

# Passing on Failure

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*District Promotion  
Policies and Practices*

American Federation of Teachers

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(Dadd)

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# Executive Summary

**T**oday, too many students graduate from high school ill-equipped to do college-level work or perform adequately in entry-level jobs. The public is becoming fed up and beginning to doubt that public schools are able to prepare students to lead productive lives. They wonder how so many students can graduate with so few skills. One explanation is "social promotion"—that is, school systems' practice of moving students from grade to grade regardless of their academic ability to do the work required at the next level.

Social promotion is an insidious practice that hides school failure and creates problems for everybody—for kids, who are deluded into thinking they have learned the skills to be successful or get the message that achievement doesn't count; for teachers who must face students who know that teachers wield no credible authority to demand hard work; for the business community and colleges that must spend millions of dollars on remediation, and for society that must deal with a growing proportion of uneducated citizens, unprepared to contribute productively to the economic and

civic life of the nation.

The public believes that students should earn the right to move from grade to grade; they should demonstrate that they have mastered the knowledge and skills required of them. Students should know that performance counts. If students can't do the work they should not go forward.

Unfortunately, more retention—done in the customary way, that is, doing again what failed to work the first time around—is not the answer: we already have too much. Accurate figures are hard to come by, but it is estimated that between 15 and 19 percent of U.S. students are retained in grade each year, and in many large, urban districts, upwards of 50 percent of the students who enter kindergarten are likely to be retained at least once before they graduate or drop out.

Neither social promotion nor retention is an adequate response to student underachievement, in large measure because neither requires change in pedagogy, content or curriculum. Nevertheless, throughout the twentieth century the education pendulum has swung between these two policy alternatives.

This study: reviews research and looks at pro-

motion policies in 85 districts, including the nation's 40 largest districts; describes the practices that support social promotion; and identifies the kinds of policy changes that will be necessary if we are to break out of the social promotion-retention-social promotion cycle and address the problems of low achievement of many of our children, particularly poor and minority students

What did we find? Social promotion prevails for a number of reasons:

- Many districts implicitly support it and their policies declare retention the "option of last resort;"
- In most districts, there are no agreed-upon, explicit standards of performance against which student progress can be judged and on which a credible, defensible promotion decision can be made;
- Teachers, who have the most knowledge of students, often can make recommendations regarding retention but rarely have the final authority on such decisions, and frequently they are pressured by principals and parents to pass students along;
- Many districts require that, under certain conditions, students be moved ahead regardless of performance; and
- There is little provision for programs to prevent or intervene with students who fall behind.

Policies to help underachieving youngsters learn must address the underlying causes of failure. For some small number of students, creating a negative incentive—that is, the possibility of retention—may be enough to prompt success. For a few others, repeating the grade may make sense. But for the vast majority of underachieving students, systemic change is required if success is to be achieved.

Policies and practices have to be developed that address the problems of a lack of standards, undermanning curriculum, underprepared teachers, and administrative indifference to whether learning takes place. The policies must address the unique

educational experiences and support services that children who fail or are at risk of failure need. Absent attention to these issues, we are doomed to continue the ineffective pendulum swing between social promotion and retention.

If we want to eliminate social promotion, we have to do the following:

- Institute policies to prevent early school failure. We need to get serious about providing excellent pre-school and all-day kindergarten programs to at-risk students. We need to reduce class size in the early grades and make sure that at-risk students have excellent reading instruction in the early grades. No child should leave third grade unable to read, and districts must have the supports in place to assure that this does not happen.
- Adopt rigorous grade-by-grade standards and develop assessments and curriculum to support them. With such standards teachers will be better able to identify students in trouble, and they can seek "just in time" interventions, rather than let problems fester.
- Provide timely intervention to children who are falling behind—one-on-one tutoring, "double dosing," parent counseling, extended-day and the like.
- Place well-trained teachers in every classroom by developing policies to attract and retain the best teachers in schools with high-risk student populations.
- Make it a top priority to provide all teachers with opportunities to learn how to teach students to read.
- Learn from schools and districts that have successfully implemented research-based reforms.

The bottom line: to end social promotion districts must design policies and programs to prevent failure of students, and to intervene swiftly when it occurs. They must examine the effectiveness of the policies and practices they institute and make changes—either in program implementation or in policy—where current efforts are ineffective.

# Introduction

**D**espite recent progress in raising standards for American students—and despite the excellent performance of our students in the international reading and fourth-grade math and science studies (IEA, 1992; TIMSS, 1997)—there is still distrust in the ability of the public schools to prepare students for college and the workplace. A glance at the newspapers tells the story:

- Chicago put 100 public schools on probation because less than 15 percent of the students in those schools scored at the national norm for their grade level. Indeed, in one high school, less than 4 percent of the students were reading at grade level (Terry, 1996).
- In Michigan, more than half of fourth graders and nearly six in 10 seventh graders receive unsatisfactory ratings on state reading tests (Lutz and Durant, 1996).
- In Boston, 40 percent of third graders score below grade level on citywide math tests, and 50 percent score below in reading (Avenoso, 1996).
- Alabama threatens to take over 25 districts where 40 percent or more of the students rank below the 25th percentile on standardized tests (*Education Week*, 1996).
- More than half of the 112,000 Maryland third- and fifth-grade students fail the Maryland School Performance Assessments (Bowler, 1996).
- Remedial education in college is costing taxpayers and students alike. In Florida, where 43 percent of 1994 new college entrants flunked at least one college-readiness course, the state spent \$53 million on remediation. These statistics are not very different from those of other states. "Across the country, about a third of freshmen take remedial courses in college, and three-quarters of all campuses, public and private, offer remediation" (Dembner, 1996).
- Industry spends millions of dollars teaching basic skills to its entry-level employees. Last year, for example, MCI spent \$7.5 million to provide basic skills training (*USA Today*, 1996).

One response to the evidence that students, particularly poor and minority students in urban school systems, are proceeding through school without reaching adequate standards of literacy and numeracy is to blame it on "social promotion"—that is, the practice of moving students from grade to grade regardless of their academic ability to do the work required at the next level. As President Clinton says, "No more free passes. If

you want people to learn, learning has to mean something" (Page, 1996). Students should earn the right to move from grade to grade; they should demonstrate that they have mastered the knowledge and skills required of them—and those standards should be set high. Students should know that performance counts.

The public agrees (Public Agenda, 1995). Ninety percent of the respondents in a recent public opinion poll indicated that they favored higher standards in the basic subjects—math, history, English, and science—for promotion from grade to grade, and 68 percent even favored requiring students to pass standardized national examinations for promotion from grade to grade (Elam and Rose, 1995).

Indeed, as critics point out, social promotion is an insidious practice that hides school failure and creates problems for everybody:

- **For kids**, who are deluded into thinking they have learned the knowledge and skills necessary for success, who get the message that effort and achievement do not count, and most important, who often are denied access to the resources and support programs they need because their failure is not acknowledged by the system.
- **For teachers**, who must deal with impossibly wide disparities in their students' preparation and achievement that result from social promotion, and who face students who know that teachers wield no credible authority to demand hard work.
- **For parents**, who are lulled into thinking that their children are being adequately prepared for college, for civic responsibility, and for the world of work.
- **For the business community**, which must invest millions of dollars in teaching new employees the basic skills they did not learn in school.
- **For colleges and universities**, which must spend a sizable portion of their budgets on remedial courses to prepare high school graduates to do college-level work, and for the professors who

must lower their standards in order to accommodate an ill-prepared student body.

- **For taxpayers**, whose support of public education is eroded by evidence that a high school diploma is not necessarily a guarantee of basic literacy and numeracy.
- **For society**, in general, which cannot afford, in both economic and civic terms, a growing proportion of uneducated citizens who neither benefit from, nor contribute to, the commonweal.

But, if social promotion is such a problem, why does it happen? Common sense dictates that students should not move to the next grade until they have the knowledge and skills needed to handle the new material. How can our education system permit hundreds of thousands of students to pass from grade to grade when they haven't acquired the skills and knowledge to do the work required? Why aren't students who fail to meet the standards retained in grade?

In fact, they are. There is clear evidence that retention—requiring students who have not mastered the work to repeat a grade—is just as rampant as social promotion in American schools. Accurate figures are hard to come by, but it is estimated that between 15 and 19 percent of U.S. students are retained in grade each year (Darling-Hammond and Falk, 1995). In large urban districts, upwards of 50 percent of the students who enter kindergarten are likely to be retained at least once before they graduate or drop out (Karweit, 1992; Slavin, 1996).

And as with social promotion, there is evidence that wholesale retention results in serious problems and significant costs:

- **For kids**, who often do not significantly improve their academic skills as a result of being retained, but instead may become alienated from school, develop emotional and behavioral problems, and be at greater risk of dropping out.
- **For teachers**, who must deal with overage and underachieving youngsters in their classes, many of whom act out their frustration by becoming

disruptive, and, thereby, deprive their classmates of an opportunity to learn.

■ **For taxpayers**, whose tax dollars pay for an additional year of school (on average \$5,500 per pupil) for millions of students with no evidence that those dollars make a difference.

■ **For the future of public education**, which is threatened with privatization and voucher schemes because of the large failure rates of students, particularly in the inner cities.

Therein lies the dilemma—in their most customary applications, neither social promotion nor retention is an adequate solution to underachievement, in large measure because neither requires change in pedagogy, content, or curriculum. And perhaps because neither solves the basic problem, throughout the 20th century, the education pendulum has swung between these two policy approaches to student failure—being “soft” and getting “tough” (Labaree, 1984).

In the 1970s, with mounting evidence of the negative effects of student retention, particularly regarding self-esteem, social promotion was the prevailing policy. Then in the early 1980s, partly in response to *A Nation at Risk's* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) dire message about low student achievement, many districts passed stringent policies requiring retention of students based on their performance on standardized tests (Roderick, 1995). Chicago, New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Dade County, Fla., all instituted policies to retain students who failed standardized tests at various transitional points along the K-12 continuum. By the late 1980s, however, those policies were rescinded when research studies indicat-

ed that student achievement of retained students was not improved compared to students with similar reading scores who were socially promoted, but the retained students' dropout rate was higher (Gampert and Opperman, 1988; Olson, 1990; Darling-Hammond and Falk, 1995).

However, poor achievement of students, particularly inner-city, minority youth persists, and today the pendulum is again swinging back to retention as the best response to student failure. New York City in 1995 released a report, *Raising Standards for All*, that calls for an end to social promotion and the development of promotion policies that “certify levels of accomplishment, not simply passage of time in schools” (Chancellor's Commission on Educational Standards and Accountability, 1995, p.9). In its efforts to eliminate social promotion, Chicago is requiring all students at third, sixth, eighth, and ninth grades who do not score at grade level on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to go to summer school and pass the test or be retained (Hendrie, 1997). Indeed, this spring almost half of Chicago's ninth graders and upwards of 30 percent of third-, sixth-, and eighth-graders—some 43,000 students—were informed that they had to attend summer school to raise their test scores or be retained in grade. Other districts around the country are following suit (Lawton, 1997).

In an effort to halt the pendulum swing and to bring an end to social promotion, this report:

- Examines current district promotion and retention policies, and
- Suggests policy changes that are necessary to address the needs of low-performing students and maximize student success.

# School District Promotion Policies: A Survey

**T**he AFT surveyed 85 of the 820 largest school districts concerning their promotion policies.<sup>1</sup> These 820 districts, taken together, account for more than a third of all enrollments in the country and are responsible for educating students who live in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The districts are located in 32 states and vary in size from more than a million students to just under 10,000. All 85 districts responded to our survey. Seven of the districts had no formal, written policy, and decisions about promotion and retention were left to the discretion of individual schools in the district. The remaining 78 districts sent us their formal, written school board policies, which ranged from three-paragraph statements to 30-page documents, with little consistency among them.<sup>2</sup>

We reviewed the policies to determine:

- Who has the final decision-making authority;
  - What interventions exist to prevent failure;
  - What educational alternatives are available to failing students; and
  - What the requirements are for reporting grade retention rates to the public.
- What standards are required for promotion;
- What evidence is used in decisions to retain students;
- What restrictions are placed on retention decisions;
- Who is involved in the decision;

<sup>1</sup> The sample was selected as follows: the 40 largest school districts were included, and then an additional 45 districts were chosen by selecting every 20th district in descending order of size from the 41st largest to the 820th largest district. See Appendix A for a list of districts.

<sup>2</sup> This analysis is based on the explicit, written district policies. As part of our procedure, we sent our analysis of the district policy back to each district, and where applicable, to union leaders in the district. Changes were made to our analysis if the district or union leader provided written documentation to warrant a correction. Discussions with school officials, and with union leaders in the districts surveyed, often indicated that practice was broader than explicit policy. For example, some district officials indicated that standardized test scores were part of the evidence used in decision making, even though the policy was not explicit on this matter, or union officials indicated that despite the policy, teacher recommendations were often disregarded. The reverse was also true. For example, school administrators and/or union officials sometimes indicated that despite the mandate for summer school for students who were to be retained, districts often had no funds available and consequently did not provide such programs.

## What Standards Do Districts Use To Make Decisions on Promotion or Retention?

The first and most obvious problem with the policies is the absence of specific academic standards against which student progress is judged. Although about a third of the policies refer to curriculum guidelines, the language often is vague and not useful for ensuring that teachers and administrators have a commonly agreed upon expectation about satisfactory performance. For example, policies state that:

- To be promoted, a student's "progress should be continuous and student advancement through the curriculum should be according to the student's demonstrated ability" (Clark County Schools, Nev.);
- Promotion is dependent upon a student's ability to "demonstrate sufficient growth in learning required basic skills" (Long Beach Unified School District, Calif.);
- Promotion "is based upon an evaluation of each pupil's achievement in terms of appropriate instructional goals" (Duval County Public Schools, Fla.);
- To be retained a student must be "one or two years below performance expectations in most academic areas and indicate the ability to achieve at a higher level" (Janesville Board of Education, Wis.).

■ "Retention should be based on insufficient progress in basic skills and on the student's inability to apply basic skills to the study of academic areas" (Hillsborough County, Fla.).

Some policies refer to the need for students to meet state standards. But a recent AFT analysis of state standards revealed that only 17 of the 50 states and the District of Columbia have standards in all four core disciplines—English, mathematics, social studies, and science—that are well grounded in content and clear and specific enough to be used as a common guide (AFT, 1997).<sup>3</sup>

## What Evidence Is Used for Decisions Regarding Retention?

Teacher-assigned grades, standardized test scores, social/emotional development, attendance, and teacher recommendations form the evidence upon which most districts claim to base retention decisions. The significance of these factors varies with grade level (Table 1).

**Grades.** Most school districts today do not have agreed-upon standards of performance that support a uniform grading policy. Grades mean different things to different schools and to different teachers, and, as a result, are an uncertain guide to promotion/retention decisions. For example, a recent study of eighth-grade students indicates that more than 31 percent of them got mostly A's

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B: *Setting Strong Standards: AFT's Criteria for Judging the Quality and Usefulness of Student Achievement Standards.*

TABLE 1  
What Evidence Is Used in Retention Decisions?

| <i>Evidence</i>         | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Elementary Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Middle School Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>High School Level</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher-Assigned Grades | 48.2                                             | 58.8                                                | 64.7                                              |
| Standardized Tests      | 38.8                                             | 35.3                                                | 23.5                                              |
| Developmental Factors   | 45.9                                             | 36.5                                                | 21.2                                              |
| Attendance              | 30.6                                             | 27.1                                                | 17.6                                              |
| Teacher Recommendation  | 48.2                                             | 45.9                                                | 25.9                                              |

and another 38 percent got mostly B's. But when those grades were compared with student performance on an external math and English exam, it was clear that an "A" in a school with high concentrations of poor children did not represent the same high level of performance as an "A" for children in schools where only a few students came from poor families. Indeed, in poor schools "B's" were often given for work that would be considered failing in more affluent schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). It appears that grades are so variable, they provide no reliable basis for decisions on student progression.

When Austin and McCann (1992) surveyed 144 districts to determine grading practices and procedures, they learned that:

- Grading policies and procedures vary across districts;
- Policies fail to specify the criteria for determining grades and how those criteria should be applied;<sup>4</sup>
- Few of the districts, schools, and departments provide direction specific enough to ensure consistency in grading practices; and
- None of the districts provides staff development to help teachers assign grades that would be consistent within schools and across the district.

**Standardized Tests.** As Table 1 indicates, standardized tests are used most often in the elementary grades for decision making regarding promo-

<sup>4</sup> The researchers concluded that the variability and inconsistencies in grading reflect the conflicting views of the purpose of schooling that teachers hold: "Those who see the primary job of schools to be helping students master certain knowledge and skills, want grades to *define the current status of a student's achievement*—that is, its status against an explicit standard. Those who see the primary job of schools to be developmental—that is, helping students to develop increasingly mature patterns of thought and behavior—want grades to *describe the effort and progress students are making*. Those who see the primary job of schools to be providing multiple programs that are responsive to individual students' differences want grades to *differentiate students and their performance from other members of their class, grade, or age group* (Austin and McCann, 1992, emphasis added).

tion. These tests take several forms: commercial, criterion-based readiness tests such as the Metropolitan Test of Reading Readiness; norm-referenced achievement tests such as the California Test of Basic Skills and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; and state-developed accountability tests.

Many education researchers (Shepard and Smith, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 1995) have criticized the use of commercial, standardized, multiple-choice tests in the early grades. In particular, they question the appropriateness of this format for young children and assert that such testing is both invalid and unreliable. Furthermore, the researchers note that *exclusive use* of those tests to make decisions can be harmful to children who may be wrongly labeled as immature or unready for school work and who, as a result of retention, may come to believe that they are incapable of performing well in school.<sup>5</sup>

The greater use of standardized tests in the early grades also reflects the fact that, at the elementary and middle school levels, promotion is based on general student achievement for the core content areas—English, science, social studies, and mathematics. Retention involves repeating the grade. At the high school level, and sometimes in junior high, promotion more often is based on the number of credits earned by passing individual courses. Failed courses, not the entire grade level, must be repeated. Thus, moving from freshman to sophomore status results from achieving satisfactory grades in a prescribed number of courses.

In high school (and sometimes in middle school) standardized tests are more likely to serve as an accountability measure, i.e., they lend credence to, or raise suspicions about, local grading practices. But standardized tests in the upper grades—usually imposed as a graduation requirement—are generally no more than basic skills tests and rarely require that students demonstrate high

<sup>5</sup> Such exclusive use of tests for decision making is also contrary to the guidelines for proper test use promulgated by the American Psychological Association, the American Education Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (APA, AERA, NCME, 1996).

standards of accomplishment in the core disciplines.<sup>6</sup>

Some states are also beginning to develop policies requiring adequate academic performance at various points along the K-12 continuum. Seven states,<sup>7</sup> up from four in 1996, require districts and schools to use state standards and assessments to determine whether students in certain grades can be promoted (AFT, 1997).

**Developmental Factors.** As with standardized tests, a student's emotional and social development plays a greater role in decision making at the elementary level than at the upper grade levels. Policies reflect this. At the elementary level, 46 percent of the policies indicate that retention may be based in part on developmental or readiness factors (Table 1). The policies speak of "social and emotional maturity," "physical factors," and "age and maturity" as important criteria to consider in making decisions about the retention or promotion of students. Promotion decisions in the middle grades still reflect some concern for developmental readiness (36 percent), but this concern drops substantially (21 percent) in high school progression policies.

**Attendance.** Attendance is a factor taken into account in decision making at all school levels. Some policies indicate the number of days or the percent of the school year that students must be in attendance:

- "A student will not be promoted if the student has more than eight (8) unexcused absences for the year" (Houston, Texas).
- "Students must attend school 80 percent or more of the days school is in session."

<sup>6</sup> Only 17 states require students to pass a standardized test to graduate, and in only four states do those tests entail anything greater than basic skills assessment (AFT, 1996). There is, however, a growing interest in extending the coverage of graduation tests to core discipline areas (that is, beyond literacy and numeracy) and in setting passing standards at a level beyond minimal competency (AFT, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Those states are: Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia.

Attendance for promotion will be determined at the end of each school year" (Nashville, Tenn.).

- "A student is expected to have a minimum of 85 percent validated days of attendance of the enrolled days within each grading period to receive passing report card grades" (Inglewood, Calif.).

Here again, at the high school level attendance is mentioned less often, and major emphasis is on grades earned for course credits. Some districts, however, concerned about truancy, especially at the high school level, have imposed mandatory attendance policies for promotion as one mechanism to keep students in school.

**Teacher Recommendations.** Some policies explicitly indicate that teachers' recommendations—based on observations, student performance on teacher developed tests, homework, and the like—can be brought to bear as evidence for decision making. In other policies, the teachers' role is implicit. For example, in high school, where most students have many teachers, their "recommendations"—as reflected in grades<sup>8</sup>—play a significant role in determining credits earned, and thus eligibility to move to the next grade level.

## Policy Restrictions on the Retention of Students

Many of the policies we examined have language indicating that retention is the strategy of last resort. For example,

- "The policy of the San Diego Unified District is to ensure the success of every student. In light of research findings that grade level retention, especially after Grade 2, is harmful to students, non-promotion, especially after Grade 2, should only be considered when it is in the best interests of the child" (San Diego, Calif.).

<sup>8</sup> As the Austin and McCann (1992) study indicates, grades often represent a teacher's judgment based on a number of factors—academic performance, results of teacher developed tests, standardized tests, teacher observations, and the like. For an interesting discussion of issues surrounding grading practices, see Elbow, 1986.

■ "Retention should be considered only after all other options have been pursued" (Memphis, Tenn.).

■ "All teachers face wide ranges of ability and achievement in the students who comprise their classes. Retention does very little to reduce this range of difference. Strong evidence suggests that student achievement and student adjustments are not enhanced by retention. The benefits of retention generally do not outweigh its adverse affects such as increased probability for dropping out of school" (Albuquerque, N.M.).

No policy explicitly endorses "social promotion," and a handful explicitly forbid it. Nevertheless, many policies include restrictions on retaining children under certain conditions—which is tantamount to endorsing social promotion. These restrictions are most often related to the age or grade level of students (e.g., students in kindergarten or between some grade span—kindergarten to third grade, sixth to eighth grade—cannot be retained); types of students (e.g., special education, limited English proficient (LEP), and/or at-risk students cannot be retained); or number of times a child can be retained.

No formal policy has a restriction on the number or percentage of students who can be retained. Although many teachers believe that capping the number of students who may be retained is a widespread administrative practice, the imposition of such limits is not the result of any formal policy in the districts we surveyed.

Table 2 presents the data concerning limitations on retention. Forty percent of the policies restrict the number of times a student can be retained. These restrictions involve the number of consecutive times a student can be retained and/or the number of times within a particular grade span a student can be retained. For example:

■ Students may be retained only two times in kindergarten through fifth grade and then students are referred to the special services department for testing (Waterbury City Schools, Conn.);

■ Only one retention in elementary school (Orange County, Fla.);

■ Maximum retention of two years and then referral for diagnostic placement (Washington, D.C.);

■ Only once in elementary school, and no double retentions (Baltimore County, Md.);

■ No more than two times (New Orleans, La.); and

■ No more than once in kindergarten to fourth grade, and once in fifth to eighth grade (Houston, Texas).

TABLE 2  
Limitations on Retention

| <i>Limitations</i>                   | <i>Percent of Districts</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number of Times a Student Can Repeat | 40.0                        |
| Type of Student                      | 49.4                        |
| Special Education Students           | 45.9                        |
| LEP Students                         | 27.1                        |
| At-Risk Students                     | 3.5                         |
| Age                                  | 32.9                        |
| Grade Levels                         | 16.5                        |

Age limitations deal with the problem of "over-aged children," that is, the 17-year-old who might still be in middle school as a result of multiple retentions. For example:

■ In Chicago, students who are 15 years old prior to December 1 must be promoted to ninth grade regardless of academic achievement;

■ Similarly, the Norfolk, Va., school district policy requires that students enter ninth grade by the age of 16; and

■ The Milwaukee, Wis., policy says that students must complete sixth grade by age 14.

Several districts refer to these mandatory promotions as "placements," to acknowledge that the student has been moved ahead but has not been

promoted on the basis of achievement. While such policies prevent excessive retention of students, they fail to help students who have not succeeded despite retention.

Grade-level restrictions usually prohibit retention in certain grades, or more than one time within certain grade spans. For example, Montgomery County, Md., restricts retention in grades 1 and 2 and 4 and 5, and New York City restricts retention to one time from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Some districts explicitly acknowledge different treatment for disabled students (46 percent) or students with limited English proficiency (27 percent). The language of the policies usually stipulates that such students be placed and moved along at "a pace that is appropriate to their abilities."

## Who Participates in the Decision To Retain Students?

Table 3 indicates that teachers, parents, principals, and others—counselors and sometimes school committees—all can play a role in promotion/retention decisions. Parental involvement in decisions regarding retention decreases as students move along the education continuum. The greater participation of parents in the decision-making process at the elementary level is not surprising given other research findings concerning the greater involvement of parents in school activities in general, and in their children's schooling, in particular, at the early grades.

Teachers have a significant advisory role in decisions about retention and/or promotion, particu-

larly at the elementary and middle school levels. Their reduced participation in decision making at the high school level, as compared to elementary and middle school, may reflect the "mechanical manner" in which retention occurs at that level in many districts—that is, promotion and/or retention are the result of passing a specific number of courses and amassing the requisite credits to be moved to the next grade level.

## Who Has the Final Authority in Promotion Decisions?

Parents are not only part of the decision-making process, but may also have the right to appeal the decision and, in a minority of districts, have final authority as to whether the student is promoted or retained. However, when policies are explicit on this matter, the principal is almost always the final authority (Table 4). In only rare instances are teachers given the final authority on decisions to retain or promote students, and surveys of teachers indicate that principals and/or parents may apply pressure to get the decisions reversed (Peter D. Hart Associates, 1996).

A few districts use a joint decision making process in final determinations regarding retention. For example, the Albuquerque, N. M. policy states:

A conference consisting of principal, teacher, counselor, and parent must be scheduled and the parents notified of the conference. All factors will be taken into consideration. There should be a review of all records, and all significant points of view should be aired by all interested parties (Albuquerque, N. M.).

TABLE 3  
Who Participates in Promotion Decision Making?

| <i>Participants</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Elementary Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Middle School Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>High School Level</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Teachers            | 60.0                                             | 58.8                                                | 35.3                                              |
| Principals          | 68.2                                             | 70.6                                                | 45.9                                              |
| Parents             | 70.6                                             | 62.4                                                | 38.8                                              |
| Committee           | 25.9                                             | 25.9                                                | 17.6                                              |
| Counselor/others    | 15.0                                             | 15.0                                                | 8.0                                               |

TABLE 4  
Who Has the Final Authority in Promotion Decisions?

| <i>Final Authority</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Elementary Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>Middle School Level</i> | <i>Percent of Districts<br/>High School Level</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Principals             | 49.1                                             | 48.1                                                | 34.1                                              |
| Teachers               | 3.5                                              | 3.5                                                 | 2.4                                               |
| Parents                | 4.7                                              | 1.2                                                 | 0                                                 |
| Committee              | 9.4                                              | 10.6                                                | 3.5                                               |
| Others                 | 3.5                                              | 2.4                                                 | 2.4                                               |

## What Policies Do Districts Have To Prevent Failure?

The policies in several districts address services for students who are in danger of failing (Table 5). Chief among them is parental notification. Parental notification not only serves a legitimate "due process" function, but it is also an essential element in getting parents involved in their children's education and in decisions about their placement. It is significant to note that less than 60 percent of the districts require this.

TABLE 5  
What Intervention Programs Exist To Prevent Failure?

| <i>Intervention Programs</i> | <i>Percent of Districts</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Parental Notification        | 57.6                        |
| Tutoring                     | 15.3                        |
| Alternative Programs         | 12.9                        |
| Diagnostic Testing           | 11.0                        |

More important, very few districts mandate programs to assist students in danger of failing:

- Only 15 percent of the policies call for tutoring;
- Only 13 percent mention alternative programs and strategies such as "transitional" classes for students who are promoted but are not prepared to do the work at the next level, individualized plans for students, peer mentoring, reduced

course load, additional instructional time in extended-day or extended-year programs, customized instructional programs, or supportive social services; and

- Only 11 percent discuss diagnostic testing for students identified as in danger of failing.

## What Do Districts Do with Students Who Are Retained?

Despite the high retention rate in U.S. schools, particularly in urban areas, promotion policies do not generally offer many options as to educational treatments in addition to, or in lieu of, grade repetition (Table 6). Although, in practice, districts may have programs and alternatives for students who fail or who are at risk of failing, their policies on promotion and retention are mainly silent about their obligations to provide such alternatives.<sup>9</sup> Only one half of the district policies mention summer school, and discussions with school officials and union leaders indicate that in some instances funds to support summer school programs have been cut drastically, if not eliminated altogether. In several districts where summer school is offered, junior high and high school students must pay to

<sup>9</sup> District administrators often told us that they had programs, such as Title I, which are designed to assist disadvantaged children. But those programs were not explicitly mandated for children who were struggling or had failed, and the policies had no explicit references to other educational programs that must be made available to children who are retained.

attend, although some scholarships are available for needy youngsters.

**TABLE 6**  
**Consequences for Students**  
**Who are Retained**

| <i>Consequences</i>           | <i>Percent of Districts</i> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Summer School                 | 48.2                        |
| Tutoring                      | 9.4                         |
| Reassign to Special Education | 2.4                         |
| Reassess Next Year            | 8.2                         |
| Other                         | 16.5                        |

Other kinds of intervention programs for retained students include:

- "Double dosing"—that is, offering students at

risk of failing particular subject matter an opportunity to have additional classes to learn the material (New Orleans, La.);

- The development of education plans to address particular needs of failing students (Cobb County, Ga. and Caldwell County, N. Car.);
- Remedial tutoring (New York City); and
- Smaller classes with more individual attention (Cincinnati, Ohio).

## What Are the Reporting Requirements?

Public reporting regarding promotion and retention is one way a school district is held accountable. Yet, only a few of the district policies (14 percent) specifically require some form of public reporting regarding retention of students in

## Teachers' Role in Promotion Decisions

The role teachers play in social promotion decisions is complicated. Teachers do not like social promotion but they are ambivalent about retaining students. Ninety-four percent of teachers in a recent survey agreed with the statements: "Promoting students who are not truly prepared creates a burden for the receiving teachers and classmates. Automatic promotion inevitably brings down standards and impedes education." Yet 54 percent of those same teachers indicated that they had promoted unprepared students in the past year. Why? Our polls indicate:

- Teachers do not have the authority to retain students.
- Teachers succumb to pressure from principals and parents to promote students that the teachers could not be unprepared. Six of 10 teachers indicate that teachers in their school are pressured by principals and other administrators to retain students, while 32 percent say parental pressure is a problem.
- Teachers fear that when students are retained, they will cause behavior and discipline problems in class.
- Teachers know that there is already a significant amount of retention occurring in schools.
- Teachers believe that the educational research indicates that retention is both harmful and ineffective.
- Teachers believe that there are insufficient educational alternatives to social promotion or retaining young students who do not master the grade-level material. They see their dilemma as having to choose between two unsatisfactory alternatives. Teachers often know that retention may result in students repeating the same material taught with the same instructional strategies that were ineffective for those students in the first instance. To recommend retention in such a situation is not only a violation of what teachers know about how children develop and learn but it also lacks support from what teachers perceive as fundamental problem—the failure on the part of the administrative director and support staff to initiate and prevention programs to minimize risk of failure.

Peter D. Elph Associates, *Academic Standards and Student Discipline: A Research Essay*, 1996

grade. Furthermore, a review of district annual reports reveals that they are generally uninformative as to the level of performance required for promotion, how many students within a particular age cohort are retained, what educational services are

provided to retained students, and what the subsequent educational outcomes are for those students.

Some reports give annual rates, some break the data down by individual school, by grade, or by characteristics of students (e.g., race, ethnicity,

## Alternatives to Social Promotion

Some districts have policies in their promotion guidelines that call for programs designed to assist at-risk students. For example, Cincinnati has a policy that includes:

*When a student is retained, the district's curriculum committee must provide appropriate grouping practices and developmentally appropriate instructional programs for students who are retained. The curriculum committee must also ensure that students who are retained receive appropriate instructional programs and that the district's curriculum committee is responsible for ensuring that students who are retained receive appropriate instructional programs.*

*When a student is retained, the district's curriculum committee must provide appropriate grouping practices and developmentally appropriate instructional programs for students who are retained. The curriculum committee must also ensure that students who are retained receive appropriate instructional programs and that the district's curriculum committee is responsible for ensuring that students who are retained receive appropriate instructional programs.*

These policies have not been implemented and so data on their effectiveness is unavailable.

Nonetheless, they are an attempt to acknowledge individual and design programs to remedy it.

**Albuquerque** also requires that children in danger of failing receive special attention. The principal and parents must be notified early in the second term if retention is anticipated, and the teacher, principal, counselor, and other support personnel, as necessary, are charged with the responsibility of designing a special support program for each child in danger of failing. And of note, no student can be retained without a documented intervention plan and recommendations from school support staff concerning what unique education needs the student has and how they will be met.

**Baltimore** requires customizing intervention for students who are moved forward but not ready for the next level.

When students are moving from grade 8 to grade 9, there is a conference regarding students who have not achieved promotion in the conventional manner. Each year, at the end of the school year, a meeting called by the high school principal involving administrators, counselors, and other appropriate personnel from both schools shall be held to review all possible interventions in the middle school level and to prepare special provisions for the students in the high school. These provisions may include placement in study skills, language, or other programs, remedial education, or special curriculum programs. Students who study programs should be differentiated according to individual needs.

In **Houston**, students falling behind in grades one through eight are determined by their teachers. They:

Communicate with parents to make sure the child's educational progress is satisfactory. The communication may be in written form or by phone. School improvement studies:

- In the event of a student's failure, a minimum program should be:
- Individualized instruction involving multiple exposures, grouping, and
- Remedial instruction in extended-year programs.
- Remedial instruction in extended-day programs.
- Instructional accommodations that accelerate learning.
- Remedial instruction in the school's remedial program.
- Special program assignments and/or
- Other interventions designed by the school and approved by the district's curriculum committee.

and/or gender). In any event, the presentation of the data is such that it is often difficult to determine whether retention generally is a problem in the district, whether certain students are disproportionately affected, or whether failing students have been provided with extra help.

