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ABSTRACT

An overview of U.S. academic achievement and the role of the federal government is offered in this report. It looks at scores on national tests, such as the SAT, and finds that although some improvements in math scores are evident, overall, students still score below scores from the 1970s. Furthermore, it is claimed that American students' math knowledge lags behind that of students in other countries. Such conditions raise the question whether schools are receiving adequate federal funding, and it is argued here that they are. Many schools, especially urban schools, are portrayed as being in crisis. Current federal establishments in education do not meet the needs, it is argued, in part because of program overlap and because of the sheer number of employees required to administer federal funds. An assessment of the federal effort shows that the effectiveness of federal programs is typically unknown. This lack of evaluative accountability is blamed on a shortage of results-oriented programs and an "instinctive caution." Research on federal programs has likewise failed to produce accountability. The report claims that real educational change will come through the states and districts and that these administrative bodies be given more latitude in school operations. (RJM)

Prospects for Reform: The State of American Education and the Federal Role

An Interim Report of the
Senate Budget Committee
Task Force on Education

Senator William H. Frist, M.D.
Chairman

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Introduction: The Challenge

Americans, all 265 million of us, send approximately 52 million of our children to elementary and secondary schools. More than 46 million attend public schools while approximately 5.8 million attend private schools, including parochial schools. These 46 million youngsters in our public school systems require over 87,000 individual public schools to educate them.

The obvious question is how well are our children doing? The answer: mediocre, at best. Any fair reading of student achievement over the past two decades demonstrates a picture of unrelenting stagnation.

During the first half of the twentieth century, such stagnation might have been acceptable. In 1910, only 14% of Americans completed high school. But by 1970, approximately 55% of the population had a high school diploma. Today, completing high school is nearly a universal phenomenon. Approximately 94% of America's youth complete high school, although many not on time.[1]

With access to and completion of high school now virtually universal, it is time for American education to address the issue of quality. In a recent study of the American economy, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a respected international research group, had this to say about our schools:

> The U.S. adult population has received on average more years of schooling than those of other large industrialized nations. A higher percentage of 25 to 64 year-olds have completed secondary school and college than in any of the major seven OECD Member nations . . . . At the same time, achievement levels are low. This indicates that although American students spend considerable amounts of time in school (measured in years), they furnish less effort than do their counterparts in other countries . . . . The general impression left by the primary and secondary education system is that, for most students, it is neither demanding nor motivating and that the stakes riding on performance are not high. Standards are vague or non-existent. Students are routinely passed who do not have grade level competencies . . . . Looked at as a whole, the performance of the education system at the primary and secondary levels has to be

regarded as mediocre.[2]

The case for a quality education system is obvious. Although the report will avoid a mind-numbing recitation of the requirements of the information age in a global economy as we enter the next century, it is worth stating the obvious that mere attendance in school without achieving competence is the road neither to personal nor to national success.

The need for academic competence and rigor is growing. High school graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed as college graduates (3.9% vs. 1.9%). Moreover, the value of a college degree over a high school degree is rising. In 1970, a college graduate made 136% more than a high school graduate. Today it is 176%.[3] Even more ominous are labor participation rates for high school graduates in an information economy. While labor force participation for adults is at an all time high in the American economy, this boom has masked a 10% decline in participation rates for high school graduates since 1970 from 96.3% to 86.4%.

At the same time that our public schools are struggling to meet the academic challenge posed by the information age, they are facing a multi-faceted demographic challenge. The first of these challenges is simple enrollment increases. From 1995 to 2005, our elementary and secondary schools are facing a 7.5% increase in enrollment.[4] The second challenge is the composition of American society. America is rapidly becoming more diverse racially and ethnically. The percentage of children who lack English fluency has risen. These language difficulties often result in lower academic achievement and higher drop-out rates. In addition, the American family has changed. Increasingly, poor children are found in households headed by females. Nationally, from 1960 to 1991, poor children living in such families grew 23.7% to 59%.[5] In some urban communities, the percentage is over 80%. Suicide, homicide, and arrest rates for our children have risen dramatically over this period.

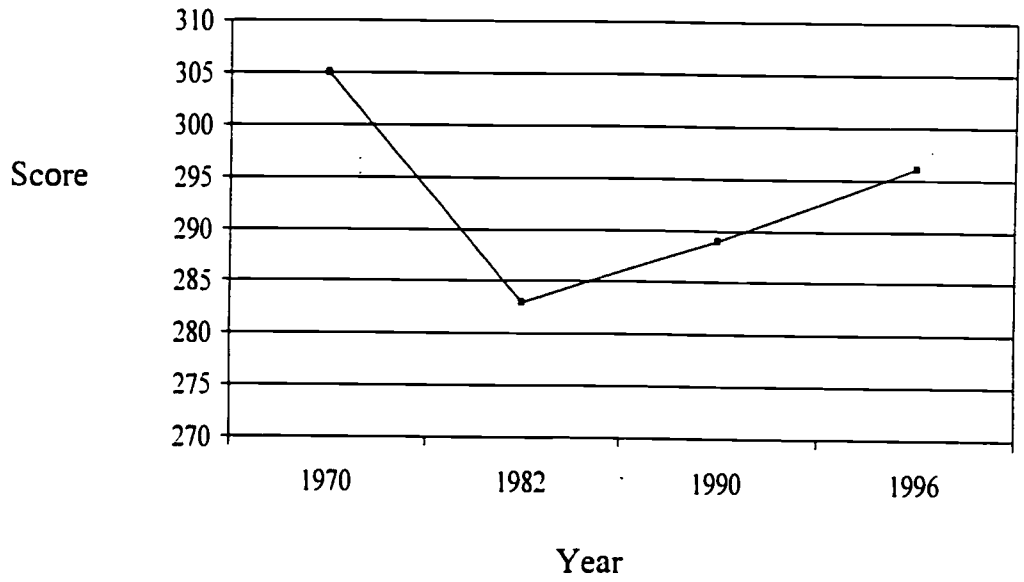
The demographic challenge of increased enrollments, changing family structure and increased diversity in the fabric of American society are often given as excuses for the difficulties of American education. For a nation as open and diverse as America, such excuses are unacceptable. As the economic value of knowledge has increased, such defeatism creates an ever-widening economic gap among Americans that is based on academic achievement. Moreover, because parents with a good education generally produce children who perform better in school, we will have a self-perpetuating cycle from generation to generation. The goal of our schools, to give every citizen a chance, regardless of the circumstances of his birth, will have ended. Demographic excuses represent the end of the American dream.

I. The State of American Education

a. Student Performance

The performance of American students over the past three decades has been stagnant. Such a straightforward conclusion is easily lost in the welter of data published on American education. Because the public debate on American education has entered the political arena, contending parties use selected data to make their point that things are getting either better or worse. A good example of this statistical duel is the conclusions drawn from the following chart on the achievement of 17 year olds in science from 1970-1996.

Science Scores for 17 year-olds (1970-1996)



Source: Table 126. Digest of Education Statistics 1997. p. 131

The testimony the Task Force was given by Secretary Richard Riley contends that all is well and stresses the improvement in scores from 1982-1996. Critics, such as former Secretary of Education William Bennett, note that 17 year-old students in 1996 are not even doing as well as students in 1970.

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores are another battlefield. Secretary Riley notes with pride that combined scores for math and verbal have increased 19 points from 1982 to 1997. The critics are quick to note that the

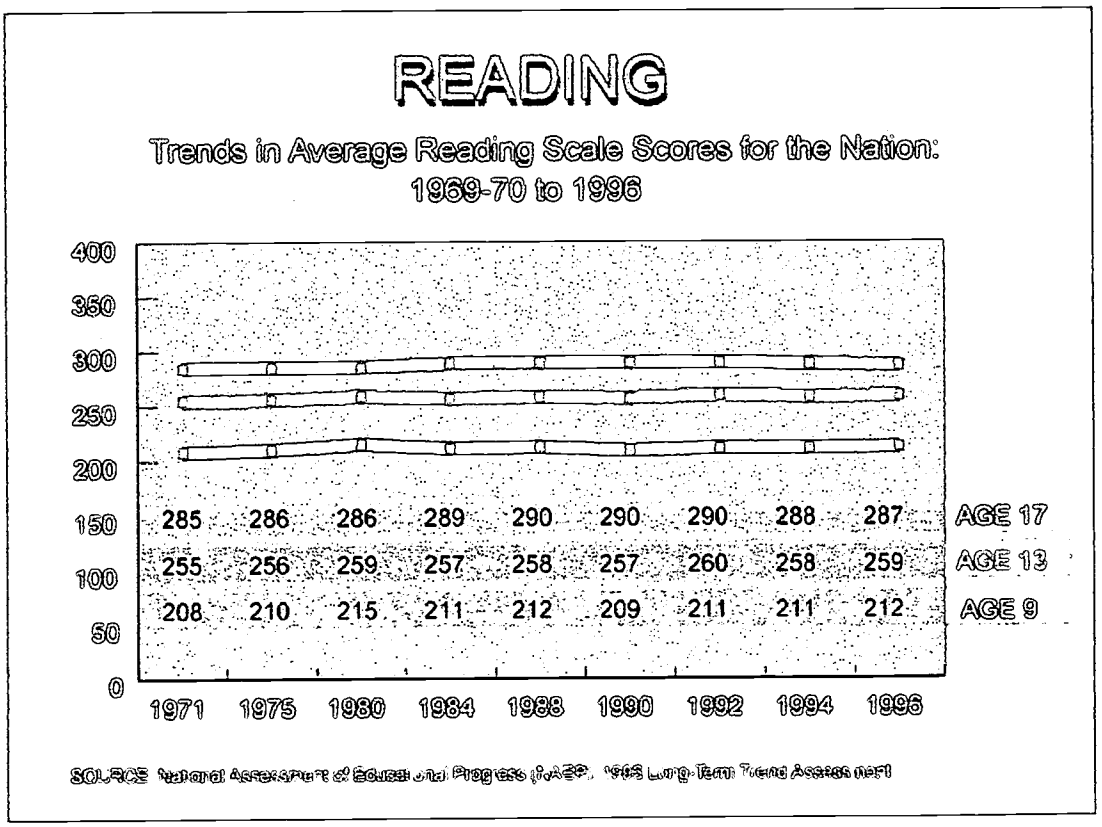
increase is all in math. As the following chart shows, Secretary Riley's data hide both a major decline in verbal achievement since the 1970s and the fact that combined scores are still below the 1970s.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Scores

	Total	Verbal	Math
1971	1039	530	509
1982	997	504	493
1997 (recentered)	1016	505	511

Source: Table 129, Digest of Education Statistics

A proper antidote to this push and shove of data is the following chart on reading. The essential stagnation becomes manifest.



