares? Students become powerful thinkers by asking these questions of every subject they study, Meier says.

The school day is simple: two hours a day of humanities (art,

history, literature and social studies), two hours of math and science and one hour with an adviser. Students are judged on portfolios and exhibitions of work, and they spend hundreds of hours in public service and internships. Oregon's school reform act is setting similar expectations for children.

Students must meet Central Park East's high standards to graduate. About 90 percent do. And about 90 percent of those go on to college and do well there.

Nationwide, about 238 schools using Central Park East as a model belong to a group called the Coalition of Essential Schools. Evergreen High in Vancouver, Wash., and Portland's small Riverdale School District belong, and Portland School District's Metropolitan Learning Center is considering membership.

Meier, who recently published a book called "The Power of Their Ideas," was in the Portland area last week to visit schools and address a conference sponsored by the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and Portland State University. She has left Central Park East to be a Senior Fellow of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. She will open a new elementary school in Boston this fall.



Following are portions of an interview with Deborah W. Meier during her recent visit.

Q. What led you to organize Central Park East the way you did?

A. You can't teach people successfully whom you don't know well. . . . I mean knowing them as a learner, knowing where their passions are, knowing what their strengths are, how they go about tackling a complicated question. . . . So the school had to be very small, and the program in the school had to be very simple.

Q. What are the advantages of keeping schools small?

A. Everybody can know each other well. You can surround kids with a whole community of grownups. . . . It allows people to focus on what is important. . . . Also, smallness makes it hard for people to hide things from each other.

Q. What do you think of the academic standards that are being set in Oregon and other states?

A. We have missed the point of what standards mean. We have turned them into standardized curriculums and standardized assessments. . . . Each school should set its own standards, say publicly what those standards are and tell how they will be judged with a variety of forms of public review. . . . There isn't a single definition of what a student should know and know how to do in history. There just isn't.

Q. How should Oregon educators respond to the squeeze on their budgets in recent years resulting from property tax limits?

A. They should be awfully indignant at the idea that great education doesn't cost money. . . . I don't know a rich person who lives by that. Private school in New York City costs three times as much as public schools. . . . But, on the other hand, that I don't have enough is no excuse to avoid using what I have as powerfully and effectively as I possibly can.

Q. How were you able to get your class sizes so small without spending more?

A. We don't teach music. We don't have in my opinion a strong foreign language program. We made a list of what colleges count. They never ask us in college whether the kid is musically literate. I think that is disgusting. We don't really care whether the children speak a second language. . . . In suburban schools in New York City and New York state, they can have both (small classes and music and foreign language.) . . . It is not quite fair.

Trying to Turn Around Their Schools, Americans Focus on Role of Parents

By JUNE KRONHOLZ

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Americans look at the failure of their schools and see in them the failure of the family. They think about what will set the schools right, and they don't hesitate to give an answer: parents.

Parents, straightening out their unruly children. Parents, holding the family together. Parents, setting a good example.

Americans want better teachers, smaller classes and smarter school computers, and they say academic standards could use toughening. But what has led to the failure of public schools, and what will turn them around, they say in the Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, is getting parents involved with schools, and holding them responsible for their children.

Their "intuitions are correct," says Fred Morrison, a psychologist at Loyola University in Chicago. Kids who start school not knowing the things parents are supposed to teach—following instructions, the alphabet, colors and numbers—never catch up. Their future is "set in stone," he says. Their school performance "stays the same because whatever their parents are doing stays the same."

The irony is that parents insist they are involved with their children's schools—that it's everyone else who isn't. Most of those surveyed said they read aloud to their children, help them with homework, attend parent-teacher conferences.

But ask the kids, and there's a different perception. When the National Commission on Children talked a few years ago to youngsters ages 10 to 13, 72% said they wished they could talk to their parents more about homework. And when the Department of Education asked fourth-graders about their television habits, 43% said they watched four or more hours a day. That doesn't leave a lot of time for reading with Dad.

"Almost no one is able to concede failure" on the main responsibilities of parenthood, says pollster Thomas Riehle of Peter Hart Research.

They know it's important, and it's just unthinkable to admit they may have been too busy to help with algebra.

Researchers say one of the surest predictors of a child's achievement is how involved parents are. Three factors that parents can control—student absenteeism, books in the home and TV time—explain 90% of the difference in eighth-grade math scores across the country, research published by the Department of Education shows.

Americans surveyed in the Wall Street Journal poll were firm: Parents, not schools, should be responsible for discipline, for teaching manners and sportsmanship, for after-school care, for making sure their children do their homework.

Yet today, schools are asked to assume more and more parental duties: drug and AIDS education, values lessons, before- and after-school services, nutrition and now, conflict resolution.

Eleven Detroit schools that took part in a pilot

conflict-resolution program found it saved them \$100,000 in teacher salaries, administrative time and suspension rooms. Truancy and violence were reduced. But it also supplanted one academic class period a week.

Parents are also clear about what the schools should—and shouldn't—do. They aren't much interested in experimental teaching methods. Or a longer school day—even though most mothers of school-age children hold outside jobs. Nor do they think more homework is the answer.

Marshall Smith, the deputy secretary of education, doubts that Americans really distrust school innovation. They know the workplace is changing, and that education has to change too, he says, adding: "I think they're open to changes, as long as those changes are focused on the basics."

What Americans told pollsters is that to improve schools, start with the teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future calls teacher training and performance "a national shame." One quarter of high-school teachers aren't trained in the subjects they're teaching. A third of all high-school math teachers don't have even a minor in mathematics. Only 18 states require their new teachers to take a technology course.

With public-school enrollments rising and one-fifth of all teachers approaching retirement age, two million new teachers must be hired over the next decade, the Department of Education estimates. And yet, the indifference of students and administrators alike often leads to demoral-

ization: Almost a third of each new crop of teachers leave within three years.

Poll respondents are strongly behind annual competency tests for teachers, and they want them to teach basic skills using tried-and-true teaching methods. Far fewer support paying rewards to the best teachers, indicating indifference to the president's plan to single out 100,000 of the best and certify them as master teachers.

Where human teachers leave off, Americans want computers to take over, a sentiment they share with the president. The Clinton administration wants to spend \$2 billion over the next five years connecting public schools to the Internet.

There's no evidence that the Internet will improve schools. "Right now, we're taking it on faith," says Penelope Engel of Educational Testing Service. But 71% of those surveyed share that faith, viewing better technology as a plus.

Nearly as many, 70%, advocate smaller classes. In the biggest test of the notion that kids learn better in small classes, California is offering its schools an extra \$650 per student—\$97 million—to cut class size to 20 in the lowest grades. The idea has proved so popular that the governor recently added \$95 million for portable schoolrooms to house the new classes.

But while computers and smaller classes are big-ticket items in a school-district budget—and while 70% of Americans say they'd be willing to pay higher taxes for education—they also say money isn't the problem, or the solution. It's the family, they say. And they say it resoundingly.

A leading authority on education offers some practical suggestions for everyone who is concerned about how well our children are learning.

10 Things You Can Do To Make Our Schools Better

BY VARTAN GREGORIAN

Vartan Gregorian, who becomes president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in June, is one of the leading authorities on education in America today. He also is a living example of what education can do. Gregorian came to the U.S. 40 years ago as an Armenian immigrant, earned a Ph.D. from Stanford University in California and went on to a distinguished career as a college professor and administrator. He spent eight years as president of the New York Public Library, starting in 1981, and since 1989 has been president of Brown University in Providence, R.I. Gregorian also has served as adviser to the Annenberg Challenge, one of the most innovative programs to address the needs of America's schoolchildren.

WHEN I WAS invited by PARADE to write an article about improving our public educational system, I thought for a moment of titling it "In Praise of Public School Teachers." This is because, while our schools badly need reform and upgrading, the respon-

sibility for their problems cannot simply be dumped on our teachers, who by and large are a dedicated, hardworking and undervalued corps of professionals.

In fact, even as we acknowledge that our public schools need help, we ought to recognize their achievements and successes along with their shortcomings. They face problems that reflect those of our entire society, and they have to contend with burdens and restrictions that don't affect most of the private and parochial schools with which they are sometimes unfairly compared. Nevertheless, our public schools should be better—much better—than they are, and improving them is a job for everyone from parents to college presidents.

What are some of the things that you, as a concerned individual, can do right now to better the schools and the educational process in your own area? Here are 10 practical steps you can take in this direction.

1. Visit your schools. It's not enough for parents to go once or twice a year for PTA meetings. I'd like to see schools make it easier for parents to visit regularly, even holding weekend and evening open houses for parents who can't get there during their working hours.

2. Involve the grandparents. This is especially important in cases of single parents.

3. Make the public school a magnet for the community. Hold social and community functions in school buildings.

4. Volunteer to help in your school. When rules permit, parents or others should offer to take over nonteaching jobs, such as hall monitors or cafeteria supervisors. Teachers should be treated as professionals whose job is teaching.

5. Read to your children. Nothing is more important than this. Start your children with nursery rhymes and go on from there.

6. Give every schoolchild a library card. When I was president of the New York Public Library, we arranged with Mayor Ed Koch to give one million library cards to the city's schoolchildren. We found that the majority of them were put to good use. Every town library should issue a card to each child in the community.

7. Organize and attend shows that the children put on. They encourage children to work together and also serve as a bond with the community.

More...

8. Recognize that too much television has a terrible effect. Consider making television a chore rather than an amusement. Let children watch four hours a day if they want to, but require them to write papers on what they see. My objection to television is not only the time it wastes but also the passivity it brings. It produces isolation, not communication. If children had to critique what they watched, it might even serve to reduce the violence on the screen.

9. Let our children go. Schools should take children on expeditions, and not just to a museum or zoo. Business and civic leaders could invite whole classes to visit workplaces for a day—banks, hospitals, universities, factories, police stations, places of worship, government offices.

10. Restore the arts as a major element in education. We've made a tremendous mistake in diminishing or eliminating art, music and dance as fluff or frills. The arts, like sports, play a vital role in bringing students together and promoting teamwork. Athletics provide stability and a way to release energy. The arts allow children to develop creativity and imagination. The Duke Ellington School in Washington, D.C., has one of the lowest dropout rates anywhere. Ninety percent of the participants in The Boys Choir of Harlem go to college following high school. It's almost impossible to overemphasize the significance of the creative arts in education. Make sure that your own school district recognizes this.

An important challenge faced by today's schools that didn't exist in the past is the changed expectations of the public. Today, it is assumed that almost everybody has to go to college. A university education is regarded more as a necessity than as something extraordinary. And we glamorize the past. The 1930s and '40s had high dropout rates too, but fewer people then were deeply concerned about that. American society has changed and raised its expectations of what an educational system should provide.

How can we meet those expectations? The core of the teaching process is, and always will be, the teacher. I believe that to become a teacher is to join a noble profession. Teachers have an awesome responsibility: We entrust our sons and daughters to teachers to help prepare

them for life. Yet too often teachers are held in low esteem. We pay them less than we pay plumbers and mechanics, and we complain about them more readily. As I have suggested, teachers today

are not just teachers—they're called upon to be supervisors, custodians, counselors, hall and cafeteria monitors, law and order officers. Despite all this, thousands and thousands of men and women are public school teachers because they are dedicated people.

Are teachers' unions part of the solution? Yes. They are interested in the economic aspects of teaching, and they should be. But they have a moral, professional and historical obligation to help rescue and reform our public schools. The burnout rate among teachers in our nation's public schools is very high. Unions should join in an effort to allow teachers to be retrained, re-educated and immersed in the very disciplines in which they need renewal so they can further the horizons of education and knowledge.

There is a great need for strengthening the schools of education in our colleges and universities, so we can raise our standards of teaching. This is something in which college presidents can play a part, for too often the school of education is not regarded as highly as the rest of the university. The arts and science faculties in many universities have no close affinity with the schools of education. Schools of education often stress the technique rather than the substance of the subject matter. We really need to rethink our teacher-education and teacher-retraining programs.

I don't agree with those who feel that school vouchers are a panacea for our educational ills. Vouchers may solve individual problems, but not society's. Choice is meaningless for the millions of Americans who live in rural areas with few schools. Choice between bad schools is not useful to city dwellers.

Parents who want their children to attend private schools learn quickly that parents don't choose private schools—private schools choose children. I have a drastic solution for a school that is bad: Shut it down. We don't allow a bad hospital to function; why should we allow a bad school?

A national consensus exists on the need for school reform. According to a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll taken just before the election, four in 10 voters said education should be one of

the next President's two top priorities. It ranked evenly with keeping the economy healthy as the No. 1 concern. During the last decade, there has been a nationwide movement for school reform, and there is a major national effort now being made to bring this about—the Annenberg Challenge, which deserves to be widely recognized.

The Annenberg Challenge is a metaphor for change in our schools. It was launched in 1993 with a five-year, \$500 million grant by Walter Annenberg, our former ambassador to Great Britain. Since it was a 2-for-1 matching challenge, the total amount will reach \$1.5 billion, the largest such grant ever made to American public education. The Annenberg Challenge is not for budget relief; it is for enhancement. A full 90 percent must go to teaching and to the classroom, with only 10 percent to be spent on overhead.

The Annenberg Challenge operates on a variety of fronts. It includes grants to some of the nation's largest urban school systems, a rural schools initia-

tive and an arts initiative, as well as aid to such organizations as the New American Schools Development Corporation, the Education Commission of the States and the Annenberg Institute of School Reform to carry forward their respective programs.