## Conclusions Regarding Promotion Policies

Our examination of district student progression policies, review of research, and discussion with union leaders and district officials reveal that:

- In most districts, there are no agreed-upon explicit standards of performance to which students are held accountable;
- Grades and standardized tests, along with teacher recommendations, form the basis for most decisions about retention and promotion;
- Teachers play an advisory role in the progression decision, but the final decision almost always rests with the principal;
- No district advocates "social promotion"—but many districts have implicit social promotion policies in that they limit retention under certain conditions, regardless of student achievement (i.e., they restrict the number of times a student can be retained, the grades in which a

student can be retained, and the types of students who can be retained);

- There are few mandates for intervention to prevent failure;
- With the exception of summer school, there are few alternative programs for children who are retained; and
- Reporting requirements about student progression are generally nonexistent or inadequate for informing citizens about the retention/promotion practices in their districts.

These findings indicate that district policies support social promotion by:

- Declaring retention the "option of last resort;"
- Having vague academic standards to which students are held accountable;
- Denying teachers, who have the most knowledge of students, significant authority in retention decisions;
- Mandating, under certain conditions, that students be moved ahead, regardless of performance; and
- Having few program options for preventing or intervening with students who fall behind.

# Eliminating Social Promotion

**E**nding social promotion merely by developing a new set of rules about how students progress from grade to grade will not address the underlying problem, nor stop the policy seesaw between retention and promotion. Policy alternatives must ensure that students learn what they need to know to be successful in the next grade, and ultimately, in life. Ignoring the problem of failure (social promotion) or doing again what failed to work the first time (simple retention) is not the answer. Policy changes must address the underlying problems of why children do not achieve and what changes in school organization, curriculum, instruction, and educational programs are necessary if children are to succeed.

Social promotion is particularly insidious, not only because the problems of failing students are ignored, but because it sends a message to every student that effort and achievement hardly matter. If achievement is irrelevant to student progress, then teachers' ability to demand that all students meet high standards is seriously eroded.

Districts can initiate a number of immediate policies and programs to end social promotion and address the problems of chronic, systemic underachievement that is so prevalent in many of our urban schools. These include:

- Adopting rigorous standards and developing grade-by-grade curriculum to support them;
- Ensuring that all schools with large numbers of students at risk have a full complement of well-

trained staff;

- Instituting policies to prevent early school failure; and
- Bringing "just in time" interventions to students who show evidence of falling behind.

## Explicit Grade-by-Grade Standards

Clear academic standards are essential to higher achievement and success for all. As Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat said: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." Without explicit grade-by-grade standards for students, anything goes, and anything is accepted—and sometimes even mediocre or poor work is rewarded as excellent.

Commonly shared grade-by-grade standards for students are essential. These standards

- Support academic rigor and ensure fairness by defining the expectations for success for all students;
- Eliminate the need for every teacher to set his or her own standards for grading and promotion decisions, or for requesting special services for students who are falling behind;
- Give teachers the authority to demand that students work hard, without the risk of appearing arbitrary or mean;
- Make academic expectations public and, therefore, accessible to students, parents, and the community;

## Why Students Fail

A very small percentage of children fail because they do not have the human capacity to acquire the complex knowledge and skills required for functioning in today's information age. But vast majority of children are insured to fail in school for other, more complicated reasons:

- Some children don't prosper in school because they are immature or otherwise unready for school.
- Some children don't thrive because they are in an early school where they are not provided with the academic and organizational practices and support needed for achievement.
- Others don't acquire the necessary knowledge and skills because of excessive absenteeism.
- Some students achieve at minimal level because they make little effort to acquire knowledge—either because they don't believe in academic achievement or because of institutional failure to their goals. There are no consequences for failure or other things, such as failure or physical prowess are more highly esteemed.
- But others are the victims of ill-conceived theories about children and why they learn that result in failure—and in practice for the part of teachers, administrators, parents and students, and the wider society, which sustain low achievement.
- Some students don't learn because they have no incentive (positive or negative) to engage them in the educative process.
- And still others fail because of a combination of the reasons identified above.

Policies to help underachieving students learn must address these underlying causes of failure. For some students, creating a negative incentive may be enough. Sending them a clear signal that learning counts, that failure to perform will result in retention, may be sufficient to inspire this small number of students to devote attention to their studies. For a few others who have been absent, repeating the grade may make sense, since they were not exposed to the material in the first place. And for some children, particularly those with little or no access to high-quality early childhood programs, repeating the early grades may make sense. But for the vast majority of underachieving students, systemic change is required if success is to be achieved. Policies and practices have to be developed that address the problems of a lack of standards, understaffing, underprepared teachers, and administrative indifference to whether learning takes place. These policies must address both learning, educational experiences and support services necessary for children who fail or are at risk of failure. Absent attention to these issues, we are doomed to continue the intractable pendulum swing between social promotion and retention.

- Furnish the basis for professional development for teachers as they come to consensus about what evidence of student learning is appropriate, how to spot problems in achieving the standards, and what strategies enhance student progress toward meeting the standards; and, most important

- Provide the basis for monitoring and managing student learning and making decisions about promotion, retention, and the need for additional educational services.

*District policies must specify the content and performance standards in each grade and/or schooling level (elementary, middle, and secondary) that students must achieve in order to be promoted and must include*

state- or districtwide assessments, based on the standards. Such assessments provide an external check on the teaching and learning process.

The assessments must include benchmarks of inadequate, satisfactory, and outstanding performance on the standards so that all stakeholders—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the broader community—have a shared understanding, not only of the content that students are expected to master (the “what” of standards), but also of the level of performance required to meet the standards (the “how much” of the standards). Assessment of students must be ongoing, not just at the end of the term, and must feed into daily decisions teachers make regarding appropriate instruction and assistance for struggling students. *Districts must provide teachers with the opportunity to learn about and use a variety of assessment strategies to determine where their students are in relation to the standards and to diagnose problems related to students’ meeting the standards.*

## Well-Prepared Teachers

All too often students at-risk of failure are taught by individuals who have not been adequately prepared to teach children effectively. As the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future indicates, a full 14 percent of the teacher workforce is hired on a temporary, provisional, or emergency basis, and:

In the nation’s poorest schools, where hiring is most lax and teacher turnover is constant, the results are disastrous. Thousands of children are taught throughout their school careers by a parade of teachers without preparation in the fields they teach, inexperienced beginners with little training and mentoring, and short-term substitutes trying to cope with constant staff disruptions. It is more surprising that some of these children manage to learn than that so many fail to do so (*What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future*, 1996, p. 16).

Indeed, in some New York City schools under registration review (SURR)—where the rate of student failure is so high that the schools are threatened with closure if they do not improve—more than half of the teachers are inexperienced and unlicensed (Darling-Hammond and Falk, 1995). Without experienced, well-trained teachers

in these schools, neither holding students back nor socially promoting them is likely to have much effect. *Districts must change their staffing practices and develop policies to attract and maintain a skilled teaching force, especially in schools with high-risk student populations.*

## Early Intervention— Getting It Right at the Start

The evidence is overwhelming—the best, most cost-effective remedial program is one that prevents students from falling behind in the first place. As Alexander, Entwisle, and Dauber (1994) put it, the answer to social promotion and retention is intervention policies that ensure that resources are brought to bear to promote successful student learning, especially for those children at risk of failure.

For long-term success, it is crucial that young students be provided with a firm academic foundation, particularly in reading. Districts must give full attention to ensuring that every student learns to read by third grade. To do this it is necessary to have well-trained teachers who not only can identify problems early, but who also can bring to bear a combination of instructional methods to deal with youngsters’ reading difficulties. For example, research has indicated that, if they are to learn to read well, many children need explicit instruction in decoding and comprehension skills as well as engaging curricular materials. Unfortunately, many teachers have little training in teaching such skills, and are apt to have limited knowledge of effective programs for working with children at risk (Moats, 1995). *A top-priority policy objective for any district that wishes to eliminate social promotion and that wants kids to “get it right from the start” is to require that all teachers, especially at the elementary school level, are thoroughly skilled in the teaching of reading.*

To make matters harder, many children—particularly those from high-poverty areas—come to school at an educational disadvantage. Many will have had little or no exposure to reading and writing at home, and no experience with the cultural norms and social expectations of public school. To

help create an equal playing field, *districts must provide poor and minority children with access to preschool programs that prepare them for success in kindergarten, and in particular, provide these children with the pre-literate skills (e.g., "A, B, Cs" and exposure to children's literature) that are necessary for learning to read. It is also essential that, from the start, districts develop comprehensive outreach programs to form partnerships with parents so that they can become actively involved in, and provide more effective support to, their children's education* (Comer, Haynes and Hamilton-Lee, 1989).

The research clearly shows that if children at risk are to be successful in school, they must receive individual attention. One way to provide such attention is with smaller classes, a policy that has been shown to improve achievement in the early grades (Mosteller, 1995). *Districts must develop policies to reduce class size in the early grades, especially in schools with high proportions of poor and minority students.* Other programs that provide early interventions include one-on-one tutoring, non-graded primary programs in which students have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills at the fastest possible pace, and extended learning time—longer school days or more days of instruction (Slavin, Karweit, and Wasik, 1993).

## "Just-in-Time" Interventions

A key goal of establishing clear academic standards, and regularly checking students through the use of aligned assessments, is to ensure that any problems are caught early, before students fall too far behind. Unless every effort is made to intervene quickly, students are likely to fall further and further behind as they proceed through the system. Indeed, in a longitudinal study of retention in a cohort of Baltimore students, Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber (1994) found retrospectively that even as early as the beginning of first grade:

...children who will be retained some time in elementary or middle school are far behind academically at the start of school. Their first marks indicate that they are having trouble with the curriculum, and their test scores at the beginning of the first grade show serious deficiencies in terms of readiness skills (Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber, 1994, p. 58).

Unlike medicine, which places an emphasis on prevention and early detection, school districts often wait until the problem is full-blown—for example, using students' test results at the end of sixth or ninth grade—before treatment begins. *Districts must develop policies and programs that provide immediate, "just in time" interventions to students at the first sign of trouble.*

While the development of policies to promote early intervention and prevention are vital, districts must also be ready to respond to the needs of students who have already fallen far behind. This is more difficult, but not impossible. Because the goal is to ensure that all students meet the same high standards, it is important to note that the traditional approach to remediation—dumbing down the curriculum and leading students through it at a slower pace—is a recipe for failure. If struggling students are ever to catch up to their peers, the emphasis must be on accelerating the pace of learning.

According to research, one of the most effective, standards-aligned intervention methods is to increase the instructional time for struggling students, especially intensive instruction delivered by a trained adult—i.e., one-on-one tutoring, Saturday classes, an extra period in the problem subject area ("double-dosing"), and summer school. Unfortunately, one recent study of remediation practices in schools (McIver, 1991) found that this type of intervention is relatively rare.

Ninety-five percent of public schools were found to offer struggling students at least one intervention option, including:

- Extra homework (56 percent),
- Pull-out programs in reading or English (50 percent),
- Before- or after-school coaching classes (46 percent),
- Peer tutoring (45 percent),
- Pull-out programs in math (43 percent).

Schools were less likely to offer:

- Summer school (41 percent),
- One-on-one adult tutors (35 percent in math, 34 percent in English),
- An extra core subject period in lieu of an elective course or "double-dosing" (17 percent),
- Saturday classes (3 percent).

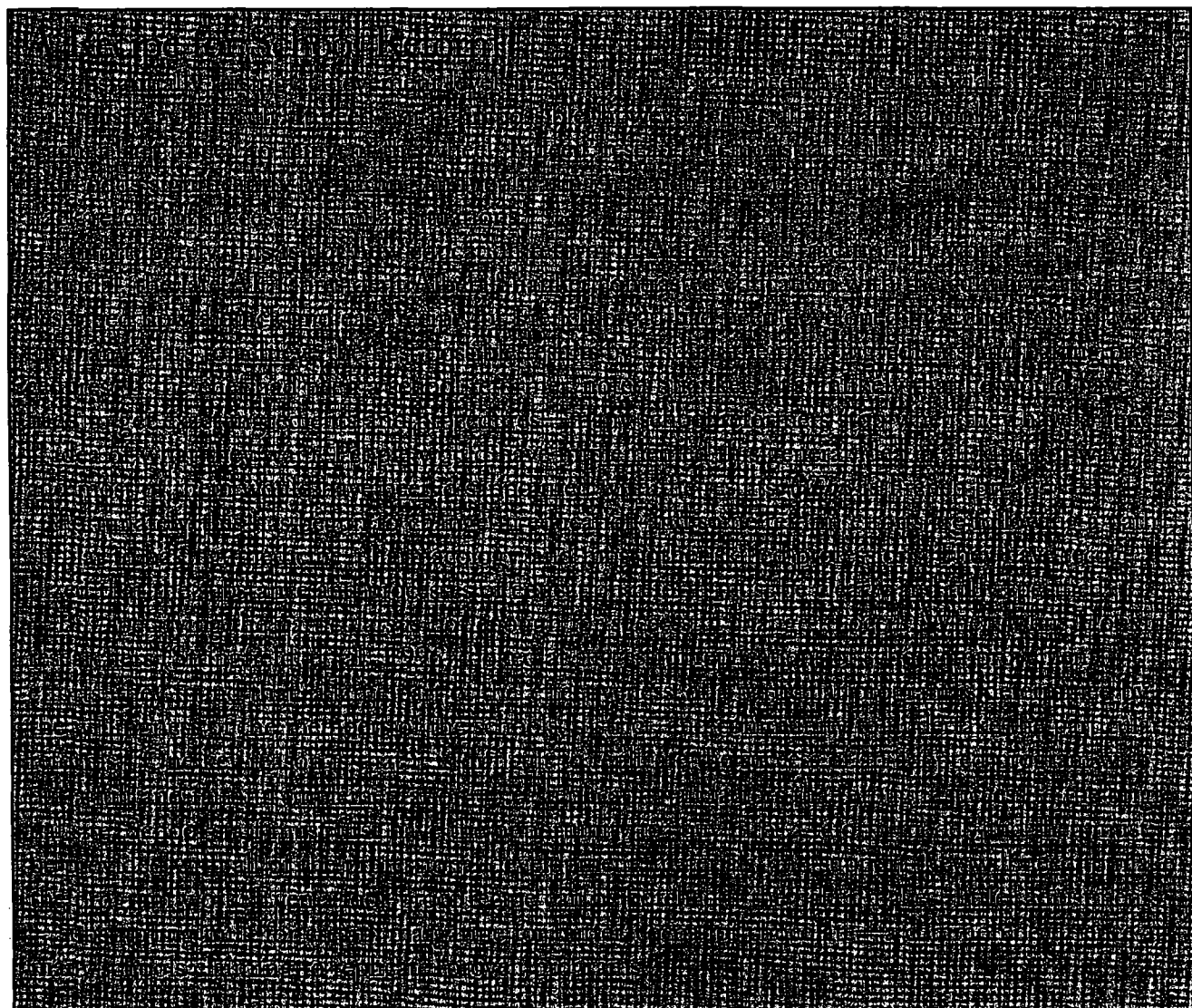
In other words, schools tend to do least what research shows will work best.

*Districts must furnish the resources for effective programs and services for students in danger of failing—"double dose" instruction, Saturday classes, summer school, tutoring and the like. They must also provide the professional development opportunities that teachers need to be effective with such students.*

## Ending Social Promotion

We have learned from experience that neither teaching nor learning is automatic, inevitable, or easy. We have also learned that social promotion and retention—the most common responses to student failure—are inadequate to the need. Even so, there is reason for optimism. We know things don't have to be this way. Around the country—in some of the poorest, toughest neighborhoods—there are schools that are working, and working well. Many of these schools have achieved success by implementing replicable programs, specifically designed to raise the achievement levels of struggling students.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix C for a description of four promising programs for raising student achievement.



The research indicates that most programs which are effective in educating at-risk youngsters and raising their levels of achievement share several essential characteristics. They have:

- A clear academic focus and rigorous curriculum,
- A safe and orderly environment,
- Small class sizes,
- Instructional strategies designed to maximize time on task,
- Frequent monitoring of individual student performance,
- Extensive staff development and training in support of the program.

As with any educational reform, however, repli-

cating the achievement gains of these programs is not guaranteed. Success will depend heavily on how well a given program or reform is implemented, how early a student's difficulties are caught and corrected, and the level of commitment among the educators and administrators charged with making the program work.

*Districts can develop programs to ensure the academic success of even the most troubled and disadvantaged students. Children achieve when they are taught the basics early; when they are challenged by high standards and a rich curriculum; and when caring, firm adults pay strict attention to the quality of students' work and behavior. Schools that work this way are the ones we want to send our own children to. They are the schools that all of our students deserve. They are the ones districts must create if we are to eliminate social promotion and help all students learn.*

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# APPENDIX A:

# Districts Participating in the Survey

|                                                    |                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Albuquerque Public Schools, N. M.                  | Inglewood Unified School District, Calif.       |
| Anderson County School District 5, S. Car.         | Janesville School District, Wis.                |
| Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Md.            | Jefferson County Schools, Colo.                 |
| Austin ISD, Texas                                  | Jefferson County Public Schools, Ken.           |
| Baltimore County Public Schools, Md.               | Jefferson Parish Schools, La.                   |
| Brandywine School District, Del.                   | Jersey City School District, N.J.               |
| Broward County School District, Fla.               | Jordan School District, Ut.                     |
| Bullitt County Schools, Ken.                       | Kansas City Unified School District, Kans.      |
| Caldwell County Schools, N. Car.                   | Lake Washington School District 414, Wash.      |
| Cartwright Elementary School District #83, Ariz.   | Lansing School District, Mich.                  |
| Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, N. Car.     | Long Beach Unified School District, Calif.      |
| Chesapeake Public Schools, Va.                     | Los Angeles Unified School District, Calif.     |
| Chesterfield County Schools, Va.                   | Memphis City Schools, Tenn.                     |
| Chicago Public Schools, Ill.                       | Mesa Unified School District, Ariz.             |
| Chino Unified School District, Calif.              | Metro School District, Ind.                     |
| Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio                    | Milwaukee Public Schools, Wis.                  |
| City School District of the City of New York, N.Y. | Mobile County Public Schools, Fla.              |
| Clark County School District, Nev.                 | Montgomery County Public Schools, Md.           |
| Cleveland Public Schools, Ohio                     | Nashville-Davidson County Schools, Tenn.        |
| Cobb County School District, Ga.                   | New Orleans Public Schools, La.                 |
| Compton Unified School District, Calif.            | Norfolk City Schools, Va.                       |
| Coweta County School System, Ga.                   | Ogden City School District, Ut.                 |
| District of Columbia Public Schools, D.C.          | Orange County Public Schools, Fla.              |
| Dade County Public Schools, Fla.                   | Palm Beach County School District, Fla.         |
| Dallas Public Schools, Texas                       | Philadelphia School District, Penn.             |
| DeKalb County School System, Ga.                   | Pinellas County Public Schools, Fla.            |
| Detroit Public Schools, Area G, Mich.              | Polk County Public Schools, Fla.                |
| Duvall County Public Schools, Fla.                 | Prince George's County Public Schools, Md.      |
| Edgewood ISD, Texas                                | Rochester City School District, N.Y.            |
| Eugene School District, Ore.                       | Rockingham County Consolidated Schools, N. Car. |
| Fairfax County Public Schools, Va.                 | Salinas Union H.S. District, Calif.             |
| Folsom Cordova Unified School District, Calif.     | San Diego City Schools, Calif.                  |
| Fort Worth ISD, Texas                              | San Marcos Unified School District, Calif.      |
| Fresno Unified School District, Calif.             | Santa Rosa County School District, Fla.         |
| Glendale School District 40, Ariz.                 | Shelby County Schools, Tenn.                    |
| Granite School District, Ut.                       | Socorro ISD, Texas                              |
| Greece Central School District, N.Y.               | Springfield School District R-12, Mo.           |
| Gwinnett County Public Schools, Ga.                | St. Mary's County Public Schools, Md.           |
| Hamilton City School District, Ohio                | Vigo County School Corporation, Ind.            |
| Hawaii Department of Education, Hawaii             | Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Va.         |
| Hillsborough County Public Schools, Fla.           | Wake County School District, N. Car.            |
| Houston ISD, Texas                                 | Waterbury City Schools, Conn.                   |
| Independence School District, Mo.                  |                                                 |

## APPENDIX B:

# AFT's Criteria for Judging the Quality and Usefulness of Student Achievement Standards

**I**magine it is 10 years from now. Instead of endless news stories decrying the low quality of American schools, instead of constant proposals for private school vouchers and other forms of privatization, and instead of school bond votes sinking because voters feel they are pouring good money after bad, America's public schools have turned themselves around.

Teachers, parents, taxpayers—and the students themselves—all know what we expect our children to know and be able to do, because states have adopted and publicized clearly defined academic standards and translated them into curriculum frameworks that guide instruction. What our students study is no longer delegated to a handful of textbook publishers. The expectations for students are high—as demanding as the standards met by students in other industrialized countries. And the belief that all students can do challenging work has put an end to the watered-down curricula that so many kids—especially those in the inner city—used to receive.

Students are periodically tested on whether they're reaching the standards, and if they're not, the system responds with appropriate assistance and intervention. Until students meet the standards, they won't be able to graduate from high school or to enter college; and they won't have an easy out—even McDonald's won't hire them until they meet some version of the

standards. Since learning now "counts," parents no longer complain about too much homework or teachers who are too strict. Instead, they support teachers' efforts to elicit hard work from their children. The relationship between teachers and their students has improved, too; it has become similar to that of a coach to his team. Students know that much depends on their success in reaching clearly defined goals, and they see teachers as their allies in that joint effort.

Teachers' roles are further strengthened because all components of the school system are devoted to helping students achieve the standards and, therefore, are all working together: The curriculum that teachers use is based on these standards and so are the assessments (instruction is no longer distorted by the drive to produce high scores on multiple-choice, basic-skills tests); teacher education and professional development programs are focused on preparing teachers to help students meet the standards (instead of one-shot workshops on generic teaching skills or the latest fads); and textbooks and other instructional materials are tailored to the content of the curriculum frameworks.

Finally, the federal government, the state education agency, and school district have greatly loosened the rules and regulations that have smothered innovation in the past. With standards and assessments to measure their success, schools and teachers are free to find and devise the best programs and strategies for helping students succeed.

**T**his may sound like a fantasy, but it is the way school systems in most other industrialized countries function, which is a major reason why their students consistently outperform ours on international assessments. It was also the major impetus behind the nation's two education summits and the reason that virtually every state in the country is in the process of developing, reviewing or strengthening their academic standards, many of them encouraged to do so by Goals 2000 legislation. According to several recent polls, it is also an idea that is strongly supported by the public. Safe schools with high academic standards are now ranked among the nation's highest priorities.

But what exactly do people mean by "standards?" If the activities in the states are a fair indicator, it seems that everyone has a different idea of what standards should look like and what functions they are meant to serve. Some states are basing their standards in the academic subjects; others are not. Some states have short documents that fit entire subjects on one page; others have produced large volumes. Some are focusing on the skills students should acquire; others are combining academic content and skills. Some are mainly interested in defining what students should learn; others are just as interested in changing the way teachers teach.

The differences go on and on. And the resulting confusion is threatening to shift the momentum and erode support for a very good idea. In our view, only strong academic standards can provide the sturdy foundation we need to dramatically improve student achievement and win back the confidence of the public. We have already learned a lot from the standards-setting efforts in various states and districts, as well as from our own research into the academic standards that undergird the educational systems of several of the world's highest-achieving nations. Based on these lessons, and in an effort to bring some clarity and consensus to the standards-setting process, the AFT developed the following set of criteria.

Since these criteria were first published in the fall of 1994, they have been read widely. As the work on strengthening standards continues in states and communities across the country, we

hope that these criteria will continue to be of use to teachers, parents and other interested citizens in their attempts to judge whether what has been put forward in the name of "standards" is good enough.

Of course, we should not expect that perfect standards will arise on the first try. It took other countries a long time to arrive at usable descriptions of the most essential knowledge and skills that they want their students to learn. We are not likely to be any different and should be prepared for a lengthy process of revision and refinement—not to mention a lot of hard work. This should not dissuade us from the task, however. Adopted and implemented with care, academic standards are a powerful tool for improving the American education system. It is in this spirit that we put forward these criteria.

## 1. Standards must focus on academics

This may seem obvious to many people, but it is important to stress the point. The purpose of setting standards is to improve students' academic performance. This should be the central mission of all our educational arrangements. Forging agreement around the academic content of the curriculum and the expectations we have for our children is the essential first step. If we can agree on what all students deserve to learn, we can focus our energies and resources on giving all kids the opportunities they need to read and write better; reach greater heights in math and science; and learn more about history, geography, literature, and the arts. These are the things that will make a difference in students' lives, and they are what parents care most about.

But there are some who would rather have standards focus on social and behavioral issues than on academics. Across the country, we've watched debates and legislative battles unfold around proposed education standards or "outcomes" that stray from or avoid academics. These efforts, frequently referred to as "outcomes-based education," or "OBE," are being challenged and defeated, and not only by religious fundamentalists but also by concerned parents, business people, educators, and other public school supporters who have raised serious questions about some of the stan-

dards that have been developed.

In several states, the intense negative reaction to nonacademic standards resulted in the substantial revision or defeat of the entire standards reform package. Here are a few examples from Virginia (where, in 1992, Governor Douglas Wilder abandoned the complete draft set of "Common Core of Learning" standards) and from Pennsylvania (where strong opposition prompted the state to significantly amend its draft "Student Learning Outcomes"):

All students understand and appreciate their worth as unique and capable individuals and exhibit self-esteem (*Pennsylvania's Student Learning Outcomes, Draft 1991*).

All students demonstrate caregiving skills and evaluate, in all settings, appropriate child care practices necessary to nurture children based on child development theory (*Pennsylvania's Student Learning Outcomes, Draft 1991*).

[A] student who is becoming a fulfilled individual uses the fundamental skills of thinking, problem solving, communicating, quantifying, and collaborating...to analyze personal strengths and limitations to improve behaviors, capabilities, and plans (*Virginia's Common Core of Learning, Draft 1992*).

In contrast, the following excerpt from the recently revised national history standards is clearly grounded in academic content and represents the type of information that standards ought to convey:

The student understands the causes of the American Revolution. Therefore, the student is able to:

- Explain the consequences of the Seven Years War and the overhaul of English imperial policy following the Treaty of Paris in 1763.
- Compare the arguments advanced by defenders and opponents of the new imperial policy on the traditional rights of English people and the legitimacy of asking the colonies to pay a share of the costs of empire.
- Reconstruct the chronology of the critical events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and England.
- Analyze political, ideological, religious and economic origins of the Revolution.

- Reconstruct the arguments among patriots and loyalists about independence and draw conclusions about how the decision to declare independence was reached.

As noted earlier, the program most responsible for giving standards a bad name is called "outcomes-based education" or OBE. Although it makes sense to organize our education system around the results—or outcomes—we hope it will produce, OBE's treatment of academic knowledge as a low priority doesn't sit well with most teachers and parents. OBE proponents served as key consultants to several state education departments over the last several years, and in each case the so-called "reform" proposal that resulted was met with significant opposition, largely because of the non-academic and controversial nature of the standards. Now, in a number of states, those opposed to any kind of standards development are trying to pin the "OBE" label on whatever effort is under way in an attempt to taint it. In reaction, states have begun to avoid terms like "outcomes" and "OBE" to describe what they're doing. Terminology, however, is not at the heart of the matter. In the end, it's the content of the standards that must be kept center stage.

Schools certainly have a role to play in helping students develop those traits essential to good behavior and strong character, such as compassion, honesty, self-discipline, and perseverance. And the standards-setting process can contribute to that mission by ensuring that all students have access to a solid academic curriculum, because moral education is a natural by-product of a good curriculum. As students weigh the dilemmas and compromises of history and learn about its heroes and villains; as they re-visit the great debates that have stirred mankind over the centuries; and as they confront the ethical issues that lie at the heart of so much of our great literature, their moral understandings will be greatly enriched.

In addition, of course, schools can contribute to the moral education of the young in other ways—for example, through their discipline policies; through their decisions about what to reward and recognize; and by the example they set as a community in which the virtues are both expected and honored. These are not matters, however, that lend themselves well to the standards-setting mechanism. They are best taken up by teachers,

parents, and the local or school community, coming together to find common ground in their hopes for their children.

## 2. Standards must be grounded in the core disciplines

Some educators argue that we should move away from traditional subject areas and create "interdisciplinary" expectations for students. "Human growth and development," "environmental stewardship," and "cultural and creative endeavors" are just some of the topics that have sprung up in place of math, science, history, and English. Proponents of this approach argue that solutions to "real-world" problems and issues cannot be based on one or another discipline, so, therefore, neither should standards.

This argument belies the purpose of standards, which is to focus our educational systems on *what* is most essential for students to learn, not to prescribe *how* the material should be taught. At its best, interdisciplinary education can be a stimulating approach to teaching the knowledge and skills that arise from the disciplines. But that content knowledge and those skills have to be defined first if interdisciplinary teaching is to be effective. That is the purpose of setting standards.

Strong standards in each of the core disciplines will ensure that interdisciplinary approaches to teaching reflect the depth and integrity of the disciplines involved. It is not enough for standards to simply touch upon or reference the disciplines. To be complete, a set of standards must embody the knowledge and habits of mind essential to each of the core subjects, and in our opinion, this cannot be accomplished by trying to fit disciplinary knowledge into broad over-arching categories such as "critical thinking" and "problem solving."

When standards-setters abandon the disciplines or significantly blur disciplinary boundaries, content often suffers. Standards become vaguely worded and loosely connected, making the job of curriculum designers, assessment developers, and teachers all but impossible. These are also the kinds of standards that parents and the public are least likely to understand and support.

In other words, no matter how interesting the teaching method, the subject matter must still be worthwhile for the approach to work. Strong stan-

dards in each of the core disciplines will ensure that interdisciplinary approaches reflect the depth and integrity of the disciplines involved.

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In order to better prepare students for the job market after they finish school, some states and industry groups are developing "career" or "skill" standards separate from the core academic standards. In so far as these efforts help make clear to students the academic knowledge and skills they will need to get good jobs and build successful careers, skill standards will be serving a very useful purpose. Students are always asking how what they are learning in school is relevant to their later lives. By showing students, through the standards and curriculum, how good writing skills or trigonometry are used in the workplace, schools may have an easier time motivating students to work hard, and businesses may have better-prepared youngsters applying for jobs.

There is a real danger, however, that skill standards can have a very different effect than the one just described. If these standards become purely vocational in nature, and if they fail to make a strong connection to the academic subjects, the result will be a greater separation between the vocational and academic tracks in American high schools. Whether students plan to go to college, vocational training, or directly into the workforce after high school, there is a common core of academic knowledge and skills they will need to succeed. Skill standards either need to build in that academic core or they need to make clear references to a set of academic standards that does.

## 3. Standards must be specific enough to assure the development of a common core curriculum

We have already established that good standards are based in the academic disciplines, but being academic and subject based is not enough. A good set of standards should also outline the essential knowledge and skills that all students should learn in each subject area.

Such standards would guarantee that all students, regardless of background or neighborhood, are exposed to a common core of learning. This means putting an end to the unequal, uninspiring

curricula that many disadvantaged youngsters get locked into from an early age. A strong common core also would enable us to continue to forge a strong common culture, to preserve what unites us without diminishing the unique strength that flows from our diversity.

Requiring a common core would not, of course, limit students who choose to go beyond it to advanced-level high school courses in any of the academic subjects. Nor would it prevent a fruitful integration of the academic core with vocational or technical education at the upper-secondary level. But to the extent that a common core is established through most of the high school years—which is the practice abroad—we would ensure that all students are given a more equal chance to become well-educated citizens.

In addition, teachers would have a much clear-

er idea of what their students learned the year before, so they would not have to waste so much class time re-teaching previously covered material. And it would make life much easier on students who move from one school to another and often find themselves either way ahead or way behind the rest of the class.

With a common core in hand, we could—as other industrialized countries have done—end the need for every teacher to re-invent the wheel. Like other professionals, we could begin to accrue a more focused body of knowledge, a portfolio of good practice, of materials and options that teachers and teacher educators could draw from, adapt, add to, polish, and refine. But this is only possible if there is broad agreement on what is most essential to learn.

If standards are to set forth the content of a

*Here are a few examples of standards that meet and do not meet the AFT criteria.*

|                | <b>Strong Standards</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Weak Standards</b>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>English</b> | Students should be able to read, understand, and analyze a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes.                    | Students should be able to read and understand a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. |
| <b>History</b> | Students should be able to understand and analyze the historical context of a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. | Students should be able to read and understand a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. |
| <b>Math</b>    | Students should be able to understand and analyze a variety of mathematical concepts and problems, and to apply these concepts and problems to a variety of real-world situations.                                                     | Students should be able to read and understand a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. |
| <b>Science</b> | Students should be able to understand and analyze a variety of scientific concepts and problems, and to apply these concepts and problems to a variety of real-world situations.                                                       | Students should be able to read and understand a variety of texts, including literary, informational, and technical texts, and to write effectively in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes. |

common core, and if they are to be used by teachers, curriculum and assessment developers, textbook publishers, and others, they must be specific enough to guide these people in their activities. Unfortunately, many states' standards seem to be falling short in this regard, offering the barest guidance as to what should be covered. Some of the standards we've seen fit entire subjects on a single page. Others don't make any distinction between what elementary and secondary students should learn. One state's social studies standards mention that students should learn about the concept of "war and its many repercussions," but never specify which wars are most important for them to study. Such a guideline could lead to textbooks that cover the U.S. Revolution and the Civil War, assessments that cover World War I and World War II, and professional development and teacher education that stress Korea and Vietnam.