Source: NAEP, as presented by Dr. Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., U.S. Commissioner of Education Statistics to the National Alliance of Business, September 29, 1997.

A more complete view is found in the next table. Here, summary data from all the tested areas--reading, writing, science, and math--are provided. For each age group and subject, the earliest and most recent data are provided. Also, the year of the highest score is noted.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Trends in Academic Performance

Subject Matter	First Year of Testing/Score	High Year/Score	Most Recent Year of Testing/Score
Reading	1971		1996
Age 9	208	1980/215	212
13	255	1992/260	259
17	285	1988/290	287
Writing	1984		1994
Age 9	204	1992/207	205
13	267	1992/274	265
17	290	1988/291	285
Science	1970		1996
Age 9	225	1992/231	230
13	255	1992/258	256
17	305	1970/305	296
Math	1973		1994
Age 9	219	1994/231	231
13	266	1994/274	274
17	304	1992/307	306

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *Trends in Academic Progress: Achievement of U.S. Students in Science, 1969-1994; Mathematics, 1973-1994: Reading, 1971-1994; Writing, 1984-1994*, 1996.

Other than mathematics, where the data do seem to be showing some improvement, in every other category--reading, writing, and science--student achievement in the most recent year of testing remains the same (Age 9 writing scores) or declines slightly from the peak year of achievement. In short, for every

age group in every subject matter other than math, the latest data represent stagnation or a decline from a previous high.

Even with respect to mathematics, the picture is not without clouds. International comparisons, measured by the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), show that in fourth grade American children are competitive in mathematics, but by eighth grade, our students have dropped into the middle of the pack, with more than half the countries in the survey achieving at higher levels than America. For high school students, the results are even more alarming.

On February 24, 1998, the last battery of TIMSS results was released. Measuring the achievement of students at the end of their last year of secondary school--twelfth grade for students in the United States--these latest results confirm the reasons for concern about American student achievement vis-a-vis our international counterparts. In fact, as the charts on the following pages demonstrate, our high school seniors are at rock bottom. The Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, Dr. Pascal Forgione, in his press release on the results said:

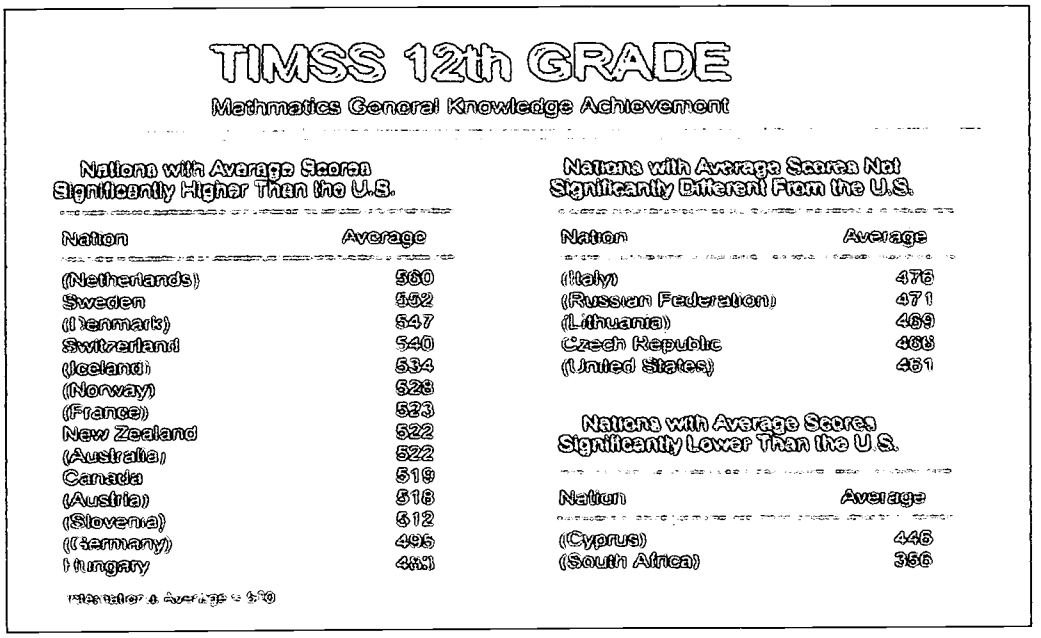
> The results of schooling in America are now in. Our most significant finding is that U.S. 12th grade students do not do well. When our graduating seniors are compared to the students graduating secondary school in other countries, our students rank near the bottom. This holds true in both science and math, and for both our typical and our top-level students.

Contrary to the assertion that TIMSS is an unfair measure of U.S. student achievement relative to the achievement of students from other countries because of greater student access in America, Dr. Forgione further noted that:

> TIMSS is not an assessment of other country's best students against our average students, but of the entire range of students in each country. While the percentage of young adults who complete secondary school in the U.S. once was significantly larger than the percentage in other countries, this is no longer the case. Today, similar proportions of young people are enrolled at the end of secondary schooling in most of these countries.

Another disturbing finding in the latest TIMSS study is that it is not the "bottom rung" students who are pulling our overall achievement scores down. For a long time, we have believed that our top students were the top in the world. The 12th grade TIMSS results show that the entire distribution of U.S. scores both

starts and ends lower than in most other nations. This means that the average level of general knowledge in mathematics among students in a majority of these countries matched that of the top quarter of U.S. students.



TIMSS 12th GRADE

Mathmatics General Knowledge Achievement

Nations with Average Scores Significantly Higher Than the U.S.

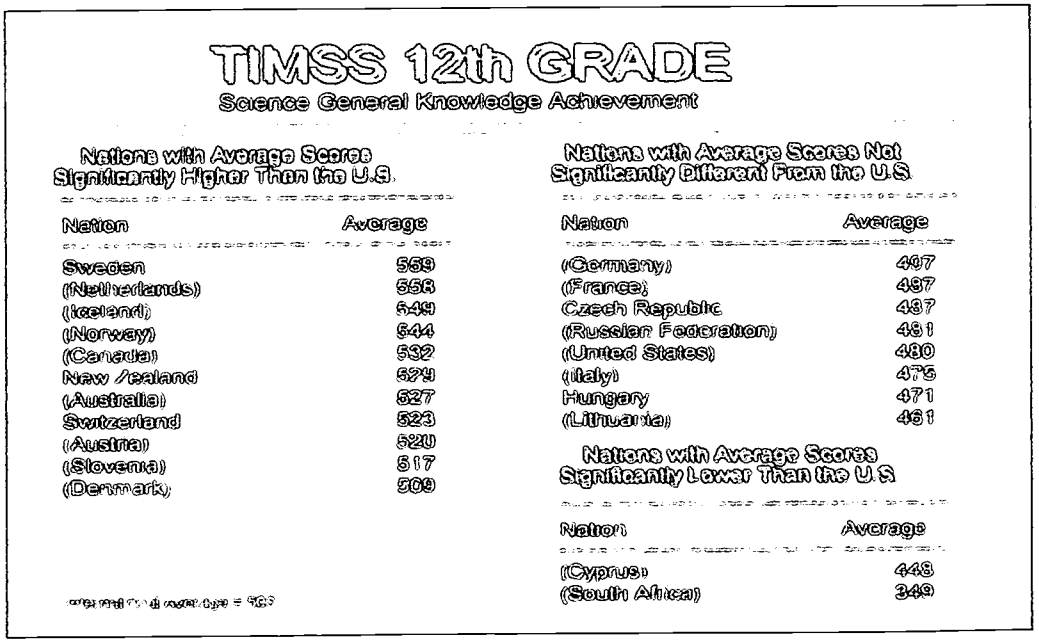
Nation	Average
(Netherlands)	560
Sweden	552
(Denmark)	547
Switzerland	540
(Iceland)	534
(Norway)	528
(France)	523
New Zealand	522
(Australia)	522
Canada	519
(Austria)	518
(Slovenia)	512
(Germany)	495
Hungary	483

Nations with Average Scores Not Significantly Different From the U.S.

Nation	Average
(Italy)	476
(Russian Federation)	471
(Lithuania)	469
Czech Republic	465
(United States)	461

Nations with Average Scores Significantly Lower Than the U.S.

Nation	Average
(Cyprus)	446
(South Africa)	356



TIMSS 12th GRADE

Science General Knowledge Achievement

Nations with Average Scores Significantly Higher Than the U.S.

Nation	Average
Sweden	559
(Netherlands)	558
(Iceland)	549
(Norway)	544
(Canada)	532
New Zealand	529
(Australia)	527
Switzerland	523
(Austria)	520
(Slovenia)	517
(Denmark)	509

Nations with Average Scores Not Significantly Different From the U.S.

Nation	Average
(Germany)	497
(France)	497
Czech Republic	487
(Russian Federation)	481
(United States)	480
(Italy)	475
Hungary	471
(Lithuania)	461

Nations with Average Scores Significantly Lower Than the U.S.

Nation	Average
(Cyprus)	448
(South Africa)	349

This disappointing performance in the last year of high school is particularly important for two reasons. First, 40% of our students do not go directly on to college. And even for the 60% that do, only one-half get a two or four-year degree. This means that for 70% of our children, twelfth grade is their last degree. The TIMSS data cast doubt on the value of that degree. A second point of concern is that approximately 30% of college freshmen must take remedial courses.[6] Because many of these students are financed by federal loans, the taxpayer pays twice to get the job done.