Wherever it has been put in operation, the Annenberg Challenge has required a cooperative effort by the school boards, labor leaders and legislators, as well as corporate and foundation executives. In New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit and other localities where the Challenge now functions, I actually have witnessed the

MAKE SCHOOLS BETTER, continued... (3)

encouraging phenomenon of such groups working together to produce results. As of now, some 4500 schools throughout the country are benefiting from the program. The Annenberg Challenge money itself will not reform the entire system, but it has created laboratories for change.

So I am optimistic about the possibilities of improving our schools. As a

college president, especially, I know how important it is that we do so, for I do not want to see our universities turn into remedial schools. The superstructure cannot stand without a healthy infrastructure. When the *Titanic* sinks, you cannot say, "I was traveling first class." We all are our future's guardians, and our future is our children. ■

For More Information

To learn more about available educational resources, write to:

"Education Reform,"

Annenberg Institute for School Reform,

Brown University, Box 1985,

Providence, R.I. 02912.

Or telephone the U.S. Department of Education's Information Resource Center at 1-800-872-5327.

California schools key to Gore

He says state must lead national drive for improvements

BY MARY ANNE OSTROM **3B**
Mercury News Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO — Vice President Al Gore on Thursday urged Californians to take the lead in a nationwide effort to boost the quality of public education, pleading that "politics must stop at the schoolhouse door."

Never mind that only a smattering of Republicans even bothered to show up for Gore's address to a joint session of the Legislature, which one GOP assemblyman slammed as "a veneer of propriety to a day crammed with partisan political fundraising."

Later Thursday, Gore met with Silicon Valley business leaders to hear their plans for improving education — a smorgasbord featuring offers of Internet services for schools, proposals for national education standards and demands for more science and math teachers.

It was Democratic Senate leader Bill Lockyer who originally asked Gore to speak before the Legislature. Once the date was set, the California Democratic Party moved up a planned \$1,000-a-head fundraiser to coincide with his visit.

Gore, who last week admitted he solicited campaign contributions from his White House office, took note of that timing in responding to critics of his speech: "The principal purpose (of the Sacramento trip) was to speak to the joint session."

In the speech, Gore urged parents to demand more control over how education dollars are spent.

"Student performance bears very little relationship to the absolute amount of dollars spent. But it bears a close relationship to how the money is spent," said Gore, who complained of "excessive overhead and bloated bureaucracy and unnecessary layers of middle management."

"It is time," he said, "for parents and others to start asking pointed questions: How much of the money in their schools is going for teachers and books?"

In what he touted as a blueprint for reorganizing school financing, Gore released a list of nine questions that the Clinton administration is encouraging parents to ask of school administrators.

The questions suggest parents should seek more school choice, charter schools, lower administrative costs and rigorous academic standards. These are ideas Republicans have been championing for years.

A spokeswoman for the California Teachers Association said her organization supports expanding charter schools only if research proves they are effective.

And the Association of California School Administrators called bloated school bureaucracies a "myth," noting that California is the only state in the nation with a law establishing how many administrators a district can employ.

Gore also suggested that California will be the leader in moving schools into the information age. "Silicon Valley is the place that made it cheap to be a geek," he said.

At the meeting with Silicon Valley venture capitalists and high-tech executives, Gore heard from two companies that plan to offer free e-mail addresses to the state's schoolchildren and from Netscape's Marc Andreessen, who spoke of a plan to create a new Internet platform designed for students, teachers and parents.

Using the platform he dubbed Dashboard, Andreessen said students could, for example, take advanced placement classes not offered by their schools over the Internet. And educators at different schools could easily share their best teaching techniques.

"This is not yak yak," said venture capitalist John Doerr, who organized the meeting. "We're getting things done."

photo caption

California Assembly Speaker Cruz Bustamante, D-Fresno, left, presents a ceramic bulldog to Vice President Al Gore representing Gore's "tenacity"

in dealing with issues such as education reform. Hayward Democrat Bill Lockyer, president pro tem of the state Senate, looks on.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gore: State's schools decline

*Says bureaucracies
are 'bloated,' costly*

By Dana White
STAFF WRITER

SACRAMENTO — Vice President Al Gore said yesterday that "bloated" school bureaucracies have allowed the once-envied California educational system to tumble into a disreputable state where some teachers must buy their own chalk.

"Let us acknowledge that in California and in the rest of our nation our schools are simply not what they should be," the Democratic vice president told a joint session of the Legislature.

His remarks follow a recent report showing that San Diego County public schools spend only 58 cents of every tax dollar on the classroom, but school administrators quickly dismissed the idea of inflated administration as "myth."

Republicans criticized Gore's visit as purely political because the vice president, a central figure in the growing fund-raising controversy vexing the Clinton administration, attended a Democratic fund raiser later in the day.

And they wasted no time placing the burden for cash-strapped classrooms on Congress and on President Clinton, saying both have failed to give California its fair share of federal tax dollars.

Gore told the legislators that education "funding has shrunk . . . test scores have dropped. Standards have eroded. Red tape has accumulated.

"And as a direct result, children have suffered," he said.

"We should be spending public funds on teachers and children," he continued, "not on extended overhead and bloated bureaucracy and unnecessary layers of middle management."

This month a study commissioned by the Girard Foundation of La Jolla found that just over half of the \$2.1 billion spent last year to run San Diego schools paid for teachers, books and other direct

new California Computer Refurbishing Fund that handles the \$10 million in state money.

Carroll estimated that the money will eventually put 24,500 computers in schools, four times more than could be purchased new for the same amount of money. He said the average cost of reconditioning a computer — \$400 — is about a quarter of the price of a new model.

Furthermore, said Carroll, nearly all of the first 4,200 reconditioned computers contained fast processing chips, 77 percent Pentiums and 10 percent 486s. He said only 13 percent contained the slower 386 chips.

Carroll said the failure rate of donated computers is less than 5 percent. The donated computers have a one-year guarantee that replaces machines if they fail.

In Silicon Valley, Detwiler said he insisted that 20 percent of the match from the Intel donation be made in other areas of the state. He said Intel's donation of parts and other equipment more than offset the state funds spent on computers that went into Silicon Valley schools.

Detwiler said the Legislative Analyst's Office proposal to have schools pay for reconditioned computers would add new administrative costs and raise a barrier that would prevent schools from accepting the machines.

Mincing no words, Detwiler complained to the board about what he considers to be unjustified criticism.

"Hardly a day goes by without my getting calls that the state Department of Education is bad-mouthing the program," he said.

Mary Kirlin, Eastin's representative on the board, said Carroll's remarks sound as if the "concerns are being addressed with this new round, which is just great."

Detwiler said the software publishers association headquartered in Washington opposes his program because they fear that recycled computers will encourage the use of recycled software.

"This operation in Washington is willing to deprive California students because of what they fear in the future," said Detwiler.

Laura Mastrangelo, a lobbyist for the software publishers, said the group does not oppose the donation of computers, but believes that local school districts should decide how to spend the money.

"Their position is if they are going to be using state and federal funds, give it to the locals and let them use it as they choose," said Mastrangelo.

Hearings begin on restructuring of Cleveland school system

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - A House committee has begun hearings on proposals for restructuring the way Cleveland's public school district is to be governed.

The 72,000-pupil school system has been under state control for two years on the orders of a federal judge dissatisfied with mismanagement, high dropout rates and a rising debt.

Supporters of two proposals considered at Tuesday's opening hearing agree on the need for change in the Cleveland system, but differ on who should appoint the school board and on whether there should be a public vote before or after the system is changed.

A plan by two Republicans, Reps. Mike Wise of Mayfield and William Batchelder of Medina, would allow Cleveland Mayor Michael R. White to appoint a nine-member school board from a slate of candidates offered by a panel. A team of professional administrators would be hired to run the district. After four years, the public would vote on whether it likes the change.

Rep. C.J. Prentiss, D-Cleveland, has proposed a plan that would allow the mayor, the Cuyahoga County commissioners, and the Cleveland City Council to each appoint a board member. In addition, one person would be elected from five areas of the city representing neighborhood groups. There would also be one person elected from a parent-teacher organization, and one nonvoting student member.

"We need a shared-ownership form of governance," Prentiss said. "We've got a school system in crisis. We need everyone sitting at the table."

Prentiss and others have questioned whether the four-year delay under the Wise-Batchelder plan is constitutional. They cite sections of the state constitution and state law that give voters the right of a referendum to determine how many board members a school district will have, and how it should be organized.

Batchelder stressed that the proposal does not take away any voting rights of Cleveland residents.

"Our goal is to empower a board and have that board appointed by an elected official," he said.

During questioning Tuesday by members of the Select Committee on School Governance, Wise acknowledged that there would need to be minor revisions of his proposal. One change will be to allow residents of other cities who attend the Cleveland schools to participate in the new structure. The pending proposal would only allow Cleveland residents to be considered for the board.

The same flaw was discovered in Prentiss' bill.

More hearings were scheduled today on the two proposals, as well as others offered by Reps. Dan Brady and Vermel Whalen, both Cleveland Democrats.

Members of Cleveland Children First, a group of parents and community activists supporting the Wise-Batchelder bill, planned to testify before the committee today.

BUSINESS WEEK, Dec. 9, 1996

EDUCATION: MORE REFORM PLEASE

By Richard Melcher and Paul Magnusson

Nineteen ninety-six will go down as the year education finally achieved mass-market political appeal. Republicans, warning of wholesale failure in the nation's schools, called for radical restructuring; President Clinton and other Democrats, their assessment of the crisis no less dire, pushed somewhat more moderate solutions. The message resonated with an electorate that consistently ranked education as a top-of-mind issue.

Was the rhetoric justified? Are schools that bad? By most measures, yes. A study of students in 41 countries, released on Nov. 20, found that American eighth-graders ranked smack in the middle of the international pack--between Romania and Bulgaria--in math and science. The U.S. is laughably behind schedule in meeting the standards for graduation rates and science and math prowess specified in 1990 by the Education Dept.'s Goals 2000 task force. Business executives complain less about global rivals or the price of raw materials than about the millions they are spending on remedial education for new hires--if they can find them.

Amid the distressing news, though, there is hope: Public schools are getting better. The nation was jolted awake 13 years ago by the Education Dept.'s report, *A Nation at Risk*, which warned that schools were producing a vast legion of mediocre students. Since then, education reform has produced signs of slow but consistent progress. National test scores, especially in math and science, are up over the past decade; more students are taking advanced placement courses; and the gap between graduation rates of blacks and whites has narrowed dramatically.

The achievements are modest--but remarkable, say many educators and analysts, given schools' resources and the deteriorating qualifications of many students entering the system. More than 40% of kids attending urban schools come from families in poverty, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Single-parent families, teen pregnancies, and higher drug use all have created barriers to learning. City teachers typically wrestle with larger classes, more immigrants with limited English proficiency, and fewer resources than their suburban counterparts. Yet two-thirds of the city kids graduate on time.

more...

More Reform, Please, continued...

Loosen the system. Tighten standards and hold teachers and administrators accountable. But allow local districts--or, better, individual schools--flexibility in figuring out how to meet the goals. Charter schools --performance-based and legally freed of many regulations--are sprouting across the nation. According to Joseph Nathan of the University of Minnesota's Center for School Change, early results show higher parental satisfaction and student achievement. Consider, too, the striking results of a back-to-basics mathematics effort aimed at minority students in Prince George's County, Md. The combination of newly trained teachers, afterschool tutors, and a Saturday "Math Academy" for additional help has helped lift enrollment of minority ninth-graders in advanced algebra from 53% to 90% since 1991.

Early intervention and parental involvement. Carnegie Corp. researchers point to a direct link between reaching kids early and later achievement. So expand preschool and full-day kindergarten to the half of all students not now attending. Also, seek imaginative ways to tune in parents as coaches. At the Richard Yzaguirre School for Success, a charter school in Houston's barrio, parents are required to sign a contract to volunteer in the school, binding them to their kids' education.

Expand teacher training. A growing number of teachers lack either certification or sufficient time for training and planning. By some estimates, U.S. schools spend less than 2% of their budgets on training. Spend more, and teachers can overcome some of the problems kids bring to the classroom. "We don't have to change the social and economic background of every parent in the country to have better schools," says Michigan State University Professor William H. Schmidt.

Put it all together, and the results can be striking. A few years ago, the 1,200-student Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in northeast Los Angeles was being shunned by students and teachers. Now, there's a waiting list to get in, attendance is near perfect, and test scores are up sharply.

What happened? Vaughn became a charter school, giving "chief education officer" Yvonne Chan control over budget, curriculum, even length of the school year. Chan redirected funds from administrative overhead to teacher training and computers. She started a career-training center for parents. Parents, teachers, and students alike quickly responded.

It's a powerful lesson. Set high standards but allow flexibility in determining solutions. Invest in teachers. Involve parents. Hold everyone, including students, accountable. "We've got the opportunity to get out of the box," Chan says. "The handcuffs are off." (available online)

...But Showing Signs of Life

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The Sixth Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education

BY GERALD W. BRACEY

Mr. Bracey takes his annual close look at the myths about and the hard data describing the current performance of American public schools.

LAST YEAR, the Fifth Bracey Report awarded *Family Circle* a "Least Credible Article" prize for its school-bashing op-ed piece by Rush Limbaugh. Unfortunately, Al Franken's exposé, *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*, was not yet available to use as a trophy. An "Intensity of Loathing" award went to *Business Week* for its "Will Schools Ever Get Better?" cover and accompanying article. This year, we have all new prize winners and more of them.