Though it has received a lot of attention for its reform efforts over the last several years, Kentucky is an example of a state whose standards were, until recently, too vague to guide local districts toward a core curriculum and matching, content-based assessments. Kentucky's original standards contained only five to ten statements of what students should learn in each subject area. Here, for example, is the complete list of Kentucky's original social studies standards:

2.14 Students understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations.

2.15 Students can accurately describe various forms of government and analyze issues that relate to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

2.16 Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups.

2.17 Students interact effectively and work cooperatively with the many ethnic and cultural groups of our nation and world.

2.18 Students understand economic principles and are able to make economic decisions that have consequences in daily living.

2.19 Students recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations.

2.20 Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends and issues to develop historical perspective.

To the state's credit, officials in Kentucky have decided that it is necessary to provide teachers, parents, and others with more clarity in terms of the academic content students are expected to learn. The original standards are, therefore, being fleshed out in greater detail, and should help to fill a hole in what is otherwise a very impressive state education reform effort.

In contrast, California has for years communicated its standards in terms of grade-by-grade curriculum frameworks, thus providing substantial, common, clear guidance to all the players in the educational system. Here, for example, is an excerpt from the California History/Social Science Framework describing what 11th graders should understand about the Great Depression:

Students should assess the likely causes of the Depression and examine its effects on ordinary people in different parts of the nation through use of historical materials. They should recognize the way in which natural drought combined with unwise agricultural practices to cause the Dust Bowl, a major factor in the economic and cultural chaos of the 1930s. They should see the linkage between severe economic distress and social turmoil. Photographs, films, newspaper accounts, interviews with persons who lived in the period, as well as paintings and novels (such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*) will help students understand this critical era.

The administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal should be studied as an examination of the government's response to economic crisis. The efforts of the Roosevelt Administration to alleviate the crisis through the creation of social welfare programs, regulatory agencies, and economic planning bureaus should be carefully assessed.

Officials in California are trying to build on the information in the curriculum frameworks by developing complementary standards and assessments that all students will be expected to master.

How specific should standards be? There is no perfect formula. But it helps to keep in mind why we are setting standards in the first place and how

they will be used. Here are some questions worth asking about the standards in your state:

■ Are the standards organized by grade levels or age bands, or do they in some way clearly delineate the differences in expectations for students at different ages or levels?

■ Are the standards clear and specific enough to guide the development of curriculum frameworks that would describe the core units to be covered in every grade?

■ If a state were to adopt these standards but give districts the responsibility for fleshing them out into a curriculum, what are the chances that students across the state would be learning the same core curriculum?

■ If a student moved from one district to another or from school to school within a district, would these standards ease the transition and ensure that they were neither too far behind nor too far ahead?

■ If a textbook publisher and an assessment developer were to use the standards in their work, is it likely that the text and the test would be well aligned?

#### 4. Standards must be manageable given the constraints of time

Neither standards nor the resulting common core curriculum should try to cover everything to be taught. A core curriculum should probably constitute somewhere between 60 to 80 percent of the academic curriculum; the exact amount is open for discussion. The rest can be filled in by local districts, schools, and teachers.

It's important not to draw the wrong conclusions here: there is nothing sacred about the ways schools presently apportion their time. According to *Prisoners of Time*, the 1994 report by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning, American schools spend about half as much time on academics as their counterparts overseas. The average U.S. high school graduate spends only 40 percent of his time studying core academic subjects in his school career. There is no reason why these figures should be so low, and standards are the first necessary step toward initiating some changes in school schedules.

Nevertheless, as states begin to adopt standards, there undoubtedly will be competing

demands for time in the curriculum—both within and among the disciplines. Standards-setters will need to exhibit restraint in the face of these pressures. Their job is to determine what is essential for students to learn. A laundry list that satisfies everyone will be self-defeating, leaving teachers right back where they are now—facing the impossible task of trying to rush through overstuffed textbooks and ridiculously long sets of curriculum objectives.

#### 5. Standards must be rigorous and world class

Much of the discussion about education standards in recent years has focused on the need to bring American students up to "world-class" levels of achievement. As commonplace as this phrase has become, it is extremely important that we don't lose sight of what it actually means. It doesn't mean making standards a bit more rigorous than they were before. It doesn't mean asking teachers or parents what they think a "world-class" education should look like. And it doesn't mean reliance on the work of national standards-setting organizations that have not, themselves, arrived at an adequate definition of "world-class achievement."

For standards to be truly world class, they must establish expectations for American students that are at least as demanding as those set for students in other high-achieving countries. It means placing American standards side by side with the best the world has to offer and seeing how well they measure up. It means studying the actual curriculum frameworks, exams, and samples of student work from a variety of countries to determine what students around the world are expected to learn, at what age or grade level it is taught to them, how well they are expected to know it, and the means by which they are asked to demonstrate that knowledge.

If standards truly are rigorous and world class, they should stand up to some tough but sensible questions:

■ Do they reflect various levels of knowledge and skills comparable to what students in high-achieving countries are expected to master?

■ Which countries did the standards-setters use as a basis for comparison, and what documents

from these countries did they look at to determine their standards?

■ Will the standards lead to a core curriculum for all students—those headed for college and those headed for work—as demanding as those in France or Japan?

■ Are the standards as rigorous as those reflected in the French *Brevet de College* and the German *Realschule* exams, a standard met by two-thirds of students in those countries?

■ Will they result in assessments for the college bound as rigorous as the German *Abitur*, the French *Baccalauréat* exams, the British A-levels, or the Japanese university entrance exams?

■ Did the standards-setters refer to internationally benchmarked curricula and exams such as those of the International Baccalaureate program?

■ What about the best programs and resources available in the U.S., such as the College Board's advanced-placement exams and achievement tests (now called the SAT II)?

In our 1996 report on the quality of state standards (*Making Standards Matter*, August 1996), the AFT asked officials in all fifty states whether they looked at the expectations in other countries while developing their standards. Only twelve states had done this in any measurable way, and most of those had only done so in one or two subjects.

Everyone involved in developing standards, whether at the national, state, or local level, must take this benchmarking issue seriously. Information on other countries is not easy to obtain, but it is absolutely essential that we do a better job of it if our standards are going to help students achieve their maximum potential. Nothing will be accomplished by setting standards that are too low. Yet without honest international benchmarking, we will be captives of our own parochial notions of what students can accomplish, and low standards may very well be the result.

## 6. Standards must include 'performance standards'

In recent polls, most AFT teachers agreed that students, across the board, are capable of doing better work and mastering more demanding material than they currently are. Teachers also

cited the lack of student motivation as one of the biggest problems they face in their classrooms. In any profession, specific standards are developed in order to measure competence and performance, and these standards give people something specific to aim for. Whether you look at the medical boards that prospective doctors must pass, the bar exams for lawyers, or the time trials for drivers to qualify for the Indianapolis 500—performance is never dealt with in the abstract. For example, Indy racers are not simply told that “very fast driving” will qualify them for the big race. They know exactly what times they need to beat, and they plan their strategies accordingly.

It should be the same for education standards. An influential report commissioned by the National Education Goals Panel, *Promises To Keep: Creating High Standards for American Students*, asserted that a complete set of standards should describe both *what* students should know and be able to do and *how well* they must know and do it. The report separated these functions into two distinct categories—content standards and performance standards. Content standards should define the knowledge (the most important and enduring ideas, concepts, issues, dilemmas, and information) and skills (the ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning, and investigating) essential to each discipline. Performance standards should specify “how good is good enough.” They should show how competent a student demonstration must be to indicate achievement of the content standards.

Most states began the standards-setting process by developing content standards. A few states made it clear that the next step would be to develop performance standards, but until very recently, there weren't any examples to look at. In an attempt to define “how good is good enough,” a handful of states have now begun to put together sample assessment questions and samples of student work that “meet” the content standards. The most effective examples not only show competent student work but also explain why that work meets the standards. Oregon is one of the states farthest along in this process, but there is still plenty of work to be done.

## 7. Standards must define multiple levels of performance for students to strive for

Standards are not merely meant to measure what students are learning but also to motivate them to excel. Youngsters should be able to look to academic standards as a goal, something to work toward, to strive for; something that will challenge them, no matter how far ahead or behind they may be. Standards that are too easy to reach won't require students to work hard. On the other hand, students will be discouraged from trying at all if the standards are so high that they seem out of reach. All students need to be able to look at a set of academic standards and say "these are challenging, but I think I can reach them if I work hard and put my mind to it."

Considering the range of achievement among students, they won't all be inspired by the same level of performance. What may seem very challenging to some is bound to look easy to others. Title I of the *Improving America's Schools Act* recognizes this. It requires states and districts to define multiple degrees of mastery of the content standards (e.g., partially proficient, proficient, advanced) and to report achievement that way from elementary school onward. This will be helpful to students, parents, and teachers who will want to know—beyond just "pass or fail"—how well students are doing in relation to the content standards. It will also help schools and districts target resources to those students in most need of support and track their progress against a set of clear benchmarks.

What's not necessarily required in Title I—but is very important for states and districts to do—is to make clear to parents, teachers, students, and others what the different performance levels mean. What should an "advanced" high school student's writing look like? How does that compare to "proficient" and "partially proficient" writing? What kinds of math problems should students who are considered "proficient" be able to solve in elementary school? In middle school? In high school? States and districts have to begin putting concrete examples of student work out there in the public view if their standards are going to mean anything to anyone.

Defining multiple degrees of performance standards does *not* mean having low standards for some students and high standards for others. The minimum acceptable level of performance needs to be much more demanding than what many students are achieving today, and no child should be able to slip through the cracks. The goal is to significantly raise the floor while also raising the ceiling.

Another important way to make sure standards motivate all students is to encourage specialization at some point in high school. All students should be required to meet the same core content standards in elementary and middle school and through a certain point in high school. Some may take longer than others, and there should always be second and third chances, but they should all reach the core standards.

Once they've mastered the common core, students should have the opportunity to pursue different courses of study depending on their strengths and interests, and those courses should be directly linked to students' postsecondary and career aspirations. Students who want to go on to college should know what types of courses they will need to take in order to be well prepared, and there should be a clear set of standards for them to work toward before graduating. Those who want to pursue further technical training after high school, but are not interested in a four-year college, should also know which courses and standards will help further their careers. And those who intend to go directly into the job market should have at least mastered the core content standards before getting a diploma—a step, when met, that will significantly raise the achievement levels and life chances of these youngsters.

The point here is that not all high school students are going to be challenged by and interested in the same courses and standards. Again, this is not a way of setting up low standards for some students and high standards for others. They should all be high. In fact, the core content standards should reflect a level of understanding and achievement that is much higher than what's considered "minimum competency" today. It is shameful to let students graduate from high school by passing tests based on 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade knowledge and skills.

## 8. Standards must combine knowledge and skills, not pursue one at the expense of the other

There is a terrible myth in education that has a tendency to confuse important decisions affecting curriculum and that is threatening to strangle the standards movement. The theory goes something like this: Knowledge is dynamic, transient, always changing, whereas the need to apply knowledge is constant. What is most important for students to learn are skills such as problem solving, decision making, and higher-order thinking, so that they can react to any situation, gain and use whatever knowledge they need, and not waste their time learning facts and theories that may turn out to be irrelevant to their lives. Who can be sure of how much specific knowledge each person will really need in the "real world" anyway?

Of course this is overstated, but not by much. At the root of this myth is a false dichotomy between knowledge and skills. And what it is leading to are standards that neglect the subject matter (the facts, ideas, concepts, issues, and information) of the traditional academic disciplines that are needed to develop the skills in the first place. Consider the following very general "skills" standards:

Students should be able to use critical and creative thinking skills to respond to unanticipated situations and recurring problems. (*Connecticut's Common Core of Learning, 1987*)

Students should know reading strategies are tools for constructing meaning, thinking critically, and solving problems. (*Arkansas' Reading Curriculum Framework, 1995*)

Students will demonstrate the ability to examine problems and proposed solutions from multiple perspectives. (*Missouri's Standards, Draft 1995*)

These examples may seem harmless enough, but they leave unanswered just what it is students are to solve, decide, or think about. What is the subject? Where is the content? The unyielding facts and ideas? And how are students to learn how to learn without learning something concrete first? Let's turn the issue around: Is it possible to name a problem to be solved, a decision to be made, or a thing to be thought about that is not

tied to subject matter?

And what kind of guidance do "standards" such as those cited above give to teachers and others in education? "Critical thinking" cannot be taught in the abstract. Students *are* taught to think critically, however, when they are given something challenging to think about, such as: Analyze the contradiction between the principle expressed in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" and the existence of slavery at the time.

Good standards will ensure that students develop the intellectual powers of observation, communication, reasoning, reflection, judgment, perspective, and synthesis that are often lumped under vague phrases like "higher-order" or "critical thinking." But they must pursue these skills through the content of the subject areas. Skills that are cut free from content and context are meaningless—and impossible to teach or assess.

An overemphasis on generic skills and processes seems to be a particular trend in states that favor local control of the entire curriculum. In essence, this is a way for states to avoid making judgments about the core content of the curriculum. But as discussed earlier, vague, content-free standards accomplish nothing. They do not ensure that all children will have access to a challenging curriculum, nor can they lead to assessments that reveal the depth and breadth of student knowledge.

## 9. Standards must not dictate how the material should be taught

Good standards are designed to guide, not to limit, instruction. They are intended to communicate to teachers and other school staff what is most important for students to learn, but not how the ideas or information should be taught. If, for example, a set of standards includes teaching activities, they should be there for illustrative purposes only. It is important that standards are not allowed to infringe on teachers' professional responsibilities, their ability to choose their particular teaching methods and to design their lessons in ways that reflect the best available research and that are best suited to their students' needs.

## 10. Standards must be written clearly enough for all stakeholders to understand

Part of the challenge states face when developing standards is how to generate broad, public support. It is important, therefore, that standards not be written solely for an education audience. The standards must be written clearly enough for parents, students, and interested community members to understand—indeed, to be inspired by. Otherwise, standards developers will risk alienating the very people whose trust and support they need.

We've already pointed out a number of ways that standards can go astray and cause friction. Non-academic or interdisciplinary standards aren't clear to the public and often engender distrust. Vague standards do not communicate anything and usually raise more questions than they answer. Standards that emphasize skills at the expense of content knowledge are treated with deserved skepticism by parents. The list goes on. Sometimes, something as simple as a word or phrase that has no meaning to parents can cause a problem.

Our best advice to writers of standards is to consider what the language of each standard will mean to everyone who will be reading it. Avoid jargon. Are the standards clear enough for teachers to understand what is required of them and their students? For parents to understand what is expected of their children and to keep an eye on their progress? Do the standards send a coherent message to employers and colleges as to what students will know and be able to do when they leave

high school? What about the students themselves? Will they be able to read the standards and get a clear idea of what is expected of them?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," your work is not done. If a standard seems confusing to lay people, it needs to be re-thought and re-written. Examples of what to avoid:

All students understand human development theories across the lifespan and value individual uniqueness in the context of family life. (*Pennsylvania's Student Learning Outcomes, Draft 1991*)

[A high school graduate] understands and describes ways that a specified culture shapes patterns of interaction of individuals and groups. (*Minnesota's High School Standards, Draft 1994*)

Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and apply strategies based on one's own experience in preventing or solving problems. (*Missouri's Standards, Draft 1995*)

## The threshold of a great opportunity

Subject matter standards and a common core curriculum are new concepts in American education, and people—including many educators—are often skeptical of new ideas in the field. Considering the fads and failures of the past, this skepticism is certainly healthy. But the AFT and others believe that if we develop rigorous academic standards and use those to guide us in everything else we do in our schools, we have a real opportunity to make substantial improvements in the way we educate our children. Such an effort is certainly a more palatable and responsible strategy than turning the schools over to the whim of the market.

## APPENDIX C:

# Four Promising Programs For Raising Student Achievement

**W**hy are some schools effective at educating most students, even those from disadvantaged high-poverty areas, while others struggle fruitlessly to fulfill their academic mission? How can schools replicate the successes of their more effective counterparts?

Researchers, working for years to answer these questions, have described the characteristics of successful schools—e.g., high expectations for all students; challenging curricula; clear standards and a coherent, focused academic mission; high-quality professional development aligned to the standards; small class sizes, especially in the early grades; an orderly and disciplined learning environment; a supportive and collegial atmosphere; an intervention system designed to ensure that struggling students can meet the standards. But, while we now know a great deal about *which* reforms are effective, comparatively little is known about *how* to achieve them.

As many schools have found out the hard way, systemic reform is extremely difficult—especially when it must occur simultaneously on many fronts, and is begun without the benefit of high-quality curriculum materials, appropriate professional development, or readily-available technical assistance. In fact, a number of schools—especially those that are already foundering—have found that lasting improvement is impossible without concrete, step-by-step implementation support.

According to a recent study of efforts to raise academic achievement for at-risk students (Stringfield, Millsap, Scott, and Herman, 1996), the reform strategies that achieve the greatest academic gains are those chosen and supported by faculty, as well as administrators. Success is also dependent on the existence of a challenging curriculum, and on paying “a great deal of attention to issues of initial and long-term implementation, and to institutionalizing the reforms.” This and other studies have also found that schoolwide reforms tend to be more effective than pull-out or patchwork programs, and that externally developed programs—particularly those with support networks from which schools can draw strength and tangible assistance—tend to do better than local designs.

Given these and similar research findings, we developed the criteria below to help identify promising programs for raising student achievement, especially in low-performing schools. You will find descriptions of four of these programs on the following pages.

All four programs attempt *schoolwide* improvement, offer the kinds of materials, tools and training that increase the likelihood of effective replication, and primarily affect curriculum and pedagogy—the areas over which faculty have the most control. Although each particular program has its own strengths and weaknesses, all show evidence of:

- **High Standards.** The program helps all students acquire the skills and/or knowledge they need to successfully perform to high academic standards.
- **Effectiveness.** The program has proven to be effective in raising the academic achievement levels of “at-risk” students in low-performing schools, based on *independent* evaluations.
- **Replicability.** The program has been *effectively* implemented in multiple sites beyond the original pilot school(s).
- **Support Structures.** Professional development, materials, and ongoing implementation support are available for the program, either through the program’s developer, independent contractors, or dissemination networks established by schools already in the program.

# Success for All (SFA)

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades Covered</b>                                  | Elementary/K-6.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Curriculum Materials</b>                            | Curriculum guides, curriculum materials, children's literature, daily lesson plans, and teacher manuals are provided for grades K-6 in reading, writing, and language arts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Instructional Support/ Professional Development</b> | Through lesson plans and teacher manuals, specific instructional guidance is provided for each part of the curriculum. Professional development is also provided as a part of the basic cost of the program, with pre- and post-implementation workshops for all instructional staff. In addition, advanced training is provided for the principal and a "program facilitator," who works as an on-site coach/coordinator in the school.                                                                                                   |
| <b>School Reform/ Restructuring Assistance</b>         | This is a schoolwide restructuring program, that affects curriculum, pedagogy, scheduling, resource allocation, professional development, and family support services. To help ensure success, a clear commitment on the part of administrators and a secret ballot endorsement by at least 80 percent of the school staff is a required part of the application process. Once accepted, schools receive implementation assistance and training, as well as continuing support through a "network" with researchers and other SFA schools. |
| <b>Role of Paraprofessionals</b>                       | To some extent, the deployment of classroom paraprofessionals is determined at the school level. SFA recommends their use as classroom aides in pre-K and K and as one-on-one tutors working under the direction of certified teachers with students with mild reading difficulties.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Cost of Implementation</b>                          | Most Success for All schools have funded the program as a Title I schoolwide project. For a school with 500 students, SFA estimates the first-year implementation costs to be \$90-\$100 per student for training, materials, and follow-up visits. <sup>1</sup> If the facilitator, tutor, and other SFA-related staff positions cannot be filled by a redeployment of existing staff, the costs related to the hiring of additional staff may range between \$450 to \$1,100 per student.                                                |
| <b>Results*/Effect Size<sup>2</sup></b>                | Reading (+.34 to +.82); Word Attack (+.51 to +4.22). <sup>3</sup><br><i>*To give a sense of scale, an effect size of +1.00 would be equivalent to an increase of 100 points on the SAT scale or 15 points of IQ—enough to move a student from the 20th percentile (the normal level of performance for children in poverty) to above the 50th percentile (the norm for mainstream students).</i>                                                                                                                                           |

**S**uccess for All (SFA) is an elementary school restructuring program, designed to deliver intensive academic assistance to student populations at risk of school failure. Developed in the mid-1980s by Dr. Robert Slavin, a researcher at Johns

Hopkins University, SFA will be in place in more than 750 (mostly high-poverty Title I)<sup>4</sup> schools across the country, as of fall 1997. Because learning to read has been shown to be critical for academic success, the program was built around research into the most effec-

tive ways to teach reading and safeguards to catch and correct problems early.

## Main Features

**Reading and Writing Program**—The core of Success for All is a reading curriculum that incorporates research-based instructional practices, including cooperative learning. In kindergarten and grade 1, the program emphasizes reading readiness and the development of oral language. Students work on phonemic awareness activities to help develop auditory discrimination; become familiar with books, letters and phonetically-regular words; and listen to, retell, and dramatize children's literature and thematic units based in science and history. When students reach the primer level, they use an adaptation of another Johns Hopkins University-developed program: Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). In addition to receiving direct instruction from teachers in reading comprehension and writing, SFA and CIRC students engage in cooperative learning activities built around oral reading in pairs, structured discussion, summarization and retelling of stories, vocabulary building, decoding practice, and story-related writing. Detailed teachers' manuals and support materials, through grade 6, are built around children's literature and the most widely used basals and anthologies. Classroom libraries of trade books at the students' reading level are provided to each teacher, along with support materials.

**Reading Groups**—Although heterogeneous, age-grouped classes are conducted most of the day, students in grades 1-3 (and sometimes 4-5 or 4-6) are regrouped for reading. A common, 90-minute reading period is established across grades, during which students are regrouped by reading performance level. By establishing a common period and using all certified staff (including tutors, librarians, art teachers, etc.), class size for these groups is substantially below the size of homeroom classes. By eliminating the need for multiple reading groups, direct instruction time is increased and student busywork is decreased, thus accelerating the pace of learning.

**Frequent Assessments**—Every eight weeks, reading teachers assess student progress using personal obser-

vations and curriculum-based and formal measures. Teachers use the results of these assessments to identify students who are falling behind and need extra help and tutoring, as well as those who are progressing quickly and should be placed in a higher performance group. At the same time, teachers attempt to identify students who need other types of assistance, such as family interventions or screening for hearing or vision problems.

**Tutors**—Another important element in the program is the use of one-on-one tutoring, the most effective form of instruction, for students with reading problems. Tutors are certified teachers who are reading specialists or have experience teaching Title I or special education students. Trained paraprofessionals may also be used for students with less severe reading difficulties, under direction of the certified tutor. Children with reading difficulties are tutored during a 20-minute period during the day when neither reading nor math is being taught in class. To prevent problems from developing and to minimize the number of older students needing remediation, first-grade students are given priority for tutoring. Certified tutors also act as regular reading teachers during the 90-minute reading periods.

**Program Facilitator**—Another key element of the program is the use of a program facilitator at each school. A member of the school staff who is released from regular classroom responsibilities, the facilitator works (with the principal) to oversee the details of implementation, including scheduling changes and professional development arrangements. The facilitator also monitors the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom, and is available to assist/coach individual teachers and tutors through any problems. He or she will also help deal with student behavior problems and act as a liaison between the staff and the family support team.

**Training**—The professional development provided by Success for All includes a brief initial orientation and training period, in-class coaching and assistance, and periodic inservice workshops and discussion groups. In the first year of implementation, three days of inservice training are provided for all teachers, tutors, and classroom paraprofessionals at the beginning of the school year. The initial training for both

the facilitator and the principal is more comprehensive, usually a weeklong training session at Johns Hopkins University. Throughout the year, researchers make frequent site visits during which they make classroom observations, meet with staff, and conduct inservice training. Facilitators also arrange sessions for staff to share information, discuss problems and solutions, and collaborate on the needs of individual children.

**Family Support Team**—The family support team consists of the facilitator, parent liaison (if any), counselor (if any), principal or vice principal (if any), and any other staff the school deems appropriate. The team promotes parental involvement in the school—providing information, organizing school-related activities, and conducting workshops for parents. It also intervenes to help solve behavior and other problems, acts as a resource for teachers and parents, and helps coordinate services with community-based health, social service, and juvenile justice agencies.

## Results

Not only is Success for All designed around research into effective teaching methods, but the program itself has an extensive body of research demonstrating its effectiveness. Statistically significant positive effects have been found on every measure from grades 1 to 5, with especially large gains for students most at risk for failure. These effects have also been shown to be cumulative: While first-grade SFA students are about three months ahead of matched control students in reading, by the fifth grade, they outscore control students by an average of a full grade level. Bilingual students and students in the lowest quartile of their grades average even higher gains, with effect size changes of +1.00 or more (see footnote 2).

The program has also been found to cut special education placements in half, on average, and one study found that the program eliminated the black-white achievement gap.

## Case Studies

**Baltimore, Maryland.** The birthplace of Success for All, Baltimore has five of the longest-running SFA implementations in the country. The schools are located in inner-city, predominantly African-American

neighborhoods, with between 75 percent to 96 percent of students eligible for school lunch subsidies. On average, SFA schools outperform control schools in the city at every grade level. For example, CTBS scores for SFA and control schools were collected during the 1992-93 school year. By the fifth grade, SFA students were found to be 75 percent of a grade equivalent ahead of control students on the CTBS Total Reading assessment. Evaluations have also found positive effects on attendance and retention rates.

**Houston, Texas.** In Houston, a recent experiment in the large-scale replication of Success for All has also shown positive results. What began in 1993 as a special summer school program, offered by the school district, was quickly expanded into a reform option for all elementary schools. By the 1994-95 school year, more than 70 schools had chosen to participate. Unfortunately, with the quick start-up, many schools did not receive the necessary training and materials before the beginning of the school year. Despite these widespread implementation problems, the Houston experiment appears to be working. According to a preliminary study by the University of Memphis,<sup>5</sup> SFA's median first-year results varied from ES=+.15 to +.33 (see footnote 2) in Houston, largely depending on whether all of the program's features had been faithfully implemented. Although lower than the achievement gains reported in previous studies of smaller-scale implementations, these results still demonstrate a statistically significant improvement.

## Considerations

Although the research on Success for All is overwhelming in proving its effectiveness, any successful implementation will require a substantial commitment in funding, staff time, and school restructuring work. Because this program was developed for, and is primarily used by, high-poverty Title I schools, some have the idea that the program is primarily remedial (interpreted to mean "dumbed down"). The truth however, is that SFA's developers went out of their way to strike a workable balance between challenging content and the acquisition of basic skills, incorporating everything from guided skill instruction to basals to children's classics such as *Charlotte's Web*. As such, it should be considered by any elementary school, across the demo-

graphic range, that needs to boost reading scores and student achievement levels.

Although the costs of implementation are high, the reallocation of existing Title I funds and the redeployment of existing staff can make it affordable, even in high-poverty schools and districts. For example, a school that already has four Title I teachers could train one to be the SFA facilitator, while the other three become reading teachers/tutors.

Another tradeoff arises from Success for All's intensive focus on reading in the primary grades. This could result in less money for other programs and activities, and more resources allocated for grades 1-3 versus grades 4-6. But while some of these trade-offs may be difficult, research and common sense tell us that the best, most cost-effective academic intervention program is one that prevents students from falling behind in the first place. For long-term success, it is critical that young students be provided with a firm academic foundation. The ability to read with ease and comprehension is the bedrock upon which that foundation is built. This program has proven it can help schools accomplish this goal.

## Publications/Resources

Robert E. Slavin, Nancy A. Madden, Lawrence, J. Dolan and Barbara A. Wasik. *Every Child, Every School: Success for All* (1996). Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc. 805/499-9774.

Robert E. Slavin, et al. "Whenever and Wherever We Choose: The Replication of Success for All," *Phi Delta Kappan* (April 1994).

Robert E. Slavin, et al. "Preventing Early School Failure: What Works," *Educational Leadership*, (December 1992/January 1993).

**For more information,** contact: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

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<sup>1</sup> Per-pupil costs may be lower in multischool implementations.

<sup>2</sup> An effect size is a standard means of expressing achievement gains and losses across studies, showing differences between experimental and control groups in terms of standard deviation. An effect size of +1.00 indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group by one full standard deviation. To give a sense of scale, this would be equivalent to an increase of 100 points on the SAT scale, two stanines, 21 NCEs (normal curve equivalent ranks) or 15 points of IQ (Fashola and Slavin, 1996)—enough to move a student from the 20th percentile (the normal level of performance for children in poverty) to above the 50th percentile (in range with mainstream America). Because of differences among study designs and assessments, this can only be considered a "rough" measure of comparison. In general, an effect size of +.25 or more is considered to be educationally significant.

<sup>3</sup> Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, and Smith, 1994; Slavin, Madden Karweit, Liverman, and Dolan, 1990. Note: reading results data are pooled scores from all interventions, 1988-1993, with scores rising through each successive year of implementation.

<sup>4</sup> **Roots and Wings**, a program to supplement the Success for All reading and language arts curriculum with curricula in math, social studies, and science for grades K-6, has also been developed through New American Schools Designs. Preliminary results are promising.

<sup>5</sup> Nunnery, Ross, and Smith, 1996

# High Schools that Work (HSTW)

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades Covered</b>                                      | High school/9-12.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Curriculum Materials</b>                                | Limited pilot studies of new student curricula are being conducted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Instructional Support/<br/>Professional Development</b> | HSTW schools are invited to participate in the program's annual professional development conference. Schools also receive a set of staff development guides on subjects ranging from assessment to site-based management, publications on successful practices, and a newsletter. A video series to support implementation of the program's "key practices" also is available; and schools can participate in an annual video teleconference on key implementation issues, for which study guides are distributed.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>School Reform/<br/>Restructuring Assistance</b>         | The program provides a framework, technical assistance, and a support network to help schools make the necessary changes in curricula, scheduling, resource allocation, and professional development. Support for systemic reform is offered at the state and district level through formal working relationships with education officials. Feedback from test, survey, and site-visit data, gathered in conjunction with the HSTW evaluation process, are made available to schools; as are recommendations for improvement. Assistance in identifying new funding sources also is provided.                                                                                                          |
| <b>Role of Paraprofessionals</b>                           | Use of paraprofessionals is determined at the school level.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Cost of Implementation</b>                              | Although HSTW funding varies greatly from state to state and school to school, the program recommends that \$15,000-\$20,000 in discretionary funding be devoted to implementation. Priority expenditures are for staff development, common planning time, and extra help for struggling students. Depending on the career focus, extra funds may be needed for new materials, equipment, technology, laboratories, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Results</b>                                             | In addition to other assessments, HSTW schools use a battery of tests drawn from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In 1993, 96 schools participated, resulting in a mean reading score of 267.1, a mean math score of 284.8, and a mean science score of 269.5. By 1996, scores had risen to 272.9 in reading, 285.3 in math, and 283.3 in science—significantly higher than NAEP national mean scores for vocational students of 266.6, 276.7 and 266.7 respectively. <sup>1</sup> Schools which faithfully implement all of the program components showed the most dramatic gains, with scores approaching those achieved by the nation's college-bound students. <sup>2</sup> |

**H**igh Schools that Work (HSTW), a project of the Southern Regional Education Board, was designed to help states raise the academic achievement levels of career-bound students.<sup>3</sup> As such, it historically has worked with and through state education departments, with an emphasis on connect-

ing the school house, district office, and state in a long-term collaborative effort. An HSTW coordinator, employed by the state, is trained to facilitate and oversee most aspects of the program, including implementation support and technical assistance site visits, which are conducted at least every three years.

The main goal of the program is to help participating schools replace their general and vocational tracks with an academic core of high-level math, science, and English courses, integrated with quality vocational studies, thus helping to raise achievement and broaden students' educational and career opportunities. The program, begun in 1987, is now being used in more than 650 schools in 21 states.

## Main Features

Working with state education departments, school systems, and school staff, HSTW attempts to help schools implement 10 "key practices" for accelerating student achievement:

**High Expectations**—Establish high expectations and standards for general and vocational education students, which are clear and understood by all stakeholders—including students, parents, school staff, and the business community.

**Vocational Studies**—Increase access to intellectually challenging vocational and technical courses, with a major emphasis on preparation for continuing education and on developing the high-level mathematics, science, language arts, and problem-solving competencies necessary to function well in today's workplace.

**Academic Studies**—Increase access to core academic courses from the college-preparatory curriculum, using functional and applied strategies that enable students to see the relationship between course content and future employment opportunities.

**Program of Study**—Increase graduation requirements for general and vocational track students to include four years of college-preparatory English, three years each of math and science (with at least two years in each subject area of equivalent content to courses offered in the college-prep program), and a major concentration composed of at least four Carnegie units in a broad technical or academic course of study and at least two Carnegie units in related technical or academic courses.

**Work-Based Learning**—Provide students with a structured system of work-based and high-status school-based learning—high school and postsecondary—collaboratively planned by educators, employers, and workers, and resulting in an industry-recognized credential and employment opportunities in a career pathway.

**Common Planning**—Provide the organizational

structure, staff development, and time that allow academic and vocational teachers to work together in planning and providing integrated instruction in high-status academic and technical content.

**Student Engagement**—Tailor instructional practices to foster more active engagement in learning on the part of students.

**Guidance**—Involve each student and his or her parent(s) in a career guidance and individual counseling system that can help students focus on completing an accelerated program of study with a career or academic major.

**Extra Help**—Establish a structured system to provide the extra assistance and support that can help career-bound students successfully complete an accelerated program of study that includes challenging academic content and a major.

**Keeping Score**—Use student assessment and program evaluation data to continuously improve curriculum, instruction, school climate, organization, and management—with the goal of raising student achievement.