Moreover, the TIMSS results cast a new light on the focus on early brain development as an issue in American education. The TIMSS data show our children doing well in fourth grade, performing mediocre in eighth, and scoring badly in twelfth. Thus, the longer a child is in an American school, the more his math and science skills deteriorate in relation to the skills of his international peers. The quality of our schools, rather than the quality of our children's brains, appears to be the issue.

Because the Task Force has little patience with the range of excuses offered for these TIMSS results, it is worth noting that such a performance is not inevitable. A group of 19 northern Illinois school districts, known as the First in the World Consortium, has a history of scoring at the highest level of performance at the fourth, eighth and twelfth grade level in both science and math*. Additionally, Consortium AP Calculus students outperformed all other nations on the twelfth grade advanced mathematics test. The Consortium attributes its success to increased academic expectations and improved classroom instruction.

b. Resources

When confronted with such disappointing performance, the question arises whether as a society we are devoting enough resources to improve American education. Obviously, such a question has a subjective component as to what is "enough." But on an objective basis of whether America has increased spending over time, the answer is yes.

For all of American education, in current dollars, spending has risen from $23.9 billion in 1959 to $564.2 billion in 1996. As a percent of our nation's wealth, educational expenditures have risen from 4.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 7.4% over the same time frame. For elementary and secondary school

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* Singapore outperformed Consortium students in math at the fourth and eighth grade levels.

programs, the focus of the Task Force Report, spending has risen from $16.7 billion in 1959 (3.3% of GDP) to $339.7 billion in 1996 (4.5% of GDP).[7]

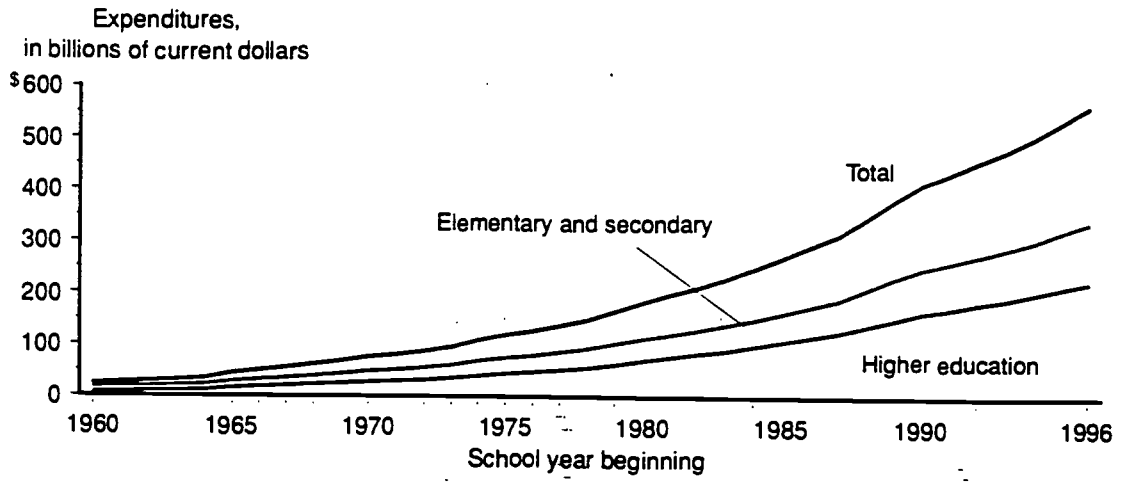
The following table highlights that America has been willing to commit growing resources to American education.

Spending on Education

	All Education Dollars (in billions)	%GDP	K/12 Dollars (in billions)	%GDP
1959	23.9	4.7	16.7	3.3
1969	68.5	7.0	43.2	4.4
1979	165.6	6.5	103.2	4.0
1989	381.5	7.0	231.0	4.2
1996	564.2	7.4	339.7	4.5

Source: Table 31, *Digest of Education Statistics 1997.*

This national commitment of greater resources in not only absolute dollar terms, but also a growing share of our national economy translates into the following chart.

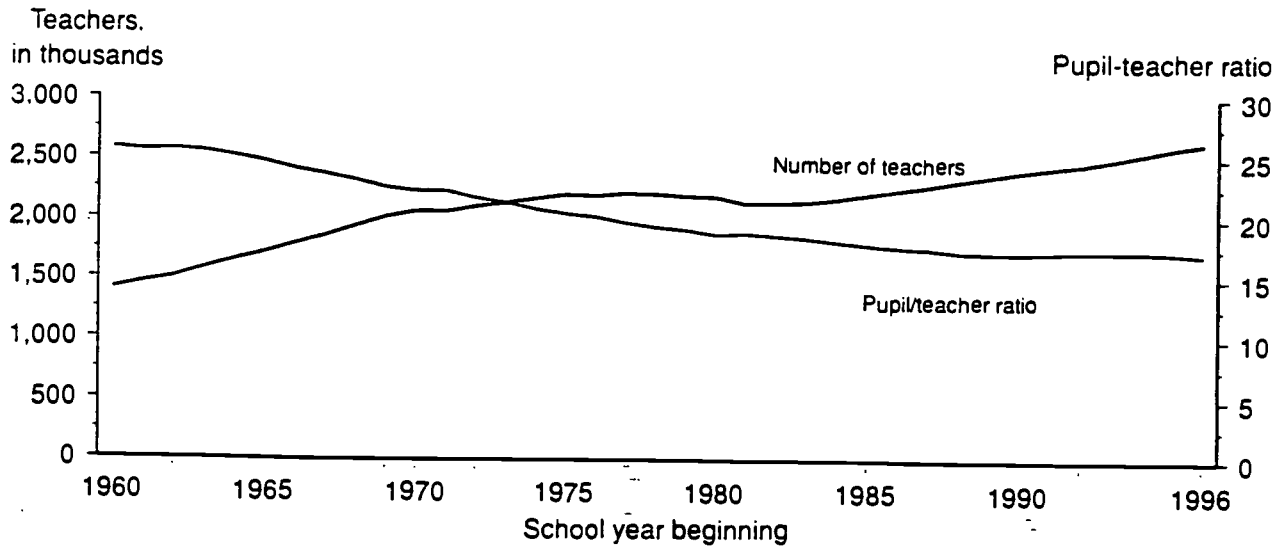


Source: Figure 2, Digest of Education Statistics 1997

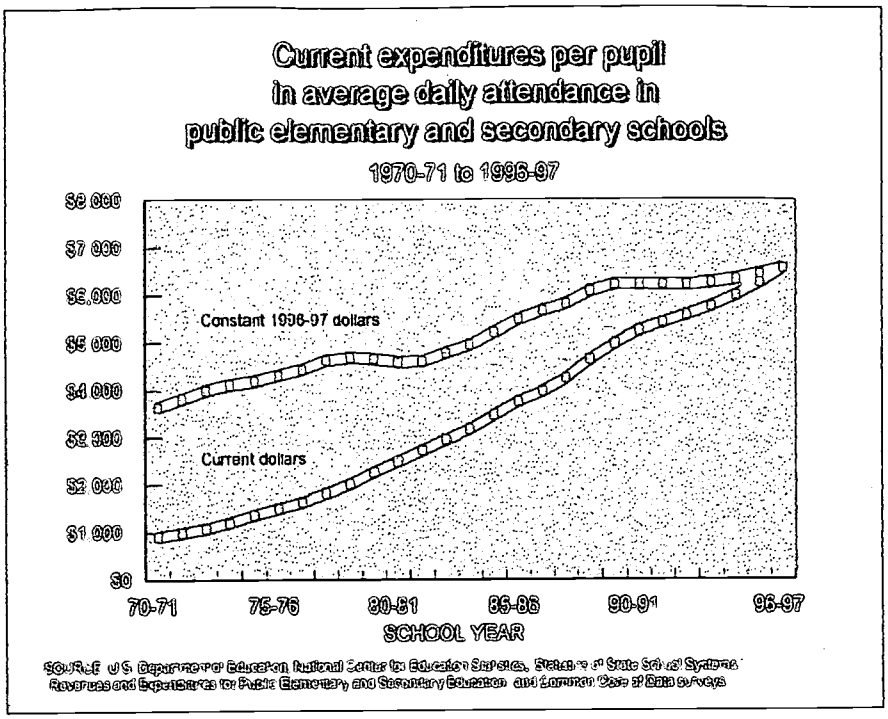
This increase in national expenditures has also translated into increased expenditures per pupil and declining teacher-pupil ratios. For those who see declining teacher-pupil ratios as a panacea, the numbers are sobering. During the long stagnant period in student achievement, teacher-pupil ratios have been dropping. In 1970, there were 22.3 pupils per teacher. In 1997, the ratio had dropped to 17.3, more than a 22% decline. Moreover, America's student-teacher ratios are lower than such international competitors as Japan whose students consistently outshine our students on the international math and science tests.

In looking at the financial commitment to American education, it is worth noting one disturbing trend. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of the public school budget that was devoted to the classroom ("regular instruction") declined from 61% in 1960 to 46% in 1990. Much of this occurred because of increases in administrators and non-teaching support staff. Between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of teachers on the personnel payroll declined from 60% in 1970 to 52% in 1980, a number which has since stabilized. In fact, in one area of Tennessee, home of the Task Force Chairman, the percentage of teachers has dropped to 38%. Certainly, if American education had maintained its commitment to classroom teaching over the past 30 years, student-teacher ratios would have dropped even further.[8]

The following charts show how America's commitment in financial resources has led to increased per pupil expenditures and declines in pupil-teacher ratios.