The Envelope, Please

The "Most Unethical Advertisement" award is won jointly by the National Alliance of Business, the National Governors' Association, the Business Roundtable, the American Federation of Teachers, and, most incredibly, the U.S. Department of Education. These august groups earned this accolade for sponsoring a full-page ad in the *New York Times* on Sunday, January 31, that lamented the state of education in this nation. On the left half of the page, 15 countries were listed by number. The United States was number 14, and the words "United States" were boldly circled. On the right, the text read, "If this



were a ranking in Olympic hockey, we would be outraged." (This ad led me to coin the phrase "Worst Possible Spin Syndrome," a label that, unfortunately, must often be applied to reports about educational data.)

The number 14 is the rank of American 13-year-olds in math in the Second International Assessment of Educational Progress. Within the squishy boundaries of propaganda, the ad is accurate. American 13-year-olds did rank 14th among 15 nations. But ranks tell you nothing about performance. In the 200-meter dash at the Atlanta Olympics, Michael Marsh of Houston ranked third in his semifinal heat and finished *dead last* in the finals, although his

performance in the two races differed by a mere .22 of a second. A 7% improvement in his performance in the finals would have given Michael Marsh — not Michael Johnson — first place and a world record.

If one looks at the performances — the actual scores on the math test — one finds that the American 13-year-olds averaged 55% correct. And the international average of all nations? Fifty-eight percent. For a nation obsessed with being number one, as America is, this sort of average performance is not acceptable. But it presents a very different picture from the gloomy one suggested by the ranks. Students from Korea, the top-ranked country, got 73% correct. This 18% difference between American and Korean students was the biggest gap between the two nations in the study; the smallest difference was just 3%. As we shall see below, this is not much of a reward for the price Korean youngsters pay to be number one.

The "Longest-Running Goofy Speech" award goes to Louis Gerstner, Jr., the CEO of IBM. Gerstner began his "the-system-is-broken" speech several years ago and continued it through the March summit with the nation's governors and business leaders. Along the way, he has maintained that, if we don't shape up our schools, we will soon be a Third World economy. Of course, this is ludicrous. In 1994 and 1995, the World Economic Forum declared the U.S. economy the most competitive in the world. In 1996 the Forum changed its formula, and the U.S. *fell* all the way to fourth place among 25 industrialized nations. The International Institute for Management re-

GERALD W. BRACEY is a research psychologist and writer living in the Washington, D.C., area.

tained a formula similar to the old one used by the Forum, and the U.S. maintained its top ranking.

The "Most Unethical Means of Publicizing a 'Study'" award is shared by Paul Peterson and Jiang Tao Du of Harvard and Jay Greene of the University of Houston. The basis for this award is discussed in the section on choice.

The "Most Ludicrous Fact Pulled from Thin Air" award goes to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). This should be the speaker's second award in a row in this category; only an oversight kept me from handing out the prize last year for his comment, recorded in the Fifth Bracey Report, "Three out of four of our students are not learning to read." This year, addressing the National PTA Legislative Congress, Gingrich declared that "55% to 60% of our seniors don't know enough about our culture to sustain it." One wonders what Gingrich might have said a century ago, when the high school graduation rate was 3%.

The 'Failed Miracle'

This heading is the title of a 1996 feature article about Japan.¹ A heretofore adoring U.S. press is at long last showing some appropriate journalistic skepticism about Asian schools. Asian students still score higher on tests than American students, no question. But it is clear now from the *Time* article and from other essays that appeared over the past year that American students can beat the socks off their Asian counterparts if we are willing to take only four simple steps.

1. Convince American parents that, when their children come home from public school, they should feed them and then ship them off to a private school or tutor until 10 p.m.; most youngsters, both elementary and secondary, will need to go all day on Sunday, too.

2. Convince American parents to spend 20% to 30% of their income on these after-school schools.

3. Convince American parents that, when their children turn 4, they should take them on their knees and tell them, "You are big boys and girls now, so you need to start practicing for college entrance examinations."

4. Convince American students that, if they sleep four hours a night, they will get into college, but if they sleep five hours a



night, they won't; they must study instead.

For more on these four steps, read on. My Research column in the May 1996 *Kappan* contained a strong indictment of Japanese high schools that drew extensively on Paul George's monograph, *The Japanese Secondary School: A Closer Look*.² That volume chronicles a year George spent in a Japanese school, observing a group of students he had earlier observed for a year when they were seventh-graders. He reports that he and his son, who attended the school both years, took to exchanging glances to register their surprise and shock at what they were seeing.

And what they were seeing was a group of students so obsessed with the upcoming college entrance examinations that they could not pay attention and often acted in uncivil ways — when they were not actually sleeping in class. The students were sleep-deprived from keeping late hours at *jukus* (cram schools). Since their *juku* instructors tell them not to pay attention to what their regular teachers say, they use the school day to catch up on their Z's.

Here's what *Time* had to say about the Japanese high school:

The most forceful indication that parents are disappointed in the public schools is the intense competition to get into private ones, from kindergarten through high school. The key to success

is the *juku*, an evening and weekend cram school where children from the age of four prepare for entrance examinations. Nearly 60% of junior high school students take *juku* classes, which cost their parents as much as \$400 a month. They usually study material at least a year ahead of the public school curriculum and endure rigorous schedules that leave no time for the playground.

Akiko Tsutsui, a 10-year-old fifth-grader, gets out of school at 3:30 p.m. and goes straight home to have a snack and do her homework. Three afternoons a week she leaves again at 4:45 for a *juku* session that lasts from 5:10 to 10:00. For almost the entire class, Akiko will listen to tutors explain how to answer test questions and will practice taking them herself. She sometimes attends all day on Sunday for extra help. The classes give Akiko a better chance of getting into a local private junior high school.

Competition in Japan has always been fierce, and the schools have always demanded conformity and intense rote learning. But the system has become an extreme, decadent version of what it used to be. And not only do children suffer on account of the schools and cram courses, but they may not be learning what they ought to.

Have a nice childhood, Akiko.

Recall that Susan Goya, an American who has taught in Japanese schools for 20 years, made similar comments in the October 1993 issue of the *Kappan*. She cited the *juku* as critical to the success of Japanese students because "the quality of education in Japanese public schools is poor."³

The observations of George and Goya were further corroborated by Susan Elbert, an American teaching English in a rural part of Japan. Even there, Elbert reports, 70% of the students attend *juku* and often do not get to sleep before 1 a.m. "I have talked to many teachers and students," Elbert reports, "and they all seem convinced that a student cannot get into a prestigious high school or college with only the knowledge acquired in public school. I was shocked. The exams are really difficult. You need special training and attention to pass them, and you can't get it at a public school."⁴

Elbert also confirms the comments of earlier authors that *ijime* — bullying — occurs when the object of the bullying is perceived as somehow "different." Elbert rejects the word *ijime*, though, saying that

kurushime — torturing — is more accurate. "Looking deeper than the mentally damaging words, threats, demands, and beatings, these troubled students seem victims of what Japanese society institutionalizes as ideal, namely 'sameness.' Two tormentors said of their classmate after he hanged himself last fall, 'We have no regrets. He was weak, and his character was poor.'"

Elbert's and George's depictions of the uptight, hyperanxious Japanese students make Mary Jordan's comments on Korean youngsters even more telling and poignant. Jordan, a former education reporter for the *Washington Post*, now with that newspaper's foreign service in Tokyo, writes that "today's South Korean students make the famously intense Japanese students look easygoing." Her article on the topic opens with the following story:

It was 11 p.m. and fourth-grader Moon Sae Bom was solving math problems and double-checking her social studies maps. For the past two hours, her mother had sat beside her, checking her answers, making sure the 10-year-old didn't fall asleep.

This is a regular night at the Moon house and in millions of homes throughout South Korea, where mothers spend hours a day studying with their elementary and secondary school children, even plying them with caffeine to keep them awake and learning. There is a huge new industry of private tutors for women who need to relearn algebra, world history, and other subjects so they can help with homework.

Across this academically hyper-achieving country, students file out of public and private high schools not at 3 p.m. but at 10 p.m. Every weeknight they study in their classrooms from dinner until late into the evening.

Sae Bom's mother not only helps check answers, she spends more than \$30,000 a year for private tutors. Many Koreans, says Jordan, now spend 20 to 30 percent of their income this way.

Korean youths appear to be even more sleep-deprived than the Japanese. Jordan cites one girl who says she studies 80 hours a week. She studies in school until 11 p.m., puts in another hour at home, and then is back on the subway to school at 7:40 the next morning. Nothing in Jordan's description suggests that this girl is an exception.

As in Japan, Korean schools pay no attention to individuality or creativity. All

teachers teach the same thing, and the students memorize it. About the girl who studies 80 hours a week, Jordan writes, "She has heard about American high school students hanging out at malls, joining activities like the track team or the yearbook, and even dating, but there is little time here for that."

Anyone still want to be number one in the world in math and science? Are American parents willing to eliminate their children's childhood for a few measly percentage points on a math test and even less on a science test? Sae Bom, incidentally, is lucky. Her mother plans to send her to high school in Britain, where, she has been told, children can be children.

Given that they spend all this time grinding the books, one can wonder why the Korean students are not even farther ahead of our TV-drenched couch potatoes, who, according to a recent report, seldom spend even an hour a day on homework on school nights (and forget weekends).⁶ In the Second International Assessment of Educational Progress, where U.S. students ranked 14th of 15 nations in mathematics and 13th in science, Korean 13-year-olds finished first, but they got only 18% more items correct in mathematics and only 11% more correct in science. A paltry 18% for all that effort and angst and a childhood forgone? I don't think so. Although Jordan contends that Korean children start worrying about college when they are 4, at age 9 they got exactly one more item right (out of 58) than American 9-year-olds. If we were to control statistically for hours of study, no doubt we'd find American youngsters ahead of the Korean children.

Choice, Charters, and Contracts: New Wines or Trojan Horses?

The grand proposals for choice have diminished since the biggest advocates at the national level — George Bush and Lamar Alexander — left office. But choice as a political movement is far from dead. It has just moved from the White House to the statehouse and "morphed" into newer forms: contracting for services, private vouchers, and, especially, charter schools. Not much is happening with the first two, but the charter school scene is hot. If Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney were around today, they'd probably shout, "Hey, gang, let's start a charter school!" Education's one consistency is its proneness to fads,

but seldom have so many waxed so enthusiastic over an innovation yet to prove its effectiveness.

The arguments for charter schools were presented in the September *Kappan*. Here, I want to note some reservations. It is clear that many people are interested not in the impact of the first round of charter schools but in what are being called "second-order effects." For some, these second-order effects are the improvement of public education. For others, they are the destruction of public education.

Charter schools promise to improve the performance of students, and, in exchange for that promise, they are granted a "charter" relieving them of some regulations and entanglements with central office bureaucracy. Although they are supposed to supply data in order to obtain renewals of their charters, it is not clear that they will. The need to show that they are improving education will certainly provide an incentive to cook the books, as happened with the failed privatization experiment of the 1970s, performance contracting. At the moment, though, "Charter schools' ability to improve student achievement has yet to be proven."

Whether charter schools will ever improve achievement is a question that might never be answered. Even right-wing enthusiasts Chester Finn, Jr., Louann Bierlein, and Bruno Manno lamented that they "have yet to see a single state with a thoughtful and well-formed plan for evaluating its charter school program. Perhaps this is not surprising given the sorry condition of most state standards-assessment-accountability-evaluation systems generally. The problem, however, is apt to be particularly acute for charter schools, where the whole point is to deliver better results in return for greater freedom."⁷

Jeffrey Henig, perhaps the most disinterested and careful observer on the choice front, agrees with Finn and his colleagues. He finds that charter schools "show few signs of interest in systematic empirical research that is ultimately needed if we are going to be able to separate bold claim from proven performance. Premature claims of success, reliance on anecdotal and unreliable evidence are still the rule of the day."⁸

Alex Molnar predicts that such unreliable anecdotes will prevail.

Charter schools will fail, fraud will be uncovered, and tax dollars will be wasted. But just as certainly, glowing

testimony will be paid to the dedication and sacrifice of the selfless teachers and administrators at some "Chartermetoo" school who transformed the lives of their students and proved the success of charter school reform.

Free-market zealots will either claim vindication or argue that their revolutionary ideas need more time to work. Supporters of public education will call the experiment a costly failure and marvel at the willingness to spend large sums on unproven alternatives while cutting resources for the public system that serves most children. With an absence of any uniform standards, the war of educational anecdotes and misleading statistics will remain "subject to interpretation." And all the while, the desperation of America's poorest children and their families will grow.¹⁰

And these words were written before the disaster for children called "welfare reform" was passed.

Molnar observes that charter schools create a rather peculiar free-market setting. When the Edutrain charter school in California failed because of fiscal mismanagement, free-market fans cited it as a case of the market imposing its discipline. But in a true free-market setting, those punished are those who invested in the enterprise. Those punished by Edutrain's failure, though, were the children who attended the school and had their lives and education disrupted, along with the taxpayers of Los Angeles who funded the enterprise. "The charter school market feeds on the revenue provided by taxpayers even in failure. It is a market in which the financial risks are socialized, and the financial gains are privatized," says Molnar. "The struggle is not, at its root, between market-based reforms and the educational status quo. Rather it is a battle over whether the democratic ideal of the common good can survive the onslaught of a market mentality that threatens to turn every human relationship, inside and outside the classroom, into a commercial transaction" (p. 167).