## Results

With permission from the NAEP Governing Board, HSTW administers a battery of tests to students in reading, mathematics, and science, which are drawn from and normed against NAEP assessments. This has allowed the program to gauge schools' progress longitudinally as well as in reference to national norms. Test results (gathered in 1990, 1993, 1994, and 1996) show both substantive overall gains and large variances among school sites. Mean scores for all 514 sites participating in the 1996 assessments show that HSTW students significantly outperform vocational education students nationally: *HSTW* 272.6 (reading), 285.2 (math), 282.6 (science); *national* 266.6 (reading), 276.7 (math), and 266.7 (science).<sup>4</sup> The assessments also show that the key variable among the highest- and lowest-performing HSTW schools is not pre-program scores or number of years in the program, but the extent to which schools have actually implemented the program's "key practices."

Concurrent with the NAEP assessments (now on a two-year schedule), the program has also commissioned independent student, teacher, and administrator surveys for each school, as well as transcript analyses comparing the actual level of course offerings

against program goals. On the off-years (beginning in 1997), studies of the educational and career status of first-year graduates will also be conducted.

## Case Studies

**St. Mary's County Technical Center (St. Mary's County, Maryland).** In 1988, St. Mary's County Technical Center adopted the HSTW program. An underutilized vocational education facility, held in low regard by the local business community, the high school had become a dumping ground for the county's discipline problems. In addition to the large number of students who lacked basic literacy skills, 34 percent of students were discipline referrals and 34 percent were classified as "special education." In accordance with HSTW, the school's curriculum was revamped. The general track was eliminated, and academic requirements were strengthened. The vocational program was also beefed up, with the incorporation of applied learning courses and the expectation that all students were being prepared for postsecondary training. Interim results are positive. In 1990-91, senior SAT scores averaged 869. By 1994-95, with a similar student population and 50 percent more students taking the test, SAT scores had jumped 70 points to an average of 939. During those years, the dropout rate also fell from 7.2 percent to 3.6 percent, enrollment went up, and discipline problems were cut by half.

**Sussex Technical High School (Georgetown, Delaware).** Sussex Technical High School, located in rural southern Delaware, opened in 1961 to serve part-time students from seven independent "feeder" districts. By the mid-1980s, serious problems were evident. Enrollment, test scores, and student expectations were all low and getting lower. In 1991, Sussex Tech opened as a redesigned HSTW school. The general track was eliminated, graduation requirements were raised, and challenging academic and vocational courses were introduced. The lowest-scoring school to participate in HSTW's 1990 assessments, by 1996 Sussex had managed to take a similar group of students and raise the school's score to above the HSTW mean for all subjects tested (reading, math, and science). In 1994, only 8 percent of students took the SAT, with a combined average score of 790. In 1996, 28 percent of students chose to take the test, with a combined average score of 876.

## Considerations

While the research on this program is still preliminary, it is clear that a large number of schools have been helped to make the kinds of substantive reforms which lead to higher student achievement. A significant percentage, however, have yet to show meaningful improvement. According to data collected by the program in 1996, one-third of career-bound students at participating sites were still enrolled in watered-down academic courses. Half were enrolled in vocational courses that lacked challenging assignments and projects.

HSTW has responded to these implementation problems by beefing-up technical assistance services to school sites. One important problem has yet to be addressed, however. Understanding that systemic reform is crucial to long-term success, thus far, only schools from partnership states have been allowed formal participation in the program.<sup>5</sup> As a part of the implementation process, state education officials are asked to assume much of the responsibility for program dissemination, oversight, and monitoring, while district and school administrators are asked to commit to the program and its "key practices." Yet there appears to be little if any direct contact with the majority of school staff until they are being trained to implement the program. In other words, the program depends on competence and support at multiple bureaucratic levels, while having no formal mechanism to ensure staff "buy-in" at individual school sites. Thus, some schools have embraced the program as a ray of hope, while others may regard it as yet another in a long line of futile, top-down "reform" schemes. In discussions, HSTW officials have expressed interest in opening up the program to reform-minded school districts in non-partnership states. The program has also begun to organize an urban network to help provide support to districts with multiple HSTW sites. Whether formal participation by individual schools will be allowed—no matter how committed and supportive staff members may be—is still far from certain.

Despite glitches, HSTW has many obvious strengths: It is designed to help students achieve to high standards. It gives proper focus to—and helps provide—high-quality professional development. It stresses the need for a structured support system for struggling students. It helps to define, upgrade, and mesh essential academic and vocational skills. It provides a system of student assessment, data-collection,

and feedback that can help spur continuous improvement. It offers assistance in obtaining business and community support. And it provides a post-implementation support network for all participating schools.

Given these benefits, local unions and interested technical and vocational schools outside of the 21 partner states may want to consider approaching state and/or district administrators about official adoption of the program. To help support successful replications, local initiatives to ensure that staff members at each participating school are fully informed, supportive, and involved—prior to implementation—should also be considered.

## Publications/Resources

Gene Bottoms, Alice Presson, and Mary Johnson. *Making High Schools Work Through Integration of Academic and Vocational Education* (1992). Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board.

Gene Bottoms and Deede Sharpe. *Teaching for Understanding through Integration of Academic and Technical Education* (1996). Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board.

*Reaching the Next Step: How School to Career Can Help Students Reach High Academic Standards and Prepare for Good Jobs* (1997). American Federation of Teachers.

**For more information,** contact: High Schools that Work, Southern Regional Education Board, 592 Tenth Street, NW, Atlanta, GA 30318.

**Phone:** 404/875-9211.

**Fax:** 404/872-1477

**Internet:** <http://www.peach.net/sreb/hstw/high.html>

<sup>1</sup> Differences in achievement are statistically significant at the 1.3 level for reading, the 1.6 level for mathematics, and the 1.5 level for science.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent national NAEP scores for college-bound students are 302.4 for reading (1992), 316.8 for mathematics (1992) and 306.8 for science (1990).

<sup>3</sup> In this context, "career-bound students" are defined as those who, upon entering high school, do not intend to prepare for admission to a four-year college.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> As of 1997, the 21 official partnership states were: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

# Direct Instruction (DI)

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades Covered</b>                                      | Primarily an elementary school (pre-K-6) program, but also used successfully with secondary and adult special education and remedial students.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Curriculum Materials</b>                                | Curricular materials, daily lessons, and teacher's guides are available for grades K-6 in reading, language arts, spelling and math; grades 4-6 in expressive writing; grades 3-6 in science; grades 3-12 in corrective reading; and grades 4-12 in corrective math. <sup>1</sup>                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Instructional Support/<br/>Professional Development</b> | Professional development and implementation support of differing levels of quality can be contracted from various providers. At times, the program's scripted teachers' guides have been used in lieu of—rather than in addition to—adequate professional development, giving rise to criticism of the program for being “teacher-proof.”                                                                                        |
| <b>School Reform/<br/>Restructuring Assistance</b>         | Limited assistance can be contracted from some providers as part of their implementation-support package.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Role of Paraprofessionals</b>                           | Trained classroom paraprofessionals are fully integrated into the program, working as instructional aides, one-on-one tutors, and small group leaders under the direction of certified teachers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Cost of Implementation</b>                              | \$150-\$200 per student for first-year implementation of the K-5 reading, writing, language, and math curriculum, including materials, training of staff and a part-time school facilitator/curriculum coach. <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Results*/Effect Size<sup>3</sup></b>                    | Language (+.49 to +.84); reading comprehension (+.07 to +.69); math (+.57 to +1.11). <sup>4</sup><br><i>*To give a sense of scale, an effect size of +1.00 would be equivalent to an increase of 100 points on the SAT scale or 15 points of IQ—enough to move a student from the 20th percentile (the normal level of performance for children in poverty) to above the 50th percentile (the norm for mainstream students).</i> |

**D**irect Instruction (DI) is a highly-structured instructional approach, designed to accelerate the learning of at-risk students. Curriculum materials and instructional sequences attempt to move students to mastery at the fastest possible pace. The oldest version of the program, Distar, was developed in the 1960s as a part of Project Follow Through, a massive educational initiative of President Johnson's War on Poverty. Despite its success in raising student achievement levels, Distar was heavily criticized for being too rigid; concentrating too heavily on the basics; and for some vendors' poor implementation practices, such as selling it without support as a “teacher-proof” program. As DI, the original Distar

program has been expanded and enriched. Although the early mastery of basic skills is still a key element, the program also addresses students' general comprehension and analytic skills. Adequate professional development, ensuring that practitioners understand what the program is and how it works, is also essential for successful implementation.

## Main Features

**Scripted Lesson Plans**—Classroom scripts are a hallmark of Direct Instruction; the scripts are written, tested, rewritten, retested—polished in a cycle of classroom field-testing and revision that ends only when

trials show that 90 percent of students grasp a lesson the first time around. Without proper orientation, many teachers find this level of prescriptiveness off-putting. The idea, however, is to ensure that even beginning teachers will be successful, and to allow veteran educators to fill any holes in their teaching skills. With curricular and pedagogical details presented in precise relationship to each other, the program offers a template of how to teach particular skills and content. It is a template that can be applied to other curricula or modified to better suit the needs of a particular group of students, but only after the teaching methods have been learned to precision.

**Research-Tested Curriculum**—In DI, skills are taught in sequence until students have fully internalized them (what cognitive researchers call “automaticity”) and students are able to generalize their learning in new, untaught situations. Each lesson sequence is extensively field-tested to determine the most effective and efficient way to lead students to mastery. For example, the first reading and language arts lessons begin with a focus on phonemic awareness, which are followed by increasingly complex phonics and decoding lessons, which are followed by lessons that focus on comprehension and analysis of content, etc. With each lesson building on previously-mastered skills and understandings, teachers are able to dramatically accelerate the pace of learning, even for the most disadvantaged students. New material is usually introduced through teacher presentations to the whole class or small groups, followed by guided practice and frequent checks for individual student mastery. Once the skill has been learned to the point of automaticity, cognitive studies show that it is transferred from short-term to long-term memory, thus freeing children to apply their learning, attend to content, and move on to progressively more difficult and higher-order skills.

**Coaches/Facilitators**—Another feature of the program is the use of in-class coaches for implementation support. The coach periodically monitors each classroom and is available to assist individual teachers with any problems, perhaps taking over a part of the lesson to model pedagogical procedures. In some cases, this role has been filled by an employee of the contractor, retained to help with implementation. In some multi-school implementations within a single district, teachers are released from regular classroom duty, given special training, and assigned to assist one or two schools.

**Rapid Pace**—Because the goal of DI is to move

students to mastery as quickly as possible, a large proportion of classroom time is spent on fast-paced teacher-directed instruction, punctuated by rhythmic choral-group and individual-student responses. For instructors, this means a very full work day. For example, the DI program requires teachers to ask 300 or more questions in six small-group sessions each day and to perform reading checks every five or 10 lessons to ensure that all students reach 100 percent mastery. This level of interaction, which produces substantial achievement gains, is made possible by the use of the heavily-researched, highly refined scripts.

**Achievement Grouping**—Common periods for reading and math are established across grades during which students are regrouped by performance level, with the idea that all students will progress at the fastest possible pace and no students will be left behind. In several schools, these groups are reduced in size by assigning half of the class to a paraprofessional who leads the group through guided practice for half of the period, while the teacher introduces new material to the rest of the class, and then changing places. If the program is implemented well, these should not be rigid “tracks,” but flexible achievement groups, with students who are progressing quickly periodically reassigned to a faster group and immediate assistance given to students who are struggling.

**Frequent Assessments**—Frequent assessments are also built into the program as a means to ensure that all students are reaching mastery, to detect any student who might need extra help before falling too far behind, and to identify students who need to be regrouped.

## Results

When this program is faithfully implemented, the results are stunning, with high-poverty schools reporting average test scores at or above grade level—in a few cases, several grades above. In the 1977 evaluation of Project Follow Through, the achievement results of high-poverty Direct Instruction students were compared to students in nine other early education programs. DI students outperformed control group students and students in the other experimental programs on every academic measure, moving from the 20th percentile (the normal level of performance for children in poverty) to about the 50th percentile (even with mainstream students). In contrast, the achieve-

ment results of students in some of the other programs actually *declined* as a result of the intervention. Follow-up studies of students taught by Direct Instruction in the early grades also show enduring benefits. One New York comparison found that more than 63 percent of DI students graduated from college, as opposed to 38 percent of the control group; mean ninth-grade test scores were higher ( $ES=+.41$ , reading;  $ES=+.29$ , math; see footnote 3); retention rates were lower (21 percent versus 33 percent); and there were fewer dropouts (28 percent vs. 46 percent).

## Case Studies

**Wesley Elementary School (Houston, Texas).** Wesley Elementary has one of the longest, continuous Direct Instruction implementations in the country. It is located in one of Houston's poorest, mostly African-American, neighborhoods and has a student population that is over 99 percent minority and 90 percent eligible for school lunch subsidies—statistics that usually signal low achievement levels. For many years, however, this school has ranked in the top tier of all schools in the state. Much of this success has been credited to the school's 1975 adoption of Direct Instruction. First piloted in a Title I reading resource room, DI was soon in use throughout the school. By 1980, Wesley students had average test scores above the 80th percentile in both reading and vocabulary, outscoring students in comparison schools by more than 40 percentile points. In many of the succeeding years, Wesley's scores have been even higher, with some classes testing up to three years above grade level.

**Utah ASAP Project.** As a part of Utah's Accelerated Student Achievement Project (ASAP) to improve poor-performing Title I schools, three elementary schools adopted schoolwide DI programs during the 1994-95 school year. The preliminary achievement data are impressive, with students in all three DI schools outperforming more advantaged control school students in two Woodcock-Johnson subtests. After two years in the program, one school moved from last to second place (out of 24 schools) in the district's annual Math Olympics.

## Considerations

This is a highly interactive, teacher-intensive approach to education. Teachers and paraprofessionals

must be informed about—and prepared for—its fast pace and the structured and repetitive nature of the program.

DI also has a history of problematic implementations. When the program's developer, former preschool teacher Siegfried Engelmann, started designing the curriculum more than 25 years ago, he included fully-scripted teachers' guides, believing that they could serve as prototype demonstrations for specific teaching skills. In other words, one design objective was to provide hands-on teacher training *during* class-time, thus reducing start-up costs and at the same time ensuring that all teachers would have the skills necessary to reach the maximum achievement levels. Unfortunately, some marketers and administrators interpreted this to mean that *no* training was necessary, and that teaching skill was inconsequential to the success of the program. DI materials were sold as "teacher-proof," leaving administrators who didn't understand the program to impose it in a rigid, dictatorial manner. Educator horror-stories and lower-than-expected achievement levels were the predictable results. In some regions, this has left DI with a tarnished reputation that will have to be clarified and overcome. For any new implementation to be successful, proper orientation and training are vital—not only for teachers and paraprofessionals, but also for administrators.

Another frequent criticism is that DI provides so much structure and regimentation that it stifles student and teacher creativity. The student results—both in higher academic achievement levels and elevated measures of self-esteem—should speak for themselves. Teacher focus groups, following DI implementation in Broward County, Florida, are also instructive. Some teachers felt that the "standardized approach actually allowed more creativity, because a framework was in place within which to innovate," and said that they could do more with content once DI had helped students acquire the necessary skills. Other teachers reported that they had initially been resistant, feeling that "even though the students thrived on it, the repetition was boring for the faculty," but, over time, had found ways "to innovate within the repetition, so that they become drawn in as well."

The Broward implementation also incorporated another important feature: advanced training for and assignment of teaching staff to act as full-time "coaches" (facilitators) for the new DI schools. By retaining their status within the bargaining unit, it was made

clear that these educators were a resource for the benefit of the teaching staff, not administrators. There was always someone to turn to, on a confidential basis, for advice and assistance. Given the inevitable frustrations, glitches, and misunderstandings that arise when implementing any new curriculum, using new instructional methods, this assistance has proven to be invaluable.

## Publications/Resources

Adams, Gary L. and Engelmann, Siegfried. *Research on Direct Instruction: 25 Years Beyond Distar* (1996). Seattle: Educational Achievement Systems. 206/820-6111.

*Effective School Practices*, journal of the Association for Direct Instruction.

Gersten, Russell, et al. "Effectiveness of a Direct Instruction Academic Kindergarten for Low-Income Students," *The Elementary School Journal* (November 1988).

**For more information, contact:** Direct Instruction Project, University of Oregon, College of Education, 170 Education, Eugene, Oregon 98195, or Association for Direct Instruction, P.O. Box 10252, Eugene, Oregon 98195.

**Phone:** 800/995-2464.

**E-mail:** ADIhome@aol.com

**Internet:** <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adiiep/>

<sup>1</sup> These materials are available from the SRA division of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 800/843-8855. In addition, several videodisc programs on math, geometry, chemistry, and earth science are available from BFA Educational Media, 800/221-1274.

<sup>2</sup> These costs are based on the budget for the Alliance of Quality Schools in Broward County, Florida, an effort to raise achievement levels of low-performing schools by implementing a DI reading and math curriculum. Estimated per-school costs were as follows: Direct Instruction materials, \$35,000; professional development (five days before school and five days during school), \$70,000; a trained teacher, assigned to act as a part-time coach/curriculum consultant for the school, \$35,600.

<sup>3</sup> An effect size is a standard means of expressing achievement gains and losses across studies, showing differences between experimental and control groups in terms of standard deviation. An effect size of +1.00 indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group by one full standard deviation. To give a sense of scale, this would be equivalent to an increase of 100 points on the SAT scale, two stanines, 21 NCEs (normal curve equivalent ranks) or 15 points of IQ (Fashola and Slavin, 1996)—enough to move a student from the 20th percentile (the normal level of performance for children in poverty) to above the 50th percentile (in range with mainstream America). Because of differences among study designs and assessments, this can only be considered a "rough" measure of comparison. In general, an effect size of +.25 or more is considered to be educationally significant.

<sup>4</sup> Data from Abt Associates' 1977 evaluation of Project Follow Through and a 1996 meta-analysis of this and more recent studies. See *Research on Direct Instruction: 25 Years Beyond Distar*, by Gary L. Adams and Siegfried Engelmann.

<sup>5</sup> "Alliance of Quality Schools Evaluation Report" (August 1996). School Board of Broward County, Florida.

# Core Knowledge (CK)

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Grades Covered</b>                                  | Elementary and Middle School/pre K-8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Curriculum Materials</b>                            | Separate Core Knowledge Sequences—content guidelines—are available for <i>Preschool</i> , <i>Grades K-6</i> and <i>Grades 7-8</i> , detailing what is to be taught in the areas of language arts, American and world civilizations, geography, visual arts, music, math and science. A series of resource books, <i>What Your Kindergartner(-6th Grader) Needs to Know</i> , are also available from the Core Knowledge Foundation, as are lesson plans prepared by Core Knowledge teachers around the country, which are assembled and disseminated as "Share the Knowledge" materials. |
| <b>Instructional Support/ Professional Development</b> | Inservice presentations and professional development workshops can be contracted through the Foundation. It also distributes "model" planning guides and holds an annual conference with a focus on professional development, which brings together more than 1,200 teachers and administrators from around the country.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>School Reform/ Restructuring Assistance</b>         | Limited assistance can be contracted through the Foundation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Role of Paraprofessionals</b>                       | To a large extent, the deployment of classroom paraprofessionals is determined at the school level. CK recommends their use as one-on-one skill-and-content tutors for new and/or struggling students, assistants in researching and developing age-appropriate materials and resources, and sources of assistance for students in completing CK schools' many curriculum-related projects and activities.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Cost of Implementation</b>                          | Variable. The costs for the curriculum sequence (less than \$25/teacher) and workshop training are modest. However, the costs of supplementary curricular materials, professional development, and the faculty release time necessary for properly implementing the program can make it more expensive. One study estimates start-up costs ranging up to \$26,000 per school. <sup>1</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Results</b>                                         | Preliminary results are promising, and a large-scale longitudinal study is currently under way. <sup>2</sup> (See "Results" section, below, for a description of positive results from individual school studies.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

The Core Knowledge Sequence (CK) was designed to add content to the general skills and objectives typically found in state and local curriculum guides and provide a common core of knowledge in the early grades. Originated by University of Virginia professor E.D. Hirsch, Jr., CK is being implemented in over 350 schools in 40 states around the country. As such, it represents the first articulation of many standards-based reformers' push

for a model national curriculum, built around the idea that American schools need challenging academic standards to provide equal educational opportunity. Or, as one teacher describes Core Knowledge, "It's like a gifted curriculum for all kids." Designed to comprise about 50 percent of the school's curriculum, the sequence provides a detailed listing of specific content to be taught, at each grade level, in the disciplines of history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts.

## Main Features

**Interesting, Detailed Curricular Content**—One measure of the success of the standards movement is that virtually every state in the nation is in the process of developing or strengthening its academic standards. Districts, in turn, are attempting to translate these state mandates into curriculum guides. Unfortunately, a majority of these state and district documents are still not clear enough to be useful at the classroom level. Many focus on the skills students are to acquire rather than on the specific content of the curriculum to be delivered. Core Knowledge seeks to fill this hole by outlining the grade-by-grade knowledge that children will be taught. For example, the first-grade history sequence asks schools to: "Introduce [students to] ancient civilizations and the variety of religions in the world, using maps of the ancient world," specifically: *Egypt* (King Tutankhamen, Nile, Pyramids, Mummies, Animal Gods, Hieroglyphics); *Babylonia* (Tigris and Euphrates, Hammurabi); *Judaism* (Moses, Passover, Chanukah); *Christianity* (Jesus); *Arabia* (Mohammed, Allah, Islam); *India* (Indus River, Brahma, Hinduism, Buddha); *China* (Yellow River, Confucius, Chinese New Year).

**Sequenced Presentation**—Cognitive research indicates that children learn new skills and knowledge by building on what they already know. Core Knowledge's developer, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., observed that this can place some American students at a perpetual disadvantage. Children from highly educated families are exposed to a rich vocabulary and knowledge base in their formative years, enabling them to acquire additional skills and knowledge at a faster pace than their less advantaged peers. The result is an achievement gap that increases through successive years of schooling. The Core Knowledge response is to expose all students, very early, to interesting and demanding subject matter, and then to build on that knowledge, year by year, in a carefully constructed sequence. Because what is to be learned is defined clearly, teachers are better able to provide students with consistent, coordinated instruction. It is also easier to monitor whether students have mastered what they need to know for the grade level and to intervene quickly when students need extra help.

**A Common Core**—Because the program stipulates exactly what is to be taught grade by grade, students advance through school on a more equal footing. All students, regardless of background or neighborhood,

are exposed to a common core of learning, and the watered-down curriculum typical of many high-poverty schools is eliminated. Core Knowledge teachers also have the advantage of knowing exactly what their students have and have not learned the year before. Unlike most U.S. teachers, CK teachers don't have to waste time reteaching previously covered material or developing different lesson plans to accommodate students who already know the material or those who are far behind. Because all teachers in a specific grade level are covering the same material, they are able to work collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and lesson plans, or even divide up the work of developing a new unit.

## Results

Although no large-scale quantitative data are yet available for this program, several studies show impressive results at particular Core Knowledge sites.

For example, recent test results from the Paul H. Cale Elementary School in Albermarle County, Virginia, indicate that the program may raise overall student scores and lower the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Cale is the second-highest poverty elementary school in the district, with approximately 40 percent of students qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunches. A districtwide review of 1996 scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills showed that the socioeconomic status of students was an extremely accurate predictor of schools' performance rankings—the higher the concentration of poor students, the lower the percentage who scored above the 50th national percentile. Only one school stood out from this trend: Cale, with almost 70 percent of students scoring above the national norm, had an achievement level that was far above prediction. According to the school's principal, "scores have consistently gone up" over the four years the school has been using Core Knowledge, "especially in social studies, science, and math.... We are scoring well above the national norms in social studies, above the 75th percentile.... Our scores defy what you would expect."<sup>3</sup>

Another recent study demonstrated that students at the Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas, also achieved at higher than expected levels. Hawthorne—an inner-city neighborhood school with a predominantly Hispanic student population, 96 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced

price lunches and 28 percent of whom are limited-English proficient (LEP)—adopted the Core Knowledge curriculum during the 1992-93 school year. According to the author of the Hawthorne study, “although Hawthorne students tend to be more at risk of failing academically than are students in the district as a whole, because of the larger percentages of economically disadvantaged and LEP students, snapshots indicate that the school has succeeded in raising achievement levels beyond the aggregate performance of all other elementary schools in the district.” For example, Hawthorne students’ performance on the reading portion of the 1994 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills was compared to students in the other 65 elementary schools in San Antonio. “Although district reading performance is generally consistent across grade levels with a student pass rate of about 55 percent, Hawthorne’s results show a steep increase in the reading pass rate at consecutive grade levels. At Grade 3, Hawthorne’s pass rate of 34 percent is well below that of the district. By Grade 5, however, Hawthorne’s 67 percent pass rate far exceeds the district’s 56 percent pass rate.”

## Case Studies

Although Core Knowledge offers a challenging and comprehensive grade-by-grade curriculum sequence, its implementation support—important for successful replications in low-performing schools—is not as strong as that offered by some other proven-program models (see “Considerations” section, below). Therefore, we offer descriptions of two promising implementation models:

**The Trinity Partnership**—In San Antonio, Texas, Trinity University has established an extensive support system for the implementation of Core Knowledge. As an outgrowth of a pre-existing university-public school partnership, Trinity assisted the city’s first Core Knowledge school, Nathaniel Hawthorne (see above), with the implementation of the curriculum. Over the intervening years, as approximately 20 area schools attempted to replicate the program, the university created a network to support the new implementations. Support has come in a variety of forms, such as: coordinating an active network of Core Knowledge schools; offering technical and financial support, including stipends to teachers who participate in network-related activities that extend beyond normal

working hours or assigned responsibilities; helping to arrange and facilitate common planning time for grade-level and subject-area teachers; supporting and designing professional development opportunities, including pre- and inservice pedagogical and content-area training; providing access to curricular material and resources, including the creation of a Core Knowledge Technology Center; and supporting “mentorship” and train-the-trainer programs specifically designed to help with the introduction of the program at new sites.

**Calvert County, Maryland**—Calvert County is the first U.S. school district to implement Core Knowledge in all elementary schools. Much of the impetus for the systemwide adoption came from parents and teachers, responding to information about Core Knowledge pilot programs that had begun in three schools. According to administrators, teacher support (“buy-in”) was one of the keys to the program’s successful implementation, with the only resistance coming from principals. Today, all 12 Calvert County elementary schools are using the curriculum. Because of the systemwide implementation, Core Knowledge schools in the district seem to have some clear advantages. Economies of scale are achieved by having inservice training delivered for larger groups of teachers; implementation support can be delivered by a small team of central-office “teacher-specialists”; teacher networking and the sharing of experience and information across schools is made possible at the local level; scope and sequence statements, aligned assessments, and other supporting documents are prepared by experts, with teacher input; and the central office, not individual schools or teachers, does the work of aligning the curriculum to state standards. In addition, teachers know exactly what background knowledge to expect from students who transfer from one county school to another.

## Considerations

The Core Knowledge Sequence represents the first major effort to specify a common core curriculum for all American students. As such, it goes a long way toward addressing the low expectations for student performance and lack of challenging curricula that characterize many of the nation’s low-performing schools. Although implementation assistance can be purchased through the Foundation, it is not as exten-

sive as that offered by school-improvement programs specifically designed to help low-performing schools. While many of these elements currently are being strengthened, CK still lacks: extensive-enough professional development assistance; the school restructuring assistance needed to ensure that teachers share common planning time; readily-available high-quality curricular and other age-appropriate resource materials; and aligned performance standards and assessments. The program requires a lot of staff work during start-up, including extra time spent on researching, planning and writing new lessons. It should also be noted that CK was not designed to strengthen the teaching of basic skills, such as phonics—a priority need for many low-performing schools.

Nevertheless, several schools and school systems—including high-poverty urban schools—have found ways to fill these gaps on their own. Therefore, before deciding whether or not to adopt the program, it is worthwhile for schools to learn how these successful implementations have been supported. The preliminary findings of a three-year quantitative and qualitative longitudinal study of Core Knowledge offer some useful clues.<sup>5</sup> According to the researchers, several factors “greatly facilitated successful early implementations”: (1) extra funding for start-up, including teacher preparation, materials, etc., (2) common planning time for teachers, (3) parental and community support, (4) site-based management, which can lead to increased flexibility in the use of resources, etc., (5) district support, (6) interest and support from staff, (7) team teaching, which allows the burden of extra work to be shared, (8) sharing lessons and experience with teachers at other Core Knowledge schools, (9) assistance in finding materials, and (10) local adaptations that help serve schools’ specific needs.

At the same time, researchers also detailed the benefits of Core Knowledge: (1) children gain self-confidence as they gain knowledge, (2) students connect to previously learned material, (3) students are more interested in learning and reading, (4) discipline problems decrease, (5) Core Knowledge meets the needs of all students, (6) interaction and accountability among teachers are increased, (7) teachers find their work more interesting and rewarding, and (8) parents are satisfied. The list speaks for itself.

## Publications/Resources

“Common Questions about Core Knowledge,” *Common Knowledge* (Fall 1993), Vol. 6, No. 4.

“Core Knowledge Schools Take Root Across the Country,” *American Educator* (Winter 1996-97), Volume 20, No. 4.

“Why Content Counts,” *American Teacher* (March 1997), Vol. 81, No. 6.

**For more information,** contact: Core Knowledge Foundation, 2012-B Morton Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901.

**Phone:** 800/238-3233.

**Fax:** 804/977-0021.

**E-mail:** coreknow@www.comet.net

**Internet:** <http://www.coreknowledge.org>

<sup>1</sup> Stringfield, Datnow, Nunnery, and Ross, “First Year Evaluation of the Implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence: Qualitative Report” (1996).

<sup>2</sup> Among the other studies now under way is a three-year multistate comparison of schools being conducted by researchers from Johns Hopkins University’s Center for the Social Organization of Schools and the University of Memphis (see footnote 1).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Marshall, “Core Knowledge Sequence Credited in Test Score Boosts,” *Common Knowledge* (Fall 1996), newsletter of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> Gail Owen Schubnell, “Hawthorne Elementary School: The Evaluator’s Perspective,” *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* (1996), Vol. 1, No. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1.

*National Symposium on School Design:  
Schools as Centers of Community*

*October 4-5, 1998*

*A joint project of the U.S. Department of Education and the White House Millennium Council.*

**CREATIVE SOLUTIONS GROUP**

*Unique models of communities working together to design and modernize schools.*

**DISCOVERY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Vancouver, Washington

**Todd Horenstein**, Superintendent, Vancouver Public Schools

**Terry Nelson**, Principal, Discovery Middle School

**Ric Packard**, Teacher, Discovery Middle School

**Vaughn Lein**, AIA, Architect, LSW Architects

**John Wyckoff**, AIA, Architect, LSW Architects

Completed in July 1995, the Discovery Middle School in Vancouver, Washington, was developed through the extensive involvement of parents, students, educators, architects, business partners and other community members. Integrating unique educational spaces, the school features "Academic Villages." The school has ten other unique spaces that service a range of needs for the school and community, in addition to the "Academic Villages." Each village consists of 10 high-tech classrooms and is organized as schools-within-the-school containing teams of students and teachers. Another design feature is the large open box, called the "Tool Box." This area is divided into five zones of integrated instruction, including research with reference materials, wet/dry lab, art design, technology education and fabrication. Outside access is available for environmental studies.

The Community Center reaffirms Discovery Middle School's place within the Vancouver community. A special room near the school's main entrance is dedicated for use by community organizations, school partners and social services support. The school's design reflects a creative approach to teaching. Recipient of several awards including, the national award of the 1996 "Learning by Design" Grand Award, given by the National School Boards Association.

*Contact: 800 East 40th Street, Vancouver, Washington 98668; 360-696-7191 (phone); 360-696-5239 (fax)*

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**CROW ISLAND SCHOOL**

Winnetka, Illinois

**Dr. Elizabeth Hebert, Principal**

The 430-student, K-5 school in the Chicago suburb of Winnetka, Illinois, Crow Island School opened in 1940 and was named a National Historical Landmark in 1990. The school was among the first schools in American to reflect concepts of progressive education in its construction. The benches in the auditorium are graded in size - from the smallest in front to the largest in the rear - so that every little one's feet touch the floor. Door handles, light switches, and plumbing are all on a child's level. So students feel safe on the playgrounds, the school has three separate age-level playgrounds.

The school's design can also adjust to structural needs. For example, classrooms are L-shaped and include adjacent workrooms to facilitate large block designs, science centers and ongoing projects or to serve as technology center. Focused on the enduring qualities of childhood, Crow Island School serves as an example how we can create buildings that respond to a larger vision of school and its place in the community.

*Contact: 1112 Willow Road, Winnetka, IL 60093; 847-446-0353 (phone); 847-446-9021 (fax)*

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**WESTERN PLACER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Lincoln, California

**Dr. Roger Yohe, Superintendent, Western Placer Unified School District****Jeremy Ross Dyer, Student & Graduate of Lincoln High School****Joanne Neft, Chairperson, Western Placer Educational Foundation****Jordan Knighton, AIA, architect, Neptune, Thomas, and Davis Architects****Jim Bush, California State Department of Education**

Western Placer Unified School District (WPUSD) began a process known as *Project Build* – a systemic approach that will support and enhance the instructional strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During two school terms, 1995-96 and 1996-97, over 100 community members, faculty and staff, administrators, parents and students formed a committee to explore and investigate four major frameworks that impact on facilities development: physical resources, learning, governance, and socioeconomic opportunities. In addition, the school district has incorporated the planning process into the curriculum teaching students to design, draw, and make models in preparation for better communication with architects who will be designing Lincoln's new schools.

*Project Build* has produced the Lincoln High School-Sierra Community College Learning Center to address the growing need for a seamless educational program to educate and train high school and community college students for careers in the region's burgeoning high-tech industry.