Source: Figure 8, Digest of Education Statistics 1997



Source: Figure 8, Digest of Education Statistics 1997

c. Urban Schools in Crisis

Beneath the surface of the disappointment over stagnant student performance, and despite the commitment of increased resources, there is an acute crisis in our urban schools where one out of every four public school students is enrolled in an urban school district. A recent 1997 report funded by the Pew Foundation and conducted by "Education Week," entitled *Quality Counts 98: The Urban Challenge*, lays out in chilling terms the depth of the crisis.

At the heart of the urban crisis is abject student achievement. On an aggregate basis, the Report tells us that 67% of students in urban schools fail to achieve even "basic level" on national tests. Moreover, the Report indicates that the causes of failure lie with the schools, not the children. Children in our city schools do worse than equally poor children outside the cities. Moreover, poor students who get a chance to attend middle-class schools perform significantly better.

On a human level, the *Washington Post* recounted the tale of Demetrius Wilkins, a young man who graduated from the Alexandria, Virginia, public school system who could not read, despite years of high-cost special education classes. After graduation, alert to his shortcomings, Demetrius entered an adult reading class where he learned to read in six months. As the Pew report notes, "islands of achievement serve to make even less tolerable the

oceans of failure that surround them."

Because the Report so eloquently speaks for itself, several concluding quotations will serve to give the magnitude of the crisis.

> "It is hard to exaggerate the education crisis in America's cities. Words like scandal, failure, corruption and despair echo in the pages of the Nation's newspapers. They are words that aptly describe many urban districts and the schools within them."
>
> "...we also search for a solidly successful urban district...significantly, there are none."
>
> Richard Elmore, Harvard University: "I am not sure how much longer I'm going to argue for the large-scale bureaucracies in cities that don't contribute any value added for student performance. Unless they get control of that, they don't deserve to exist."

The risk posed by the academic meltdown of our urban schools is also well-capsulized by the report:

> "If the States, in particular, do not meet this challenge, the continuing national movement to improve schools will fail."

In the Task Force's view, the issue of whether America's urban schools can be restored cannot be left an open question. The Task Force looked at the Chicago Public School System where the first signs of a renaissance are visible. The Chicago system is the nation's third largest school system. In 1988, it was deemed the "worst school system in America" by former Secretary of Education, William Bennett. Its evolution since that decree is an intriguing case study.

Chicago's first signs of progress have required a series of heroic reforms, such as: placing 109 schools on academic probation, requiring principals to meet higher criteria, mandating additional math and science courses for students to graduate, ending social promotion, and forcing teachers in failing schools to reapply for their positions. Chicago is beginning to see results. It has had a second consecutive year of increased math and reading scores for elementary and secondary students and the first improvement since 1993 on reading and math scores in its high schools.

Significantly, radical changes in flexibility and accountability were the precursors to these reforms. In 1988 and 1995, the Illinois state legislature enacted sweeping reforms. Specifically, the 1988 law gave unprecedented discretion to individual Chicago schools. The 1995 law gave the mayor a critical

role.

In addition, the Task Force learned from Chicago school officials that the State legislature has allowed the use of block grants for much of the funding for Chicago's schools. According to Chicago school officials:

> Most of our initiatives are locally based, locally funded, locally developed by people that had been working in Chicago for many years. We know the system, and we believe we know the things that it needs to have happen in order to improve. So the more flexibility we have with Federal and State funds, the easier it is for us to make those changes.

And in clearer terms, they pleaded to the Task Force, "Let us be accountable to you [the federal government] for getting the results, but give us the flexibility to do it in the way that works best for us."

It seems clear that Chicago public schools have benefited from these "radical" changes, especially the increased flexibility with respect to both regulations and funding. A recent assessment of the Chicago reforms by University of Chicago researchers asserts:

> Against a backdrop on which urban schools have often seemed impervious to reform, we judge the success of democratic localism in catalyzing basic organizational changes at the school-building level as a significant accomplishment.

II. Current Federal Establishment in Education

a. Basic Elements

Against the backdrop of stagnant student performance, the Task Force examined the federal government's role in American education. Regrettably, we found a sprawling, unfocused effort that suffered from a programmatic reluctance to ask itself the fundamental question: What works?

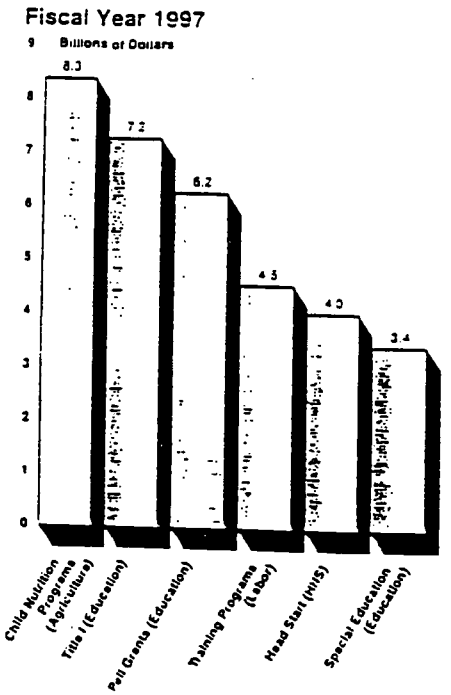
In their testimony before the Task Force entitled ***Federal Education Funding: Multiple Programs and Lack of Data Raise Efficiency and Effectiveness Concerns***, the General Accounting Office (GAO) noted that federal support for education approximates $100 billion a year, excluding tax expenditures.[9] Of this, about $27 billion is "off-budget" expenditures

for programs such as federal loans or non-federal expenditures by private parties for education loans that are guaranteed by the federal government. The other $73 billion are appropriated funds.

This $100 billion enterprise consists of 552 programs administered by 31 federal agencies, according to GAO. (An analysis by the House Committee on Education found 760 programs in 39 agencies with the same cost of $100 billion.)

Within this total federal effort, the Department of Education administered 244 education programs spending about 43% of appropriated funds, or $31 billion. In a letter to the Ranking Member of the Task Force, GAO stated that if we count only "the number of funded federal education programs providing direct instructional assistance and indirect instructional assistance to students in kindergarten through grade 12," the Department of Education still funds 69 programs. [10] As an example of the confusion inherent in the system, the Department of Education was unable to compile a list using this more narrow definition.

After the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services spends the next largest amount ($13 billion to administer among other programs, the Head Start program for disadvantaged preschool children). The six largest federal education programs, their federal sponsor, and the amount they spent in fiscal year 1997 are listed in the following chart:



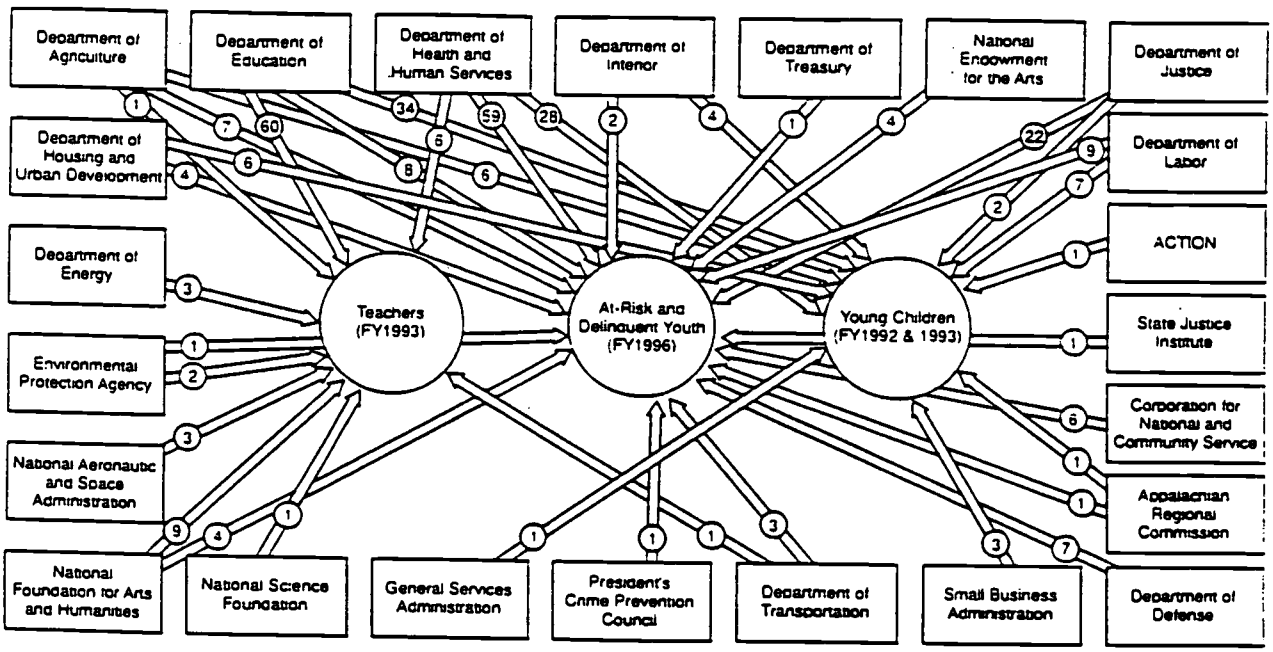
Within the federal education establishment, about half of the $73 billion appropriated annually goes to elementary and secondary education, a figure which roughly reflects the allocation of resources within the Department of Education. For example, in the FY 1996 budget, $14.6 billion, or 48% of the Department of Education's budget was targeted for primary and secondary education.

b. Programmatic Overlap

With 552 or more federal programs, and 244 in the Department of Education alone, the question is does anyone have any idea what is going on?

The following chart, prepared by GAO for its testimony before the Task Force, answers the question.

Figure 6: Three Target Groups Served by Multiple Programs and Agencies



This chart examines programmatic overlap for three targeted groups--young children, at-risk and delinquent youth, and teachers. This program overlap, admittedly, is not unique to the federal education effort. A large number of federal agencies and departments have their fingers in various pies. However, because the Task Force was charged with examining only the issue of education, our findings are limited to this issue.

