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ABSTRACT

Education, community, and business organizations are now organizing public forums to address school repair and modernization. This report discusses the need for school modernization assistance, the impact of inadequate school facilities on student learning, school construction planning to receive construction bond allocations, and examples of ways modernization bonds help schools. It concludes with a summary of the Forum on School Construction and Modernization held on April 8, 1998, in Phoenix, Arizona. Forum participants discuss the following questions: why it is important to build, repair, and modernize schools; and whether there are successful stories where buildings have been remodeled or constructed that are making a difference in the way children learn. (GR)

Forum on School Construction and Modernization

Wednesday, April 8th, 1998
Phoenix, Arizona

CEFPI
The School Building Association

Did you know...

Students who attend schools in a good state of repair score 5 to 11 percentile points higher on national tests than students who attend schools in need of repair.

Phoenix site sponsored by:

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Location:

Phoenix Preparatory Academy
735 E. Fillmore St.
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Agenda:

9:00 am Overview & Opening Remarks
9:10 am Panel Discussion and Q&A
10:00 am Conference Call with Vice President Gore and Secretary Riley
10:15 am Q&A and Reaction

Panelists:

Tom Rushin, Associate Superintendent, Yuma SD#1 - Moderator
David Berliner, Dean, College of Education, ASU
Barbara Clark, Director of External Education, Motorola
Carol Fehring Irvin, Parent
Joe Eddie Lopez, State Senator, District 22
Ron Peters, Arizona AIA
Lori Walk, Principal, Phoenix Elementary School District

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

March 30, 1998

Dear Friend of Education:

I invite you and your organization to join the growing nationwide effort to build, repair and modernize our nation's schools. As U.S. Secretary of Education, I have visited schools all across America in the last five years and I can assure you that many of them are either overcrowded or wearing out.

Research shows that a safe, welcoming, and up-to-date learning environment is the building block for student academic success. This is why I am joining parents, teachers, and community and business leaders who are working hard to get broad public engagement to rebuild and modernize our nation's schools.

Today there are many schools in desperate need of repair, and other schools without adequate space to accommodate growing student enrollments. According to the GAO, an estimated $112 billion is needed to build new schools and modernize old ones. A recent report card by the American Society of Civil Engineers indicated that our schools are in worse shape than any other infrastructure in America and actually gave our schools an "F" as a grade citing the fact that "one third of all schools need extensive repair or replacement."

Education, community, and business organizations such as yours are now organizing public forums to explain why it is so important to fix broken school buildings and to discuss how to design schools to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. I will be joining Vice President Gore in kicking off an initial group of conversations in early April which will be followed by a continuing dialogue during the month of April.

These forums are being developed in different ways. Some are organized as roundtables for interested citizens in local schools, while others are being planned as town meetings. In all cases, you are cordially invited to participate. The enclosed materials provide background information as well as resource and contact information.

As we prepare to enter the 21st century, it is essential that school facilities be safe and that they provide the learning environment all children need to achieve during the school day and at school-based after-school learning programs. Better education is everybody's business, and everyone can make a positive difference in children's learning by getting

involved in these school construction forums. Your participation is welcome.

Yours sincerely,

Richard W. Riley

THE NEED FOR SCHOOL MODERNIZATION ASSISTANCE

The President's proposal to create School Modernization Bonds is designed to address a nationwide school facilities crisis. These funds are necessary because: (1) the cost to repair existing schools is high, and States and communities can stretch their efforts and dollars further with these interest-free bonds; (2) enrollment growth is surging; and (3) better school facilities lead to better academic achievement.

The Cost to Repair Existing Schools Is High

In a 1995 report, School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools, the General Accounting Office (GAO) estimated that the cost of bringing the Nation's schools into good overall condition was $112 billion. GAO's report revealed:

· One-third of all schools, serving 14 million students, need extensive repair or replacement; and

· About 60 percent (including some schools in generally adequate condition) of all schools report needing at least one major building feature to be replaced or extensively repaired.

According to GAO: 28,100 schools serving 15 million students have less-than-adequate heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems; 23,100 schools serving 12 million students have less-than-adequate plumbing; and 21,100 schools serving 12 million students have less-than-adequate roofs.

GAO cited horrific examples of the need for school repairs:

· Heating depends on a fireman's stoking a coal furnace by hand at a high school;

· Raw sewage was backed up on the front lawn of a junior high school because of defective plumbing

· At an elementary school, a ceiling weakened by leaking water collapsed just 40 minutes after students had left for the day; and

· Another elementary school had asbestos, chipping and peeling lead paint, and boarded windows.

Enrollment Growth is Surging

The National Center for Education Statistics projects that elementary and secondary enrollments will swell from 52.2 million in 1997 to 54.4 million in 2006. State and localities will need to build some 6,000 new schools to serve additional students in the next

decade.

The Condition of Schools Is Related to Student Achievement

Several research studies indicate that the condition of school buildings affects student achievement. For instance, a 1991 study in the District of Columbia found that students in school buildings that were in poor condition had achievement 6 percent below students in schools that were in fair condition and 11 percent below students in schools in excellent condition.