*Contact: Western Placer Unified School District; 1400 First Street, Lincoln, CA 95648; 916-645-6350(phone); 916-645-6356 (fax)*

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**HENRY FORD MUSEUM & GREENFIELD VILLAGE**

Dearborn, Michigan

**Dr. Steve Hamp**, President, Henry Ford Museum**Steven Binger**, AIA, Concordia Architects, New Orleans, LA

The academy is located on the premises of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. Chartered by Wayne County RESA (Regional Educational Service Agency), the academy opened with 100 ninth-grade students in the fall of 1997 and will graduate its first class in 2001, when it will have its full complement of 400 students in grades 9 to 12. Students use museum artifacts and exhibitions for analysis, inspiration, and association. For example, students in math class used the museum structure itself as a resource, making estimates and calculations of geometrically symmetrical window, wall, and ceiling areas as well as irregular exhibit spaces. The collaborative effort of a global corporation, a renowned not-for-profit cultural organization and the public schools allows for ideal integration of school and museum environments. The nature of this integration produced lesson plans developed by the teaching staff that prepares students for the global economy through several manufacturing projects that help students see real-world applications for their discipline-based studies.

*Contact: 20900 Oakwood Boulevard., Dearborn, Michigan 48124; 313-982-6110 (phone); 313-982-6111 (fax)*

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**BIG LAKE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Big Lake, Minnesota

**Rande Gustafson**, Community Education Director, Big Lake School District**Jane Stevenson**, Co-location Coordinator, Big Lake School District

The Big Lake Public School District is located approximately 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis. The district has one elementary school, one middle school and one high school all on a centrally located campus. Even though over 2,000 K-12 students attend Big Lake schools, the schools serve the educational needs of the entire community. For example, at the heart of the high school is state of the art theater; an interactive, comprehensive resource center; and a multi-purpose athletic facility. All three of these areas embrace the idea that learning should nurture the artistic, physical and academic intelligence of everyone in the community.

Through the use of computer and phone networks, Big Lake Schools have enhanced the communication link between our staff and the community. They have the capacity to directly access data and personnel at any of the three buildings. The technology infrastructure provides learners with the opportunities to interact with people from different cultures, conduct research using university resources and follow current events as they happen. The schools are truly the center of the community and are used regularly by almost all local residents.

*Contact: 501 Minnesota Avenue, Big Lake, Minnesota 55309; 612-262-2523 (phone); 612-262-2539 (fax)*

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**GAYLORD COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Gaylord, Michigan

**Dr. Diane Scheerhorn**, Superintendent, Gaylord Community Schools**Chris Collins**, President, Board of Education**Mason Buckingham**, Former Superintendent, Gaylord Community Schools**Susie Bensinger**, Community leader, former president of the board of education

Built with the community in mind, Gaylord High School in Gaylord, Michigan, serves as a secondary education institution as well as a community center. The school houses senior activities, day-care, performing arts programs, community health-care clinics and even weddings allowing students to interact with other members of the community. School officials believe the bond referendum to build the high school would have never passed without the inclusion of community activities. Now the entire community has a vested interest in the school.

The auditorium is a perfect illustration of this point. Gaylord lacked an auditorium for concerts, recitals and other functions, therefore a special auditorium committee evolved to address the details involved with theater design. Classrooms were also designed to accommodate community use. Anticipating that some teachers might be reluctant to have community members invade their classrooms, school administrators worked with the design team to create departmental offices that would provide private space for faculty members. The high school also houses a full cadre of higher education programs. The rich range of activities at Gaylord High School has resulted in more volunteerism, more fund-raising and more general interest in the school.

*Contact: 90 Livingston Blvd, Gaylord, MI 49735; 517-732-6402 (phone); 517-732-6029 (fax)*

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**CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DRAKE TRANSITION CENTER**

Chicago, Illinois

**Bill Latoza**, Architect, BauerLatoza

In January 1996, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) embarked on a five-year capital improvement program - what became the largest public-school renovation program in the country - to address overcrowding and facilities deterioration in 557 schools. To date all 557 schools have been assessed and their needs prioritized: 256 schools are undergoing extensive renovations, 112 schools are targeted for major renovation in FY 1999, and additional 137 schools are scheduled in FY 2000. In the second year of the improvement plan, the city added specialty programs, such as the creation of career academies to train students for work after leaving school. The plan also calls for energy-efficient programs to be evaluated on a systems wide basis to lower costs and increase energy efficiency.

John B. Drake School is one example of the renovation. The school was constructed in 1898 and was decommissioned as a Chicago Public School in 1978. The school was used by the Chicago Housing Authority from 1980 to 1988, and remained vacant until the rehabilitation project began in April 1998. The school reopened this past September as a transition center, and boasts the most up-to-date computer/Internet technology and science labs for the students.

*Contact: 2641 South Calumet Avenue, Chicago, IL; 773-534-9727(phone); 773-534-9733 (fax)*

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## **CENTER FOR APPLIED TECHNOLOGY AND CAREER EXPLORATION**

Rocky Mount, Virginia

**Dr. Christopher Corallo**, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction  
**William Bowling**, AIA, Architect, Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern, Roanoke, VA

Located in Rocky Mount, Virginia, the Center for Applied Technology and Career Exploration exemplifies total community effort: community leaders, business and industry representatives, local colleges and universities, parents, and teachers worked collaboratively to develop the curriculum and the facility. The Center consists of eight modules representing the skills and career opportunities of the future including environmental/natural resources, health and human services, media design and engineering/architectural design.

Eighth and ninth graders are immersed in real problems, units of study and/or projects. Instructors act as facilitators by guiding their students toward practical solutions. Through their experiences at the Center, students will develop: a work ethic; demonstrate the ability to solve problems effectively in diverse collaborative groups; develop and apply problem solving skills using appropriate technology; and, develop strategies that will help them adapt to change. The center prepares students for the American workforce of the 21st century.

*Contact: 25 Bernard Road, Rocky Mount, VA 24151; 540-483-5138 (phone); 540-483-5806 (fax)*

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## **FLAGSTAFF ARTS AND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

Flagstaff, Arizona

**Dr. Karen Butterfield**, executive director, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy  
**Ms. Jan Stevens**, founding parent & board member, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy

A public charter high school emphasizing the visual and performing arts, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy (FALA) is located on the research grounds of the Museum of Northern Arizona. School lessons are centered within six 28-by-60-foot modular classrooms, but the museum shares its entire 400-acre campus with FALA's students and faculty. The school and museum remain autonomous while at the same time collaborating to strengthen the vision of both organizations. □

Both understand they must be community-based. Therefore, MNA and FALA have worked to maintain strong relations with the local public school district, arts agencies, Northern Arizona University, professional artists, and community and civic leaders. FALA students also volunteer at the museum throughout the year. To graduate they must fulfill 15 hours of community service per semester. MNS also has an apprenticeship program that teaches the students about all aspects of the museum – as a business as a future work place, and as a service agent to the public through its arts, research and science programs. FALA's environment inherently offers an exciting curriculum.

*Contact: 3100 North Fort Valley Road, #41, Flagstaff, AZ 86001; 520-779-7223; 520-779-7041 (fax)*

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## SCHOOL BUILDING MODERNIZATION

### Overview

Quality public education is a clear priority for all Americans, regardless of geographic region, economic background, or political affiliation. Yet the average school building in America is 50 years old, badly in need of repair and renovation, and structurally unfit to become technology-ready. Due to record enrollments, millions of children are in overcrowded, unhealthy, and unsafe classrooms. If our nation's children are to focus on academic achievement, there must be a national commitment to transform every public school into a well-equipped, disciplined place where quality teaching and learning can occur. Modernizing our public schools opens the door to greater student achievement for all children.

### Background

There is a crisis in the condition of America's public school buildings. The crisis affects children of all income groups in urban, rural, and suburban schools alike. The crisis is exacerbated by surging enrollments and spiraling costs for repairing and renovating long neglected school buildings. Specifically:

- **The "Baby Boom Echo" Means Overcrowded Classrooms and Less Learning.** Total enrollment in America's public elementary and secondary schools is projected to climb to more than 48 million in 2007. Schools nationwide are straining to accommodate the children, setting up classrooms in trailers, hallways and closets. The U.S. Education Department estimates that 6,000 new schools must be built by 2006 to handle the overflow.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure Limits Access to Classroom Technology.** Only 27 percent of classrooms and other instructional rooms were plugged into the Internet as of 1997.
- **Aging School Buildings are Unhealthy and Unsafe.** Nearly 14 million children attend

public schools in which at least one building needs major repair or replacement. These repairs are needed in 38 percent of urban schools, 29 percent of suburban schools, and 30 percent of rural schools. At one Alabama elementary school, the roof collapsed just after children left for the day. Teachers in one Chicago school use cheesecloth to filter out lead-based paint flecks getting into their classrooms through the heating and ventilation system.

- **Modern Schools Equal Student Achievement.** Studies document the link between school building conditions and student learning. In 1996, Dr. Glenn Earthman, of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, compared student test scores in substandard and above-standard buildings. He found a positive difference for students in the better buildings. An April 1997 poll by the American Association of School Administrators found that more than 94 percent of American educators said computer technology had improved teaching and learning in American schools.
- **Costs of Renovation and Repair.** In 1995, the General Accounting Office estimated that it would cost \$112 billion to make existing schools healthy and safe, while an additional \$73 billion is needed to build the 6,000 new schools required by 2006 to meet an enrollment surge. Bringing all of America's classrooms into the technological era will push the national price tag up over \$200 billion.

### Recommendations

The evidence is clear: Modern school buildings are a fundamental ingredient in creating quality public schools for America's children. In 1998, a national bipartisan survey commissioned by the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found

that three-fourths of the public backs a major federal investment in public school building modernization. NEA supports federal legislation that would create

and expand tax incentives and other assistance to help states and public school districts meet their school modernization and construction priorities.



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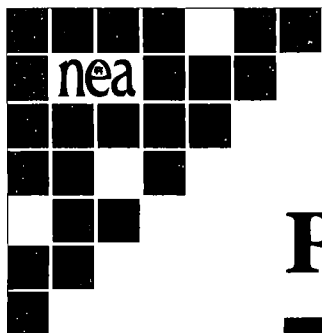
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# THE PROFESSION BUILDER

Center for Teaching and Learning

National Education Association

## ■ ■ ■ PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION ■ ■ ■

High standards, quality assurance, and public accountability are cornerstones of the teaching profession. The National Education Association (NEA) has long been committed to guaranteeing that highly skilled teachers enter the profession and continue to develop throughout their careers. This commitment, according to NEA President **Bob Chase**, includes a "quality assurance system composed of demanding teacher preparation accreditation standards, rigorous licensing standards, and an emphasis on continuous professional development enabling P-12 students to achieve high academic goals."

Meeting high standards for teaching begins with quality teacher preparation. Accreditation is a critical element of the NEA's support for quality teacher preparation.

Accreditation is a process for assessing and enhancing academic and educational quality through voluntary peer review. In its 1996 report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future asserted that "if schools of education are serious about preparing teachers, they should take the necessary steps to become accredited." In fact, the report recommended that states require schools of education to meet the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards by 2006 or be closed.

Accreditation ensures that teacher preparation programs have met rigorous standards for teaching that have been set by the profession. The NEA recognizes NCATE as the national accrediting organization for teacher education programs. This *Profession Builder* takes a brief look

at NCATE, with a focus on how NEA members are advancing the profession through their work on NCATE boards, committees, and projects.

### High Standards: At the Heart of NCATE

"Only through quality teaching will America achieve improved student performance," NCATE President **Arthur Wise** reminds us. "NCATE's goal is fully prepared teachers."

Formed in 1954, NCATE is a nongovernmental coalition of national education organizations and members of the public, all committed to quality teacher preparation (see page 6). NCATE accredits schools, colleges, and departments of education within higher education institutions that provide preparation for teachers and other school specialists. NCATE is the only accrediting organization for teacher preparation that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

NCATE relies on the professional judgment of the nation's top educators in setting its standards. To ensure high standards, NCATE:

- Sets and applies national standards for teacher preparation programs that are determined by professionals in the field.
- Encourages teacher preparation programs to reflect the latest knowledge and best practices.
- Requires institutions to provide necessary resources for program implementation.
- Provides recognition of accredited teacher preparation institutions.

To ensure compatibility across the full continuum of professional development for teachers, NCATE coordinates its standards with the licensing principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and with the standards for accomplished teachers of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

NCATE accreditation is not synonymous with state program approval. While some states do choose to substitute the NCATE review for state program review, the final decision on whether an institution can prepare education personnel rests with the state. State program reviews are mandatory in nearly all states; accreditation is voluntary.

### Meeting Rigorous Standards

NCATE accreditation is awarded only after a thorough review of the teacher preparation program by NCATE trained professionals. Institutions applying for NCATE accreditation prepare a comprehensive report that documents how the institution and its teacher education program meets the NCATE standards. Standards fall into four categories: design of professional education; candidates; faculty; and the unit. After reviewing the report, an NCATE Board of Examiners team visits the institution to verify evidence regarding the standards.

Accreditation, once granted, is continuous as long as the institution fulfills its responsibilities. Continuing accreditation requires institutions to file annual reports, have data reports reviewed by NCATE, and host an on-site visit every five years.

(continued on page 6)

# **Congressional Issues Overview 105<sup>th</sup> Congress**

***NEA Government Relations  
November 1998***

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### **Congressional Issues Overview**

*The first session of the 105th Congress began on January 6, 1997, and ended on November 14, 1997. During the first session, Members of Congress considered a number of issues critical to NEA. Congress rejected a balanced budget constitutional amendment; passed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (P.L. 105-17); cleared H.R. 1871, the FY 97 supplemental appropriations bill; passed a five-year balanced budget plan (H. Con. Res. 84); and enacted historic budget reconciliation bills on taxes and spending to implement the budget resolution. Congress also passed the FY 98 education appropriations bill, charter schools legislation, a literacy bill, and the bill reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, the Perkins Vocational Education Act. Congress considered campaign finance reform legislation, private school voucher legislation, and the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Act.*

*The second session of the 105th Congress convened the last week of January 1998 and adjourned October 21. On January 27, President Clinton gave his State of the Union address, which featured education proposals that would help ensure high academic standards; lower class sizes in grades one through three by hiring 100,000 new teachers; provide for school building modernization zero-interest bonds; enhance public school-based, after-school programs; and increase funding for college work-study programs. The State of the Union address built on Clinton's 1997 State of the Union address, which was perhaps the most strongly championed plan for public education ever delivered by a President.*

*Looking ahead to the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, NEA will face a number of issues critical to students, public schools, and education employees. Foremost among these is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which encompasses every federal elementary and secondary education program except for IDEA and Vocational Education. Also likely to surface as key issues will be school building modernization, Social Security reform, block grants, private school vouchers, managed health care, the minimum wage, and tax cuts.*

## **NEA Legislative Victories in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress**

### **Education Funding**

- ◆ Education funding will increase \$3.6 billion for FY 99, or 12 percent. This represents the third consecutive yearly increase for education, for a total of \$10.4 billion. The other increases were \$3.3 billion in FY 98 and \$3.5 billion in FY 97.
- ◆ Elementary and secondary programs fared particularly well, achieving a 16 percent increase. Among programs receiving major new investments are: Title I math and reading skills, education technology (including teacher technology training), IDEA special education, after-school learning centers, professional development for teachers, literacy programs, and Pell Grants for college students.

### **100,000 New Teachers**

- ◆ The FY 99 budget includes \$1.2 billion to reduce class size in the early elementary grades by providing a down payment for hiring and testing 100,000 new teachers.
- ◆ These funds will pay salary and benefits for some 30,000 teachers (including special education teachers) in the 1999-2000 school year. In addition, up to 15 percent of the funds can be used for professional development and competency testing for teachers new to the profession.

### **School Building Modernization**

- ◆ Unfortunately, the Congress failed to enact the NEA-supported Public School Modernization Act, which would have provided tax credits to subsidize interest on some \$22 billion of school modernization bonds. The House bill had 133 cosponsors.
- ◆ NEA succeeded in raising the visibility of the issue and secured a commitment from the President that this will be a top Administration priority in the next Congress. In addition, as part of the 1997 bipartisan balanced budget plan, the Congress did enact tax credits to subsidize interest on \$800 million of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds, which will pay for school modernization in designated enterprise and empowerment zones.

### **Vouchers**

- ◆ NEA turned back several voucher bills in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- ◆ NEA defeated the HELP bill that would have used Title VI funds for private and religious school vouchers.
- ◆ Most recently, NEA blocked a voucher program proposal for the District of Columbia from being included in the omnibus bill.

### **Higher Education**

- ◆ Congress overwhelmingly passed, and President Clinton signed, an NEA-supported bipartisan bill that reauthorizes the Higher Education Act.
- ◆ The reauthorized law:
  - ◆ Lowers the student loan interest rate to its lowest level in 17 years (7.46 percent),
  - ◆ Increases the authorized Pell Grant maximum award (from \$3,000 to \$4,500) and funding for Federal Work Study Programs,
  - ◆ Improves teacher preparation and professional development programs,
  - ◆ Forgives loans for teachers working in high-poverty rural and urban areas,
  - ◆ Establishes a demonstration program for quality distance learning,
  - ◆ Creates a program to encourage low-income middle-school students to prepare for college, and
  - ◆ Improves a provision on voluntary early retirement incentives.
- ◆ NEA turned back an anti-affirmative action amendment

### **Head Start**

- ◆ Congress passed an NEA-supported bill that reauthorizes the Head Start Program.
- ◆ The reauthorized program:
  - ◆ Increases funding for teacher salaries and professional development,
  - ◆ Expands programs for infants and toddlers, and
  - ◆ Heightens standards of quality.
- ◆ NEA successfully fought back Head Start vouchers and the wholesale entry of for-profit organizations into the program.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

- ◆ Congress passed, and President Clinton signed, an NEA-supported bill that reauthorizes IDEA.
- ◆ NEA helped obtain a FY 98 funding increase of \$700 million and an additional FY 99 increase of \$503 million.
- ◆ NEA worked closely with Congress and the Education Department on language about student discipline, individual education plans, and excess paperwork.

### **Vocational Education**

- ◆ Congress passed an NEA-supported bill that reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.
- ◆ NEA successfully fought efforts to block grant funding for vocational education programs with adult job training and maintained vocational education as a school-based program.

### **Child Nutrition**

- ◆ Congress passed the NEA-supported William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, which:
  - ◆ Increases funding,
  - ◆ Raises the age that children can participate in after-school programs from 12 to 18, and
  - ◆ Makes it easier for after-school programs that serve low-income areas to qualify for the highest level of reimbursement.

### **“Paycheck Protection”**

- ◆ NEA blocked several efforts to prevent NEA and other unions from utilizing voluntary union dues on advocacy activities, including legislative efforts and internal communications with members.

### **Block Grants**

- ◆ NEA, working in coalition with various advocacy groups, defeated several efforts in both the House and Senate to eliminate key programs such as Eisenhower professional development, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and education technology, and replace them with untargeted block grants that have no accountability.

### **Mandatory Medicare coverage**

- ◆ NEA efforts in 1997 succeeded in deleting from the bipartisan balanced budget bill a Senate proposal to subject all state and local employees to the Medicare payroll tax, which would have adversely affected NEA members in 15 states.

### **Private School Tax Breaks**

- ◆ NEA lobbied against enactment of some \$1.6 billion in tax subsidies for private and religious school expenses. While the Coverdell bill passed the Congress, the President vetoed it.

### **E-Rate**

- ◆ NEA, in coalition with various education and library advocacy groups, defended the E-Rate program against several efforts to eliminate this important source of financial support to provide schools and libraries with discounted access to the Internet.

### **Access to Copyrighted Materials in the Classroom**

- ◆ NEA played an active role in blocking new restrictions on the ability of educators to utilize materials available over the Internet in the classroom.

### **Expanded Children's Health Coverage**

- ◆ NEA helped to enact, as part of the 1997 bipartisan balanced budget bill, the new \$24 billion Children's Health Insurance Program, which will provide health coverage to some 5 million children who lack health insurance.

### **Child Literacy/Reading Excellence Act**

- ◆ NEA successfully lobbied for the creation of programs as a part of Eisenhower Professional Development, Title II, and requiring coordination with other federal professional development and literacy programs at the federal, state and local level.
- ◆ Focuses on implementing research-based reading programs and providing professional development in literacy for school staff.
- ◆ Requires that districts that provide after-school tutoring include a school-based program among the options for students in need of reading help.

### **Charter Schools**

- ◆ NEA helped include language in a charter school expansion law requiring public charter schools to participate in state assessments to be eligible for federal funds
- ◆ NEA deleted language from bills that would have given priority in funding to states whose charter laws treat every charter school as its own school district and automatically waive most of the state education code, including standards and employee rights.

## **NEA Quality Public Schools Agenda**

NEA unveiled its Quality Public Schools Agenda at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on February 25, 1997. NEA President Bob Chase presented the details of the Agenda and its goal of improving teaching and learning in public schools.

The Agenda, a set of targeted national initiatives designed to help strengthen our public schools, includes specific recommendations for federal legislative action based on five goals: safety and order in every school; every child ready to learn; every school building in good condition; every student's classroom connected to new technologies; and a qualified teacher in every classroom.

On March 4, 1998, the Senate Democrats unveiled RESULTS, their education agenda for 1998. Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) sponsored the bill, S. 1708, which would: build and modernize schools; hire 100,000 teachers to reduce class size in grades one through three; expand after school programs; integrate technology into the classroom; and help low-performing urban and rural schools with educational opportunity zone grants.

Several additional bills that advance the Quality Public Schools Agenda were introduced in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress:

**Safety and Order in Every School.**

- Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) introduced H.R. 879, the Teaching Responsibility and Accountability to Children Act, which would provide grants for intake screenings by youth development specialists to help provide service referrals to youth in juvenile proceedings.
- Bills were introduced in the House and Senate that would expand the Family and Medical Leave Act so that parents could have time to participate in parent-teacher conferences and school activities. Rep. Clay (D-MO) introduced H.R. 109 in the House and Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced S. 183 and S. 280.
- Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) introduced S. 882, the After School Education and Safety Act, which would provide grants for after-school public school programs to improve academic and social outcomes.
- Rep. Jim Maloney (D-CT) introduced H.R. 4009, which would amend Title II of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to encourage school-based partnerships between local law enforcement agencies and local school systems to hire School Resource Officers (SROs). SROs would work with schools, students, and community organizations to help prevent violence in and around schools. In October, the Senate and House passed S. 2235, a companion bill to H.R. 4009 sponsored by Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO). President Clinton is expected to sign the bill.
- The fiscal year 1999 omnibus appropriations bill, H.R. 4278, includes \$210 million for a new safe schools initiative, including \$167.5 million for hiring SROs.
- The FY 99 omnibus spending bill includes \$566 million for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and \$35 million for the new Safe and Drug-Free School Coordinators program.
- The omnibus bill included the Senate Democratic leadership bill, S. 1708, which increased funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers — after-school centers that provide tutoring, counseling, homework assistance, and drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs — to \$200 million, a \$160 million from FY 98.

In the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, NEA will continue to work with Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to reintroduce key features of their legislation to prevent gun violence against children, H.R. 4073/S. 2185. The Children's Gun Violence Prevention Act of 1998 seeks to educate children and protect them from gun-related violence at school, home, and in their communities. The bill (1) prohibits the sale of assault weapons to minors, (2) imposes fines on a gun owner if a child gains access to his or her firearm, (3) sets criminal penalties against gun owners whose firearms are accessed by a child and used in an act of violence, (4) provides funding to develop and disseminate a model children's firearm education program, and (5) authorizes competitive grants to local education agencies for gun violence education.

#### **Every Child Ready to Learn.**

- During the first week of October 1998, Congress approved S. 2206, Sen. Dan Coats' (R-IN) Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Conference Report No. 105-788). The NEA-endorsed bill reauthorizes the Head Start program. S. 2206 increases funding for teacher salaries and professional development, expands programs for infants and toddlers, and requires heightened measures of quality. Head Start has had great success at preparing low-income children for school, while addressing their health and social service needs. Parental involvement is a hallmark of this program.
- The FY 98 budget resolution included \$24 billion over five years for a new proposal, the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (P.L. 105-33), to provide health coverage to 5 million of the nation's 10 million low- and moderate-income children without insurance. NEA was actively involved in the passage of this legislation and continues to monitor its implementation. States can voluntarily choose to participate in this program and are given great flexibility in developing health insurance plans that can include expanding Medicaid to this population or developing a new program. As of September 30, 1998, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services had approved 41 state plans.
- In October, Congress approved the William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Conference Report No. 105-786). This legislation will increase access to child nutrition programs by expanding eligibility, streamlining services, reducing paperwork, and increasing funding. The legislation also builds safeguards into the new Women Infants and Children program requirements.

### **Every School Building in Good Condition.**

- A school infrastructure initiative sponsored by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) was enacted in the 1997 tax bill. It provides interest-free bonds for public schools -- categorized as qualified zone academies -- in empowerment and enterprise zones for construction and renovation. It requires a private business partner and provides tax credits for \$800 million of bonds (\$400 million in each year for FY 98 and FY 99).
- A wide variety of bills were introduced to help modernize school buildings, but NEA endorsed the Public Schools Modernization Act, H.R. 3320/S. 1705, as a positive first step. This bill, sponsored by Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (D-IL) and Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), and based on President Clinton's budget proposal, would have provided tax credits to subsidize \$22 billion of zero-interest bonds. Fifty percent of the funds would be allocated to the school districts in the nation with the largest number of low-income children, with the other 50 percent allocated to state education agencies to distribute to other schools with infrastructure needs. H.R. 3320 had 133 cosponsors. Unfortunately, even though the President made inclusion of school modernization one of his priorities for funding in the 1999 omnibus appropriations bill, the Republican leadership refused to agree with this proposal, and it was not enacted in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **Modern Schools, Better Learning Campaign.**

NEA and the American Federation of Teachers have jointly proposed a 10-year, \$30 billion program of interest subsidies and direct grants to help states and local school districts respond to the school building crisis. Between the estimated \$112 billion needed to repair and renovate public school buildings, \$73 billion for new construction to meet rising student enrollments, and billions more to modernize buildings for technology, public schools face at least a \$200 billion modernization problem.

Both the House and Senate voted on the Public Schools Modernization Act in various forms this year. On April 1, the Senate tabled an amendment by Sen. Moseley-Braun (D-IL) to the FY 99 budget resolution that would have expressed the Sense of the Senate that tax subsidies on \$22 billion of school construction bonds should be provided. On April 21, the Senate again tabled a proposal by Sen. Moseley-Braun to substitute school modernization tax credits for the private school tax subsidies contained in the so-called Coverdell education savings account proposal, H.R. 2646.

In the House, an amendment by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) to the FY 99 budget resolution to provide modern school tax credits was rejected in the Budget Committee on May 20. On June 18, Rep. Rangel (D-NY) offered a motion to recommit the conference report on the Coverdell bill, with instructions to substitute tax credits for school modernization. The House rejected the Rangel motion by a vote of 196-225.

On September 26, the House passed on a largely party-line vote a tax bill, H.R. 4579 sponsored by Rep. Bill Archer (R-TX). The bill would have provided some \$80 billion in various tax cuts over five years and included a provision that would have granted local schools \$1.379 billion in fiscal relief over five years. Under current law, schools are allowed to keep any earnings they make on the proceeds of school construction bonds for the first two years the bond money is invested. Such profits are known as arbitrage. Because many schools are unable to complete construction within two years of receipt of the bond proceeds, any arbitrage earned after two years must be rebated to the federal government. The House bill would have extended this rebate period to four years.

NEA believes this modest first step would have provided financial benefits to some schools. However, it fell well short of the need and failed to leverage new investments in construction.

The Senate did not consider the House-passed tax bill because it was clear that there was not the 60-vote majority needed to pass the bill.

Finally, the Senate Appropriations Committee version of the FY 99 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bill, S. 2440 sponsored by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), included \$100 million in direct grant money for school construction to rural and urban schools in financial need. This was dropped from the final omnibus appropriations bill in conference.

NEA will continue to press for meaningful school modernization resources in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Cosponsor and support legislation next year to provide significant federal financial support to states and local schools to modernize, repair, and rebuild America's schools.*

### **Every Classroom Connected To New Technologies.**

- Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced S. 351, the Teacher Technology Training Act, which would amend various existing teacher preparation and professional development programs to include training in the effective use of educational technologies. Rep. Connie Morella (R-MD) introduced H.R. 1572, the House companion bill.
- Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) introduced S. 839, the Technology for Teachers Act, which would create a program for teacher training in the use of educational technologies. Rep. Morella (R-MD) introduced the companion bill, H.R. 2065.
- The FY 99 omnibus appropriations bill provides \$425 million for Technology Literacy Challenge Fund state grants.

### **A Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom.**

- Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced S. 1169, the Teacher Excellence in America Challenge Act of 1997, on September 11, 1997. The bill would establish grants for partnerships between universities and local public schools to improve the preparation and professional development of public school teachers and to raise academic achievement of students in the classroom.
- Two bills that would expand loan forgiveness for new teachers who commit to teaching in shortage areas were introduced: Rep. George Miller (D-CA) introduced H.R. 2228, the Teacher Excellence for All Children Act of 1997; and Rep. Bill Clay (D-MO), introduced H.R. 1435, the College Access and Affordability Act of 1997. Some provisions of these NEA-supported bills were included in the final conference report on H.R. 6, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, which was signed into law in early October 1998.
- The FY 99 omnibus appropriations bill includes \$75 million for a new program to train teachers in effectively using technology.
- The Higher Education Act, Title II, includes elements of S. 1169, the Teacher Excellence in America Challenge Act of 1997, which established grants for partnerships between universities and local public schools to improve the preparation and professional development of public school teachers and to raise the academic achievement of students.
- The bill reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), signed into law in June 1998, strongly urges states and school districts to provide training and information to all school personnel who work with students with disabilities.
- The bill reauthorizing IDEA requires appropriate training and supervision for paraeducators in accordance with state law.

## **I. Federal Education Budget**

On February 2, 1998, President Clinton submitted his FY 99 budget, proposing total FY 99 spending of \$1.7 trillion, with a surplus of \$10 billion. This would be the first federal budget surplus since 1969. The budget projects surpluses increasing every year until the surplus reaches \$258 billion in FY 2008. Subsequent estimates by the Congressional Budget Office project even higher surpluses -- totaling some \$1.6 trillion over 10 years.

The President's proposed total budget for the Department of Education would increase by \$3.1 billion to \$37.8 billion (a 8.9 percent increase), while the discretionary portion of the department's budget -- programs that need to be funded every year to continue -- would receive a \$1.75 billion increase to \$31.2 billion (a 5.9 percent increase).

In addition to the Department of Education funding increase summarized on the following page, the budget included a school building modernization proposal for new, zero-interest bonds. These tax credits would have totaled \$215 million in FY 99 and \$5 billion over five years. A total of \$9.7 billion in bonds would have been made available in FY 99 and FY 2000 each. Also, the Department of Health and Human Services' Head Start program would have received a \$305 million increase, or a total of \$4.66 billion, under the President's budget. Congress rejected these proposed increases.

On April 1, the Senate passed S. Con. Res. 86, the FY 99 budget resolution, by a 57-41 margin. NEA opposed the resolution because it would have resulted in a \$1 billion cut for education funding below the level needed to maintain the current level of services. The Senate-passed version of the budget bill drops the funding proposed by President Clinton that would be used to hire 100,000 teachers to reduce class size, provide tax credits for school modernization bonds, increase the Pell Grant maximum award, increase funding for Title I, education technology, and other important programs. While the budget proposal assumes an increase in funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Title VI block grant, it would require a cut of \$422 million in other education programs to accommodate these increases.

During Senate floor consideration, several amendments to provide needed investments in education were rejected. The one improvement passed by the Senate was an amendment by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) to add \$50 million per year for after-school learning centers.

On June 5, the House, by a 216-204 vote, passed its version of the budget, H. Con. Res. 284. The House-passed budget was even worse than the Senate's. It, too, would have dropped all funding for school modernization and class size reduction initiatives. In addition, it would cut domestic spending by \$100 billion over five years, below the bipartisan balanced budget agreement, to fund a tax cut. Funding for education and related programs, such as Head Start, would be cut by \$4.4 billion below the balanced budget level, resulting in a \$13.8 billion cut below the level needed to maintain current services.

The House rejected an NEA-supported substitute, offered by Rep. Spratt (D-SC), that would have provided funding for school modernization and class size reduction, while adding \$7 billion for education programs above the levels in the plan sponsored by Budget Committee Chairman Kasich (R-OH).

Due to the inability of the Republican leadership to agree on the level of a proposed tax cut, Congress failed for the first time in 25 years to agree on a final budget resolution

The House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, H.R. 4274 by Rep. John Porter (D-IL), was completely unacceptable to NEA. It cut \$2 billion in education funding requested by the President. It would have (1) cut Goals 2000 by 50 percent, (2) dropped funding for teacher technology training, (3) froze Title I at last year's level, (3) cut Eisenhower Professional Development by \$50 million, (4) dropped a \$25 million proposed increase for professional development for bilingual ed teachers, (5) eliminated several college student aid programs, including Perkins Loans and State Student Incentive Grants, (6) failed to increase funding for after-school learning centers, and (7) did not provide any funds for class-size reduction or improved training for new teachers. In addition, it would have eliminated funding for summer youth jobs.

Because of these drastic cuts, as well as several controversial policy riders -- including the creation of an elementary/secondary block grant, arbitrary limits on bilingual ed services, and a ban on voluntary national testing -- the full House failed even to consider H.R. 4274.

The President had promised to veto the bill.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the FY 99 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, S. 2440 sponsored by Sen. Specter (R-PA), on September 3. While this bill also fell short of needed levels of investments on education, it was a significant improvement over the House bill. The Senate did not eliminate any programs or reduce funding below FY 98 levels. It would have provided an increase of \$1.4 billion for education programs funded with discretionary money, compared with the House increase of only \$474 million, which is below the level needed to cover inflation.

The Senate bill also dropped all the controversial policy riders. However, NEA believes it still had to provide additional funding for such programs as class-size reduction, after-school learning centers, teacher technology training, and Pell Grants. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) advocated that the Senate Labor-HHS-Ed bill receive an additional \$700 million in outlays to increase education funding.

The Senate failed as well to consider this appropriations bill on the floor.

Thus, the final decision on the FY 99 education funding levels were determined as part of an omnibus appropriations bill, H.R. 4278. Education programs did extremely well in the final appropriations process, receiving a \$3.6 billion (12 percent) increase. Within this total, elementary/secondary programs did even better, receiving a 16 percent increase. Included in this total is \$1.2 billion for a new program to reduce class size by providing a down payment on hiring and testing 100,000 new teachers.