Specifically, for at-risk and delinquent youth, GAO found 127 programs in 15 federal agencies. Moreover, many programs fund similar services. For example, in 1996, 47 federal programs provided substance abuse prevention, 20 provided substance abuse treatment, and 57 provided violence prevention. Often many similar programs were under the roof of a single agency. The Department of Justice, for example, had 9 programs in 1996 providing substance abuse prevention services to the youth.

For teacher training, GAO found 86 programs in fiscal year 1993 in 9 federal agencies and offices. For early childhood, there were 90 programs in 11 agencies and offices. In fact, one disadvantaged child could be eligible for as many as 13 programs.

c. Burdens

It should come as no surprise that so much confusion comes at great cost. The Task Force heard from critics that although federal funds make up only 7% of their budgets, they impose 50% of their administrative costs.[11] As one concrete example, Frank Brogan, Florida's Commissioner of Education, told the Task Force that it takes 297 state employees to oversee and administer $1 billion in federal funds. In contrast, only 374 employees oversee approximately $7 billion in state funds. Thus, it takes six times as many people to administer a federal dollar as a state dollar.

Brogan went on to say:

> We at the State and local level feel the crushing burden caused by too many Federal regulations, procedures, and mandates. Florida spends millions of dollars every year to administer inflexible, categorical Federal programs that divert precious dollars away from raising student achievement. Many of these Federal programs typify the misguided, one-size-fits-all command and control approach. Most have the requisite focus on inputs like more regulation, increasing budgets, and fixed options and processes. The operative question in evaluating the effectiveness of these programs in usually: How much money have we put into the system?

Cozette Buckney, Chief Education Officer, of the Chicago school system echoed the sentiments of many state and local officials:

> Excessive paperwork is a concern. Too many reports, the time lines for some of the reports, the cost factor involved, the administrative staff just do not warrant that kind of time on task. That is taking from what we need to do to make certain our students are achieving and our teachers are prepared.

At the field hearing, Lamar Alexander, former Secretary of Education and Governor of Tennessee, had words of caution for the Task Force to take back to Washington:

> Please resist the temptation to become a national school board. Please don't pass anymore well-meaning specific federal education programs, because they almost always end up adding to the administrative overhead, and restricting the creativity of classroom teachers.

The proliferation of current education programs highlighted by the Task Force is an important reference point for considering the education initiatives in President Clinton's State of the Union Address on January 27, 1998. The President unveiled a list of new proposals for our nation's education system, including after school learning centers, smaller classes, and modernized schools. When the efficacy of the current maze of complicated and duplicative programs is already questionable, should the federal government continue to expand this system by adding new programs and increasing resources for existing ones?

Take for example the issue of school construction. This has traditionally been a responsibility of the states and localities. Up until the 105th Congress, virtually the only time in history that the federal government has given aid for the building of public schools occurred during the Great Depression, when people and states were destitute. Yet proposals are currently pending which would put the federal government into the school construction business. There is clearly a need for school construction and renovation in many parts of the country. But times are bright, and many states are enjoying budget surpluses.

As part of its FY96 Budget submission, the Administration expressed reservations about federal government involvement in school construction. Specifically, the budget rationale stated that "the construction and renovation of school facilities has traditionally been the responsibility of state and local governments financed primarily by local taxpayers. We are opposed to the creation of a new federal grant program for school

construction." The Administration has now changed its tune on this issue.

Commissioner Brogan notes that school construction is important in the state of Florida. He states, however, that "the President's proposal in this area may do more harm than good." Specifically, he cites that if federal funding is tied to Davis-Bacon provisions, school construction costs could increase by at least 15%.

To its credit, the Department of Education administers a program, authorized under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, called Ed-Flex -- the Education Flexibility Partnership Demonstration Program. Under Ed-Flex, the Department has granted 12 states authority to waive the requirements of some of the federal programs in their districts. The 12 states which participate in the program are Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Vermont. Through this program, the Department of Education allows states to grant individual school districts temporary waivers from certain federal requirements. While Ed-Flex does not address the overlap of federal education programs, it can ease the regulatory burden. School districts are given greater flexibility in using federal funds, in exchange for greater accountability in student achievement.

There are two types of Ed-Flex waivers:
1) Programmatic Waivers: These allow flexibility on specific program requirements, and are tied directly to student performance.

2) Administrative Waivers: These reduce the requirements related to submission of applications for funds and maintenance of records.

The Task Force heard that in Texas schools, programmatic waivers allowed campuses with fewer than 50% of low-income students to use federal funds to upgrade the entire school. Without the waiver, these campuses would have had to target Title 1, Part A, funds for students with identified educational needs only.

Madeleine Manigold, the Coordinator for Waivers of the Texas Education Agency stated that ". . . under Ed-Flex, we believe that increased flexibility is accompanied by increased accountability for results, and so we set even higher expectations for performance gains for districts and campuses with Ed-Flex waivers than we set for our regular accountability systems . . . ."

Because it does not address the fundamental confusion and costs of the overlap issue, Ed-Flex, in its present form, is a limited, tentative first step to reform.

GAO is currently undertaking a study of flexibility in program design. Specifically, its report, "Balancing Flexibility and Accountability: Grant Program Design in Education and Other Areas," will be formally released later this spring. As GAO states, "Considering design features and their implications can help policy makers ensure that accountability and information needs are met."

d. Technology

Both Congress and the American public have shown a willingness to provide increased funds for technology implementation in schools. Some may even see technology as the "silver bullet" to our nation's education problem. While technology may be an important tool in education, it alone is not the remedy.

Even Steven Jobs, one of the founders of Apple Computer and a major benefactor of computer equipment to schools, has said:

> What's wrong with education cannot be fixed with technology. No amount of technology will make a dent... You're not going to solve the problems by putting all knowledge onto CD-ROMS. We can put a Web site in every school -- none of this is bad. It's bad only if it lulls us into thinking we're doing something to solve the problem with education.[12]

A 1994 RAND study, entitled ***Fostering the Use of Educational Technology: Elements of a National Strategy,*** found that the introduction of educational technology into schools should occur as a component of a broader effort of school reform. Tom Glennan of RAND told the task force, "the rapid growth in acquisition of technology for schools has made it difficult to coordinate the use of technology with a reform agenda."

Technology does have an important role to play in education. As a facilitator of more individualized instruction, as a provider of access to materials and expertise, and as an aid for student assessment, computers can improve student learning. The introduction of technology must be accompanied by teacher training to foster teachers' abilities to effectively incorporate technology into the classroom. Disappointingly, a recent survey by the Educational Testing Service found that only 15% of teachers

nationwide have received at least nine hours of training in educational technology.

Additionally, the role of the federal government in introducing and supporting technology in education is quite limited. As Tom Glennan noted, the RAND report found that "the recurring costs of educational technology should be built into school budgets as a normal component of recurring costs" and "major responsibility for financing and implementing technology clearly lies with state and local school authorities." In the GAO report on School Technology, only one of the five districts surveyed utilized federal funds as the major source of funding.

III. Assessing the Federal Effort

a. Evaluation of the Federal Education Effort

For a pragmatic democratic culture such as America's, asking what works is instinctive. Surprisingly, the Task Force found that this was not the case for much of the federal education effort. As GAO noted:

> For Kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) programs, we remain concerned about whether the Department knows how well new or newly modified programs, like Title I, are being implemented; to what extent established programs are working;...Like other Departments, Education needs to focus more on the results of its activities and on obtaining the information it needs for a more forward, results-oriented management decision-making process.

In a blunter appraisal, Professor Maris Vinovskis of Michigan stated:

> It is disappointing that having spent more than $150 billion on these compensatory education services, we still do not know which practices and programs are particularly effective...For Head Start and Title I, these evaluations have not even attempted to ascertain in a rigorous and systematic manner which components of their programs have been successful.

The failure to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of federal education programs appears to have two causes. First, the origins of most federal programs are not result oriented. Instead, many such as disability programs and educational services for the poor, were intended to provide

services to those who were left out of the American mainstream. And now that they have been in existence for several decades, they have not adjusted to the need for educational rigor and results.

The second reason appears to be instinctive caution. As Chester Finn, a former Assistant Secretary of Education and now one of its most outspoken critics, told the Task Force:

> The fact is that nearly every cent of the Education Department's budget is based on yesterday's outdated assumptions, on pious but unproven hopes, on dubious claims...The fact is that there is no evidence to support the view that the average American child will learn more, or that the typical American school will become more productive, or that the quality of American education as a whole will improve one iota, as a result of continuing past "investment" policies...

But rather than helping themselves, federal educational programs, by failing to make a case based on performance, have invited not only criticism, but also the search for alternatives that has shaken the educational establishment.

The clearest example of a well-intentioned program that has eluded result-oriented self-analysis is Head Start. Founded in 1965 as part of President Johnson's Great Society programs, Head Start is a federal preschool program for the poor administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Overall, the Head Start program has grown to a $4 billion a year program (in 1997), having more than doubled since 1990 ($1.5 billion). Today, it serves more than 750,000 children.

Because at inception Head Start provided services beyond education, such as medical care, and because many of its initial organizers were community action activists, Head Start has not been a result-oriented educational program. Early research, although ambiguous, has been treated by advocates as definitive about Head Start's benefits. There is no need to rehash the true meaning of this early research, however. Undisputed is the fact that this research was conducted 20 years ago, when the program had only 35,000 children, 1/20 its present size.

Because Head Start has increased in size so dramatically since 1990, and because some of the additional funds were to improve program quality, GAO conducted a review of the program in 1997. GAO, in summarizing its

study for the Task Force, has concluded that, "we do not know what is working and what is not in today's programs..." GAO goes on to note that "very little research has focused on program impact, and the body of Head Start research available is inadequate for use in drawing conclusions about the impact of the Head Start program."

Is Head Start working? Thirty-three years after its initiation, the Task Force has had to conclude that we do not know, but nagging concern is pervasive. In its ongoing work, GAO found that no list of Head Start classrooms and their locations existed.