For the moment, though, charter schools are thriving. As Henig says, "Legislators and citizens who balk at full-fledged choice proposals seem to find charter schools less threatening, perhaps because they retain a clear role for governmental oversight; proponents of more extensive choice proposals seem to find charters an acceptable step in the right direction."

Elsewhere on the choice front, the results continue to be mixed at best. The only project that has received something close to an adequate evaluation is Milwaukee's choice programs, wherein up to 1.5% of the city's children are eligible to receive vouchers to attend private schools. John Witte and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin have evaluated this program each year for five years, under contract from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. They conclude that, while the attrition rate from the program remains puzzlingly high, "the majority remain and applaud the program." Witte's comments scarcely constitute a ringing endorsement of the program:

Outcomes after five years of the Choice Program remain mixed. Achievement change scores have varied considerably in the first five years of the program. Choice students' reading scores increased the first year, fell substantially in the second year, and have remained approximately the same in the next three years. In math, choice students were essentially the same in the first two years, recorded a significant increase in the third year, and then significantly declined this last year.

Regression results, using a wide range of modeling approaches, including yearly models and a combined four-year model, generally indicated that choice and public school students were not much different. If there was a difference, Milwaukee Public Schools children did somewhat better in reading.¹¹

This is actually a remarkable outcome. The number of students participating in the choice program has never approached the legal limit and has never exceeded, on average, 70 students per school. Thus the private schools involved are not being overwhelmed by a flood of low-income students. One might think that such students are sufficiently few in number that they could receive more attention in the private schools than they might in their neighborhood schools and that their test scores would rise as a consequence. On the other hand, Peter Cookson, another researcher in the choice arena, concludes from his observations that private school teachers are less creative, more by-the-numbers teachers than public school teachers.¹²

In conversation, Witte again said that the public schools are doing a better job with their students than the choice schools,

but his reasoning presents a good-news/bad-news scenario. Initially, both choice and public schools serve similar clienteles. As one moves up the grade ladder, though, the public school student body is increasingly drawn from lower-income and minority families, groups that post lower test scores. That the public schools are able to maintain parity with the private schools, then, constitutes quite an accomplishment. That they are not able to hang on to their middle-class clients does not.

In connection with the Milwaukee choice program, I should note that a "study" purporting to show that the program is effective just happened to be released on the opening day of the Republican National Convention. The study, with Jay Greene of the University of Houston as lead author and ardent school choice advocate Paul Peterson as another author, was prepared for a conference on August 30. (Peterson brought to the Brookings Institution the research that produced John Chubb and Terry Moe's notorious book on school choice.)

Almost three weeks prior to the conference, the study was handed to the media. A press release was given to the Associated Press, and a short version, titled "School Choice Data Rescued from Bad Science," turned up on the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal* on August 14. The rhetoric and tone of this op-ed article reveal that the purpose of the "study" is not to learn what actually happened in the Milwaukee program, but simply to persuade those who might influence choice legislation that something positive came of it.

The study has been hyped by former Secretaries of Education William Bennett and Lamar Alexander and by noted educator Rush Limbaugh. Surely, this is a historic moment. It must be the first time that any of the three have accepted at face value the conclusions of a study conducted at Harvard. (They must have accepted it at face value, because — aside from the "Executive Summary" and the conclusions — it is virtually impossible to understand.) Limbaugh congratulated the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which he frequently targets, for actually funding something worthwhile. Although the manuscript cites that organization, the foundation has denied that it funded the research.

It is difficult to refute the study, because it is virtually impossible to determine what Greene and his colleagues did. In the in-

roduction, they refer to a "natural experiment" similar to medical studies wherein one group of people receives a treatment and a comparable group does not. However, during the course of the report, they refer to both analysis of covariance and regression analysis as ways of analyzing the data. In a "natural experiment," however, neither technique would be needed.

The principal claim is that the effects of choice show up only after three or four years of participation. This result is from a comparison of children in the program for that length of time with those who applied initially and were not selected. This comparison is problematic from the outset because the attrition rate of participants in the program is so high that very, very few of the children who started the program are still in it after four years (perhaps not such a great recommendation for the program itself). It is even more difficult to find the nonselected children, who might differ from the selected group on any number of variables. When Witte attempted to reconstruct the analysis, he discovered that of some 72 cells that would be needed, 23 contained no children at all, and another 20 contained three or fewer. How anything could be determined by such empty cells and small numbers is, well, a mystery.

An analysis by Witte indicates that, after four years, the two groups are not random samples either of those who joined the program or of those who applied and were turned down four years earlier. But no adjustment made in the Greene study for their differences.

Actually, in the end, Greene and his colleagues acknowledge that it is not choice that has produced the results — if, indeed, there are any results after the methodological flaws are factored out. They write, "The disruption of switching schools and adjusting to new routines and expectations may hinder improvement in test scores in the first year or two of being in a choice school. Education benefits accumulate and multiply with the passage of time." Certainly, one cannot take issue with this statement. On the other hand, this statement means that attributing the results to "choice" is an ideological decision, not one based on the data. Many of the students who were not choice students had experienced "the dis-

ruption of switching schools" many times during the four years. To draw the conclusions that they did, Peterson and his colleagues would have needed another group of students demographically similar to the choice group but who had been in the same public school for four years.

Kathryn Stearns, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Foundation and a resident of London, penned one article that suggests that choice in England has had all the outcomes its detractors predicted.¹³ The schools that people choose (which she says are not al-

*It's convenient —
but wrong — to link upward
trends to publication of
A Nation at Risk.*

ways the effective ones) do, indeed, thrive. But since these schools have limited opportunities to grow, they soon become overcrowded, and so they end up choosing the students that they think will give them the least trouble. Such stratification is a commonly predicted negative outcome of choice plans in this country.

Middle-class parents, much more than working-class parents, are using their choice options, but Stearns doesn't think it's because they are better educated or more interested in their children's education. She thinks that the reason the middle class exercises its options to a greater degree is that poor people are more likely to see the local school as central to their communities.

Contrary to what market theory would predict, none of the unpopular British schools have closed. They simply serve a clientele that is increasingly more difficult to educate, and they serve that clientele less well. Writes Stearns, "The gains for certain individuals have come at the expense of others and at the expense of the community as a whole. The legislation has led to increased social segregation, and this, in turn, is leading to greater inequality of attainment. . . . If the British experience is any guide — and I think it is — abandoning the urban schools to the whims of the marketplace won't improve the lot of most students or the adminis-

tration of urban education." Exactly.

New Data

The past year was an even quieter year for new data about schools than the previous one. The data from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study are due to be released soon — probably in December — but most data analyses this year were rehashes of old, sometimes quite old, material.

Threatened with annihilation by the Gingrich gang, the U.S. Department of Education finally got around to looking at what the data said about education. Even though most overall trends were up, Emerson Elliott, then-commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, would commit himself to saying only that "some conditions are improving, while others are not."¹⁴ The *Washington Post*, never quick with a good word for schools, looked at Elliott's data and awarded the schools an editorial with the headline "A B+ for the Schools."¹⁵

Indeed, it seems a bit misleading to say only that things are getting better, except where they aren't. Most of the conditions that have showed no improvement or have worsened have to do with differences between various subgroups — the gap between the achievement of blacks and that of whites or between children of high-income families and children of low-income families, and so on. More misleading is the tendency of *The Condition of Education* to date improvements from the appearance of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. This gives the impression that the report caused the changes that led to the improvements. Such a causal attribution would make sense in view of the furor caused by the "paper Sputnik." It would also be convenient to link changes to a concrete event, such as the publication of the report. It's all very convenient, but it's wrong: most of the upward trends had begun before *A Nation at Risk* appeared.

One piece of good news in *The Condition of Education* is that, despite continuing immigration by people with limited proficiency in English, the difference between white and Hispanic reading scores in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been declining con-

sistently since 1975. (The difference increased from 1990 to 1992, but the change is small enough that it could be a blip.) The gap between white and Hispanic mathematics scores has also been declining since 1973.

More disturbing, the gap between the scores of black students and those of white students declined from 1975 to 1988 but increased in 1990 and again in 1992. Moreover, that gap remains large: black 17-year-olds score just below white 13-year-olds on the NAEP mathematics test.

Although the SAT does not measure school outcomes, people are interested in its vagaries, and so I note here that SAT scores rose in 1996 for the third year in a row, moving up two points on the math section and one point on the verbal. In 1996, 1,084,725 students took the test, about 17,000 more than in 1995. Although the scores are reported this year using the recentered scale only, *changes* in scores are the same as they would have been using the old scale.

As in the past two years, rising scores did not garner the media attention that declining scores have. Only *USA Today* thought the news worthy of the front page. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Times* buried the story deep in the front sections, while the *Washington Post*, as has been its custom for three years running, relegated its article to the Metro section — material of only local interest. Only the *Washington Times* thought it necessary to comment on the recentering, featuring a long quote from former assistant secretary of education Chester Finn, Jr., declaring the test “ruined.”

A few words are probably needed about that much-ballyhooed recentering. Every five years or so, the makers of commercial achievement tests “renorm” them. This is essentially what the College Board did in its recentering, but it was the first such adjustment since the standards were set on the SAT in 1941 and the average raw score was assigned a scaled score of 500. The group taking the SAT in 1941, though, was by no means “average.” It consisted of 10,654 white students living in the Northeast and planning to attend primarily Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges. Sixty percent were male, and 40% had attended private college-prep schools.

Currently, 30% of SAT-takers are minorities, 52% are women, 83% have attended public schools, and 41% report an annual family income of \$40,000 or less.

Obviously, the 500 “average” from the 1941 elite does not represent the average score of this much more representative, much more heterogeneous, group. The College Board quite reasonably decided to make 500 represent the average score once again. This decision unleashed a torrent of irrational criticism that it was trying to hide poor performance. “The largest dose of educational Prozac ever administered,” commented Chester Finn at the time. I am certain, however, that, if we could step back to 1941 and administer the SAT to a group demographically the same as those who took the SAT in 1995, the 1941 group would score substantially lower.

As it is, some students will actually get lower scores on the SAT math section with the recentered scale than they would have gotten with the original scale. This is because over the last 15 years there was enormous growth in the proportion of students scoring above 650 on the math section. In *The Candidate's Handbook, 1996*, a publication of the Heritage Foundation, Denis Doyle attributes this growth to Asian American students. However, even a cursory look at the data would have shown him that Asian students constitute far too few test-takers to account for such growth. In fact, 6.8% of non-Asian test-takers scored above 650 in 1981, while 10.8% of non-Asians scored that high (on the old scale) in 1995, a 57% increase. In any case, the recentering pulls some of these students down — though not by much: students obtaining scores between 660 and 710 would have scored about 10 points higher on the old scale.

As a practical matter, the recentering means that a student who gets 500 knows that he or she is typical. On the old scale, this 500 would convert to 420 on the verbal scale and 470 on the math. These scores could well lead students to conclude that they are below average, given that 500 is considered average. But the old 500 was “average” only for the tiny elite who took the test in 1941.

Secretary Riley as Rip Van Winkle

Secretary of Education Richard Riley must have been pleased with the press coverage he got when he released trend data from *The Condition of Education*. After all, when in previous recorded history had the *Washington Post* accorded a grade as high as a B+ to the schools?

Maybe Riley thought he could use the tactic again a few months later to emphasize more good news. While his tactic didn't work on the *Post*, articles turned up in a number of newspapers on June 18 and 19 reporting that, in comparison to other nations, American youngsters read very well. The *Los Angeles Times* and the *Houston Chronicle* carried the story in their front sections, while *USA Today* displayed the story prominently on the front page.¹⁶ “U.S. High in Literacy,” trumpeted the *Houston Chronicle*. One wonders whether Newt Gingrich saw the story. Clearly, IBM's Gerstner did not. At a conference in July 1996, Virginia Gov. George Allen quoted Gerstner as saying, “We can teach them work skills. What is killing us is teaching them how to read.”

The reports on reading performance were true, of course. But the only reason they qualified as news was that the papers had ignored the story the first time around. When the study was actually “news,” only *Education Week* and *USA Today* covered it at all, and the *USA Today* story came complete with a quote from Francie Alexander, then-deputy assistant secretary of education, dismissing the results. On the phone, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Josh Greenberg said that he and his editors were suspicious of the story, given that it was four years old, but decided to go with it anyway as no one seemed to know anything about it. In that, Greenberg and his editors were certainly right. The data were those from the 1991 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study, released in July of 1992 as *How in the World Do Students Read?*

The Media

Relatively speaking, the past year was a good media year for us “contrarians.” Contrarians was the label affixed to me, David Berliner, Harold Hodgkinson, Harold Howe II, Richard Jaeger, and Iris Rotberg on the cover of the May 1996 issue of the American Association of School Administrators' magazine, *The School Administrator* — along with the title “The Leading Defenders of America's Public Schools.” The issue celebrated the 200th anniversary of Horace Mann's birth, and we all contributed articles. AASA Executive Director Paul Houston contributed a cover essay in which he observed something with which we contrarians all agree:

"American education has many challenges and failings. They just don't happen to be the ones about which most of our citizens have been told." Houston wants to expand this issue into a book.