On the following page is a chart and information that highlight President Clinton's proposed budget, House and Senate committee approved levels, and the final FY 99 levels.

# FEDERAL EDUCATION BUDGET

(all numbers in millions of \$ of Budget Authority)

| PROGRAM                                                     | FY 98<br>Enacted | FY 99<br>President | FY 99 HOUSE<br>APPROPRIATION<br>S COMMITTEE | FY 99 SENATE<br>APPROPRIATIONS<br>COMMITTEE | FY 99 FINAL      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|
| GOALS 2000                                                  | 491.0            | 501.0              | 245.0                                       | 496.0                                       | 491.0            |
| SCHOOL-TO-WORK <sup>1</sup>                                 | 200.0            | 125.0              | 75.0                                        | 125.0                                       | 125.0 (-15.3%)   |
| TECHNOLOGY LITERACY<br>CHALLENGE FUND                       | 425.0            | 475.0              | 425.0                                       | 425.0                                       | 425.0            |
| TECHNOLOGY<br>INNOVATION<br>CHALLENGE GRANTS                | 106.0            | 106.0              | 106.0                                       | 126.0                                       | 115.1 (+8.6%)    |
| TEACHER TRAINING IN<br>TECHNOLOGY                           | ---              | 75.0               | ---                                         | ---                                         | 75.0 (NA)        |
| TITLE I GRANTS TO LEAS                                      | 7,375.2          | 7,767.0            | 7,375.2                                     | 7,676.0                                     | 7,676.0 (+4.0%)  |
| TITLE I COMPREHENSIVE<br>SCHOOL REFORM                      | 120.0            | 150.0              | 120.0                                       | 120.0                                       | 120.0            |
| IMPACT AID                                                  | 808.0            | 696.0              | 848.0                                       | 810.0                                       | 864.0 (+6.9%)    |
| CLASS SIZE REDUCTION<br>(100,000 new teachers)              | ---              | 1,100.0            | ---                                         | ---                                         | 1,200.0 (NA)     |
| EISENHOWER<br>PROFESSIONAL<br>DEVELOPMENT (TITLE II)        | 335.0            | 335.0              | 285.0                                       | 335.0                                       | 335.0            |
| SAFE AND DRUG-FREE<br>SCHOOLS                               | 556.0            | 556.0              | 556.0                                       | 556.0                                       | 566.0 (+1.8%)    |
| SAFE AND DRUG-FREE<br>SCHOOLS MIDDLE<br>SCHOOL COORDINATORS | ---              | 50.0               | ---                                         | - -                                         | 35.0 (NA)        |
| CHARTER SCHOOLS                                             | 80.0             | 100.0              | 100.0                                       | 80.0                                        | 100.0 (+25.0%)   |
| EDUCATION<br>OPPORTUNITY ZONES                              | ---              | 200.0              | ---                                         | ---                                         | ---              |
| BILINGUAL AND<br>IMMIGRANT EDUCATION                        | 354.0            | 387.0              | 354.0                                       | 354.0                                       | 380.0 (+7.3%)    |
| LITERACY INITIATIVE<br>(AMERICA READS) <sup>2</sup>         | ---              | 260.0              | ---                                         | ---                                         | 260.0 (NA)       |
| INDIAN EDUCATION                                            | 59.8             | 66.0               | 66.0                                        | 66.0                                        | 66.0 (+10.5%)    |
| IDEA (TOTAL)                                                | 4,810.6          | 5,055.6            | 5,314.1                                     | 5,322.9                                     | 5,334.1 (+10.9%) |
| 21 <sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING<br>CENTERS                | 40.0             | 200.0              | 60.0                                        | 75.0                                        | 200.0 (+400.0%)  |
| VOCATIONAL ED<br>(TOTAL)                                    | 1,147.1          | 1,150.1            | 1,154.2                                     | 1,146.7                                     | 1,154.2 (+0.6%)  |
| PELL GRANTS                                                 | 7,344.9          | 7,594.0            | 8,178.7                                     | 8,527.6                                     | 7,704.0 (+4.9%)  |
| PELL GRANT MAXIMUM<br>AWARD <sup>3</sup>                    | (3,000)          | (3,100)            | (3,150)                                     | (3,100)                                     | (3,125, +4.0%)   |
| TEACHER RECRUITMENT<br>AND PREPARATION                      | 2.2              | 67.0               | 2.2                                         | 77.2                                        | 77.2 (+971.5%)   |

<sup>1</sup> Includes an equal amount in the Labor Department

<sup>2</sup> Advanced funded for FY99

<sup>3</sup> In actual dollars

| PROGRAM                                         | FY 98<br>Enacted | FY 99<br>President | FY 99 HOUSE<br>APPROPRIATION<br>S COMMITTEE | FY 99 SENATE<br>APPROPRIATIONS<br>COMMITTEE | FY 99 FINAL     |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| COLLEGE-SCHOOL<br>PARTNERSHIPS (GEAR-<br>UP)    | ---              | 140.0              | ---                                         | 75.0                                        | 120.0 (NA)      |
| TOTAL DEPARTMENT OF<br>EDUCATION                | 34,765.5         | 37,800.4           | 36,039.9                                    | 36,424.8                                    | 33,977.9        |
| SCHOOL BUILDING<br>MODERNIZATION TAX<br>CREDITS | ---              | 215.0              | ---                                         | ---                                         |                 |
| HEAD START (IN HHS)                             | 4,355.0          | 4,660.0            | 4,500.0                                     | 4,660.0                                     | 4,660.0 (+5.1%) |

### Summary of Final FY 99 Education Funding

- Title I: +\$301 million (an increase of 4 percent). All of this increase is for basic grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Funding for comprehensive school reform is frozen at \$120 million, while the Title I migrant education program increases by \$49 million (a 16.1 percent increase).
- Class Size Reduction and Teacher Financing: This new program would receive \$1.2 billion in FY 99, which would pay for salaries and benefits of some 30,000 new teachers in the 1999-2000 school year. LEAs can use up to 15 percent of their funds for teacher training and competency testing for new teachers. Because this is a discretionary funded program, funds for hiring new teachers are only guaranteed for one year. The next Congress will need to guarantee multiyear funding, as originally proposed in President's Clinton's seven-year, \$12.4 billion plan.
- Technology Literacy Challenge Fund: Frozen at the FY 98 level of \$425 million.
- Teacher Training in Technology: A new program of \$75 million to help new teachers learn how to use technology effectively.
- Impact Aid: +\$56 million (a 6.9 percent increase).
- School Drug Prevention Coordinators: A new \$35 million competitive grant program under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program provides funds to half of all middle schools to hire a director of drug and violence prevention.
- Charter Schools: +\$20 million to a total of \$100 million (a 25 percent increase).
- Literacy: +\$260 million was provided for the new Reading Excellence Act.
- Bilingual Education Professional Development: +\$25 million (a 100 percent increase).
- Title VI, Innovative Education Programs Strategies State Grants: +\$25 million (a 7.1 percent increase).

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grants to States: +\$503 million (a 13.2 percent increase).
- Adult Education: +\$24.4 million (a 6.8 percent increase).
- Pell Grants: +\$359 million (a 4.9 percent increase). This would raise the maximum award to \$3,125, the highest level ever.
- Federal College Work Study: +\$40 million (a 4.8 percent increase).
- State Student Incentive Grants: Frozen at last year's level of \$25 million.
- Perkins College Student Loans: -\$35 million (a 25.9 percent cut).
- TRIO Post-secondary Program: +\$70.3 million (a 13.3 percent increase).
- Learning Anytime, Anywhere Partnerships: +\$10 million (plus an additional \$10 million in the Department of Labor) for a new program to enhance and promote distance learning for adult learners.
- Strengthening Hispanic Serving Institutions of Higher Education: +\$16 million (an increase of 133 percent).
- Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities: +\$16 million (a 13.5 percent increase).

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Support continued guaranteed funding for hiring 100,000 new teachers by making the class size reduction program a mandatory, multi-year program.*
- *Continue to support needed investments in education programs, particularly Title I, IDEA, and Eisenhower Professional Development.*

## **II. Private School Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits, and Other Tax Schemes**

Despite multiple attempts in the House and Senate to use federal funds for private school vouchers, no voucher legislation was enacted in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. The President vetoed the District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act, S. 1502 sponsored by Sens. Dan Coats (R-IN) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT). The Help Empower Low-Income Parents (HELP) bill, H.R. 2746 sponsored by Reps. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and Frank Riggs (R-CA), would have allowed state and local educational agencies to use their Title VI funds for vouchers. It was defeated with large bipartisan opposition.

It is anticipated that next year's Congress will continue with various voucher proposals unveiled in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, such as:

- BOOKS (Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools, S. 1590, sponsored by Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-GA), which includes tax shelters for private school families and vouchers for private and religious schools;
- District of Columbia vouchers;
- and a block grant that would include vouchers in the list of allowable uses of funds.
- Some members have called for using some or all of Title I for vouchers in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress' reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

During the debate on the budget reconciliation package, President Clinton said he would veto the entire measure if it contained IRA-like accounts to pay for private school expenses. As a result, the provision that would have created these accounts was dropped. Subsequently, Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-GA) and Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) introduced S. 1133/H.R. 2646, the "A-Plus" Education Savings Accounts." The bill would have created tax-free accounts for families earning up to \$160,000 yearly to use for payment of expenses associated with private, religious, public, or home-schooling. The House passed H.R. 2646 by a vote of 230-198, short of the votes necessary to override a presidential veto.

On April 23, 1998, the Senate passed S. 1133 (the Coverdell bill) by a vote of 56-43 after three days of debate and votes on a series of education-related amendments. The NEA actively opposed this bill. Five Democrats -- Sens. Robert Byrd (WV), John Breaux (LA), Bob Graham (FL), Bob Torricelli (NJ), and Joseph Lieberman (CT) -- voted for Coverdell on final passage. Three Republican Senators -- John Chafee (R-RI), Jim Jeffords (R-VT), and Arlen Specter (R-PA) opposed it. Several Senators expected to support Coverdell voted against it on final passage because of amendments that were added to the bill to promote block grants, teacher testing, merit pay, and a ban on voluntary national tests in reading and math.

The Senate passed the conference report passed 59-36. Four Democrats -- Joe Biden (DE), Diane Feinstein (CA), Herbert Kohl (WI), and Max Cleland (GA) -- who had opposed H.R. 2646 because it promoted block grants, teacher testing, merit pay, and a ban on voluntary national reading and math tests, supported the conference report because it did not contain the block grants and ban on voluntary national testing. Despite his earlier support for H.R. 2646, Sen. Bob Graham (D-FL) voted against the conference report. Two Republicans, James Jeffords (VT) and John Chafee (RI), voted against the conference report.

Neither the House nor Senate passed H.R. 2646 with the votes necessary to override the promised presidential veto.

President Clinton vetoed H.R. 2646 on July 21, 1998.

In the last days of the first session, the Senate separated the D.C. voucher provisions from an omnibus appropriation package in order to ensure funding for the District of Columbia and other federal agencies and approved the separate D.C. voucher bill, S. 1502 by Sens. Dan Coats (R-IN) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), by voice vote. The House narrowly passed the bill, 214-206. In August 1998, the House narrowly passed a voucher amendment to the D.C. appropriations bill, 214-208. President Clinton threatened a veto District of Columbia appropriations bill if it included vouchers.

During deliberations over the tobacco bill, S. 1415 by Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), Sens. Coverdell (R-GA), Craig (ID), and Abraham (R-MI) offered an amendment to the bill that included vouchers for public school students who are the victims of a crime or drug-related offense on school grounds. Students could use the voucher for private and religious schools. The vouchers would have been paid for with current federal funds. All Democrats, plus Sens. Jeffords (R-VT) and Chafee (R-RI), voted against the amendment. The Senate tobacco bill died before final passage.

The Religious Freedom Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, by Rep. Jim Istook (R-OK), was defeated 224-206 in June 1998. A two-thirds vote is needed to pass an amendment to the Constitution. H.R. 78 would have essentially gutted the First Amendment's separation of church and state. The unconstitutional amendment would have prohibited "deny[ing] equal access to a benefit on account of religion," thereby resulting in direct federal and state funding of religious schools and support of voucher programs. In addition, the amendment would have authorized prayer in schools, no matter how disruptive to the classroom or school program.

Reps. Newt Gingrich (R-GA), Frank Riggs (R-CA), and Floyd Flake (D-NY) introduced H.R. 2746, the Help Empower Low-income Parents bill (HELP). HELP is a voucher bill that would be funded with current Improving America's Schools Act, Title VI, funds. The bill was soundly defeated in the House by a vote of 228-191.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) has made enacting private school voucher legislation a top priority, including the introduction of three voucher proposals in S. 1, the Safe and Affordable Schools Act. The proposals included a (1) voucher demonstration project, (2) amendments to use Titles I and VI of the Improvement of America's Schools Act for vouchers, and (3) moving poor children to "safe" private and parochial schools and from "unsafe" public schools.

Companion bills were introduced in the House and Senate, titled the American Community Renewal Act. HR 1031 was sponsored by Reps. J.C. Watts (R-OK), James Talent (R-MO), and Floyd Flake (D-NY). S. 432 is sponsored by Sens. Dan Coats (R-IN) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT). The bills included a \$1 billion voucher program for private and parochial schools in 100 "renewal" communities, as a condition to implement this proposal.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Oppose any tax shelters that help subsidize private and religious school costs. Tax credits and shelters do not improve school safety, teacher training, or parental involvement in our public schools.*
- *Oppose any legislation that would allow the use of public funds for vouchers at private or parochial schools.*
- *Oppose tuition tax credits for K-12 private or parochial schools.*

### **III. Campaign Finance Reform**

Campaign finance reform received considerable attention in the 105th Congress and from President Clinton. President Clinton endorsed S. 25, the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, introduced in the Senate by John McCain (R-AZ) and Russell Feingold (D-WI).

NEA supports major elements of S. 25, however, we opposed a provision added on the Senate floor in February that would have limited the ability of unions and corporations to pay for issue advertisements within 60 days of federal elections, while allowing ideological groups to continue to do so.

NEA also strongly opposes any effort to ban small-donor PACs, such as NEA-PAC, that empower working people and stimulate voter participation in political campaigns. Small-donor PACs give middle- and lower-income citizens the ability to pool contributions with those of like-minded people to level the political playing field with wealthier donors.

S.9, the Paycheck Protection Act, introduced by Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK), is dangerous to NEA because it would have significantly restricted our ability to be an effective advocate for children and education by requiring NEA and its affiliates, as well as other unions, to obtain expressed written annual consent from members (as well as agency-fee payers) to use their dues for such purposes as lobbying and internal communications with union members concerning political issues. No NEA dues money ever goes into NEA-PAC. S.9 was simply a back-door effort to cripple NEA's -- and other unions' -- legislative and internal political activities with members. A House companion, H.R. 2608, was introduced by Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-CO).

When the Senate considered campaign finance reform in February 1998, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) offered S. 1663, the "Paycheck Protect Act," as the sole proposal from the Republican leadership. The McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill was offered as a substitute to the Lott proposal. While the McCain-Feingold bill did receive a majority of votes, it failed to garner the 60 votes needed to close off a filibuster. The Lott bill was also blocked when a majority of the Senate voted against even considering it. By a vote of 54-45, with 10 Republicans joining all Democrats, the Senate failed to invoke cloture on this harmful provision, thus stalling this issue in the Senate.

On March 31, 1998, the House rejected a companion bill, H.R. 2608, sponsored by Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-CO), by a vote of 166-246, with 52 Republicans joining all but three Democrats in voting against this harmful bill. These votes represent a significant victory for NEA because both the House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, have voted against this legislation.

The House passed H.R. 2183 by Rep. Asa Hutchison (R-AZ) during the summer after substituting an amendment offered by Reps. Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Martin Meehan (D-MA). The amendment is based on H.R. 493, which is identical to the McCain-Feingold bill. Several other substitutes were rejected. No additional attempts to enact "paycheck protection" legislation occurred, though an anti-union amendment concerning how unions report their budgets to the U.S. Department of Labor was rejected.

After House passage of H.R. 2183, the Senate once again blocked passage of McCain-Feingold on a filibuster in September.

**The Message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Oppose any campaign finance reform legislation that targets small-donor PACs or the ability of working-class citizens to participate in political campaigns.*
- *Oppose any substitutes or amendments to campaign finance reform bills on the House floor that would limit NEA's ability to lobby or communicate with its members on political and legislative issues.*

**IV. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

On June 4, 1997, President Clinton signed into law, P.L. 105-17, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments of 1997, which assure access to appropriate educational opportunities for all students with physical and/or learning disabilities. On January 20, 1998, NEA submitted its comments with major suggestions concerning student discipline, individual education plans, and excess paper work to the U.S. Department of Education on the proposed regulations implementing IDEA '97. Final regulations, which were to be published in April or early May 1998, will be released in the next several weeks, according to most recent estimate from the U.S. Department of Education. NEA will produce an analysis of the regulations and make it available on the NEA website when they are finalized.

The omnibus appropriations bill, passed on the last day of the session, requires that that General Accounting Office conduct a study on student discipline next year.

**V. Vocational Education**

Congress passed the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1998 (Conference Report No. 105-800) after a protracted four-year battle, and President Clinton is expected to sign it into law. The legislation, which technically expired in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, was originally subject to being combined with job training legislation and converted into a block grant, and control of funding would have been given to the governors. NEA opposed these measures.

The final result essentially preserves the program as is: vocational education remains a categorical program, with a separate funding stream controlled by state and local education officials; “supplement, not supplant” and “maintenance of effort” provisions are maintained; and professional development is a mandatory activity at both the state and local level.

NEA supports efforts to assure ongoing federal support for school-based vocational education that helps prepare young people for jobs of the future and expands access to vocational education to students who have been traditionally underserved by such programs.

In May 1998, the Senate passed S. 1186, the Workforce Investment Partnership Act of 1997, sponsored by Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT), with strong bipartisan support. NEA supported this legislation because of changes that were made to ensure that vocational education funds are not converted into block grants and combined with adult job training under the control of state governors, and that education entities maintain control of education funds. In July 1997, the House passed H.R. 1853, sponsored by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA), which maintains a separate funding stream for vocational education.

NEA continues to work for adequate financial resources and a meaningful role for teachers and public schools in the design and implementation of vocational education programs. NEA also supports the continuation of a discrete School-to-Work program that helps non-college bound students prepare for good jobs after high school.

## **VI. Copyright**

Congress passed and the President signed into law the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 in October. NEA and other education and library groups successfully fought against the inclusion of sweeping legal protections for databases, which would have been a tremendous hindrance to educators seeking to use any digital information collection, including collections already in the public domain. Congress also agreed to allow the Librarian of Congress to waive the act’s application to certain classes of copyrighted works for educators and librarians upon a finding that enforcement of the act obstructs the exercise of their fair use rights.

NEA has three major interests in any copyright legislation.

- First, it must ensure that educators are able to exercise their fair-use rights over legally acquired copyrighted material in the digital environment. Fair use is the right to make limited use of a copyrighted work without obtaining the permission of and/or paying royalties to the work's author. With the rapid ascent of digital technologies, educators must be assured that their fair-use rights continue to apply in a digital world.
- Second, it must prevent the enactment of database protection provisions that would make it difficult for schools to gain access to digital compilations of information.
- Third, it must protect school districts serving as online or Internet service providers from being held liable for third-party copyright infringements. (Under the new law, school districts will not be held liable for copyright infringements by a third party on the district's network if the district was unaware of the infringement.)

NEA will continue working in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress to update distance learning language. When Congress passed the Copyright Act of 1976, it dealt only with distance learning conducted via closed circuit television and videocassette recorders. It did not foresee the development of electronic networks such as the Internet, through which distance learning can take place. As a result, current law does not deal with how educators and librarians can make use of copyrighted materials on the Internet for distance learning purposes. NEA is concerned that educators will opt not use the Internet for distance learning until the law is brought up to date.

## **VII. Telecommunications Act of 1996**

Massive efforts to move forward provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 were less than successful. These provisions include discounts for telecommunications services, internal connections, and Internet service. Although the basic E-Rate program remains intact, its funding and services have been reduced, and delays have prevented receipt of discounts by schools and libraries. Reasons for the delay are many, as described below.

Two separate audits of the E-Rate discount program (one requested by the Congress) were conducted and must be finalized before letters of commitment to schools and libraries can be sent. These letters should confirm the value of the discounts the schools and libraries will receive. The release of commitment letters may occur in late fall or early winter.

In addition to the audit of Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC) — the entity set up to administer the program — other Congressional efforts have been aimed at stalling the E-Rate program. A House Commerce and Education and Workforce Committee hearing on September 16 seemed aimed solely at raising doubt about the scope and appropriateness of the E-Rate. However, despite criticism from the Committee Chairs, the hearing elicited strong support from other Members and very useful testimony from representatives of two telephone company foundations, who stated that charity was inadequate to wire all schools and libraries and that the E-Rate was desperately needed.

Congressional attacks on the organization and administration of the SLC have contributed to delays but have somewhat abated since the resignation of its CEO and the absorption of SLC by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

Despite all of the startup difficulties, Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and SLC optimism is high for continuation of the E-Rate program. An 80-day window for 1999-2000 school year applications will open on December 1.

A number of proposals to move the E-Rate program out of the hands of the FCC and to fund the program with federal excise tax dollars were unsuccessful. Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA), Chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, Reps. Jerry Weller (R-IL) and Kenny Hulshof (R-MO) cosponsored H.R. 4324, which along with Sen. Conrad Burns' (R-MT) S. 2348 carried the greatest political weight. These bills would have taken the 3 percent federal excise tax currently collected on all consumer phone bills, deleted two-thirds of it, and put the remaining 1 percent (totaling approximately \$1.7 billion per year) into a trust fund for the E-Rate program. They would have also moved the program's jurisdiction from the FCC and the SLC to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration in the Department of Commerce. Finally, they would have converted E-Rate funds into block grants (based on a new formula) directly to the states, thereby diluting the program's focus on schools with large numbers of poor children. Similar legislation is likely to be introduced early in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

NEA and our Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) colleagues did not oppose the excise tax proposals outright because of the need to build upon recent Republican enthusiasm for finding a viable alternative to fund educational technology. However, the bills had a number of shortcomings. They did not explain (1) when, how, or if current applicants would receive their discounts, (2) whether an entirely new application process would have to be devised, (3) and from where budget offsets for the excise tax revenues would be drawn. Moreover, the amounts raised by 1 percent of the excise tax would not have been enough to cover the amounts requested by current applicants (\$2.02 billion) and would probably have to be fought for each year in the appropriations process. Also, it is important to note that this and other related bills that utilize the excise tax would supply federal tax dollars (either indirectly or directly) to private parochial schools — thus raising a voucher issue.

On another front, a legal challenge to the E-Rate by telephone corporations GTE, SBC, and BellSouth in the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals remains unresolved. Oral arguments will be heard before the end of this year, but timing for the final decision is unknown.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Continue to resist any legislative attempts to limit services covered by the E-Rate program or to reduce its funding.*

## **VIII. Higher Education Act**

The House approved the final conference report on NEA-supported H.R. 6, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, by voice vote on September 28. The Senate passed the measure 96-0 on September 29. The compromise was signed into law on October 7 (Public Law 105-244). Sponsored by Reps. Howard McKeon (R-CA), William Goodling (R-PA), William Clay (D-MO), and Dale Kildee (D-MI), H.R. 6 reauthorizes the 1965 Higher Education Act (HEA) until 2003.

NEA applauds the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress and staff and leaders of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee for their bipartisan work and passage of this key legislation. Combined with the \$45 billion tax policy for higher education passed last year, H.R. 6 makes a tremendous contribution to helping every eligible student have the opportunity to pursue a postsecondary education.

Today, student financial aid comprises more than 90 percent of the U.S. Education Department funds for postsecondary education. Funding for student financial aid programs authorized in Title IV of HEA is expected to exceed \$42 billion for FY 98. HEA currently provides \$48.5 billion in financial assistance for 8.5 million students and \$216 million for institutional development.

Additionally, the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 1998 provides substantial increases for various student aid programs. Some of these programs and their funding levels include: Pell Grants, \$7.7 billion; Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, \$619 million, and Federal Work Study, \$870 million..

NEA believes the revised HEA contains significant improvements, ranging from the lowest interest rate for student borrowers in 17 years and expansion of the Pell Grant and Work Study Programs to improved teacher preparation and education programs and loan forgiveness for teachers working in high-poverty areas.

Throughout the two-year reauthorization process, NEA worked with Congress and the Administration on key provisions of the bill, including the new distance education demonstration programs in Title IV to ensure they maintain high quality, require evaluations, and include safeguards for students against fraud and abuse. NEA succeeded in helping maintain the 50 percent rule for courses and students in distance learning until evaluations of the new demonstration programs are carried out.

NEA supported the inclusion of the Administration's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness to Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) -- designed to enhance early intervention and college awareness for low-income, middle school students -- and the distance learning initiative called Learn Anywhere Anytime Partnership.

NEA also worked for and won improvements in provisions dealing with assurances that collective bargaining rights of tenured faculty are protected in the development of voluntary retirement incentives.

NEA did support the overall progress on H.R. 6, including the final House/ Senate conference agreement. During the conference discussions, NEA was able to work with congressional staff to modify successfully several of the most egregious provisions in Title II -- Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants for States and Partnerships. Specifically, we:

- Deleted language from the final bill that would have repealed funding for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.
- Limited the "parents right to know" section only to information pertinent to a teacher's grade level and subject-area certification.

- Restored language to the bill that will safeguard due process rights and locally negotiated agreements that protect the rights of public school employees.

Despite our eventual support for the final version of H.R. 6, NEA raised objections at every step of the legislative process to several provisions contained in Title II. We were overridden by the will of the Republican majority, however, and the following proposals remain in the final bill:

- Establish alternative teacher preparation programs through nonprofit educational organizations, in addition to alternative routes to certification.
- Allow non-public school entities to receive federal public funds as partnership members.
- Include governors in the administration of these education grants, a role better left to state and local education agencies that administer and coordinate federal education programs.
- Give authority to states through an ill-defined provision to use federal grant money to develop systems of performance-based compensation (a concept most often misunderstood, and incorrectly equated, with merit pay).

On balance, Title II provides for the reauthorization and enactment of several far-reaching provisions that encourage talented individuals to become teachers, improves the quality of teacher education programs, and provides increased resources for professional development. It also provides additional support for post-secondary faculty development programs.

The HEA Senate-House compromise also includes new or strengthened provisions on child care, campus security, collection of college cost data, needs analysis for independent students, and performance-based organization model for Department of Education to improve student aid delivery. NEA also supported and helped win in the final bill enhanced campus-based programs and increased aid to Hispanic Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

For the record, during previous consideration of H.R. 6, the House voted 249-171 to defeat the NEA-opposed amendment offered by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA). The amendment would have reduced access to postsecondary education by prohibiting public colleges and universities from using any form of affirmative action in their admissions policies if they received federal higher education funds. Also, the House defeated by 227-189 an amendment offered by Rep. Tom Campbell (R-CA) that was similar to Riggs' amendment and just as harmful.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Commend Members of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress for their bipartisan support for the NEA-supported conference report on H.R. 6, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 (Public Law 105-244). NEA looks forward to working with Congress and the U.S. Department of Education on the implementation of the revised Higher Education Act.*

## **IX. Family and Medical Leave Act Expansion**

NEA played a lead role in the eight-year struggle to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which was finally enacted in February 1993. Several proposals to expand FMLA were considered in the 105th Congress. President Clinton proposed expanding the number of people eligible for FMLA by lowering the threshold for covered employees from those with 50 or more employees to those with 25 or more. In addition, the President called for allowing employees 24 hours of unpaid leave per year to attend to their children's educational needs, including teacher conferences, and to accompany children to medical or dental appointments. In the House, H.R. 109, sponsored by Rep. William Clay (D-MO), incorporated these proposals. In the Senate, S. 183, introduced by Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT), would have lowered the threshold to 25 employees, while S. 280, the "Time for Schools Act" introduced by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), would have provided 24 hours of educational leave. Both these bills were rejected in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Support legislation to expand and improve the FMLA by increasing the number of covered employees and allowing leave to facilitate parents' involvement in their children's education.*

## **X. Social Security**

Social Security reform died in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, but NEA anticipates it will be a prominent issue when the next Congress convenes in January 1999.

One important issue related to the Social Security debate is the impact on teachers and educational employees of the U.S. Government Pension Offset. The offset is used to reduce by two-thirds the Social Security benefit for the surviving spouse of a retiree from a federal, state, or local employer that does not participate in the

Social Security system. The Government Pension Offset affects government employees and retirees in 15 states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Texas.

Representatives William Jefferson (D-LA) and J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ), along with more than 100 co-sponsors, introduced legislation (H.R. 2273) that would have allowed Social Security recipients to receive a minimum \$1,200 per month in combined Social Security and public pension payments before the offset could be imposed. On November 4, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) introduced S.1365, the Senate companion bill.

On May 21, the Social Security Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on Social Security reform. Specifically, the hearing focused on the Government Pension Offset, the windfall elimination provision, and mandatory Social Security coverage for teachers and all other public employees. The windfall elimination provision applies to those who receive a pension uncovered by Social Security, but who have enough Social Security work credits to qualify as a retired worker for disability and retirement benefits. In this case, a special formula is used to determine the Social Security benefit. Benefits under this special formula are lower than those for employees who have only worked in jobs covered by Social Security.

NEA will continue in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress to support legislation that repeals the Government Pension Offset and to oppose mandatory Social Security coverage.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Support the introduction of legislation that would help eliminate Social Security payment inequities between public and private sector employees. The pension offset is unduly burdensome on retired, lower-income public employees, a disproportionate number of whom are noncertified, educational employees such as cafeteria workers, school bus drivers, teachers' aides, custodians, and clerical workers.*
- *Oppose the inclusion in Social Security reform initiatives of mandatory coverage for state and local government employees in uncovered states.*

## **XI. Civil Rights**

English Only. The 105<sup>th</sup> Congress did not pass any English-only bills.

Bilingual Education. The House passed the NEA-opposed H.R. 3892, the English Fluency Acquisition Act sponsored by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA). The Senate, however, took no action. The bill would have eliminated the current bilingual education program. Instead, it would have limited a student to no more than two years in a bilingual education program, would have used funds for English acquisition only, and would have diluted funds by transforming the program from competitive grants to the neediest districts into a formula-driven grant program. Also, the bill would have voided all compliance agreements requiring state and local education agencies to provide bilingual education in conformity with the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

Affirmative Action. NEA worked in coalition with other organizations in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress to block sweeping anti-affirmative action legislation, H.R. 1909 and S. 950, sponsored by Rep. Charles Canady (R-FL) and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY). The legislation would have turned back the clock on three decades of bipartisan civil rights enforcement.

NEA also helped defeat an attempt by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA) to attach amendments modeled after his anti-affirmative action bill, H.R. 3330, to key pieces of legislation. Riggs offered and then withdrew under pressure one such amendment to the FY 98 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. His amendment to H.R. 6, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 was defeated in the House on May 6, 1998, by a vote of 249-171. The amendment would have reduced access to postsecondary education by prohibiting public colleges and universities from using any form of affirmative action in their admissions policies if they received federal higher education funds.

NEA supports affirmative action programs because discrimination in education and the workplace persists, and affirmative action programs are fair, effective, and necessary tools in addressing discrimination. Affirmative action is an effective tool to help ensure equal educational and job opportunities to women, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged.

Employment Nondiscrimination. The 105th Congress recessed without completing action on the NEA-supported Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA), S. 869 by Sens. James Jeffords (R-VT) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and H.R. 1858 by Reps. Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Barney Frank (D-MA). ENDA would make it illegal under federal law to discriminate in the workplace on

the basis of sexual orientation. NEA supports ENDA because it promotes equal rights in the workplace for all Americans. NEA will work for reintroduction of this important legislation in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Hate Crimes Prevention. NEA participated in the first White House Conference on Hate Crimes, convened by President Clinton in November 1997. Following the conference, S. 1529/H.R. 3081, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998, was introduced in the House and Senate by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Arlen Specter (R-PA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Reps. Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Bill McCollum (R-FL). This measure would 1) authorize funding for hate crime prevention programs; 2) amend the current federal Hate Crimes criminal statute (18 U.S.C. Sec. 245) to allow federal prosecutors to pursue cases involving violence committed on the basis of race, national origin, or religion, without having to prove that the perpetrator was interfering with "federally protected activities," such as going to school or voting; and 3) provide new authority for federal officials to investigate and prosecute cases in which the violence occurs because of the victim's real or perceived disability, sexual orientation, or gender.

Despite a rising number of hate crimes, Congress adjourned without completing action on S. 1529/H.R. 3081. NEA will work for the reintroduction of this important legislation in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Oppose legislation that would make English the official language of the United States. Official English would impose federal interference in the classroom by mandating that teachers use only English to communicate with their students. Official English would limit access to education and other critical services for children and their families.*
- *Support affirmative action because it is an effective tool to address discrimination in education, business and the workplace. It gives qualified individuals equal access and equal opportunity to compete and contribute. It works because it creates diversity in our classrooms and workplaces, ensuring we have competent, educated leaders from and for all communities in America. Affirmative action is still necessary because discrimination still exists.*
- *Oppose any legislation that would turn back the clock on the nation's commitment to equal opportunity by eliminating federal affirmative action programs for women and people of color in education, business, and employment.*
- *Oppose any legislation that would ban all affirmative action in college and university admissions. Affirmative action in education is fair, effective, and still needed to address discrimination.*

- *Support and cosponsor the reintroduction of S.869/HR1858, ENDA, which would assure equal rights in the workplace, regardless of an individual's sexual orientation.*
- *Support and cosponsor the reintroduction of S. 1529/H.R. 3081, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998, which would provide new authority for federal officials to help local and state law enforcement investigate and prosecute hate motivated violence perpetrated because of a person's race, religion, national origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.*

## **XII. Charter Schools**

At the end of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, President Clinton signed into law H.R. 2616, the Charter School Expansion Act sponsored by Reps. Frank Riggs (R-CA) and Tim Roemer (D-IN). The companion Senate bill, S. 1380, was sponsored by Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Dan Coats (R-IN).