A comparable uncertainty surrounds Title I. Also enacted in 1965, the purpose of Title I is to meet the "special education needs of educationally deprived children." Starting at $1 billion in 1965, it has grown into the Department of Education's largest program, spending $7.7 billion in fiscal year 1997. Since 1987 (at $3.2 billion), it has more than doubled. Cumulatively from inception, the program's spending is approaching $100 billion.

Although laudable in objective, GAO has commented, "Our clearest evidence about a lack of positive effect from federal expenditures comes from one of the largest programs: Title I." (Ironically, Robert Kennedy, as Senator from New York, noted at Title I's passage that Congress was "just . . . investing money where it is really going to accomplish very little if any good.") In its own 1993 analysis, the Department of Education concurred with GAO:

> Chapter I is no longer closing the gap between disadvantaged students and others...More generally, the relative performance of students in very high poverty schools actually declines from the early to the later grades...[13]

To its credit, the Department of Education, following its study, urged Congress to reform Title I. At present, there are no available data as to whether the reforms for Title I are working. As GAO notes, we still do not know how "to make large-scale program improvements a reliably consistent reality in schools serving students placed at risk."

Although GAO has a large number of reports critiquing other elements of federal elementary and secondary school programs, the discussions of Head Start and Title I serve to make the point. Thirty-three years after the initiation of federal aid to education, which now approaches in all forms

$100 billion a year, the Task Force is unable to answer the critical question of whether federal aid to those children with the greatest need is working because at present no comprehensive, current data exist.

b. Evaluation of the Federal Education Research Effort

The lack of solid empirical research data raises a collateral question: What is the state of federal education research? Unfortunately, the answer again is that we do not know much. What the Task Force learned, however, is not good news.

Despite the increasing amount of federal government resources being devoted to education and the sprawling federal education establishment, how much of our poor student achievement can we attribute to misguided educational theories? As E.D. Hirsch noted in his book *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*:

> Many of our failures in precollegiate education have been caused by the lack of fit between the dominant theories and the realities they have claimed to represent. The history of American education since the 1930s has been the stubborn persistence of illusion in the face of reality. Illusion has not been defeated. But since reality can not be defeated either, and since it determines what actually happens in the world, the result has been educational decline.

At the federal level, we spend less than one-third of one percent (.033%) of education funding on education research and development across the broad spectrum from pre-K through higher education. Most of this money is channeled through the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). For FY1998, OERI is funded at $431,438,000. The President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) reported in March of 1997 that less than one-tenth of one percent (.1%) of our nation's expenditure for K-12 education is currently being invested to determine what techniques actually work.

Dr. Robert Slavin, the Co-Director of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk (CRESPAR), one of the Department of Education's research centers, likened our current expenditures in federal education research to health research that was limited to "basic research and descriptions of how sick people are, but never produced any cures for anything."

Additionally, even on the issues of policy and practice, the body of available research is limited and offers little compelling evidence that current education programs and practices are effective. Not only do we not know how well Title I is working, we are also spending nothing to develop and evaluate effective Title I programs and approaches. Slavin's own approach to Title I, *Success for All,* was partially funded by federal education research dollars but in his own words "far more private foundation money than federal money supported the R&D efforts."

Chris Whittle of the Edison Project told the Task Force that while pharmaceutical companies spend hundreds of millions of dollars to develop a single new drug, and the R&D price tag for automotive or aircraft design can top $1 billion, spending for education research is not comparable. Whittle pointed out that even the development of a recently introduced fast food sandwich, which consumers ended up finding "less than tasty," cost about $80 million. Steven Goldman of the Ball Foundation indicated that the operating budget of one of the ten education laboratories tasked to do development work and provide technical assistance is smaller than what his seed company expends in a facility devoted solely to breeding petunias.

Whittle elaborates further about the important distinction between research and development:

> Development is the creation of new practical economic products and services, and in education, what that means is creating whole new school [designs] that are effective and innovative, that can be rolled into thousands of schools across the United States without bankrupting state budgets.

Slavin also warns against proposing policy and practice changes, or even new programs, without adequate evidence. He cites President Clinton's proposal for substantial increases in funding for after-school programs when there is no evidence on how to use funds for after-school programs effectively. He says that "we are heading out with an enormous need for practical information about what would be effective practice in after-school programs, but we are flying blind. We are going out proposing vast expenditures with very little evidence about what works."

Research can play a critical role in improving the state of American Education. Dr. Robert Slavin's *Success for All* program is a product of the federal education research effort. This is the same program that is used in 740 schools in 40 states and by Whittle's Edison Project schools.

On the flip side, as Goldman reports, "poor research often leaves us with inadequately tested and replicated fads, masquerading as innovations, penetrating the system, frustrating the teachers, administrators, parents and, most importantly, the children, and leaving us all worse off than before." E.D. Hirsch, Jr., of the University of Virginia, wrote in a 1996 *American Educator* article: "Research findings that are accurate and reliable must transcend partisanship and must be seen to do so. When research is cited with misleading selectivity, or when it is second-rate and unreliable, it ceases, after a time, to be useful even as rhetoric."

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to discern good research from bad. The precursor to OERI was the National Institute of Education (NIE). Modeled after the National Institute of Health, which is widely respected, the NIE never realized the same success as its role model. The Task Force heard that OERI does not seem to be closing the gap either. Inadequate peer-review processes and a lack of good quality control measures stymies progress. Even the PCAST group recommends that additional research on education and the use of technology in education be undertaken by "a distinguished independent board of outside experts." There seems to be little faith in our current education infrastructure to produce the needed research on policies and programs that work.

IV. States and Localities: Engines for Change

Without question, it is states and localities that today are serving as the engines for change in education. The groundwork for success is already in place at the local level -- teachers, parents, principals, and communities demonstrate on a daily basis the enthusiasm and desire to succeed. However, flexibility at the local level is critical to the success of our schools. Repeatedly, the Task Force was asked to help lessen the regulatory burden our schools face. At our field hearing in Tennessee, the Task Force learned of examples of local and state initiatives:

Jane Walters, the Commissioner of Education for the state of Tennessee, noted that with a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, Tennessee was able to be creative with administrative funds. In fact, Tennessee is the only state in the nation which gives 'kids grants.' The state takes $200,000 of the administrative money for Goals 2000 to award to high school students who write proposals for up to $10,000 for things they think would make their schools better places. Awardees are chosen by a panel of citizens.

The Task Force heard testimony from Susan Gendrich who is the principal of Cason Lane Academy, a public school in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. It is one of Tennessee's "break the mold" schools, a true "Choice for the 21st Century," as it's motto proudly proclaims. As a "break the mold" school, it is also exempted from many of the state regulations. At Cason Lane, parents are responsible for providing their own children's transportation. Thus, the funds saved in transportation costs can go directly into the school's operating budget. With these extra operating funds, Cason Lane has been able to extend their school day from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and their school calendar to year-round operation. After hours activities include remedial help for every student who needs it, and a variety of special extra-curricular activities. Parents pay $1.25/hour if their child attends after hours activities. Former Tennessee Governor and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander called Cason Lane "one of the very best examples of quality public education in the country."

Other witnesses highlighted successful small-scale efforts such as those by Community Education Partners in Houston, Texas, where small classes of eight to ten hard-core juvenile offenders were given intensive instruction that resulted in significant educational progress. Certainly students who come to school eager to learn have every right to expect an environment where learning is possible. At the same time, kids who act up face a bleak future of unemployment, public assistance, even prison. In an effort to address this problem, some cities have set up privatized alternative schools for disruptive children. These schools not only allow public schools to focus on those students who can be successful in a traditional setting, but it gives at-risk kids the individualized attention they need to succeed. In Houston, Texas, as part of the reform effort, overall crime has dropped by 23%, arrests are down 20%, and the climate in public school classrooms has improved dramatically.

V. Task Force Recommendations

Stagnant student performance masking an urban collapse, and an expensive array of overlapping federal programs of unproven worth; all this raises the obvious question of: What next? In response to this question, the Task Force has three interim recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: In light of the continuing proliferation of federal categorical programs, the Task Force recommends that federal education programs be consolidated. This effort should include reorganization at the federal level, and block grants for the states. The Task Force particularly favors providing states flexibility to consolidate all federal funds into an integrated state strategic plan to achieve national educational objectives for which the state would be held accountable.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Increase funding for education research with funds targeted to foster "design competitions" and large-scale demonstration projects by states and localities with oversight by a new bipartisan governing board modeled after the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the federal government foster with substantial resources efforts by states and localities to diversify and experiment with new educational options. All this should be part of a long-term effort to adopt for primary and secondary education the federal model of higher education where children and parents are given the pivotal role of making educational choices that will maximize a child's life prospects.

1. Consolidation and State Strategic Plans: In making these recommendations, the Task Force is mindful of the need for humility. Although the federal establishment (both the Congress and the Executive) is prepared to assist in improving America's schools, it is worth remembering the limitations of the federal role in education. Not only does the federal government provide just 7% of the funding, but there are no federal teachers, no federal classrooms and no federal principals. Virtually all learning in America is occurring in classrooms and homes outside the purview of the federal government; a circumstance the Task Force wishes to maintain.

But despite its limitations, the federal government does have a role to play in revitalizing education. Over the past three decades, along with its failures, government has three notable successes: Improving the environment, streamlining Medicaid, and reforming welfare. Each of these successes has several elements in common. First, the focus and leadership came from the national government by identifying the problem as national and worthy of the collective energy of all Americans. Second, the federal government provided substantial incremental resources in terms of billions of dollars to the effort. Third, in each case, the federal government maintained focus and resources over decades to achieve results. For example, the cleaner air and water we have today is the result of federal environmental laws passed in the 1960's and 1970's.