The cover of the November/December 1995 issue of *Teacher* magazine featured large, hot-pink type against a black background, which asked the question "Is the School Crisis a Fraud?" The article for the most part featured Berliner's work and mine and revealed an interesting change in tactics by our detractors and by school critics in general. In the early days of our research, the critics labored arduously to ignore us. (Some still use this tactic; in her 1995 book, *National Standards and American Education*, Diane Ravitch alludes to us in several places but never mentions any of the six contrarians by name.) At the same time, they clobbered schools with ranks and numbers: "American high schoolers come in last or next to last in virtually every economic measure," said Gerstner and his colleagues. "International examinations designed to compare students from all over the world usually show American students at or near the bottom," said Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).¹⁷

These statements are typical. They show how the school-bashers once tried to use numbers and statistics to show that public schools had failed. Now that the contrarians have shown repeatedly that these numbers show nothing of the sort, the critics have shifted their ground and want to declare the numbers irrelevant. They refer to us as using "numerically driven arguments," as if this were something inappropriate or even reprehensible when it is precisely what they once did.

It is true that the more thoughtful commentators in the *Teacher* article — among them I number Deborah Meier, David Tyack, David Cohen, and Mike Rose — called attention to the qualities that numbers cannot measure. But we contrarians have done so as well. The Third Bracey Report presented Israel Scheffler's view of the defining characteristics of education, which is worth repeating:

the formation of habits of judgment and the development of character, the elevation of standards, the facilitation of understanding, the development of taste and discrimination, the stimulation of curiosity and wondering, the fostering of style and a sense of beauty, the growth

of a thirst for new ideas and visions of the yet unknown.

I offered this comment on these features of education: "The extent to which we accept Scheffler's definition is the extent to which we must realize that, for all the test scores and graduation statistics presented here and elsewhere, we really do not have appropriate indices of how the system functions or doesn't."¹⁸ But the qualities described in this definition are not the qualities being published in the *New York Times* ad with which this report began. That ad is a "numerically driven argument," and it is those numbers that we contrarians have rebutted.

At one level, it is unfortunate that *Teacher* brought in thoughtful critics because they give the school-bashers who use numerically driven arguments — Denis Doyle, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, Albert Shanker, and so on — an undeserved credibility by association with genuine scholars.

Shanker, in fact, provided the most stunning example of hypocrisy in connection with numerically driven arguments. When I spoke to the Education Press Association in 1995 and presented as many statistics as I could wedge into an hour, Shanker spoke next. Shanker, who in 1993 had already written such statements as "The achievement of U.S. students in grades K-12 is very poor" and "American students are performing at much lower levels than students in other industrialized nations," now discarded all use of actual data. He recounted how he kept meeting young people who could not make change and having other "personal experiences" that repudiated my data. "Frankly," said Shanker, "I find these experiences more compelling than [waving his arm at the screen where my graphs had appeared] all those numbers that Jerry just put up there." And yet, when Laurence Steinberg and Lawrence Stedman wrote numerically driven opinions recapitulating the usual litany of charges against schools, Shanker grabbed the numbers as a drowning man grabs flotsam and used them in three of his weekly paid advertorials in the Sunday *New York Times*.

One media curiosity continued this past year and warrants a brief comment. When a report by or an article about the contrarians appears, rebutters are always brought in for "balance." When a report comes out that is critical of the schools, the media

almost always play it straight, without opposing commentary. To my knowledge, only once has anyone ever called me or any of the "revisionists" to comment on such a negative report. Strangely enough, that was the conservative *Washington Times*, and it gave my retort almost as much space as the report the story was about.¹⁹

As for positive media coverage, the *New York Times* ran a long article on the contrarians, and *Newsweek* essayist Robert Samuelson titled one of his articles about us "Three Cheers for the Schools?"²⁰ In his essay, Samuelson referred to me as the "godfather" of the contrarians, which is amusing but not historically accurate. Samuelson could not bring himself to give the schools three cheers, but he did declare flatly that much of the crisis rhetoric had been overblown. Even *Better Homes and Gardens* got into the act with "The Good News About Our Schools," a surprisingly meaty and accurate piece, and I finally managed to pry open the door of the *Washington Post* op-ed page after five years of trying.²¹

In speeches and workshops, I generally excoriate the media for their susceptibility to the Worst Possible Spin Syndrome (WPSS). At the same time I tell audiences that the most balanced and most extensive coverage of education in the country appears in *USA Today*. *USA Today*, sometimes accused of rendering sound bites on paper, often includes two-page inserts on education, and for the week of 13 May 1996 it ran a weeklong series.²²

As part of its weeklong series, *USA Today* conducted a survey of parents and children and found that, overall, both groups gave schools a grade no lower than B- on a variety of elements. (For example, parents awarded this low grade to the superintendent, the school board, the budget process, and the way students treat one another.) Indeed, 75% of parents awarded their children's schools either an A or a B. The survey did show, though, that elementary school parents are much more satisfied with their children's schools than are secondary school parents. For instance, 42% of secondary school parents said that schools did not prepare students adequately for the world of work, and 38% said that schools did not prepare students adequately for college. Perhaps because of the temporal distance of elementary school parents from these realms, these complaints were voiced by only 16% of elementary school parents.

thirty-two percent of secondary school parents felt that their children were not challenged to learn, but only 17% of elementary school parents felt that way.

On the downside, fully 33% of the students said that getting good grades does not make you popular, and only 31% said that they did an hour or more of homework nightly. Forty-seven percent of the parents, despite giving high marks to the public schools, said that they would send their children to private schools if they could afford it.

Overall, though, even the editorial page of *USA Today* was surprisingly upbeat. I say surprisingly because in five years that page has never published any of the many articles and letters to the editor that I have submitted, nor had they previously said anything positive. But above a May 13 editorial three times the normal length, *USA Today's* headline read, "U.S. Schools Can't Teach? Don't Believe the Myths." The opening paragraph read: "It's time to set the record straight. Schools have been getting a bad rap over the past decade or so, fueled by some myths that have been around so long they're often accepted as fact."²³ Tell me about it.

There are several things to take into account about the *USA Today* survey. First, it asked parents only about schools their children attend, and parents are consistently more positive about their own children's schools than about the schools elsewhere in the nation. This is probably because of two other factors: 1) people depend on the national media for information about the nation's schools, and the national media accentuate the negative; and 2) people depend much more on local sources for information about local schools.²⁴

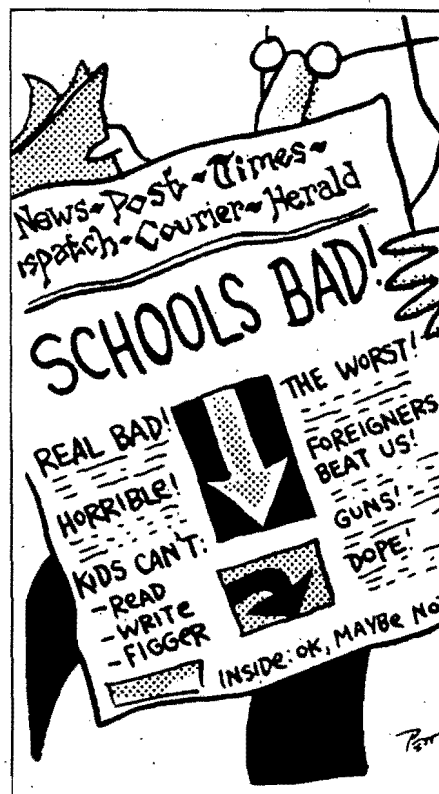
Second, it is a somewhat superficial survey. Recall that the Public Agenda Foundation in its 1995 report *Assignment Incomplete* found that, when the researchers started to scratch the surface of public support, it was very thin.

Third, some of the questions posed vague hypothetical situations. Would 47% of parents really send their children to private schools if they could afford it? We have no idea what kind of financial picture the respondents held in their minds when considering this possibility. Would a fully paid tuition allow them to "afford" it? Would their overall economic comfort level have to rise also? We don't know, but we do know

that people often respond to hypothetical situations differently from the way they do when confronted with a reality.

My salute to *USA Today* is not meant to suggest here that the media have finally stopped bashing schools. There continued to be much "gratuitous violence" visited upon the schools. Gratuitous violence is a phrase I use to describe articles that are written about something that has nothing to do with schools but that contains a slap at the schools nonetheless.

And the media still remain prone to WPSS. Typical of WPSS was the way the



media handled the NAEP history assessment released in November 1995. The *Washington Post* headlined its story "Knowing the Past May Be History, U.S. Test Reveals."²⁵ Rene Sanchez, the *Post* education writer, opened the story with these words: "The nation's students have received a dismal report card in American history." Sanchez' comment was mild compared to that of Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harper's Magazine*, who took to the op-ed page of the *New York Times* and began his essay as follows: "If it is true that American democracy requires the existence of an electorate that knows something about American history, the news last month from the Department of Education can be read as

a coroner's report."²⁶

As with Gingrich, one wonders how Lapham would have characterized American democracy a century ago, when the high school graduation rate was 3%. In a letter rejecting an article I had submitted for publication, Lapham apologized for overstating the case. Why is it that overstated charges against the schools are always made in a public forum, while apologies for the errors are made only in private?

In response to these comments, I took to the op-ed page of the *Washington Post* with this quote:

A large majority of students showed that they had virtually no knowledge of elementary aspects of American history. They could not identify Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, or Theodore Roosevelt. . . . Most of our students do not have the faintest notion of what this country looks like. St. Louis was placed on the Pacific Ocean, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, the Atlantic Ocean, Ohio River, St. Lawrence River, and almost every place else.²⁷

This quote could have come from an article on the 1995 NAEP history report, but it didn't. It appeared in a *New York Times* article about a survey of history knowledge that the *Times* itself had commissioned. The *Times* was incensed at the outcomes, and it put the story on the front page, next to its other major headline of the day: "Patton Attacks East of El Guetlar." The date was 4 April 1943.

In that wartime survey, only 3% of the students could accurately list the states of the East Coast. Asked to identify the occupation of Walt Whitman, the students pegged him as a missionary to the Far East, a pioneer, a colonizer, an explorer, a speculator, a famous cartoonist, an unpatriotic writer, a musician, the father of blank verse, an English poet, and a columnist. Hundreds of students, according to the *Times* report, listed Whitman as being an orchestra leader. Since the *Times* made no further comment on this last item, we may assume that the editors did not make the connection to Paul Whiteman, a popular bandleader of the day.

What really made these results outrageous was that they came not from high school seniors, but from college freshmen. Although the article didn't address graduation rates, the high school graduation rate

at the time stood at 45%, and only about 15% of those who graduated went on to college. The *Times* survey had uncovered not just a group of ignoramuses, but an elite group of ignoramuses.

I do not tell this story here in order to defend ignorance. Yet in my book *Final Exam: A Study of the Perpetual Scrutiny of American Education*, I showed that the last century has seen an almost unbroken march of progress in terms of how much people know (the decade from 1965 to 1975 is the lone exception).²⁸ But we are not a nation of learners, nor have we ever been. And if you wish to know why, just read the base of the Statue of Liberty. It does not say, "Give me your college grads, your 1,300 SAT scorers yearning to learn." Indeed, we are closer to being a nation of learners today than at any time in the past. The progress we have made with the huddled masses of the whole world is extraordinary. It is only recently that many educated citizens of other nations have begun to migrate to our shores.

In the opening paragraphs of "The Media's Myth of School Failure," I described how members of the media fell all over one another trying to get out the report of an international comparison in math and science and how not one media outlet had reported the international reading comparison released five months later — the one Secretary Riley finally touted this year.²⁹ Why the difference? Well, it could be that the U.S. ranks were mostly (but not entirely) low in math and science, while American students ranked second in reading among 31 nations.

Or could it be that good news is just not news to the American media? That's what it sounds like to U.S. Department of Education staffers Laurence Ogle and Patricia Dabbs. They described what happened when a generally positive geography assessment issued forth from the NAEP. "The geography press conference was attended by the President of the National Geographic Society, and the mood of almost all the speakers was clearly upbeat. . . . The reporting in the press, however, was lackluster and negative, at best. Few news agencies picked up the story." But when the history results came out two weeks later, not only did Rene Sanchez call the results "dismal" and Lapham declare them "a coroner's report," but reporters beat down the doors to get to talk with Ogle and Dabbs.

Returning to our offices after the press conference, we found our voice mail jam-packed with media requests for additional information. News accounts were on the radio, and reports were even spotted on the Internet. Requests for additional information flooded in from radio and television stations, newspapers, and a few talk-show hosts. That evening, reports on the history results were seen on the network newscasts, public television, and later in the week, on the political talk shows from Washington. . . . Even television's late-night comedy king, Jay Leno, spoke about (and ridiculed) the results. Clearly, the coverage of the negative news eclipsed the relatively good news about geography.³⁰

This is worse than the reading versus math and science reporting I had described. In that case, the media were simply ignoring the good news. Here, they stand accused of confabulating bad news: "Students Fall Short in NAEP Geography Test," declared the front-page headline of the *Education Week* story.³¹

Unfortunately, as that *Education Week* headline suggests, it is not just the general media that are subject to capriciousness. When *The Manufactured Crisis*, by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle, appeared, *Education Week* carried a story deep inside the edition about the tome that would win the Book of the Year award from the American Educational Research Association. *Education Week* editor Ronald Wolk panned the book in *Teacher* magazine in a review that made one wonder if he had read it. He called this most compendious source of data a "polemic." Though parts of it are written in an impassioned style, it is surely data-based and certainly not a "polemic." Yet when *Beyond the Classroom*, by Laurence Steinberg and others, appeared — a book barely deserving of the word "research" — *Education Week* ran it as a front-page story.³²

Events

The year was even quieter for events than it was for data. The event that everyone watched for with great anticipation was the "summit." In advance, people said it would probably be the most important policy-related event since the 1989 summit in Charlottesville between President Bush and the nation's governors.