In the final legislation, states can obtain additional funding for public charter school startups only if they review charter schools at least every five years. In addition, a public charter school is eligible for federal funds only if it has a written performance contract with the chartering agency in which it agrees to participate in state assessments (and any other assessments as negotiated) as required of other public schools. Deleted from the final language were incentives to favor states whose charter law provides an "automatic waiver" of the state education code (which includes employee rights, standards, safeguards for students) or treat charter schools as a separate school district.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Any changes to the Title X part C charter school startup program must focus on ensuring equity, quality, and accountability for students and staff, consistent with the criteria established in NEA's Charter School Initiative.*

## **XIII. Child Literacy**

In November 1997, the House passed by voice vote the Reading Excellence Act, HR 2614. The bill, authored primarily by Chairman William Goodling (R-PA), includes grants for state and local literacy partnerships -- instead of directly to state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) -- to expand professional development for teachers of students in grades K-3, family literacy services, and parent training for early childhood reading readiness. The bill emphasizes phonics

and the use of methods that are based on “reliable, replicable research” for each activity. The bill also includes controversial “tutorial assistance grants” (TAGs). The grants are administered by the local educational agency. Unlike the volunteer tutoring assistance provided in the state literacy partnership grants, these grants of federal monies must be contracted out by the local school district to for-profit and non-profit tutoring providers. The district identifies students most in need of reading tutoring and provides parents with a list of providers. The parents select the tutoring provider for their children. The district then enters into a contract with the provider to pay for the services.

The Senate committee marked up a very different version of the child literacy bill. The Senate version of H.R. 2614 would distribute funds to SEAs and LEAs instead of the House’s new partnership bureaucracies for professional development and volunteer tutors. Sen. Dan Coats (R-IN) announced during the mark up that he would try to add the TAGs provision to the Senate bill on the floor.

The final bill — included in the FY 99 omnibus appropriations bill and signed by President Clinton into law on October 21, 1998 (P.L. 105-277) — (1) adds the program to Eisenhower and directs funds to SEAs and LEAs, (2) requires a state-level literacy advisory group led by the governor, and (3) allows some funds to be used by districts for tutors. Parents will choose between a school-based program and an outside provider that meets local district criteria.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *NEA applauds a national focus on every child reading by the third grade and on professional development in the use of proven reading instruction programs.*
- *NEA opposes supplemental reading programs that are not of proven high quality and whose tutors are not well trained or supervised by the schools. NEA also opposes the contracting out of these programs to for-profit providers.*

#### **XIV. Juvenile Justice**

Despite procedural attempts to pass a juvenile justice bill (S. 2073 sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT)) that would have harmed children, NEA, working in coalition with law enforcement, religious, and education advocacy groups, prevented passage of such legislation in the final days of the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress.

On September 23, 1998, the House of Representatives passed S. 2073, NEA-opposed legislation reauthorizing the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The bill contained amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act that (1) lower to 14 the age at which juveniles may be tried as adults, (2) permit 14-year-olds to be jailed with adults, and (3) permit runaways to be jailed with other kinds of juvenile offenders and possibly adults. These amendments were previously passed by the House in H.R. 3, the Juvenile Crime Control Act of 1997 by Rep. Frank McCollum, and H.R. 1818, the Juvenile Crime Control and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1997 by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA).

There is speculation that the amendments added to the House version of S. 2073 were made to produce a juvenile crime bill because the Senate juvenile crime legislation, S. 10, the Violent and Repeat Offender Act of 1997 by Sen. Hatch, had been stalled in the Senate for more than a year. NEA opposed S. 10, which would have allowed children to be kept in adult jails, including children who commit nonviolent offenses and children who commit status offenses such as truancy or running away. Both S. 2073 and S. 10 failed to invest in programs proven to prevent crimes, while spending hundreds of millions of dollars on jails, drug testing, and record keeping. S. 10 would also have eliminated the current requirement that states address the disproportionate confinement of minority youth in secure facilities.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Support legislation that would provide funding for prevention programs and provisions to maintain current law protections for incarcerated children.*

## **XV. Child Care**

On January 7, 1998, President Clinton unveiled his childcare plan for \$21.7 million in spending and tax subsidies over five years. The proposed child care initiative includes: (1) an increase in the child care and development resources to states to help low-income families pay for child care, (2) an increase in the dependent care tax credit to include 3 million working families earning less than \$60,000 to help pay for child care, and (3) an expansion of the 21st Century Learning Community Centers to provide school-age, after-school care, and enrichment programs. NEA strongly supports the 21st Century Schools provision, which will provide an estimated 500,000 additional children educational and enrichment programs after school.

Although several Democratic and Republican child care proposals were introduced in this session of Congress, which included before- and after-school programs and expanded dependent care tax credit, the only child care program that received significant increased funding is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Included in the omnibus appropriations bill was a \$160 million increase for this program. This increase, coupled with the change in the Child Nutrition legislation that permits schools to serve snacks to children up to age 18, should mean that children, especially teen-agers, will have greater access to before- and after-school programs.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Support increased funding for 21st Century schools to provide before- and after-school care enrichment opportunities for children.*
- *Support childcare legislation that ensures high quality childcare opportunities for all children that are safe and affordable.*

## **XVI. Child Nutrition**

Congress approved in October the William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 (Conference Report No. 105-786). This legislation, which President Clinton is expected to sign into law, contains several important nutrition programs for children: the school breakfast and lunch programs, the summer food program, the child and adult care food programs, which provides snacks to children in after-school programs, and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental food program. NEA strongly supports the expansion of these programs.

The reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act will make additional resources available for helping children by expanding eligibility to more children, streamlining services, reducing paperwork, and increasing available funding. The legislation also builds safeguards in the new WIC program requirements. The expansion of child nutrition programs represents a major victory because the Republican Congress wanted to convert the programs into a block grant and reduce their funding in 1994.

Three major provisions in the new law will particularly benefit students and schools.

- First, it increases from 12 to 18 the age that children can participate in after-school food programs. Schools will be able to use the National School Lunch

Program to deliver after-school services as well, streamlining the process and reducing paperwork. This provision, coupled with the increased funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, should make running after-school programs more attractive for schools.

- Second, it reduces paperwork and increases funding in low-income areas by allowing after-school programs to qualify for the highest level of reimbursement if the program serves a low-income area. Previously, family income data had to be collected from each child.
- Third, it authorizes a universal school breakfast research project contingent on discretionary spending. Similar scientific studies have shown that when all children in a school are served a free, or "universal," breakfast, attendance and test scores increase, discipline problems decrease, and children are healthier.

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce reported out its bipartisan child nutrition bill, H.R. 3875, the WIC Reauthorization Amendments of 1998 by Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE), on June 4, 1998. The Senate Agriculture Committee passed S. 2286, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Amendments of 1998 by Sen. Dick Lugar (R-IN), on September 17, 1998. NEA supported both bills.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *After-school programs are known to deter juvenile crime and teen pregnancy, while enriching students' educational and social development.*
- *Support mandatory spending for the creation of a "universal breakfast" research project designed to ensure that all children receive a free school breakfast. A controlled pilot program will enable us to evaluate its effectiveness.*

## **XVII. Head Start**

Congress approved in October S. 2206, the Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998 by Sen. Dan Coats (R-IN) (Conference Report No. 105-788), which reauthorizes the Head Start program. President Clinton signed the bill into law (P.L. 105-285) on October 27, 1998.

Although the noncontroversial Senate bill passed by voice vote, the NEA-opposed bill reported out of the House Education and the Workforce Committee in July, H.R. 4241, the Head Start Amendments Act by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA), contained provisions damaging to the head Start program. These included

vouchers for child care, new prescriptive local performance standards, and the inclusion of for-profit organizations as Head Start grantees.

While the final compromise legislation does not include vouchers, it adds new educational performance measures, and for-profits are permitted to participate as grantees if they meet certain comprehensive prescriptive standards.

On the plus side, the legislation increases funding for teacher salaries and professional development, expands programs for infants and toddlers, and heightens standards of quality.

### **XVIII. Tobacco Settlement**

Tobacco legislation died in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. NEA continues to support comprehensive tobacco control legislation and will work in coalition with health and other advocacy groups to push the issue in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

After four weeks of debating NEA-supported S. 1415, the National Tobacco Policy and Youth Smoking Reduction Act, introduced by Sen. McCain (R-AZ), the Senate effectively killed the legislation with two procedural votes on June 17, 1998. The bill would have required tobacco companies to pay \$506 billion over the next 25 years for health and public education programs, raised cigarette prices by \$1.10 per pack, gave the Federal Drug Administration new powers to regulate nicotine, and phased out subsidies to tobacco farmers. Recent studies indicate that 3,000 children and youth become regular smokers each day and that one-third of them die eventually from a tobacco-related disease.

The legislation was strengthened by several amendments on the floor, including one offered by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) that increased penalties to tobacco companies that failed to meet youth smoking reduction targets. It also contained an amendment by Sens. John Kerry (D-MA) and Christopher Bond (R-MO) that would have mandated funding for childcare, including before- and after-school programs. Another amendment, the NEA-opposed Drug Free Neighborhoods Act by Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-GA), would have permitted public funds to be used for private school vouchers for children wishing to leave "unsafe" public schools.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Ensure that any tobacco settlement legislation provides adequate funding for tobacco-related public health programs, including research, tobacco cessation*

*programs, public education, improved warning labels, and provisions to eliminate youth access to tobacco.*

- *Ensure that any tobacco settlement legislation includes meaningful targets for the reduction and prevention of teenage smoking.*
- *Ensure that any tobacco settlement legislation require states to comply with the clean-indoor air provisions to address the hazard of second-hand smoke.*
- *Ensure that any tobacco settlement legislation provides adequate funding for key education and child care initiatives.*

## **XIX. Block Grants**

Several bills to eliminate federal education programs and replace them with block grants were introduced, but action focused on the so-called Dollars to the Classroom Act, H.R. 3248 by Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA). The House passed the bill by a small margin in September 1998. The Senate took no action, and H.R. 3248 died at the end of the session.

H.R. 3248 would have repealed the targeted federal assistance provided through 31 important education programs and replaced them with a block grant that requires no accountability. The bill would have given governors and others discretion on how to spend the funds and eliminated state-specific funding formulas, which would allow wholesale shifts of scarce federal funds away from children with the greatest need. Finally, based on funding levels in the House's fiscal year 1999 education appropriations bill, every state would have lost funds under the Pitts bill — anywhere from 4 percent to 78 percent.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Oppose any block grant legislation that dilutes or removes accountability fails to target resources to specific populations or purposes in the national education interest, and whose purpose is to diminish already-scarce federal funding.*

## **XX. Ed Flex**

There were attempts by Sens. William Frist (R-TN) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) via S. 2213 and by Reps. Michael Castle (R-DE) and Tim Roemer (R-IN) via H.R. 4590 to amend the current Ed Flex program within Goals 2000, the federal program that supports elementary and secondary education reform using state and local priorities in standards, assessments, curricula, and professional development.

NEA strongly preferred waiting for next year's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Goals 2000 reauthorization to create meaningful flexibility at the state and local levels that do not unravel the federal role and critical education program elements.

Currently under ESEA, all state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) can request waivers of federal education requirements by submitting a request to the Secretary of Education that demonstrates why the requirement impedes student achievement reforms. Further, of the waivers requested to date, nearly one-third was found unnecessary because the SEAs and the LEAs already had the flexibility they were seeking.

**The message to Members of Congress should be:**

- *Any changes and evaluations of the Ed Flex program should be carried out in relationship to all other program waivers and flexibility now available under ESEA.*

## **XXI. Minimum Wage**

The Senate voted 55-44 in September to table (kill) an amendment by Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to S. 1301, the bankruptcy overhaul bill, which would have raised the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$6.15 hour over the next two years. Two Democrats, Bob Graham (FL) and Fritz Hollings (SC), voted against the Kennedy amendment. Republicans Al D'amato (NY) and Arlen Specter (PA) voted in favor of the amendment. NEA will continue to support raising the minimum wage in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## **XXII. Managed Care**

Under the threat of a Presidential veto, the House passed a managed care bill 216-210. Twelve Republicans voted against the Republican-sponsored bill, H.R. 4250 by Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA). Only three democrats supported the measure on final passage. An NEA-supported Democratic alternative, H.R. 3605, by Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), the ranking minority member on the House Commerce Committee, was defeated 212-217.

Both the Republican and Democratic bills offered additional consumer protections, such as a process for appealing the denial of coverage and a ban on physician gag rules. However, H.R. 3605 offered broader patient protections, more specific coverage mandates, and more access to specialists and continuity of care. NEA opposes the Republican plan for a number of reasons, including that it (1) leaves medical decisions in the hands of insurance companies instead of doctors, (2) does not give access to specialty care where needed, and (3) does not provide for continuity of the doctor-patient relationship. Although managed care legislation failed to pass in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, it is expected to be a major agenda item in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.

High standards, quality assurance, and public accountability are cornerstones of the teaching profession. The National Education Association has long been committed to advancing these professional goals by guaranteeing that highly skilled teachers enter the profession and continue to develop their skills and abilities throughout their careers.

**M**eeting high standards for teaching begins with recruitment into the profession, followed by quality preparation. A critical element of the NEA's support for quality teacher preparation is accreditation. Accreditation ensures that teacher preparation programs have met rigorous standards for teaching that have been set by the profession. The NEA recognizes the *National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education* (NCATE) as the national organization that performs the professional accreditation of teacher education programs.

Formed in 1954, NCATE is a nongovernmental, nonprofit coalition of thirty national educational organizations and members of the public, all committed to quality teaching and teacher preparation. NCATE accredits schools, colleges, and departments of education within higher education institutions that provide professional preparation for teachers and other school specialists. To ensure high standards, NCATE:

- Sets and applies national standards for teacher preparation programs that are determined by professionals in the field.
- Encourages teacher preparation programs to reflect the latest knowledge and best practices.
- Requires teacher education institutions to provide necessary resources for program implementation.
- Provides recognition of accredited teacher preparation institutions.

NCATE is the only accrediting organization for teacher preparation that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

**N**CATE standards call for high quality in teacher preparation institutions, as determined by the professional judgment of the nation's top educators. With the NCATE accrediting process, members of the profession determine which schools, colleges, and departments of education measure up to the teacher preparation standards set by the profession.

NCATE standards emphasize prospective-teacher performance in the context of solid preparation in professional and liberal arts studies. The NCATE accreditation process demands that a teacher preparation institution engage in careful analysis of institutional resource allocations, conduct a comprehensive self-study, develop plans for continuous improvement, and use current research to justify the institution's educational model.

NCATE accreditation is awarded only after a thorough review of the teacher preparation program by NCATE-trained professionals. About 500 institutions producing approximately two-thirds of the nation's new teacher graduates each year participate in the accreditation process.

NCATE's on-site evaluators, policy boards, and committees are composed of individuals from the national professional education organizations--including the NEA--that make up the NCATE coalition. Constituents include teacher educators, teachers, state and local policy makers, specialty organizations, and public representatives who have been recommended by the coalition members.

**N**EA leaders and members participate on each of the NCATE boards. NEA also collaborates with NCATE to improve teacher quality through NCATE programs such as the:

- New Professional Teacher Project.
- State Partnership Program.
- Professional Development School Standards Project.
- Historically Black College and University Technical Support Network.
- Technology Project.

In addition, NEA's support of NCATE includes:

- Advocating for recognition of NCATE standards in licensure systems.
- Achieving NCATE accreditation for all teacher preparation institutions.
- Ensuring equitable representation of teachers in NCATE accreditation activities.
- Providing early experiences for prospective teachers to learn about the advantages of selecting an NCATE accredited institution.
- Increasing recognition for NCATE accredited institutions.
- Gaining increased involvement of NEA state and local affiliates in NCATE accreditation activities.
- Establishing local district employment policies that recognize the value of graduation from an NCATE accredited institution.
- Achieving collaborative arrangements between NCATE accreditation and state approval of teacher education programs.

## *The NCATE Coalition*

National Education Association (NEA)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)

National School Boards Association (NSBA)

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD)

Council of Learned Societies in Education (CLSE)

International Reading Association (IRA)

International Technology Education Association/Council on Technology Teacher Education (ITEA/CTTE)

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)

Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

National Middle School Association (NMSA)

Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

American Library Association/American Association of School Librarians (ALA/AASL)

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

## *What NEA Members Can Do to Support NCATE*

**N**EA state affiliates and local associations can do much to advance the work of NCATE.

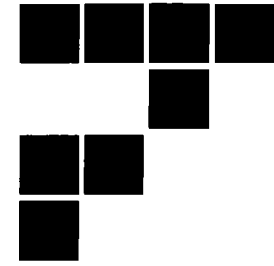
First and foremost, state and local affiliates can create an awareness among the membership of the value of accreditation generally, and of NCATE particularly, to Association goals and to individual teachers. Additional strategies include:

- Developing collective bargaining language requiring local school boards to hire only those professionals who have graduated from NCATE-approved institutions. Language should also be drafted that releases members to perform NCATE activities.
- Publicizing through high school guidance counselors, other professionals, and the media both NCATE-accredited and non-NCATE-accredited teacher education institutions in the state.
- Recommending members to receive training in the NCATE accreditation process.

nea

For more information, contact the  
National Education Association  
1201 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036-3290  
Phone: 202•822•7372

Or visit the NCATE web site at:  
<http://www.ncate.org>



## **The NEA-NCATE Connection**



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# NEA Teacher Education Initiative

## Background

Times have changed. The students who attend America's public schools are a far more diverse population than ever before. They are arriving at the schoolhouse door with greater learning needs than in the past. The educators who teach them face increasing challenges in dealing with their learning needs. Yet, the way teachers are prepared has not dramatically changed over time. That must change to meet today's needs.

In 1994 the National Education Association (NEA) established the Teacher Education Initiative (TEI), a national collaboration among the Association, colleges of education, and pre-kindergarten-12th grade schools. Its aim is to accelerate the pace of change and renewal in teacher preparation and practice to produce better-performing students. The restructuring initiative, undergirded by nine principles reflecting the key components for systemic change, seeks, through inquiry, to advance teacher professionalism.

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future declared that the right of every child in every classroom is to have a qualified teacher by the year 2006. In a report issued by the NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, practicing teachers were challenged to "take charge of their learning." The issues and challenges posed in these and other reports are some of the very strategies being implemented in NEA's TEI.

## Partnership for Quality Teaching

TEI's goals are multi-pronged.

- NEA is collaborating with seven teacher education institutions in a five-year effort to restructure teacher education — the universities of Southern Maine, Memphis, South Carolina, Wyoming, George Mason, Montclair State, and Texas A & M. Each of the sites is employing a common set of collaboratively designed instruments and methodologies over the program's term to provide teacher education institutions answers to some key aspects of the teacher education process.
- Seven ongoing work groups augment the development, research, and documentation of the project to provide a research base for the restructuring of teacher training.

- At the outset of TEI, NEA collaborated on a one-year basis with 10 other institutions to identify exemplary and promising practices in teacher preparation. A monograph describing the work of all 17 NEA TEI partners is currently being written.
- The NEA also is organizing a network of TEI professional development schools (PDSs) to learn from these special training grounds. TEI PDSs are collaborative relationships between pre-kindergarten to 12th grade schools, colleges and universities, teacher associations, parents, and communities to improve the quality of education for all students. They provide education and training for preservice professionals, as well as for those already in the field. The schools offer special opportunities for improving teaching and learning through: ongoing research and evaluation; the exploration of supportive policies, procedures, and resources; quality schooling for diverse student populations; and the preparation of teachers in diverse settings so that they are ready to meet the needs of all students.

## NEA Role

The NEA role is that of convener bringing institutions together to meet the challenges outlined by recent national reports addressing the preparation of this nation's educators and their continued professional development. The Association also:

- Provides support for research to advance systemic change at the university/college level where tomorrow's teachers are prepared and at the professional development school sites at which preservice and current practitioners acquire new experiences and test new ideas.
- Publishes and disseminates findings from its research.
- Supports the restructuring efforts of the seven partners in the five-year program with annual grants of \$10,000.
- Brings the teacher education explorers together on a regular basis through meetings, symposia and other forums, and facilitates communication among TEI participants, as well as other educators involved in school reform, through an electronic network devoted to accelerating the pace of change.

## Results

TEI institutions are leading the way to change. Here are a few examples:

- At the **University of Memphis**, the College of Education recently restructured from the ground up, because its graduates were leaving the institution unprepared to teach students from increasingly diverse backgrounds. Today, Memphis graduates are entering the field having had field experience in professional development schools in urban, rural, and suburban settings.
- At the **University of Southern Maine**, work is in progress on the development of standards for both students and teachers. The Extended Teacher Education Program has developed expected outcomes for future educators, including a portfolio presentation of what students can do. The school also has a post-baccalaureate program that requires a one-year internship in a professional development school. The university

also is collaborating with numerous other institutions and groups working to create schools that are organized for student and teacher success.

- At **Texas A & M**, students must obtain a degree in a subject field in addition to the required credential coursework. During the credential program, the university provides students with counseling regarding their performance and fitness for teaching. The school also is recruiting, supporting, and mentoring students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, while conducting research in multicultural education.

*The results? Better prepared classroom teachers for the next century and a demand for the beginning educators these institutions are producing.*

*A five-year longitudinal study being conducted in the seven institutions also will provide empirical data showing the effectiveness of the program.*

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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

1201 16th Street, N.W.

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# nea Backgrounder

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## Professional Development Schools

### *School–University–Association Partnerships*

Across the country, public schools and universities are forming new partnerships called professional development schools (PDSs) to improve teaching and learning. These public school organizations use a continuum of professional development that encompasses all levels of teaching from preservice preparation to the induction of new members into the profession to the continuing growth of career practitioners. PDS sites provide opportunities for all professionals to conduct research that advances the profession and improves the quality of education for all students.

How do PDSs enhance learning for students, teachers, and future teachers? Consider these examples:

- In Indianapolis, school district teachers and Indiana State University (ISU) faculty are linking school improvement to personnel preparation reform in their professional development school program. The program's aims are to increase learning for all students at the school sites, provide optimal learning environments for preservice educators, offer meaningful professional development for university and school faculty, and support school-university collaborative inquiry. Currently, over 70 percent of all ISU early field experiences occur at one of these sites, guaranteeing preservice teachers multiple experiences in schools where teachers are leading learner-centered reforms.
- The Southern Maine Partnership, a school-university collaboration, supports the development, maintenance, and extension of learner-centered schools through teacher-development and school-restructuring activities. In Partnership schools, stakeholders exchange ideas, teachers show their work and encourage each other, administrators engage in new learning rather than constantly focusing on problems, university and school faculty inform and enrich one another's practice, and educational research is examined through the lens of daily school experience. As educators tackle renewal issues at both school and university levels, teachers are leading the way as inventors and change agents.
- The Learning/Teaching Collaborative—a PDS enterprise that today boasts nine teams of teachers in six Brookline and Boston public schools working in partnership with Wheelock College and Simmons College—began when a team of teachers decided to improve school practices. Specifically, the team took on the tasks of reforming preservice education and improving the effectiveness of their program to include students with special needs in mainstream classes. Linking inquiry and development to school renewal and teacher development has resulted in a strong foundation for preservice practicum experiences.

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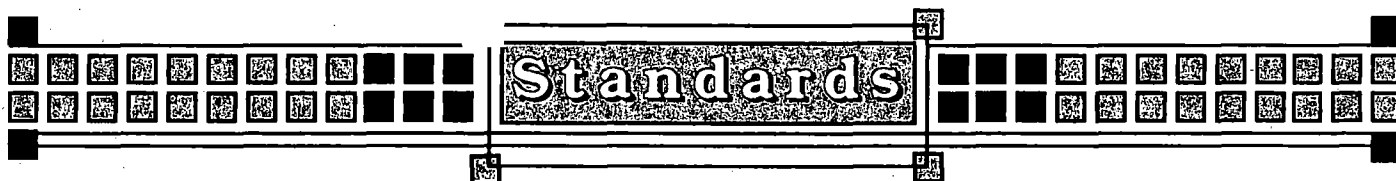
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## **Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students**

Developed by the  
American Federation of Teachers  
National Council on Measurement in Education  
National Education Association

The professional education associations began working in 1987 to develop standards for teacher competence in student assessment out of concern that the potential educational benefits of student assessments be fully realized. The Committee<sup>1</sup> appointed to this project completed its work in 1990 following reviews of earlier drafts by members of the measurement, teaching, and teacher preparation and certification communities. Parallel committees of affected associations are encouraged to develop similar statements of qualifications for school administrators, counselors, testing directors, supervisors, and other educators in the near future. These statements are intended to guide the preservice and inservice preparation of educators, the accreditation of preparation programs, and the future certification of all educators.

A standard is defined here as a principle generally accepted by the professional associations responsible for this document. Assessment is defined as the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths, and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy. The various assessment techniques include, but are not limited to, formal and informal observation, qualitative analysis of pupil performance and products, paper-and-pencil tests, oral questioning, and analysis of student records. The assessment competencies included here are the knowledge and skills critical to a teacher's role as educator. It is understood that there are many competencies beyond assessment competencies which teachers must possess.

By establishing standards for teacher competence in student assessment, the associations subscribe to the view that student assessment is an essential part of teaching and that good teaching cannot exist without good student assessment. Training to develop the competencies covered in the standards should be an integral part of preservice preparation. Further, such assessment training should be widely available to practicing teachers through staff development programs at the district and building levels.

The standards are intended for use as:

- a guide for teacher educators as they design and approve programs for teacher preparation
- a self-assessment guide for teachers in identifying their needs for professional development in student assessment
- a guide for workshop instructors as they design professional development experiences for in-service teachers
- an impetus for educational measurement specialists and teacher trainers to conceptualize student assessment and teacher training in student assessment more broadly than has been the case in the past.

The standards should be incorporated into future teacher training and certification programs. Teachers who have not had the preparation these standards imply should have the opportunity and support to develop these competencies before the standards enter into the evaluation of these teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>The Committee that developed this statement was appointed by the collaborating professional associations: James R. Sanders, (Western Michigan University) chaired the Committee and represented NCME along with John R. Hills (Florida State University) and Anthony J. Nitko (University of Pittsburgh). Jack C. Merwin (University of Minnesota) represented the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Carolyn Trice represented the American Federation of Teachers, and Marcella Dianda and Jeffrey Schneider represented the National Education Association.

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# Student Success Ahead

A Series for School Staff

• Showcasing Exemplary Practices

March 1998

## In This Issue

- Creating professional communities
- Promoting schoolwide growth
- Maximizing district support
- Finding time for professional development
- Enhancing teacher organization leadership

*Student Success Ahead* is a quarterly series written for school staff to help them as they study, evaluate, and implement exemplary practices in their schools.



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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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## Professional Development

### *The Critical Ingredient for Making Reform Work*

Professional development is the critical ingredient in educational reform in schools and districts—*when it helps schools create a professional community focused on enhancing students' learning.* Such a community is guided by a clear, shared purpose for student learning, works collaboratively to advance this purpose, and accepts collective responsibility for assuring that students learn.

In its 1996 report on professional development, NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) found 10 key characteristics of high-quality professional development (see the sidebar on High-quality professional development). This *Student Success Ahead* focuses on the first characteristic—"high-quality professional development has the goal of improving student learning"—and on creating profes-

sional communities in which high-quality professional development can flourish.

This issue adopts an expanded view of what is included under the "professional development" label. Far more than one-shot, in-service workshops, professional development is advancing to a whole new level—a truly professional level—one that includes a variety of planning, research, study, and collaborative activities.

Readers will find an emphasis on professional development that promotes a wide range of activities among an entire school staff so they can: (a) provide students with the best possible instruction and (b) improve student achievement. This kind of professional development requires district support, the commitment of resources—especially the scarce resource of time—and the active involvement of the local teacher organization.

## Creating Professional Communities

*"Teachers are clear about the purpose of continuous learning. First and last, it is students' learning that drives their passion for professional development."* (National Foundation for the Improvement of Education 1996, p. 1)

Three-quarters of the teachers who completed a 1996 NFIE survey said they engage in professional development to improve student achievement. Slightly more than half said professional development is a way to improve their teaching skills. One-third engage in ongoing learning to increase their own professional knowledge.

What kind of professional development improves student achievement? A five-year study by the Center on Organization and Restructuring Schools at the University of Wisconsin, Madison,

found that student learning improves in schools where teachers work and learn together; that is, "professional community improves student learning" (Newman and Wehlage 1995, p. 30).

Those schools that enhanced student learning organized their human, technical, and social resources into an effective collective enterprise. They became a "professional community." Their program was delivered by groups of staff rather than individuals working in isolation. The schools had the authority to implement their vision for student learning; they tended to be small, although an optimal size has not been identified; and they provided time for teams of teachers to communicate and work together.

*(continued on page 2)*

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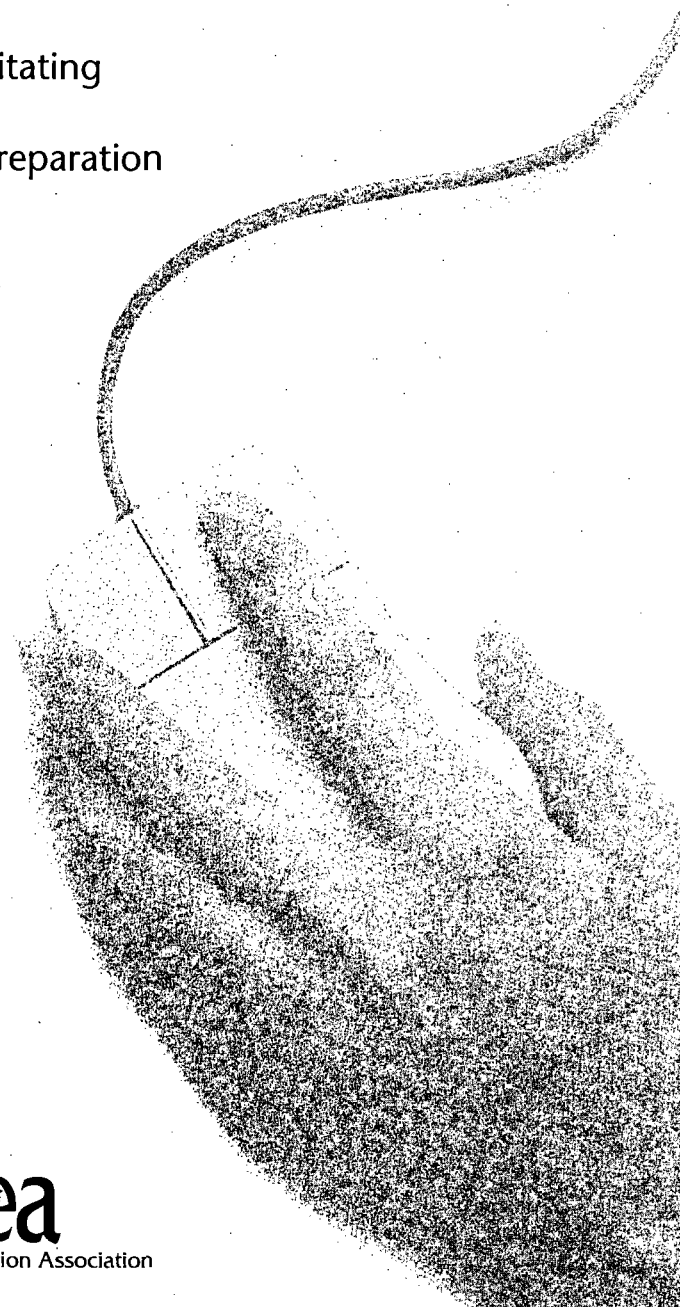
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# TEACHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE

A School-University-Association Partnership

- **Transforming** teaching and learning to meet the present and future needs of students;
- **Guiding**, supporting, and facilitating significant improvement in the preparation and induction of new teachers;
- **Sustaining** continuous professional growth of all educators;
- **Fostering** the research and development of the teaching profession.



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[Ensuring High Standards in Nontraditional  
Routes to Licensure]

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# Ensuring High Standards in Nontraditional Routes to Licensure

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Developed by the NEA  
Standing Committee on Instruction  
and Professional Development

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[Investing in the Future]

NATIONAL BOARD  
CERTIFICATION

Investing  
in the

Future

WHAT POLICYMAKERS CAN DO

National Board  
 FOR PROFESSIONAL  
TEACHING STANDARDS

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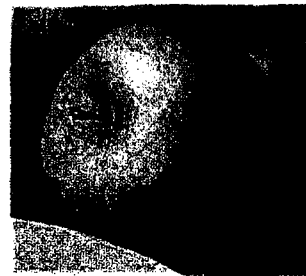
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[Teachers Take charge of their learning]

TEACHERS  
TAKE  
CHARGE  
OF  
THEIR  
LEARNING



Transforming Professional Development  
for Student Success

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

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[What Matters Most: Teaching for  
America's Future]



# What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future

Report of the National Commission on  
Teaching & America's Future

Summary Report

September 1996



# Nationwide Issues in Education

## Voluntary National Tests

President Clinton named education his "number one priority for the next four years" in his February 1997 state of the union address. He also outlined a 10-point action plan to provide Americans with the best education in the world. To make sure that children master the basics, he called for rigorous national standards and voluntary national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math.

### Who needs more testing?

Proponents believe that national benchmarks and assessments in reading and math will spur student progress in meeting higher standards of achievement. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, testifying before a Congressional committee, stressed that "our decision to test fourth grade reading and eighth grade math was very deliberate. Reading and math are the core basics, and fourth and eighth grades are the critical transition points in a child's educational experience." According to the administration, the proposed voluntary tests would:

- tell students and parents how each student stacks up against national and international performance benchmarks
- allow parents to compare a child's performance with that of peers elsewhere in the U.S. and in other countries
- give teachers, parents, and students information about unsatisfactory student achievement.

The new national tests propose to fill a gap in large-scale U.S. assessment programs, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests which produce averages, not individual student performance data.