Beyond national leadership, resources and perseverance, each of these examples of success had one additional feature: a partnership with state and local officials where tactics and implementation were left to states and localities. With respect to education, tactics and implementation procedures are virtually dictated by the federal government. Rather than working closely with the states, the Congress created 70 new federal education programs in the 1980's.[14] President Clinton, thinking that 552 federal educational programs are not enough, suggested 14 more in his fiscal year 1999 budget proposal. The rationale for expanding an already overly large and burdensome federal education establishment is simply not discernible. Instead, the Task Force believes that states should have the flexibility to put together state strategic plans. Under such a plan, the states would establish concrete educational goals and timetables for achievement. In return, they would be allowed to pool federal funds from categorical programs and spend these consolidated resources on state established priorities.

As noted, the Department of Education has initiated Ed-Flex that allows states to waive federal regulatory requirements. More recently, there have been proposals to extend Ed-Flex to all fifty states. Although well-intentioned, these proposals are too timid. While Ed-Flex might partially alleviate the regulatory burden, it leaves the problem of unfocused, duplicative federal programs untouched. The fundamental reform of creating state-federal partnerships with a common strategic focus is left out. As GAO has noted,

> The Ed-Flex demonstration is generally not structured to address the issues that result from the large numbers of federal programs administered by different departments and agencies...Because waivers cannot reduce the number of agencies or programs, they do not and cannot make fundamental changes in the underlying structure or design of federal assistance in education.

In recommending federal-state partnerships where federal resources flow to the states in return for state accountability for results, two additional points are in order. First, even without such partnerships, federal education efforts should be consolidated. This means fewer and more focused federal programs. It also means that some programs should be turned into block grants to provide the states more flexibility to achieve their educational objectives. Secondly, for states that do not want to undertake such an effort at consolidation, there is no requirement that they do so. The state strategic planning process is for states that believe they have a superior strategic vision to that embodied in federal categorical programs. The following testimony from the directors of the Florida and California state education programs highlights the need for this flexibility:

Commissioner Frank Brogan of Florida notes that:

> Congress should identify priority areas and allow States to designate the dollars for specific programs.
>
> With education, we are already beginning to see States becoming living laboratories, testing varied programs and options. If left to pursue reform without added Federal burdens and interference, States can learn from the success and mistakes of others, ... with the freedom to emulate some programs as models and/or discard those that are ineffective.

By contrast, Henry Der of California notes that California has no desire to experiment with consolidating federal funds:

> We submit to you that the roads toward devolution will result in less opportunities for those with special needs and will retard the leadership role that the U.S. Department of Education has played, as well as undermine the accountability that we need to build into our education programs.

If Florida wishes to innovate, and California does not, the Task Force recommends they should both get their wish.

2. Program Development and Demonstration Projects

As Slavin explained to the Task Force, improving our federal education research effort is not just a question of more money.

> It is a question of money wisely spent. The money that is spent now does a good job in many ways at identifying factors that underlie effective practice and describing the impacts of various policy initiatives and [it] does provide some information that is extremely valuable. What it does not provide is replicable research-based programs, and that I think is where we need to invest.

Slavin's *Success for All* program is an example of research-based, results-oriented program design. Chris Whittle of the Edison Project told the Task Force that Edison spent its entire R&D budget on development. What the American Education system needs is more information on what works, and this information should be distributed to others. Some schools and school districts already know

what works. Take for instance, the school districts in the First in the World Consortium whose students perform on TIMSS as well as any other student in the world while the large majority of American students perform in the middle or the bottom of the pack.

Additional monies should be targeted to provide the kind of research that tells us how the Consortium schools are able to achieve such dramatic results. Moreover, new research monies could support large-scale demonstration projects by state and local entities to validate or invalidate new educational approaches.

Additionally, it is especially important that the process of establishing an agenda for federally supported education research be as insulated as possible from political influences for several reasons. Since education research is one of the activities of the Department of Education over which the Secretary of Education has greatest discretion, it has been subjected to substantial political influence within Administrations of both parties in the past. Thus, the threat of political influence is very real and should be avoided. Next, the federal government is the primary funding source for education research and support for education research is a distinctly federal role in education; so the agenda established for OERI's research activities has widespread impact on education in the Nation. Thirdly, there is typically a long lead time between the setting of education research agendas and the products of the resulting research, so it is very important that agendas remain relatively stable, rather than being radically changed with the arrival of each new administration in Washington.

The OERI currently has a National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB).[15] It is charged with advising the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement on research priorities, including review and approval of the Research Priorities Plan developed by the Assistant Secretary with advice from the Board. The NERPPB has 15 members which, according to statute, are to include: (a) 5 specialists in education research, nominated by the National Academy of Sciences; (b) 5 professional educators; and (c) 5 other individuals who may have any variety of backgrounds (e.g., school administrators, members of state or local school boards, etc.).

The model for the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which is responsible for setting policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), has generally been effective and successful. NAGB is an explicitly bipartisan board, with a mix of educational assessment and curriculum specialists, elected officials of both major parties, as well as representatives of business, industry, and the public. It has proven to be quite nonpartisan and independent in its decision-making, and it might be a model for a similar board to be responsible

for setting OERI's research agenda.

Compared to a board such as NAGB, there are several disadvantages to the current NERPPB. Specifically, it does not provide for balanced representation of both major political parties; it is heavily weighted toward members of the education establishment, as well as federal agencies, while having no assurance that elected officials, business representatives, or the general public will be represented; it is less clearly independent of the U.S. Department of Education; and its role and responsibilities in setting policies are less clear.[16]

3. Innovation, Diversity, and the Parent-Child Nexus:

In the aggregate, American education is not providing desired levels of student achievement. But embedded in this aggregate conclusion are wide variances in achievement between individual schools. Secretary Riley captured this diversity when he noted that,

> Some schools are excellent, some are improving, some have the remarkable capacity to change for the better, and some should never be called schools at all.[17]

Such diversity in school quality means that there is no magic silver bullet for American education. Progress will have to be made school by school, class by class, child by child. As with other successful problem solving efforts, we are facing several decades of sustained effort. Given the failure of the present educational system to deliver the results we want, and also given the absence of a readily available consensus solution, it is a matter of public-policy logic that to be successful we must enter a period of experimentation. America's educational system must adopt self-correcting policies that give our children a chance, particularly those presently trapped in schools that "should never be called schools at all."

Fortunately, America has already begun a period of exuberant experimentation. Much of this experimentation has been conducted under the controversial label of "choice." Here, much of the national debate has focused on the use of public funds for vouchers to private schools for inner-city children, particularly in Milwaukee and Cleveland. But this view of choice is unduly narrow. The Task Force found that choice is taking a wide-range of forms:

--Magnet Schools: Public schools that specialize in subjects such as math, science, or the performing arts and are open to all who qualify.

--Charter Schools: The first charter school was started in Minnesota in 1991. Today there are more than 700 of them, with the largest concentration in Arizona. Charter schools are public schools which operate under a "charter contract" that is negotiated between a school's organizers (parents and teachers for example) and a sponsor (local or state school board) which oversees the charter. These charters are designed to focus on student achievement, not educational "inputs."

--Contracting Out: Public school authorities are contracting out the management of schools to Universities, or private contractors such as the Edison Project. The contractor, such as Edison, is responsible for achieving specified results within a fixed budget. The 1997-1998 school year is the third year that the Edison project has been operating partnership schools. The early data on student performance appears promising. In addition, of the parents of students in Edison schools, 90% gave the schools 'A' or 'B' ratings.[18]

--Public School Choice: School systems such as East Harlem and Memphis give students a choice of which public school they can attend.

--Vouchers: Publicly-financed vouchers that let students attend private schools were initiated in Milwaukee in 1995. Cleveland followed suit with a program in 1996. A Harvard study, which focused on the Cleveland voucher program, has found that 63% of voucher parents are "very satisfied" with the academic quality of their schools in contrast to the less than 30% of public-school parents.

Although controversial, the Task Force believes that the hearing record supports several cautious conclusions about choice.

1) Although the East Harlem project has been in existence for 24 years, most of the choice projects have been initiated in the 1990's. Accordingly, it must be noted that the performance record is thin, although certainly not much thinner than that for large-scale multi-billion dollar federal programs that have been underway for decades.

2) Despite their thinness, the early results of these multi-faceted choice efforts are favorable. A recent report from the East Harlem project reports "lifted achievement in all schools." The Edison Project, which now manages 25 schools in 8 states reports, after two years of operation showed, "measurable gains in reading and math." At an Edison school in Wichita, Kansas, where three out of four students lives at the poverty level and only 8% of the children are living with

both of their biological parents, test scores have risen by 23 percentage points in reading and 30 percentage points in math since Edison took over the school in 1995. Early results from the controversial voucher programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland also show positive results. In Milwaukee, such results were only evident in the third and fourth years, while in Cleveland they showed up more quickly.

3) Concern that "choice" options will be inaccessible to minorities most in need of help appears misplaced. The Milwaukee, Cleveland, and East Harlem efforts are tailor-made for and strongly backed by minorities, with the strongest endorsements coming from minority parents. The following chart provides available data on African-American participation in charter schools and the Edison Project.

Charter
(% African American)

Edison
(% African American)

	Charter	Public		Edison	Public
Arizona	12	4	Boston	59	48
Colorado	3	5	Mt. Clemens	48	37
Massachusetts	21	8	Sherman	20	19
Michigan	39	16	Wichita	23	23
Minnesota	15	4			
Total	18	7			

Source: Charter school racial enrollment data are from Table 2.4 on p. 51 of *New Schools for a New Century*, edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Vitteritti. Edison Project data are from Table 4.1 on p. 117 of the same book.

Although also raised with respect to vouchers, the issue of minority participation is moot at present, since the only programs in existence, Cleveland and Milwaukee, are targeted at the most at-risk inner city youth. Moreover, it is worth stressing that the Milwaukee program was initiated out of a sense of desperation. From 1973 to 1993, Milwaukee had increased its spending by 82% in constant dollars while its graduation rate had plummeted from 79% to 44%. In arguing for targeted voucher programs, Bill Bennett noted:

> It is a very odd argument indeed that says unless we can help everybody we will help no one. That would not be the kind of argument one would make if you came across a burning house or a sinking ship, well if we cannot get them all then do not get anybody.