The summit was tightly guarded, with

each of 41 attending governors bringing along a chosen business leader to an IBM facility in Palisades, New York, provided by IBM's Gerstner. Some 30 "resource people" were also invited to attend. The list read like a Who's Who of the Right. From the beginning, it was clear that the governors were abandoning a lot of previous work. (Since few of them were sitting governors at the time of the 1989 summit, "abandon" might not be the best word for their inaction.) Claudio Sanchez, National Public Radio education reporter, described the activity with some small incredulity in his voice. Asked by the host of "All Things Considered" if the summit's outcome meant we would have 50 sets of standards instead of one, Sanchez replied that it could mean that we would have 16,000 sets of standards, one for each district. One could almost hear Sanchez shrugging his shoulders.

It might be telling that, in an advertorial just after the summit, American Federation of Teachers president and resource person Shanker felt obligated to acknowledge the charge that nothing happened at the meeting in order to deny it. Resource person Diane Ravitch was emphatic that something actually had happened, even if it was wrong:

One theme was repeatedly sounded at the recent education summit in Palisades, New York: national standards are dead. Apparently, the United States should have 50 state standards or even 16,000 local standards. But no national standards. The governors, Democratic and Republican, said it; the President said it. And they are all wrong.³³

After this opening subtlety, Ravitch went on to try and revive the corpse of national standards. She was joined in her effort a couple of weeks later by Shanker in another of his weekly advertorials in the Sunday *New York Times*. Whether they have succeeded or ever will is not yet clear. Education, seldom able to hold the spotlight in turbulent political times, has been muscled off stage by welfare reform and the Presidential election campaign. Whether Ravitch and Shanker can transform the corpse of national standards into a living mummy probably won't be known until after the election.

Meanwhile, at a July meeting, the governors formally agreed to construct an "entity" to provide "technical assistance

in the areas of standards, assessments, accountability, and the use of technology in schools."³⁴ The governors did not give the "entity" a name, a staff, or a budget. Their earlier thinking was that the staff and budget would be small, but how a low-budget "entity" with only a few staff members can do all the things projected for it is not clear.

A number of events this year should have ramifications for education. But they are now percolating through the culture without any clear indication yet of what they will ultimately mean. I number among these events the Million Man March, the Stand for Children Day, and the various meetings of the Promise Keepers.

Education and Immigration

As this is written, our nation of immigrants seems intent on beating up on today's immigrants. There are few arenas in which those wishing to attain political popularity spew out disinformation more frequently than in the realm of immigration. Most people believe that immigrants are arriving in record numbers and rates (false), that most immigrants enter illegally (false), that most end up on welfare (false), that they take jobs from natives (false), and that they earn most of the doctorates in science and engineering (true). My facts come from *Immigration: The Demographic and Economic Facts*, by Julian Simon, a professor of business administration at the University of Maryland.³⁵ The monograph is a compilation of original work by Simon as well as other research.

Critics often use the doctorate statistic to declare that American students don't like science anymore. Actually, the number of doctorates awarded to native-born students soared between 1963 and 1972. The number then fell just as dramatically until 1983 and has been increasing substantially since then. The number of doctorates awarded in science and engineering to native-born students was just under 2,000 in 1958, just under 6,000 in 1972, just over 3,000 in 1983, and just under 5,000 in 1993. Doctorates awarded to foreign-born students showed mostly slow, steady growth from 1958 (when the number was about 300), then began to surge in 1983, and exceeded the figure for U.S.-born students in 1989. Foreigners now receive about 60% of the doctorates in science and engineering. About half of these

students become citizens or permanent residents.

Science and engineering are areas in which immigrants are in competition with natives. As I have reported each year since the Second Bracey Report, despite continued predictions of shortages (a hoax in itself), there is a glut of doctorates in these fields. This year, science writer and newsletter publisher Daniel Greenberg comments that "the paucity of solutions to the Ph.D. glut is surely one of the wonders of the great American university system. The common wisdom in the ivy-covered realm is that the problem will correct itself when students wise up to the grim job situation and stop coming."³⁶ That hasn't happened yet — for Americans or for foreigners.

Overall, fewer of the current immigrants belong to the "huddled masses." The proportion of aliens with eight years or less of education has dropped from 35% to 25%, while the proportion with 16 years or more has risen from 17% to 30%. Immigrants do constitute a larger proportion of undereducated residents than previously, however, because the proportion of undereducated native-born Americans has fallen more rapidly in the same 30-year period, from 37% to 11%.

The number of immigrants entering the U.S. has risen rapidly since 1980, and the number entering annually is now about the same as it was in 1910. The number of immigrants entering in one year peaked in 1916. The numbers declined precipitously after World War I, again at the onset of the Great Depression, and yet again as World War II began.

We call ourselves "a nation of immigrants" but forget how much more literally true this was in the early years of this century. In 1850 immigrants made up 9.7% of the population. By 1860 the figure had leapt to 13.2%. The proportion peaked in 1900 at 14.7%, and in 1990 it was 7.9%, up from a record low of 4.7% in 1970.

As for illegals, while it is tough to get a completely accurate fix, most estimates run from one-fourth to one-third of the total. Six out of 10 illegal immigrants enter legally as students, visitors, or temporary workers and become illegal only when their visas expire. Thus no more than 13% of all immigrants actually enter the country illegally.

For those between the ages of 15 and 65, the welfare rates for immigrants are lower than they are for natives. They are

substantially higher for immigrants over 65, but that group constitutes a small proportion of immigrants. The overwhelming majority of immigrants are between the ages of 5 and 45 — most of them, between 10 and 40. Welfare rates are much higher for immigrants who are also refugees, but they are a tiny proportion of all immigrants.

Immigrants rarely have any negative impact on the availability of jobs or on the wages paid. Only in markets with high rates of immigration and stagnant economies do immigrants have an adverse impact, lowering the ability of blacks to obtain jobs or good wages.

Certainly immigration puts strains on some school systems. Districts that have to deal with large numbers of students whose native language is not English or with a student body that represents a hundred native languages unquestionably bear an extra burden. Overall, though, immigration remains a boon to the country. Simon and Stephen Moore surveyed top economists around the country — including 38 who had been either president of the American Economic Association or on the President's Council of Economic Advisers — regarding their opinions about immigration. Eighty percent said immigration had been very beneficial to the economic growth of the nation, and 20% said that it had been slightly beneficial. Asked what we should do about current immigration rates, 58% said increase them, 33% said keep them the same, and 11% said they didn't know. None said lower the rate.³⁷

Education and the Economy

While immigration is an arena rife with myths, the status and future of the economy have sprouted their own collection of old wives' tales that suck in people who should know better. In the October 11 edition of *USA Today*, President Clinton and Vice President Gore co-signed a letter to the editor claiming that by 2000 "60% of all jobs will require advanced technological skills." They did not elaborate on what "advanced technological skills" meant. I wrote to Messrs. Clinton and Gore and also to Secretary of Labor Robert Reich and Secretary of Education Riley asking for a citation for the figure mentioned. My quartet of epistles produced only one response. Staff members at the U.S. Department of Education wrote

to say that they were certain that the Department of Labor could provide the answer. It did not.

But it is clear that Clinton and Gore were not using job projection figures from the U.S. Department of Labor's *Employment Outlook: 1994-2005*.²⁸ That document shows that, while jobs requiring college education will grow at a faster rate than jobs that require less schooling, these jobs are mostly not high-tech jobs, and the occupations that account for the largest numbers of jobs remain low-skilled. Cashiers, janitors, and retail sales positions are the big three. (These findings are reported in more detail in the January 1996 *Kappan Research* column.) An earlier publication had listed retail sales as the top job and found that it would account for one-third more jobs than the 10 fastest-growing jobs combined. "Systems analyst" is the only high-tech occupation that is both rapidly growing and offering a large number of jobs.

Statistics like these don't stop people like IBM's Gerstner from running around like Chicken Little, screaming that the system is broken. Even more numerous are the people who are running around claiming that we need high standards in order to facilitate — this year's hottest buzz phrase — the "school-to-work transition."

Elsewhere I have declared that schools should not prepare students for work. I offered the following arguments.²⁹

• *Schools should return to the civic func-*

tion that Jefferson argued they should fill. "In every government on earth is some trace of human weakness, some germ of corruption and degeneracy which cunning will discover and wickedness insensibly open, cultivate and improve," Jefferson wrote in his 1732 plan for education in Virginia. Governments of rulers degenerate, and thus the power must be invested in the people. To prevent the germ of degeneracy from infecting the people, a nation must see to it that the people are educated. A nation educated as Jefferson envisioned would contain people properly suspicious of power.

• *Most work lacks any intrinsic value, and most workers would not choose to do it.* It is dull, boring, and even dangerous, and — while that is an inescapable fact of life — schools should not collude with business to prepare children to endure job outcomes such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

A good commentary on work can be found in the comic strip "Dilbert," which already appears in 800 newspapers and is still the fastest-growing strip in the country. Dilbert and his buddies work for a company that has endless arbitrary and capricious rules, defective products, heartless accountants, and backstabbing co-workers. In one sequence, Dilbert suggests to a co-worker that they quit and set up their own business. "Why quit?" asks Dilbert's pal. "We can run our new company from our cubicles and get paid too." "Wouldn't that be immoral?" asks Dilbert. "That's only an issue for people who aren't already in hell," replies the co-worker.

Scott Adams, the creator of "Dilbert," put his Internet address in the strip and has been deluged with letters asking, "How did you know where I worked?" Apparently a lot of workers also think they're already in hell.

Study after study has found the American worker to be the most productive in the world. It is when the workers leave the workplace that they become Joe and Josie Sixpack, watch mindless television, and engage in other brain-numbing activities. Even if the current predictions about increases in leisure time (they seem to be coming true in Europe if not here yet) are wrong, schools should provide a liberal, not technical, education. Schools should educate students to enjoy a rich, thoughtful life, alone and in groups.

Incidentally, in this connection — to borrow the title of an article debunking the book promulgating the myth — "Bowling

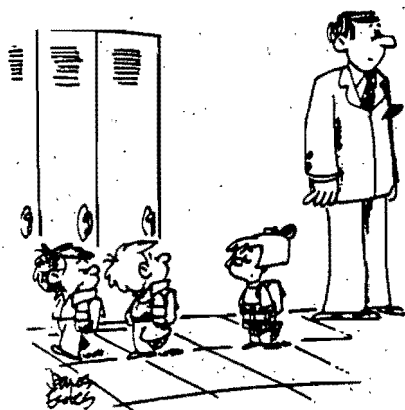
Alone Is Bunk." Peter Hong of the *Los Angeles Times* visited bowling lanes and found them thriving. The creator of the "bowling alone" myth constructed it with statistics.³⁰ In the past, group participation had been associated with higher levels of education. But in recent years, while educational levels have been rising, group participation hasn't risen as much. Thus, statistically adjusting for education, participation rates drop, but this is a statistical outcome that is not validated in reality.

Actually, the American softball league reported a rise from 27 million to 40 million participants between 1972 and 1990. Participation in sports and professional groups grew dramatically between 1974 and 1994. Only church-related groups, among 15 types of groups, showed a large drop. Even participation in literary/art groups increased.

• *Business leaders are, once again, confusing training with education and asking schools to train young people.* And in their arguments, they often operate disingenuously. Sam Ginn of Pacific Telesis likes to tell audiences about the time that his company gave a reading test to 6,400 job applicants — and only 2,800 passed. Ginn says this means we have to do more in schools. What Ginn doesn't tell his audiences is that he had only 700 positions to fill. His test found four times more qualified applicants than there were jobs available.

More important, Ginn doesn't tell audiences that his jobs paid only \$7 an hour, which works out to a little over \$14,000 a year. Does he really expect America's literati to show up for such jobs? Ginn's attitude was captured nicely in a "Frank and Ernest" cartoon in which a personnel officer tells Frank and Ernest, "What we want are people who are smart enough to pass our aptitude test and dumb enough to work for what we pay."

In his farewell speech as President, Dwight Eisenhower warned of the "military-industrial complex." Were he alive today, he would no doubt issue a new warning about the "government-industrial complex." The government sometimes appears to have forgotten that education should accomplish something other than the agenda of the National Alliance for Business, the Business Roundtable, etc. To borrow the words of a now-infamous report, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose" such a narrow agenda on our



"I forget just what they call him, but if this were a town in the West, he'd be the sheriff."

schools, "we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

• *Vocational information could be dispensed and training accomplished much more effectively at vocational centers that operate full time and to which students could go after high school (or after college, for that matter).* A number of vocational educators have responded favorably when I have posed such a notion, although the *Journal of Vocational Education*, after commissioning the article containing this proposal, ultimately rejected it because the editor felt it would be too threatening to readers.

• *Research from cognitive psychology, especially the literature on the transfer of training, strongly suggests that general training is not effective.* The lack of effectiveness of vocational training seems even more likely, given the Bureau of Labor Statistics projections that most skilled jobs will require extensive on-the-job training, no matter what the educational level of the job holder.