NAEP is currently the nation's only continuing measure of student achievement. It provides broad national- and state-level results in academic subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12. TIMSS is the latest, most comprehensive study of international student achievement in math and science among 41 countries, plus curriculum content and teaching practices. The new tests will use the 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math frameworks that are part of the NAEP to produce individual scores for students.

### at a glance...

#### Voluntary National Tests

- ✓ are proposed for 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade mathematics
- ✓ will be used beginning in year 2001
- ✓ will provide each participating child an individual score that allows comparison to peers in this country and internationally
- ✓ will be based on reading and mathematics content frameworks of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests

National benchmarks and assessments in reading and math may also help untangle divergent state and national portraits of student achievement. Today, various state goals for learning—as measured by very different state testing schemes—produce confusing readings of student achievement when viewed through a national lens. Teachers, parents, and students could benefit from a single set of clear indicators of individual student performance in key academic areas.

The proposal for voluntary national tests is not without its controversies. An alliance of Democrats and Republicans in Congress has sought through legislative measures to forbid the development of the national tests. In the 1997 budget reconciliation a compromise was struck between the Administration and the Congress. Oversight of test development was transferred from the Department of Education to the independent National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) which now oversees NAEP. The legislation also delayed field testing until several studies could be completed on test comparisons. Since then, NAGB has decided to delay the test implementation until 2001. Attempts to forbid development of the national tests will undoubtedly arise again this year during the reauthorization of the NAGB and NAEP.

### Is a national curriculum next?

President Clinton used this statement to debunk charges that his voluntary, national testing plan is a federal power grab. But any time anything national is proposed in American public education, the old bugaboo of a national curriculum enters the picture.

Voluntary national tests in reading and math will assess student performance in critical content at levels that often predict future schooling success. Teachers know that all students must read well and independently by the 4th grade regardless of instructional method. Secretary Riley calls this "the first crucial academic checkpoint." Teachers also know that good performance in math by the 8th grade is another threshold—often a gateway to college preparatory courses in high school. And there is a high degree of agreement among educators about the math knowledge and skills students need.

Educators know that students can learn the necessary content and skills through a variety of instructional strategies. Secretary Riley puts it succinctly: "These proposed tests are an opportunity and not a requirement; they are a national challenge and not a national curriculum."

*From Maryland to Michigan to Montana, reading is reading, and math is math. No school board is in charge of algebra, and no state legislature can enact the law of physics.*

## Can national tests *really* help?

**I**t depends. First, they are voluntary. States, districts, schools, and testing companies may choose to use the tests every year beginning in 2001.

Second, the new tests will require a consistent standard of performance across states. That's a first. All tested 4th- and 8th-graders will know their own reading and math performance in comparison to peers in this country and internationally. Parents will know. So will teachers.

Third, if the tests are to spur higher achievement, all students must have similar opportunities to learn the content. That's hardly the case now. As such, the tests could spotlight disparities between rich and poor schools and help galvanize support to equalize educational opportunity.

Fourth, it will be important to achieve balance in incorporating the new tests into the total testing picture at the state, district, and school levels. Increasing total student testing time by using multiple tests that serve the same purposes makes no sense.

Finally, there's an accountability issue. NEA President Chase has commented that "the scandal in American public education is, in effect, the social promotion of entire school districts. In the absence of objective standards for measuring their performance, grossly underperforming districts are allowed to skirt accountability." The proposed national tests could highlight public and school system responsibility for ensuring that all children have access to a quality public education.

*In the quest for higher standards, no one wants to trample on the tradition of local control of schools. But there is a crying need for minimum but ambitious national benchmarks against which every school and school district in America can be measured and held accountable.*

—NEA President Bob Chase  
*Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 1997

## What can my association do back home?

**S**uggested activities include:

- Insist on facts—and help others stick to the facts about the value of national tests. Key concepts to stress are: *voluntary, not required...evolving...national, not federal...helping all students achieve high standards...assuring mastery of core basics...achieving the national goals.*
- If your district is developing or refining student standards and/or rethinking district testing practices, encourage examination of whether and why the new national tests might fit.
- Work on the balance issue in local testing programs. Determine the total student testing time in your district. Identify the implications for new test adoption.
- Produce a basic Q & A brochure that summarizes school and district testing practices and policies. Include the larger context of national and international testing and comparisons. Debunk myths. Correct misconceptions. Make this material readily available to members, site-based council representatives, parents, and community members active in the schools, and media representatives.
- Institute a "point/counterpoint" or "opinion" section in your local Association newsletter devoted to airing members' views on using assessment (including the new national tests) to boost student achievement.

### To go deeper...

<http://www.ed.gov/nationaltests>

This Department of Education site contains descriptive information on voluntary national tests including press releases, contracting information, announcements, and other reports.

<http://www.ed.gov/NCES/naep>

This NAEP site contains subject area achievement trend reports for the U.S.

<http://www.nagb.org/>

This NAGB site contains the NAEP reading and math frameworks as background for the national tests.

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# Nationwide Issues in Education

## National Achievement Trends

In 1983, the nation embarked on an unprecedented campaign to improve public education. *A Nation At Risk* described America's public schools as mediocre at best and called for more accurate information about them. In 1989, the first education summit, convened by the state governors, developed six educational goals for the year 2000, the third of which was improved academic achievement in the core subject areas.

During the 1990s the states have worked vigorously to set learning standards that would challenge students. Passage by Congress of Goals 2000 legislation and the Improving America's Schools Act has reinforced the demand for higher standards. Since the goals were reconfirmed in 1996 at the second education summit, the states have been further pressured to set higher standards for academic achievement.

Behind the education reform movement is a perception that student achievement has declined steadily since the 1960s, and reversing that decline has become a mantra of a host of critics. Taxpayers have been bombarded with bad news about the problems in public schools and led to believe that quality education no longer exists. Reformers have justified increased financial support for education by citing the need for improved test scores. Critics have used the perceived decline to rationalize their call for funding alternatives to public education.

The supposed decline in student achievement has sparked controversy among researchers about the factual nature of the claim. Those most vocal about the lack of data include Gerald Bracey whose *Phi Delta Kappan* articles, along with a book entitled *The Manufactured Crisis* by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle, have added fuel to the controversy. What do we know?

### Is achievement improving or declining?

The best evidence about the status of student achievement comes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing program. Each year groups of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders are selected within each of more than 40 participating states to take the test.

#### at a glance...

#### Achievement Trends

- ✓ are important in assessing progress of educational reform
- ✓ have been observable since 1969 for science, mathematics, reading, and writing
- ✓ are measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) with samples of students at grades 4, 8, and 12

NAEP has tested reading, writing, mathematics, and science on a rotating schedule since 1969, with the following results:

**Science.** Overall student performance has been one of early decline followed by improvement. Although each grade level experienced a decline between 1969 and 1982, since then scores have been increasing for all groups tested.

**Mathematics.** Overall performance of all three groups has improved since 1969. Although mathematics achievement experienced periods of decline during the 1970s and '80s, since 1982 all three groups have shown steady increases.

**Reading.** Scores have remained fairly stable since 1984. Although the overall pattern is positive, 1996 scores are not significantly different from those of 1971.

**Writing.** Twelfth grade scores have consistently declined. Performance of fourth and eighth graders has fluctuated throughout the years, with 1996 scores not significantly different from those of 1984.

### Are there differences among groups of students?

Analysis of the results of years of NAEP testing has also revealed other important achievement patterns among U.S. students of diverse background and gender.

- Although White students attain higher average scores than their Black peers, the gap has narrowed in science, math, and reading since 1982. Writing shows no consistent pattern.

- White students have consistently averaged higher scores than Hispanic students across all four subject areas. The achievement gap, however, has lessened since 1982, although writing shows no consistent pattern. Among White twelfth-graders there has been a nonsignificant widening of the achievement gap.
- Scores of males and females vary across subject areas. Male students outperform females in mathematics at each grade level. Male students outperform females in science at grades eight and twelve, with no significant difference at grade four. Female students outperform males in reading, while writing shows no consistent pattern.

## What other achievement issues have we found?

The National Center for Education Statistics' 1998 achievement-trend report documents several significant student achievement variables

- *The number of students dropping out of school has declined since 1984.* The rate for all students has fallen from 14 to 11 percent, while Black youth dropouts have fallen from 18 to 14 percent. The dropout rate for Hispanic students remains at substantially higher levels than that of their Black or White peers.
- *The educational aspirations of students have increased since 1982.* The percentage of seniors reporting that they want to graduate from college has almost doubled. The number of students attending college has increased substantially. The proportion of students going directly from high school to college has risen from 51 to 65 percent.
- *The percentage of eighth and twelfth graders taking more challenging course work has increased since 1982.* In 1994, 50 percent of high school graduates had completed the increased core curriculum courses endorsed by *A Nation At Risk*, while in 1982, only 14 percent had done so. Although the percentage of students taking the most challenging course work, such as physics, has increased, it still remains low.
- *The number of students reporting use of a wide range of technologies in the classroom has risen since 1984,* with the most dramatic increase in the use of computers for writing from 15 to 91 percent at grade eight.
- *The amount of time eighth and twelfth graders spend engaged in homework each day has not changed significantly since 1984.*

What do these trends mean? The NAEP long-term assessments tend to give mixed results. Student performance in most core subjects and indicators

*How do you know whether what you are doing to improve student learning is really working? Administrators and teachers need to develop student achievement indicators that give them an objective measure of each student's progress. And one test score per student each year will not suffice. More comprehensive indicators that reflect test scores plus work assignments need to be used.*  
—NEA President Bob Chase

has remained steady or increased slightly since 1969. Thus, the purported decline in student achievement seems to be overstated. On the other hand, student achievement has not made the significant increases many people expected in light of the massive efforts and priority placed on it since 1984. Neither conclusion negates the need for continued efforts at improving student achievement.

## What can my association do back home?

Become assessment savvy...Organize and sponsor staff seminars and discussion groups on student assessment issues...Establish a working relationship with district testing and/or accountability offices...Know in which testing programs your district participates.

Make student achievement a priority in your district, school by school...Monitor and use student achievement as the basis of discussion and action for the association.

Alert teachers, parents, and students to the importance of all assessments, especially when the results are likely to have high stakes attached to them.

Advocate to build any of the national assessments into your state and/or district assessment system where appropriate to reduce the amount of state and local testing for the same purposes.

### To go deeper...

<http://www.ed.gov/NCES>

The National Center for Education Statistics produces numerous reports on the status of education.

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/naep/>

This government site contains information about the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Berliner, David C., and Biddle, Bruce J. *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1995.

Bracey, Gerald W. (1991) Why can't we be like we were? *Phi Delta Kappan* (October), 104-117.

National Center for Education Statistics (1997). *Report in Brief: 1996 Trends in Academic Achievement*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

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# Nationwide Issues in Education

## Public School Modernization

Children learn best in safe, healthy, modern public schools equipped with the latest educational technology. But as school enrollments grow across the country and school facilities age, there are more and more children who are learning in schools where disrepair is the norm. Besides impairing student achievement, overcrowded classrooms and schools in disrepair diminish student discipline, as well as safety.

Existing research ties the condition of school buildings to student achievement.

- A 1996 study by Dr. Glen I. Earthman of Virginia Polytechnic Institute comparing test scores of students attending standard and substandard schools, shows that those in standard facilities do better.
- In a study focused on Washington, D.C., where the school infrastructure problems have been consistent front-page headlines during the 1997-98 school year and have delayed school openings, researcher Maureen M. Edwards in 1991 found that as a school's condition improved from one category to the next (poor to fair, for example), students' standardized achievement scores rose an average of 5.45 percentage points. If a school improved its condition from poor to excellent, an increase of 10.9 percentage points in average achievement scores could be expected, she said.
- A 1988 report on school discipline from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching also indicated a connection between the condition of school facilities and behavior. Said the report: "Student conduct seems simply an extension of the physical environment that surrounds them."

Collapsing schools also have produced serious safety and health consequences, as news stories frequently note—among them sick building syndrome characterized by incidents of student/teacher headaches, and irritation of the eyes and nose that have precipitated the closing of schools.

### What is the public saying?

The American public recognizes the importance of modernizing our public schools. In a January 1998 *USA Today/CNN/Gallup* poll, 75 percent of the respondents said increasing funding for repairing and building public schools was a "top" or "high" priority.

### at a glance...

#### Public School Modernization

- ✓ affects schools everywhere in rural, urban, and suburban locales
- ✓ is a \$200 billion problem
- ✓ is a challenge of such magnitude that a recent study termed schools in worse shape than any other part of the nation's infrastructure
- ✓ will require a local/state/federal partnership response

A bipartisan poll conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Research and Tarrance Group indicates that:

- Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of American voters support a major federal investment in public school modernization.
- School modernization is supported by a two-thirds or more majority among every major voter group.

Jonathan Kozol, award-winning writer and education researcher who has devoted his career to fighting for the rights of all children to a quality education, recently said that students attending dilapidated schools "get the message very quickly: In the eyes of society, you don't matter all that much; we don't really expect that much of you, so we're not going to waste too much money on you."

### What is the impact?

What these conditions mean is that an estimated 14 million children of every race in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the country now attend school campuses in which at least one building needs repair or replacement.

Almost 60 percent of the country's public schools, including some considered in "adequate" condition, report at least one major building feature needing extensive repair, overhaul, or replacement. The problem areas include roofs, exterior walls, windows, plumbing, heating/ventilation/air conditioning, electrical power, and lighting.

A prime reflection of overcrowded classrooms is the increasing use of "portables" on school sites. While the U.S. Department of Education has projected that some 4.5 million

students will be entering schools in the next decade, new school construction has yet to reflect that projection. According to a report from the General Accounting Office (GAO) (1995) state and local governments were spending only 11 percent of the estimated \$200 billion required for school construction and repair.

An indication of the extent of the situation comes from a 1998 study by the American Society of Civil Engineers which noted that schools are in worse shape than any other part of the nation's infrastructure, including roads, bridges, mass transit, and water treatment.

A 1992 national survey by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) had provided an earlier warning of the mounting problem. AASA found that 74 percent of school facilities should be replaced or repaired immediately, while another 12 percent were identified as inadequate places of learning.

## What is the estimated cost?

**B**ecause this problem has languished over the years, the estimated cost of school modernization is now immense. The GAO estimates:

- Repairs alone would cost \$112 billion. As the GAO indicated, that is what it would take to restore the nation's schools to "good overall condition."
- Another \$73 billion would be required for new schools to keep up with growing enrollments.
- Wiring and equipping schools with the latest technology would add billions more.
- The estimated national cost to modernize America's schools is \$200 billion.

## What does this mean?

**S**tates are struggling to deal with massive school repair and construction needs.

A good example is California, where large student growth, neglected repairs, and facilities costs for the state's recent Class Size Reduction program will require more than \$40 billion in construction over the next decade. Even after recent appropriations by the Florida Legislature, thousands of that state's schools are overcrowded, outdated, or in major need of repair. In Vermont, 82 percent of the schools are outdated, needing major repairs or total replacement. In Louisiana, 88 percent of the state's schools are in the same condition as those in Vermont.

This means there's a need for a campaign to rebuild America's schools. Since local and state jurisdictions can't do it alone, there is a real need for a local/state/federal partnership to fund modernization.

*If there is one essential condition for quality teaching and learning, it is a safe and healthy learning environment. Yet today, too many of America's elementary and secondary public school buildings are dilapidated with leaking roofs, inadequate heat or air conditioning, even environmental hazards. And many schools lack the basic wiring and other conditions to accommodate classroom technology.*

—NEA President Bob Chase

There are different legislative approaches being considered by the U.S. Congress to deal with this problem. The National Education Association (NEA) along with a broad coalition of organizations supports the Public School Modernization Act, which would generate \$22 billion to help states and localities repair safety problems, build new schools, and equip classrooms with the latest technology. Prospects for its passage this year are quite dim.

## What can my association do?

**H**ere are a few ideas.

- Make the issue key for your association. Educate yourself and your members on the conditions in your city.
- Inform your members on the issue by using your newsletter as a prime information vehicle. Information for articles and updates can be found on the Affiliate Newsletter Service, as well as the NEA Web site (<http://www.nea.org/society/modern>). When you are invited to speak, address this issue.
- Keep the school modernization issue on the front burner in your community. Encourage members to write letters and articles for opinion pages of your local newspapers, providing anecdotal examples that demonstrate the need for modernization. Add photo evidence of the conditions you want to highlight—buildings in disrepair, excessive numbers of portable classrooms at a school site, etc.
- Share your thinking with your members of Congress.
- Sponsor a community forum hosted by your association, inviting parents and school and city officials to talk about the issue and its magnitude in your locale.
- Launch a local Speakers Bureau, members of which can take the story to a variety of civic organizations.
- Collect evidence of poor conditions in your schools to use as fodder in your rebuilding campaign.

### To go deeper...

<http://www.nea.org/society/modern>

Regularly visit the NEA school modernization Web site. Publish that address in all your association publications for member access.

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# Nationwide Issues in Education

## School Reconstitution

The growing high-stakes standards and assessment movement has placed accountability in the forefront in an attempt to achieve results from low-performing schools. Through test scores, performance evaluations, and a host of other measures that reward success and punish failure, policymakers are demanding results as they seek to assure parents and taxpayers that children are getting a good education—and money isn't being wasted. Some states and districts are even putting low-performing schools on probation and, when all else fails, reconstituting them.

### How does reconstitution work?

Generally, the intervention takes place in stages. Based on a review of action across school districts and states, the steps of reconstitution can be identified as:

- Stage 1: a school is put on notice that it is low-performing and is at risk of being considered "reconstitution-eligible."
- Stage 2: a warning with consequences. A school is told it must improve by a specified date or face reconstitution.
- Stage 3: the most drastic action—reconstitution. The school undergoes administrative closure. Most, or all, of the staff is disbanded and the school is reopened with a new staff configuration.

Reconstitution plays out differently in different locales. In some schools, the principal is removed, teachers replaced, and the school's governance changed. Some schools have even faced chartering to a private firm, or been closed.

Less drastic have been schools where restructuring of the school may involve changing the governance structures and the decision-making processes; adding special programs; assigning master teachers part- or full-time to help the targeted school's staff improve instruction; establishing partnerships with a local university; or creating a magnet school. These scenarios have not generally involved the wholesale removal and replacement of school employees. In most instances, permanent

### at a glance...

#### School Reconstitution

- ✓ is the most drastic measure by a school district or state to turn low-performing schools around
- ✓ is increasingly being used across the country
- ✓ usually is a phased-in process with increasingly greater pressure on the school to improve with the ultimate threat of administrative closure and reopening with a new configuration staff
- ✓ is an educational strategy getting mixed results

employees can apply for their old positions, and, if not rehired, are guaranteed a position elsewhere in the district.

### How schools are identified for reconstitution

Schools eligible for reconstitution are usually identified through poor student performance on large-scale assessment tests. In most cases, the assessment involves state tests, but school district tests may also provide the basis for placement on the reconstitution-eligible list.

Some states or districts have identified critical benchmarks that all schools must meet. Schools must show continuous progress towards that goal in the interim. Other states and districts measure performance improvement based on each school's initial level of performance on a specific test. Tennessee and New York use a single measure of performance; Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, and Maryland use multiple measures, including student and teacher attendance, dropout rates, and other outcomes.

### Changes that make a difference

Since reconstitution is a recent and growing strategy, there is scant research and mixed reviews. In a study by the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE), researchers found that in low-income rural

districts, reconstitution may perpetuate a "culture of poverty and racism." For staff the process is frequently accompanied by high levels of anxiety and confusion, resentment on the part of those targeted for removal, and a deep frustration caused by blame for factors beyond staff control. Additionally to avoid consequences and get off targeted lists, schools may engage in teaching to the test, rather than dealing with full-scale school improvement. The reconstitution process may result in local resistance or lengthy and costly court actions.

On the positive side, advocates of reconstitution argue that the threat of reconstitution is sometimes enough to spur improvement during a probationary period. That has been the case in many schools where the school district has provided substantial support and assistance during the period allotted for improvement. Some question why a district waits for a school to fail to provide support. Others ask why the support is withdrawn once student performance improves and the school is no longer targeted.

Some potential outcomes of intervention may be positive: increased professional development; more parental and community involvement; and successful partnerships with higher education, business, and other institutions.

Jennifer O'Day, assistant professor of policy studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, says her case studies of reconstituted schools reveal key characteristics of schools reversing low performance. First, those affected believe that the criteria by which reconstitution decisions are made are both fair and credible and that schools such as theirs can be turned around. There must be a vision including goals and strategies; a culture of commitment and collaboration between teachers and administrators; human and material resources to implement the changes; timely access to information about student performance; and ongoing opportunities for professional development for both teachers and administrators. An evaluation component is also important to track results. The glue that holds it all together, she says, is leadership to help articulate the vision, as well as to acquire the resources to build the other capacities.

## What can my association do back home?

- Initiate a dialogue on reconstitution whether or not your members are experiencing it. Review state law on reconstitution, and the criteria by which schools are held accountable. The best protection is prevention.
- Provide information on research-based school improvement models that work. Help your members learn more about NEA resources, such as the KEYS (Keys to Excellence for Your Schools) Initiative which

*The public's growing impatience with such (chronically low-performing) schools is palpable—and perfectly understandable. Americans will tolerate many things, but not chronic failure. We don't tolerate chronic failure in our businesses; why would we tolerate it in an enterprise as vital as our schools? We are a pragmatic people who want results, not excuses.*

—NEA President Bob Chase

helps schools determine on their "quality" quotient and provides resource materials and technical assistance to help them create an educational environment that breeds student success.

- Survey members on their professional-development needs, and work with your school district to address those needs. Build professional development into your collective bargaining contract.
- Play an active role in defining and implementing reconstitution policies.
- Where reconstitution occurs, make sure that the resources necessary to make the school an ultimate success—whether financial, human, materials, teacher professional development, or time—are provided. Be there organizationally for your members, should they be subjected to reconstitution measures, and be there for your students to ensure that what's done is in their best interest.

## To go deeper...

"Academic Bankruptcy," Amy Berk Anderson and Anne C. Lewis, Policy Brief, Accountability, Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo., March 1997.

"Accountability for School Failure: Issues for Administrators and Schools," audio tape of speech by Jennifer O'Day before the American Association of School Administrators, San Diego, Ca., March 2, 1998.

"Anatomy of a Takeover," article, Jessica Siegel, Education Week, March 2, 1994.

"Fixing Failing Schools: A Guide for Turning Around Low-Performing Public Schools, U.S. Department of Education, Spring 1998.

"Philadelphia Teachers to Take Lead in Revamping 6 Schools," article, Ann Bradley, Education Week, April 19, 1995.

Policy Adaptation and Change: The Case of the State Takeover of the Jersey City Public Schools, "Michael D. Rettig, ERIC Abstract of paper presented at American Education Research Association, San Francisco, Calif., April 19, 1992.

"Reconstitution Gaining New Momentum," article, Caroline Hendrie, Education Week, September 24, 1997.

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## NEA KEYS Initiative

### Background

What makes a quality school? That question has been at the forefront of the dialogue on education reform. Much of the talk and research on quality started in the late seventies, when the quality of American-made products was being seriously questioned. Almost a decade ago, the National Education Association (NEA) set out to pursue the quality issue as it pertains to schools. Recognizing that there is a massive amount of research showing that certain factors help organizations succeed, Association researchers set out to identify the organizational conditions in a school setting necessary for high student success and achievement. Through a national scientific sampling of educators, they learned that successful schools consistently displayed the same characteristics.

The KEYS research is groundbreaking in that it provides schools across the country with a measurement tool, a "yardstick," to check their organizational profile against specific quality factors. The factors for success range from things that require financial resources to those that do not. For example, money is necessary to ensure adequate space for students to learn and to provide quality staff development. But extra money is not necessary to achieve cooperation between administrators and educators, to set common goals, to commit to long-range continuous improvement, or to create good communications within the school environment. The more quality factors strongly present in a school, the better the possibilities for student success.

Today, KEYS is increasingly being implemented in America's schools. More than half the states in the country have a KEYS cadre in place to help local NEA associations administer the measurement tool in their community schools, help faculties interpret and analyze the data, and provide guidance and technical assistance to aid schools in taking that first definitive step toward quality.

### NEA Role

The NEA financed and produced the five-year research project that resulted in the KEYS (Keys to Excellence for Your Schools) Initiative. NEA is now:

- Sharing the research results with educators across the country.
- Administering and scoring the survey through its affiliates to help local schools produce the changes that will help students improve their performance.

- Training the KEYS cadres in each state.
- Providing the technical assistance to enable local schools to create the conditions that will set the foundation for quality institutions. Technical assistance covers a wide range of activities, among them providing research-based information on effective organizations and demonstrating how best to reach certain student populations. NEA makes no recommendations on the techniques, curriculum, or goals of the school, but it does provide helpful information tools that build the capacity for school faculties to make good decisions on those issues.
- Conferring on an ongoing basis with education experts from American, Canadian, Asian, and European universities.
- Continuing the assessment and evaluation of the initiative's implementation phase.
- Providing support for the development of research-based case studies to advance school reform and to promote strategies that work.
- Continuing work with the University of Maryland in the development of a KEYS Institute (six graduate-level credits), an on-site and electronic learning opportunity created to advance the understanding and quality principles involved in the initiative.
- Networking those engaged in the initiative electronically, or face-to-face, to advance the implementation of KEYS.

### Results

The NEA researchers now have evidence that quality schools are multidimensional environments characterized by a set of 35 definable factors. The factors positively correlate with student achievement; they significantly and statistically improve student achievement when socioeconomic and minority status are controlled.

What KEYS brings to schools is a way to diagnose organizational health, explore remedies, and adopt new ways of dealing with the important decisions that can yield quality teaching and learning. That is exactly what hundreds of schools in states like Florida, Minnesota, Tennessee, Indiana, and others are doing this year. Educators in all types of schools

are using KEYS to measure their level of quality in the 35 factors, and applying that information to make crucial decisions for creating high achievement outcomes for all students.

KEYS' goals are to help build quality institutions where students improve their academic performance, where teachers and education support personnel are able to make good decisions, and where communities are proud of their schools.

KEYS is no quick fix or silver bullet initiative. Not unlike what industry has found, NEA researchers have learned that it takes a long-term commitment and dedication to quality to meet with success. While it may take three to five years before student performance improves - and up to 10 years for KEYS to be fully effective - there is growing proof that school quality is both measurable and achievable. Through KEYS, NEA and its affiliates play a stable, guiding, and consistent role in a school's pursuit of quality.

### **What They're Saying About KEYS**

In Memphis, Tennessee, where 12 of the city's 162 schools have adopted KEYS and more are moving in that direction:

*KEYS lets you know what your strengths and weaknesses are. With this program, we can map our own direction, based on the data acquired, and set off on a path of positive motion.*

—Fay Lee, principal,  
South Park Elementary School

*With this program, we feel we can take the KEYS initiative and design a program for OUR school. That's what makes a difference. It's our plan, our program—based on our needs.*

—Marvin Harris, Jr., principal,  
Bruce Elementary School

*The great thing about KEYS is that it is so simple to implement; it's a simple concept based on lots of research.*

—Tom Marchand, kindergarten teacher and  
former president, Memphis Education  
Association

In other parts of the country:

*KEYS is a marvelous thing. The background materials provided by the NEA are extremely useful and at our middle school we've used the results to help guide our planning for professional development and school improvement. KEYS also has been useful in verifying the results of other measurements we've used.*

—Jeannie Chavis, math teacher,  
Norwell Middle School, and president,  
Norwell Education Association, Ossian, Indiana

*KEYS is a long-term process, not a quick fix. You can make some changes right away, but significant improvement in student performance can take five to seven years.*

—Susan Moore Johnson, dean,  
School of Education, Harvard University

*The idea of KEYS is powerful because we're learning from research what makes a good school is very complicated...KEYS is a comprehensive lifetime strategy.*

—Ann Lieberman, professor emeritus, Teachers  
College, Columbia University, New York

*We're always working on getting better. We'll know we got better when children are learning more and doing more than they did before.*

—Willis Hawley, dean, College of Education,  
University of Maryland, College Park.

**5/98**



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# Hot Topics

A quick look at the hottest issues in teaching & learning nea Fall 1997/Winter 1998

## Social Promotion or Grade Retention?

Alternatives to the Two Extremes That Help Students

Each spring, teachers face the same dilemma: whether to promote or retain students who have not mastered grade-level work. Should these students be promoted to the next grade even though they have not learned requisite skills? Or should they be retained in the same grade for another year so they can catch up?

Are social promotion and grade retention the best options for teachers and their students? Their only options? The answer to both questions is a resounding *no*. After a brief look at why social promotion and grade retention are poor choices, this issue of *Hot Topics* highlights alternatives that make sense for teachers and their students.

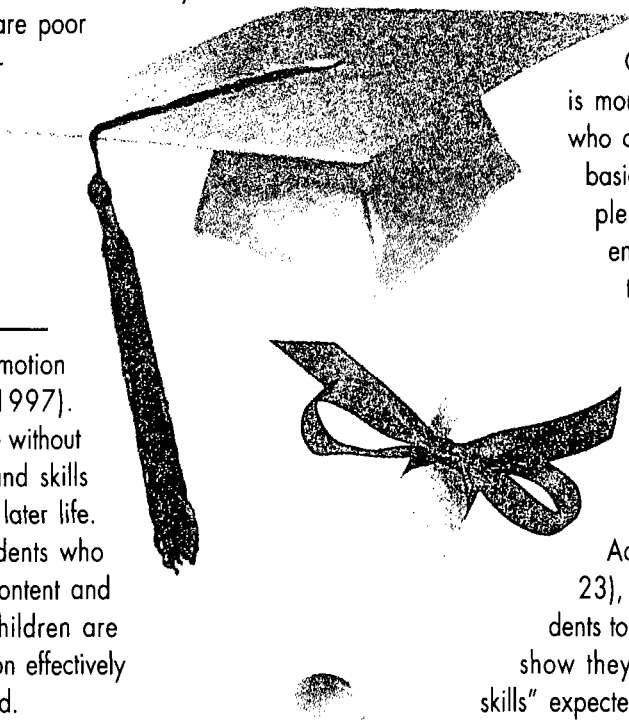
### THE CASE AGAINST SOCIAL PROMOTION

According to its critics, social promotion adversely affects us all (Feldman 1997). Students are passed from grade to grade without possessing the necessary knowledge and skills they need to succeed in school and in later life. Teachers are called upon to teach students who have not learned requisite academic content and skills. Parents mistakenly think their children are being educated and prepared to function effectively in higher education and in the work world.

Furthermore, businesses, colleges, and universities must invest in teaching the skills high school graduates did not master. Taxpayers wonder why a public school system cannot ensure that its high school graduates are literate and can do basic computation. Society as a whole suffers, say critics, when a segment of its citizenry is uneducated and unprepared for today's fast-changing, global economy.

Advancing a different argument, NEA President Bob Chase maintains that social promotion is morally wrong. "Schools that pass kids who can't read or compute are flunking a basic moral test. . . . Millions of young people are being denied the fundamental enabling right to a quality public education" (Chase 1997, p. 2). Schools that socially promote students who cannot read, write, and think effectively are schools that lack even minimal standards, he says.

Like Chase, the vast majority of teachers reject social promotion. According to Farkas et al. (1996, p. 23), 78 percent of teachers want students to be promoted "only when the students show they have learned the knowledge and skills" expected of them. Only 17 percent say stu-



*One can make a case against social promotion or against grade retention, but where does that leave students? "To think of only two options for students—promotion or retention—is to see only the ends of the spectrum and miss the middle" (Lawton 1997, p. 37). Many educators have found middle ground, other means of helping students learn requisite skills. This Hot Topics presents some strategies they are using.*

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# Student Success Ahead

A Series for School Staff

• Showcasing Exemplary Practices

July 1998

## In This Issue

- Ending the reading wars
- Identifying the risk factors
- Preventing reading difficulties before kindergarten
- Reading instruction in kindergarten through grade 3
- Extending reading-related instruction for children at risk
- Preparing and supporting instructional staff

*Student Success Ahead* is a quarterly series written for school staff to help them as they study, evaluate, and implement exemplary practices in their school.



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## Preventing Reading Failure

### What Schools Need to Know and Do

Early reading failure can be prevented.

So concludes the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (1998). The nearly 400-page report is the most thorough examination to date of research about reading. The 17-member NAS Committee, who wrote the report at the request of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health

and Human Services, provides an integrated picture of how reading develops and how its development can be promoted. In addition, the Committee translates research findings into advice for educators, parents, and others involved in educating children from birth to grade 3.

This issue of *Student Success Ahead* focuses exclusively on this significant report.

## Ending the Reading Wars

*"We submit this report with high hopes that it may mark the end of the reading wars, and that it will contribute to the successful reading development of many children." (p. v)*

For years reading wars have raged between advocates of what appears to be two diametrically opposed approaches to teaching reading—*whole language* and *phonics*. In brief, the whole language method relies heavily on literature and reading in the early grades and incorporates phonics lessons as needed within the context of meaningful reading and writing. In contrast, the phonics approach to teaching reading focuses on instruction in how the sounds of speech are represented in letters (p. 203).

The NAS Committee says that effective reading instruction must integrate both. More specifically, it argues that schools must:

1. Develop children's understanding that printed symbols represent the sounds in spoken words.
2. Provide children many opportunities to read so that they become fluent readers.
3. Develop children's skill at comprehending, or deriving meaning from, what they read.

## Identifying the Risk Factors

*"A major source of urgency in addressing reading difficulties derives from their distribution in society. Children from poor families, children of African-American and Hispanic descent, and children attending urban schools are at much greater risk of poor reading outcomes than are middle-class, European-American children, and suburban children." (p. 27)*

Research indicates that children with certain demographic characteristics are at greater risk of developing reading difficulties. In fact, the Committee's review identified a set of risk factors that are so strongly related to reading difficulties, they can be used to identify children in need of prevention and early intervention.

*(continued on page 2)*

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# **Rethinking Advocacy: One Union's Story**

**Building a Stronger Union Through  
Systemwide School Reform**

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