4) The presence of "choice" in an area appears to trigger improvements in the existing public school system. Dr. Rudy Crew, Chancellor the New York City school system, in commenting on the East Harlem experience stated that "Improved student achievement is the net result of this kind of competition." Commenting further on the "ripple effect" of choice on his efforts to reform the entire New York City school system, he said:

> These reports on school performance are not new, what is new is that the system is finally having to recognize that the consequences of not meeting these expectations is extinction.[19]

The initial success enjoyed by "choice" educational endeavors around the country is grounds for optimism. But such early success only begs the question of what the federal response should be to these diverse local and regional experiments. The Task Force's view is twofold. First, there should at this juncture be no federally managed or mandated voucher programs, even demonstration programs. Federal contracting, accounting and auditing programs are designed for multi-billion dollar programs such as national defense or college student loans. The fragile flower of choice would be crushed by the weight of a well-intentioned but inherently heavy-handed federal bureaucracy. Second, wherever cities, schools and parents band together to further the prospects of their children, the federal government should stand ready to commit its fiscal resources to states and localities. Locally supported choice options should not fail for want of money. The exact form such an option takes ranging from East Harlem public school choice to Cleveland vouchers is not a matter of concern to the federal government. It would be improper for the federal government to weigh in against a locally chosen option. As far as the federal government is concerned, it should be willing to support with substantial incremental dollars the early experimentation necessary to reform the American education system. Moreover, to the extent that states attain the flexibility to pool federal funds under state strategic plans recommended earlier, and such a plan includes choice options, then substantial funds can be funneled to choice options by the states.

Additionally, it is worth asking that if the initial positive results of choice options prove sustainable, should not our public schools be afforded many of the same "choices," i.e. greater flexibility, less federal and state requirements? If choice is to foster competition, our public schools also should be free to compete.

In closing, the Task Force would like to mention the long-term implications of choice. The philosopher John Dewey, often quoted by Secretary Riley, noted that:

> What the best and wisest parent wants for his child, that must be what the community wants for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; it destroys our democracy.

Because choice takes Dewey's admonition seriously, it has serious implications for American education. In addition to being part of a search for solutions, and also providing competition to existing troubled system, choice transfers the decision-making responsibility for where a child goes to school from the school system to the parent and child. This transfer has not only educational, but moral implications. It implies that it is wrong to send any children to a school they do not choose to attend, particularly educationally at-risk children who are forced to attend schools that "should never be called schools at all." In no other area of American society do we deny Americans the freedom to make choices that affect their well-being. Yet we require parents to keep their students in schools that are failing to adequately educate them. Although radical with respect to primary and secondary education, it is exactly the model America has adopted for higher education. Although the Task Force has heard fierce rhetoric on both sides of the question, the debate has only served to highlight the wisdom of Dewey's faith that a parent's dream for a child should be at the core of the American educational system.

NOTES TO REPORT

1. Data is from the *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1997, Table 8. The 94% comes from testimony submitted to the House Committee on the Budget March 16, 1995, by Chester E. Finn, Jr. It is also supported by NELS data that suggest that 92.8% of 8th graders in 1988 had either completed high school or were still working towards high school equivalence by 1994.

2. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *OECD Economic Surveys, 1993-94* (Paris: OECD, 1994) p.115.

3. Epstein, Gene. "In Search of Dropouts: The official numbers may undercount them," *Barrons*, February 9, 1998, Dow Jones and Company.

4. *Projection of Education Statistics to 2007*, National Center for Education Statistics.

5. Cited on p.264 in "Somebody's Children: Educational Opportunity for All American Children" by Diane Ravitch, which is found in *New Schools for a New Century*, edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Vitteritti. Ravitch cites Department of Education, *Youth Indicators*, 1993 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 1993), p.48.

6. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. *Remedial Education at Higher Education Institutions in Fall 1995*. NCES 97-584.

7. Table 31, *Digest of Education Statistics 1997.*

8. Cited on p. 244 in "The Politics of Change" by Chester E. Finn, Jr., which is found in *New Schools for a New Century*, edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Vitteritti. Finn cites Eric A. Hanushek et al., *Making Schools Work: Improving Performance and Controlling Costs* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994).

9. United States General Accounting Office Testimony before the Education Task Force, Committee on the Budget United States Senate, *Federal Education Funding: Multiple Programs and Lack of Data Raise Efficiency and Effectiveness Concerns* (GAO/T-HEHS-98-46) delivered November 6, 1997.

10. United States General Accounting Office correspondence to Senator Barbara Boxer dated January 21, 1998 (GAO/HEHS-98-77R).

11. According to a 1997 Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum, *How Congress can Ensure that More Education Dollars Reach the Classroom*, the Ohio Department of Education calculated in 1990 that over 50% of its paperwork burden was related to federal education programs.

12. Oppenheimer, Todd. *The Atlantic Monthly*; July 1997; "The Computer Delusion"; Volume 280, No. 1; pages 45-62.

13. Chapter I is now Title I (of the Improving America's Schools Act) following the 1994 reauthorization.

14. Contained in Enclosure I to correspondence sent to the Chairman, Senator Bill Frist, on September 15, 1997 entitled *Education Programs: Information on Major Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Education Programs* (GAO/HEHS-97-210R).

15. Authorized in the 1994 amendments for OERI (P.L. 103-227).

16. While it may be claimed that the NERPPB is therefore non-partisan, the most successful national education advisory boards in recent years, such as the National Education Goals Panel, have recognized the reality of partisan affiliations and explicitly assured that they are balanced.

17. Cited on p. 252 of "Somebody's Children: Educational Opportunity for All American Children" by Diane Ravitch, which is found in *New Schools for a New Century*, edited by Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Vitteritti. Ravitch cites a February 15, 1994 speech delivered by Secretary Riley at Georgetown University.

18. All data on Edison Project school performance are cited from the Edison Project *Annual Report on School Performance*, December, 1997.

19. Mosle, Sara. "The Stealth Chancellor," *New York Times Magazine*, August 31, 1997, p. 37.

Appendix I
The Senate Budget Committee Task Force on Education
Task Force Members

Bill Frist, TN, Chairman

Charles Grassley, IA
Slade Gorton, WA
Olympia Snowe, ME
Gordon Smith, OR

Barbara Boxer, CA
Patty Murray, WA
Ron Wyden, OR
Tim Johnson, SD

Appendix II
The Senate Budget Committee Task Force on Education
Hearings and Witnesses

The State of American Education -- October 28, 1997
- *The Honorable Richard W. Riley*, U.S. Secretary of Education
- *The Honorable William J. Bennett*, Former U.S. Secretary of Education, and Co-Director, Empower America
- *Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.*, Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics

Federal Pre-Kindergarten Through Twelfth-Grade Education Programs --November 6, 1997
- *Carlotta C. Joyner, Ph.D.*, Director, Education and Employment Issues, Health, Education, and Human Services Division, United States General Accounting Office; accompanied by Eleanor Johnson, Assistant Director, Education and Employment Issues, United States General Accounting Office
- *Maris A. Vinovskis, Ph.D.*, Professor, University of Michigan
- *Madeleine Will*, Former Assistant Secretary of Education for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
- *Carley Ochoa*, Former Director of Special Projects, Riverside Unified School District in Riverside, CA

Federal Education Funding: The State and Local Perspective --January 28, 1998
- *The Honorable Frank T. Brogan*, Commissioner of Education, Florida Department of Education, and Chairman of the Education Leaders Council
- *Madeleine Draeger Manigold*, Coordinator, Waivers, Texas Education Agency
- *Henry Der*, Deputy Superintendent for External Affairs, California Department of Education
- *Cozette Buckney, Ed.D.*, Chief Education Officer, Chicago Public Schools; accompanied by Philip J. Hansen, Chief Accountability Officer

The Impact of Research and Technology on K-12 Education -- January 29, 1998
- *The Honorable Sharon Robinson*, former Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement
- *Robert E. Slavin, Ph.D.*, Co-Director, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk
- *Steven H. Goldman, Ph.D.*, Executive Director, Ball Foundation
- *Harold Hodgkinson, Ph.D.*, Director, Center for Demographic Policy
- *The Honorable Jeff Bingaman*, United States Senator form the State of New Mexico; accompanied by Eleanor Johnson, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Education and Employment Issues, United States General Accounting Office
- *Michael Moe*, Montgomery Securities Education Industry Group
- *Thomas K. Glennan, Jr., Ph.D.*, RAND
- *James S. Lanich, Ph.D.*, Executive Director of the Technology for Learning Initiative at the Los Angeles County Office of Education

State and Local Initiatives: Engines for Change -- February 9, 1998 (Field Hearing in Murfreesboro, Tennessee)

•*The Honorable Lamar Alexander*, Former U.S. Secretary of Education; and Former Governor of Tennessee
•*The Honorable Jane Walters*, Commissioner, Department of Education, State of Tennessee
•*Judy Beasley*, Vice President, Tennessee Education Association
•*Susan Gendrich-Cameron*, Principal, Cason Lane Academy, Murfreesboro, TN
•*James Guthrie*, Peabody Center for Education Policy, Professor, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
•*Randle Richardson*, President and Chief Executive Officer, Community Education, Nashville, TN

Addressing our Struggling Public School System: Ideas for Reform -- February 11, 1998

•*The Honorable Chester E. Finn, Jr., Ph.D.*, Former Assistant Secretary of Education, John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute
•*Chris Whittle*, Founder and President of the Edison Project, New York, New York
•*The Honorable Eugene W. Hickok, Ph.D.*, Secretary of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education
•*David L. Brennan*, Founder of the HOPE Academies, Cleveland, Ohio
•*Henry R. Marockie, Ed.D.*, West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools
•*Susan S. Westin, Ph.D.*, Associate Director, Advanced Studies and Evaluation Methodology, United States General Accounting Office; accompanied by Gail MacColl, Project Director, Study on Flexible Grant Programs, and Eleanor Johnson

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