The fact is that schools have done a fabulous job on the supply side — providing business and industry with greater numbers of highly productive workers than they can use. Business and industry have done a poor job on the demand side. President Clinton is currently bragging about the 10 million jobs his Administration has created, but each month, as the Department of Labor announces more job creation, there is also a report that most of these jobs are in the low-paying service sector.

As has become a tradition in Presidential election years, this issue of the *Kappan* carries essays outlining the positions of the two major party candidates. This year's essays will carry the bylines of the Clinton/Gore '96 Campaign and Bob Dole. If nothing has changed since this was written in August, it would be more honest to say that the real authors were Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Before he signed the monstrous welfare reform bill, President Clinton rejected others on the ground that they hurt children too much. Elsewhere, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich has declared, "No civilization can survive with 12-year-olds having babies, 14-year-olds doing drugs, 15-year-olds killing each other, 17-year-olds dying of AIDS, and 18-year-olds receiving diplomas they can't read. All of those things are happening in America today."⁴¹

Both parties seem focused on youth. It will be interesting to see what the next Administration brings to — or aims at — our schools.

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SCHOOLS THAT WORK

by Thomas Toch and Missy Daniel

Two titans of education square off on school reform. But both have important lessons to impart to the nation's troubled schools

They are two guys in tweed jackets. Ivy Leaguers. Professors. Grandfathers. They are also vocal critics of America's schools, in a year when education looms as one of the largest issues in the presidential race. Both are convinced that public school performance is lagging because many schools are, to put it bluntly, miseducating kids. And both have spent more than a decade trying to help schools out of the wilderness.

But E. D. Hirsch Jr. and TheodoreSizer, each weighing in this fall with a new book on education, take strikingly different routes to reform. Hirsch is an educational traditionalist, Sizer a progressive. To Hirsch, knowledge is education's brass ring. The sorts of classroom strategies best suited to knowledge building are often old-fashioned ones: a tough course of study, book learning, in-charge teachers and lots of testing. To Sizer, schools ought to be about teaching students mental skills, like independent and

creative thinking. Students' curiosity should drive the curriculum. In-depth projects should replace standardized testing. And single-subject teaching ought to be abandoned in favor of interdisciplinary study.

At schools Hirsch has nurtured, like Roland Park Elementary and Middle School on Baltimore's West Side, his philosophy is on display. Students in Regina White's fifth-grade classroom perform a scene, theater-in-the-round style, from *Don Quixote*. Elizabeth Aliberti's sixth-grade pu-

pils practice songs from the musical version of *Oliver Twist*. Each day is an expedition into core knowledge, from Bach to Michelangelo to the science of rainbows.

The atmosphere at Hope Essential High School in Providence, R.I., where Sizer's ideas flourish, reflects his emphasis on developing students' minds. Housed on the top floor of an inner-city building, the 370 mostly African-American and Latino students of this school-within-a-school move through their day in 90-minute

sessions. There are few textbooks. Teachers rarely lecture. The curriculum is divided into four large blocks—math, science, English and social studies. In many courses, students study only a few topics intensively.

Two blueprints for reform. Two visions of what the basics of education should be. While Bob Dole and Bill Clinton tantalize voters with pledges of billions of dollars for new tuition plans, new schools and new technology, Hirsch and Sizer address the most fundamental questions facing the nation's classrooms: What should teachers teach, and how should they teach it? Smart answers to these questions are a sure way to improve schools, with or without infusions of money or machines.

For decades, schooling battles have been fought along progressive and tradi-

tionalist lines, and today the two camps are locked in opposition on major issues ranging from national standards to the teaching of reading. Yet school reform doesn't have to be an either-or proposition. In fact, it shouldn't be. Both Hirsch, with his traditionalist allies, and Sizer, with his progressive followers, have valuable contributions to make.

Plato, not Play-Doh. "Vermouth. Half dry. Half sweet. Straight up. Chill it," says Hirsch, Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English at the University of Virginia, red half glasses dangling on his chest. He's sitting in a Washington, D.C., restaurant, talking about education and battling a nasty cold. "Medicinal," he explains, as the waiter leaves.

Nearly a decade ago, the Yale University-trained expert on the English Romantic poets vaulted into the leadership of the traditionalist movement when he published a bestselling—and controversial—book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. In it, he argued that the nation's democratic institutions were threatened by a citizenry lacking a shared cultural vocabulary. The schools' "holiday curriculum"—cutting out pa-

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per turkeys at Thanksgiving and the like—wasn't doing the job.

In his new book, *The Schools We Need & Why We Don't Have Them*, Hirsch, 68, blasts the progressive teaching methods he says stand in the way of the wide-ranging cultural knowledge he advocates. Schools rely too much on progressive techniques like interdisciplinary instruction, ungraded work, "hands on" units and "cooperative" learning, he asserts, and such techniques are often used badly. Instead, Hirsch stresses the value of recitation, memorization, standardized tests and other traditional devices. Verbal instruction, he says, should be an "essential and even dominant focus of schooling."

Hirsch supports national education standards because he believes that to give kids the knowledge they need, a school's curriculum has to be prescribed. "What kids should know each year should be engraved in stone because the year is the unit of accountability." Able to navigate through Latin (as well as German, French and Italian) and always ready to take a computer apart, Hirsch rejects the notion of the "child centered" curriculum, in which subjects like ancient history and science are withheld from kids in early grades in favor of material focused on the students' world. "The presumption that the affairs of one's neighborhood are more interesting than those of faraway times and places is contradicted in every classroom that studies dinosaurs and fairy tales," he writes.

In 1986, Hirsch created the Core Knowledge Foundation to help schools implement his theories. The foundation, funded in part with the educator's book royalties, is now working with 350 schools in 40 states, including Baltimore's Roland Park. At such "Hirsch" schools, teaching cultural knowledge is indistinguishable from teaching basic skills like reading, writing and speaking. A culture-rich curriculum is crucial, Hirsch argues, because a shared cultural vocabulary is a cornerstone of literacy. "To grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page," he writes. That knowledge then serves as a kind of intellectual Velcro, to which new learning can cling.

Cultural Literacy landed Hirsch in the middle of the then raging culture wars, with multiculturalists and others on the left denouncing the book as elitist and authoritarian. But it was in reality a product of Hirsch's long interest in the theory of writing, a polemic less about the shape

of the cultural canon than about how kids learn to read and write. In fact, Hirsch says, a traditionally taught core curriculum helps disadvantaged students the most: "Kids from affluent backgrounds get knowledge from outside school; those who rely on school to give it to them—disadvantaged students—don't get it" because schools aren't teaching it.

Habits of mind. Ted Sizer, 64, has been called an elitist nearly as often as has Hirsch. Like Hirsch, he believes all kids should get a demanding intellectual education. But Sizer, a Yale who was dean of Harvard's graduate school of education in the 1960s and headmaster of prestigious Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., in the '70s, thinks the way to a good education lies in progressive reforms. In a blistering 1984 study of the nation's public schools, Sizer deemed the typical high school "a place of friendly, orderly, uncontentious, wasteful triviality," notable mostly for "the docility of students' minds." In classroom after classroom, he found a "conspiracy of the least"—an unspoken pledge by students and teachers to demand little of one another.

Like Hirsch, Sizer sought a way to help schools reform themselves. Backed by major foundations, he launched the Coalition of Essential Schools, an organization housed at Brown University, where Sizer served as education department chairman. Twelve years and \$60 million later,

Sizer's coalition has grown to 238 schools, including Hope Essential.

In his new book, *Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School*, the educator reflects on his years in the school reform trenches. He again takes aim at educational traditionalism in pub-

lic high schools, attacking the "lecture-drill-and-test systems" of many schools, "with their swift march over lists of topics and unconnected material." The average school, he charges, is "stuck with the notion that a curriculum is primarily a list." To Sizer, true education means

students who exhibit the right "habits of mind," ask inquiring questions and utilize knowledge in thoughtful ways.

Crucial to such thoughtfulness, he says, is interdisciplinary instruction. Grasping the complexities of a topic like immigration, for example, requires investigating a host of other seemingly unconnected subjects, such as history, economics, statistics, geography, even ecology. To encourage such probing, he urges schools to reorganize each day into longer blocks of time and to increase team teaching.

High on Sizer's list of educational crimes is the reliance on standardized testing, a practice he dismisses as "giving at best snippets of knowledge about a student and at worst a profoundly distorted view of that child." He calls instead for measuring students' achievement by having them present "exhibitions" to their classmates. He strongly opposes national and state education standards, arguing that parents should control what their kids learn

through local school boards. To impose nonlocal standards, he says, is a form of intellectual censorship, "a dangerous and potentially undemocratic road."

Common ground. School reform is a difficult road, as Sizer and Hirsch readily acknowledge. Sizer's book is far less san-

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guine than its title suggests. "We are sobered by how hard it is to accomplish change," he writes. With Sizer's reform measures come new classroom roles for students and teachers, and the task of battling union rules and school regulations. Faculty turf battles, tradition and

simple cynicism have slowed the "Sizerization" of many coalition schools: Only a fraction have introduced his entire plan. Not by accident, a portrait of Don Quixote hangs in the coalition's offices. Hirsch's curriculum, for its part, demands a far greater grasp of subjects like

ancient history than the typical elementary teacher possesses, and it often runs head-on into local curriculum edicts.

Where the educators' efforts have been successful, however, the results have been impressive, suggesting that reform is not an either-or proposition, not a matter of selecting one philosophy over the other. To be convinced by Hirsch's argument for a core curriculum, one need look no further than schools like Roland Park, with its diverse student body. Classroom life in such schools is hardly the drudgery Hirsch's critics claim, nor is the course material "Eurocentric" or otherwise elitist. There are units on African-American scientists, African and Norse myths, Maya culture and more. Diversity rules even in gym class, where students perform American Indian dances.

Roland Park's curriculum is a far cry from the school's pre-Hirsch version, which was essentially a fat list of skills the Baltimore school system wanted students to master, such as identifying the main idea in a story or locating a body of water on a map—in other words, a curriculum built on the belief that skills mattered more than what kids studied. The new curriculum is far more demanding, but students rise to the challenge. "I never thought of teaching astronomy or the Roman Empire in the third grade," says teacher Pat Wolff. "Originally, I said the kids are not going to read this," adds fifth-grade teacher Regina White, whose students read abridged versions of classics such as *Julius Caesar* and the *Iliad*. "Now I know differently. Even in remedial

classes, there's a lot of enthusiasm."

Test scores suggest as much. In the two years since the core-knowledge curriculum began, the proportion of fifth graders passing Maryland's state social studies test has jumped from 27 percent to 44 percent; passing grades in science have risen from 34 percent to 47 percent and in language usage from 18 percent to 49 percent. Other core-knowledge schools with large populations of disadvantaged students report similar gains.

Attendance up. But if Hirsch's schools prove that traditionalism doesn't equal mind-numbing learning, Sizer is right to make the culture of schools a priority. Too many schools are large, impersonal places; too many students are alienated and apathetic. In many classrooms, the instruction is as dry and lifeless as Sizer paints it; students are required merely to parrot surface facts and figures, and many never learn how to put their minds to good use. Sizer's assessment of standardized testing also has merit: Tests drive down the level of instruction in many classrooms as teachers match their teaching to the low-level skills often being measured.

At Hope Essential, breaking the school day into large blocks makes relationships between students and teachers more personal. In turn, student attendance is up, discipline problems are down. Interdisciplinary instruction gives students a richer understanding of what they are learning, exemplified in the student exhibitions so important to Sizer as alternatives to standard-

ized tests. Last year, with the O. J. Simpson trial in the news, a month's study of Shakespeare's *Othello* in an 11th-grade English class at Hope Essential culminated not in a multiple-choice test but in a mock trial of the Moor for Desdemona's murder. Students explored the tragedy's insights into marriage, jealousy and responsibility. Their tasks included reciting portions of the play, writing papers in the form of opening and closing legal arguments and a host of other activities.

Such intensive study pays off: Nearly 90 percent of Hope Essential's students are admitted to college, up from 18 percent at Hope High School before Sizer arrived. Hirsch himself is not opposed per se to exhibitions or other Sizeresque methods—if they deliver enough of the right content.

Even Hirsch's conviction that knowledge building is schools' primary task can be partly reconciled with Sizer's view that knowledge is secondary to the teaching of mental skills, or "habits of mind." Hirsch's focus is elementary school; Sizer's is high school. Indeed, when he talks about high school, Hirsch moves closer to Sizer's stance, suggesting that older students, secure in a broad knowledge base, be encouraged to "focus more narrowly and probe more deeply."

Nowhere is the value of merging the best of traditional and progressive strategies better illustrated than in the thorny question of how best to teach kids to read. Overwhelmingly, studies suggest that kids need to learn phonics, the building blocks of sound-letter relationships, as traditionalists argue. But equally compelling evidence exists that kids learn such skills faster and more thoroughly when teachers use progressive techniques to teach phonics, such as asking students to write stories using phonetic or "invented" spelling.

In the reading debate, as in other school reform issues, many progressives and traditionalists seem more eager to fight than to find common ground, routinely misrepresenting each other's views and needlessly polarizing debates at students' expense. It is left to the rest of us to break through the overheated rhetoric, finding in both sides important pieces of a national solution. ■

Colleges Move To Match K-12 In Admissions

By Lynn Olson

Students in Oregon soon will need more than good grades and test scores to get into the state's public colleges and universities.

By 2000, they will have to demonstrate that they can interpret statistical charts, conduct scientific experiments, and speak a foreign language, just for starters.

The new "proficiency-based admission standards," in six content areas, will replace grades, class rank, course credits, and fill-in-the-bubble test scores as the barometer of whether students have the skills and knowledge to succeed in college.

In a trial run this year, about 6,000 Oregon juniors and seniors at 30 high schools will be assessed based on the standards and could use the results in applying for admission.

"We're going to figure out how to make the system work," said David T. Conley, an

assistant professor at the University of Oregon in Eugene, who is directing the new system, known as the PASS project.

Oregon is one of more than a half-dozen states revising their college-admission policies to reflect new standards, curricula, teaching methods, and tests guiding students' work in high school.

Officials in Oregon plan to abandon the traditional college-application procedures by the turn of the century, and other states—such as California, Colorado, Georgia, and Wisconsin—have launched pilot initiatives.

Still others are attempting to make their traditional admission requirements more rigorous. In turn, they are advising high schools about the competencies that incoming freshmen should have.

'Increasing Mismatch'

Observers highlight several reasons why state universities are feeling pressure to revisit their admission practices.

"There is an increasing mismatch between what higher education measures—Carnegie units, end-of-course grades, and scores on college-aptitude tests—and the direction of change in K-12," argued Kati Haycock, the director of the Washington-based Education Trust, which works on K-12 and postsecondary school reform.

As schools develop new standards for what students should know and be able to do, and new ways to measure and display that information, college-admission systems must follow suit, she said. Otherwise, parents may not see the need for classroom changes.

"Parents want some assurances that colleges will accept these new approaches as enabling admission," agreed John Barth, the director of education-policy studies for the National Governors' Association. "And if the colleges won't, these approaches will wither on the vine."

College officials also acknowledge that their traditional screening procedures may need a tune-up, as evidenced by the large number of incoming students who need remedial coursework. They hope that if colleges more clearly define what they expect of students, young people will enter higher education better prepared.

The assault on affirmative action and race-based admission policies is another factor forcing universities to look for alternatives that would recognize the skills and accomplishments of a broader range of students.

Wisconsin Forges Ahead

Last year, Wisconsin became a pioneer in competency-based admission.

Students from eight high schools were able to apply to any institution in the University of Wisconsin system by using an alternative reporting form that showed their achievement in five academic subjects.

Each high school determined what it would use to assess students' performance, ranging from samples of student work to teacher-designed tests. But all of the teachers were trained to rate proficiency on the same five-point scale.

Students from the participating schools submitted both the new forms and a traditional college application. Each applicant was screened on both measures.

The results showed that the two admission procedures overlap to a large degree. Of the 172 cases reviewed so far, 73 percent of students would have been ad-

mitted under either scheme, and 12 percent would have been rejected by both. But 15 percent of students gained admission under one system and not the other.

Researchers plan to track the performance of students admitted under the old and new systems to see if their college performance differs.

But Wisconsin does not plan to abandon its traditional application procedures entirely. "It's worked for a long time and serves most of our institutions just fine," said Larry Rubin, the senior academic planner for the University of Wisconsin system. "But we didn't want to stand in the way of high schools that were restructuring."

By next year, he predicted, it may be possible for any high school in the state to use the competency-based approach, if its teachers are trained.

More...

Colleges To Rethink Admissions Policies

(2)

Continued . . .

Starting this fall, some students in Colorado and California also will be able to apply to college based on their demonstrated proficiency in the core academic subjects.

In Colorado, students from high schools that use nontraditional transcripts can gain automatic admission to all but two of the state's 11 public colleges and universities, as long as their high schools attest to their competency.

To participate in the three-year pilot program, high schools have to submit their content standards, samples of their transcripts, and descriptions of how they assess student performance to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for approval.

So far, 14 high schools are participating and 20 more have expressed interest.

"We're going to accept these students unconditionally," said Sharon M. Samson, the academic officer for the higher education commission, "and then we're going to study their academic progress to find out their success rate."

Only the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Colorado School of Mines declined to participate. They cited concerns that they would not be able to distinguish among applicants.

In California, seniors from five high schools can apply to the University of California or California State University system this fall using nontraditional transcripts. Each of the participating high schools in the Transitions Project, sponsored by the California Center for School Restructuring, will design its own reporting form.

As in Wisconsin, the alternative process will supplement, not replace, more traditional admission criteria. And researchers will track students' performance over time.

Responding to State Law

In Washington state, the higher education coordinating board formed a task force on admission standards after lawmakers required high school students to graduate based on what they know and can do.

This month, the task force released draft standards for admission to college. Next, it will tackle how those competencies should be measured. Douglas Scrima, a senior policy associate for the coordinating board, said the standards ultimately would replace existing admission criteria.

On its way to a new route to apply to college, Georgia is raising its admission requirements.

By 2000, students will have to earn 16 college-preparatory credits to gain access to the state's two-year colleges, 18 for its regional universities, and 20 for its research universities. The state also has raised the combined grade-point averages and SAT scores required of students.

This year, the state plans to award grants to craft performance standards for high school graduation and college admission. Eventually, the new standards would replace admission based on Carnegie units.

Jan Kettlewell, the assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs for the Georgia board of regents, argued that intermediate steps were needed because creating a standards-based system "is a long-term proposition."

Higher education boards in Illinois and Ohio also are pondering changes in their admission procedures.

Truckloads of Portfolios?

But not everyone is enthusiastic about such changes. Some worry that the new admission standards will be too subjective, too costly, and too complicated to use for large numbers of appli-

cants. And there are unanswered questions about how the new approaches would work across state lines.

Competitive colleges and universities also fear that the measures will fail to differentiate among students.

"In many of our heads, there's still a lurking suspicion that this is about truckloads of portfolios coming to our admission departments at some point in time," said Jan Sommerville, a research associate for the University of Maryland.

The State University of New York has drawn up guidelines for admission officers to use in considering portfolios and other nontraditional transcripts. But

Charles A. Burns, the system's assistant provost for academic programs, said, "I don't believe that there's a college or state university in the system that's really ready for this."

A Hybrid Approach

At least one state is taking a hybrid approach. Maryland is developing end-of-course tests for high school students, which will be used to meet new graduation requirements that will take effect with the class of 2004.

A statewide council that includes the leaders of K-12 and higher education has been discussing common concerns. And faculty members from both the high schools and the colleges, as well as business leaders, have been reviewing the core learning goals for the high school assessments to determine whether they are appropriate and rigorous.

More...

ADMISSIONS, continued... (3)

The goal, said Robert Rice, the executive director of the Maryland state board of education, is to devise a system that everybody trusts.

"Obviously, if high school graduation is based on an assessment of performance, then college admission needs to be based on a similar standard," argued Donald N. Langenberg, the chancellor of the University of Maryland system.

"This is not about the higher education system helping the K-12 system reform itself," he added. "This is a two-way street, and the effects on the higher education system will be as much, ultimately."

Classroom Changes

In working toward Oregon's new college-admission process, students in David J. Hamilton's physics classes at Franklin High School in Portland will have to design and conduct their own experiments this year as part of the PASS project.

"A lot of students choose not to take physics because they're afraid it will hurt their GPA," Mr. Hamilton said. "I'm really hoping that college-admission standards that require a high level of profi-

ciency on the student's part will help students see that there is an advantage to taking physics courses."

"Also," he added, "it enables me, as a teacher, to maintain high standards, and make the course tough and challenging, and still not frighten kids away."

Clinton's 'Reading Corps' garners less support now

Educators have second thoughts about the proposal

BY GIL KLEIN

MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — It sounded like a good idea.

In the emotion of the Democratic convention, delegates cheered as President Clinton proposed sending a million volunteers into elementary schools to help all students read proficiently by the third grade.

But in the cold light of day, many principals are saying, thanks for the sentiment, but please don't inflict this on us.

That many children are not learning to read properly is a national problem. Education analysts say so many children are coming from impoverished families, from non-English-speaking homes, and from parents who give no priority to reading that a significant proportion of third-graders already have fallen behind.

These students often become the slow learners who can never catch up, become troublemakers and eventually drop out of school. Many school districts have made teaching these children to read a top priority.

Looking for a high-visibility program with a Kennedyesque ring to it, Clinton proposed the creation of "America's Reading Corps." He wants to spend \$2.5 billion over five years to hire 30,000 reading specialists and coordinators to mobilize a million volunteer tutors.

Trained by these specialists to spot reading problems, the volunteers would work after school and during the summers in one-on-one reading tutorials with the estimated 3 million children in kindergarten through third grade who are reading below grade level.

Who would these volunteers be?

Education Secretary Richard Riley said he envisions them coming from the ranks of the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Girls Clubs and Boys Clubs, the YMCA and YWCA, adult service organizations and retirees.

"My son is a young lawyer in Columbia, S.C., and every week he spends time with a young student that he is mentoring and tutoring — and he loves it," Riley told the National Press Club.

But Carole Kennedy, the principal at New Haven

Elementary School in New Haven, Mo., and president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, cringes at that proposal.

"Political leaders are good at deciding what the public schools need without asking the public schools," she said. "It's great that the president is talking about the importance of reading, but just the logistics of trying to start that program would be monumental."

Schools have a lot of experience with volunteers, she said, and not all of it is good. While they may have the best of intentions, volunteers don't always show up. Teachers have to take a lot of time to work with them.

"We already use volunteers to listen to children read," she said. "But that's a lot different from teaching them to read."

Reading programs already are available with proven records, she said. At her school, teachers are implementing something called "Reading Recovery" that is spreading throughout the country with only modest help from the federal government.

Requiring extensive graduate-level training before teachers are prepared to work with first-grade students who already are falling behind, Reading Recovery provides one-on-one tutoring five days a week for a half-hour a day.

"Most children who complete the Reading Recovery program can perform within the average achievement range and do not need remedial help again," said Jack Krause, who is the lead teacher at the Orland, Calif., Reading Recovery Training Center.

Far more training and time are needed for Reading Recovery than most volunteers would be willing to give, its advocates say. But if, instead of employing 30,000 new federal workers to coordinate and train volunteers, the federal government gave that money to school systems to pay for additional teachers trained in Reading Recovery, more elementary school children would be reading proficiently.

"It's an expensive program, but it works," Kennedy said. "It would be a lot better use of federal money."

Takeovers Threatened, 25 Ark. Districts

By David J. Hoff

The Arkansas Department of Education is working with 25 school districts to improve academic or financial problems that, if not solved, could lead to a state takeover.

The state is forcing the districts to change their ways under a new law that establishes a three-year window for districts to raise student performance and improve their end-of-year balances—or face state intervention.

Arkansas education department Director Gene Wilhoit has declared 13 school districts in "academic distress" and said seven others are in "financial distress." Two districts made both lists. Mr. Wilhoit warned another seven districts that their test scores put them on the edge of joining the academically troubled list.

The 1995 law requires the distressed school districts to file plans with the state explaining how they will solve their problems.

If things don't improve after one year, the state will assemble a team of educators to recommend further changes. If that fails, the state will take over and decide whether to dismiss the school board or local superintendent. A final option would be to consolidate a troubled district with a neighbor.

A Wake-Up Call

But the state promises to help at every stage, hoping it won't need to usurp local control, said Frank Anthony, the state's assistant director for technical assistance.

So far, Mr. Anthony said, the state's moves have not caused the controversy that usually accompanies state intervention in local school systems.

The state avoided a lot of problems by informing the troubled districts well in advance of releasing their names, he said.

"It was just a courtesy call to say, 'This is where you are. You'll be getting an official letter,'" Mr. Anthony said.

Superintendents in districts cited for poor academics say they are making progress, despite the negative attention that has come with their labels.

"It's been a pretty smooth operation so far," said Al McDonald, the superintendent of the 200-student Carthage district.

"There was definitely a stigma attached to it, but that's part of it," said Richard Britt, the superintendent of the 500-student Waldo system. "It's kind of a wake-up call for us."

In response to the state action, Waldo formed a 25-member task force of educators and community leaders to discuss how to raise students' scores on the Stanford Achievement Test, the barometer the state uses to identify struggling school districts.

A "distressed" district is one that has 40 percent or more of its students ranking below the 25th

percentile on the test.

State officials held a workshop for the Waldo task force, helping it define its goals and identify ways to meet them, Mr. Britt said.

Mr. Anthony said his staff offered similar help to other school boards and superintendents as they wrote the improvement plans they filed with the state last month. It also is training administrators and principals, showing them ways to help teachers improve instruction.

Address Deficiencies

Some Problems Solved

On the financial side, some superintendents complained about the state using 2-year-old audits to determine a district's financial health.

At least two districts say they already have solved their problems.

The Earle school district landed on the watch list because its end-of-year balance fell for three straight years in the early 1990s. The 950-student district had to pay for emergency roof repairs on a building and needed to add new teachers, said Superintendent Jack Crumbly.

The district has since won voter approval for higher property taxes, so its bottom line has improved, he said.

"We can easily show that we stabilized it," Mr. Crumbly said.

The Bay school district saw its balances decline in the early 1990s because it used general-fund money to furnish two new schools with desks and other equipment.

It did not have enough bond money to pay for the equipment, said Forrest Jackson, the superintendent of the 650-student district.

"We took a calculated risk in spending money on these new buildings," Mr. Jackson said. The district is projected to have a \$225,000 surplus this year. "This is the best fiscal condition we've been in since I've been here."