Impact of Inadequate School Facilities on Student Learning

A number of studies have shown that many school systems, particularly those in urban and high-poverty areas, are plagued by decaying buildings that threaten the health, safety, and learning opportunities of students. Good facilities appear to be an important precondition for student learning, provided that other conditions are present that support a strong academic program in the school. A growing body of research has linked student achievement and behavior to the physical building conditions and overcrowding.

Physical Building Conditions

Decaying environmental conditions such as peeling paint, crumbling plaster, non-functioning toilets, poor lighting, inadequate ventilation, and inoperative heating and cooling systems can affect the learning as well as the health and the morale of staff and students.

Impact on Student Achievement

· A study of the District of Columbia school system found, after controlling for other variables such as a student's socioeconomic status, that students' standardized achievement scores were lower in schools with poor building conditions. Students in school buildings in poor condition had achievement that was 6% below schools in fair condition and 11% below schools in excellent condition. (Edwards, 1991)

· Cash (1993) examined the relationship between building condition and student achievement in small, rural Virginia high schools. Student scores on achievement tests, adjusted for socioeconomic status, were found to be up to 5 percentile points lower in buildings with lower quality ratings. Achievement also appeared to be more directly related to cosmetic factors than to structural ones. Poorer achievement was associated with specific building condition factors such as substandard science facilities, air conditioning, locker conditions, classroom furniture, more graffiti, and noisy external environments.

· Similarly, Hines' (1996) study of large, urban high schools in Virginia also found a relationship between building condition and student achievement. Indeed, Hines found that student achievement was as much as 11 percentile points lower in substandard buildings as compared to above-standard buildings.

· A study of North Dakota high schools, a state selected in part because of its relatively homogeneous, rural population, also found a positive relationship between school condition

(as measured by principals' survey responses) and both student achievement and student behavior. (Earthman, 1995)

· McGuffey (1982) concluded that heating and air conditioning systems appeared to be very important, along with special instructional facilities (i.e., science laboratories or equipment) and color and interior painting, in contributing to student achievement. Proper building maintenance was also found to be related to better attitudes and fewer disciplinary problems in one cited study.

· Research indicates that the quality of air inside public school facilities may significantly affect students' ability to concentrate. The evidence suggests that youth, especially those under ten years of age, are more vulnerable than adults to the types of contaminants (asbestos, radon, and formaldehyde) found in some school facilities. (Andrews and Neuroth, 1988)

Impact on Teaching

· Lowe (1988) interviewed State Teachers of the Year to determine which aspects of the physical environment affected their teaching the most, and these teachers pointed to the availability and quality of classroom equipment and furnishings, as well as ambient features such as climate control and acoustics as the most important environmental factors. In particular, the teachers emphasized that the ability to control classroom temperature is crucial to the effective performance of both students and teachers.

· A study of working conditions in urban schools concluded that "physical conditions have direct positive and negative effects on teacher morale, sense of personal safety, feelings of effectiveness in the classroom, and on the general learning environment." Building renovations in one district led teachers to feel "a renewed sense of hope, of commitment, a belief that the district cared about what went on that building." In dilapidated buildings in another district, the atmosphere was punctuated more by despair and frustration, with teachers reporting that leaking roofs, burned out lights, and broken toilets were the typical backdrop for teaching and learning." (Corcoran et al., 1988)

· Corcoran et al. (1988) also found that "where the problems with working conditions are serious enough to impinge on the work of teachers, they result in higher absenteeism, reduced levels of effort, lower effectiveness in the classroom, low morale, and reduced job satisfaction. Where working conditions are good, they result in enthusiasm, high morale, cooperation, and acceptance of responsibility."

A Carnegie Foundation (1988) report on urban schools concluded that "the tacit message of the physical indignities in many urban schools is not lost on students. It bespeaks neglect, and students' conduct seems simply an extension of the physical environment that surrounds them." Similarly, Poplin and Weeres (1992) reported that, based on an intensive study of teachers, administrators, and students in four schools, "the depressed physical environment of many schools... is believed to reflect society's lack of priority for these children and their education."

Overcrowding

Overcrowded schools are a serious problem in many school systems, particularly in the

inner cities, where space for new construction is at a premium and funding for such construction is limited. As a result, students find themselves trying to learn while jammed into spaces never intended as classrooms, such as libraries, gymnasiums, laboratories, lunchrooms, and even closets. Although research on the relationship between overcrowding and student learning has been limited, there is some evidence, particularly in high-poverty schools, that overcrowding can have an adverse impact on learning.

· A study of overcrowded schools in New York City found that students in such schools scored significantly lower on both mathematics and reading exams than did similar students in underutilized schools. In addition, when asked, students and teachers in overcrowded schools agreed that overcrowding negatively affected both classroom activities and instructional techniques. (RiveraBatiz and Marti, 1995)

· Corcoran et al. (1988) found that overcrowding and heavy teacher workloads created stressful working conditions for teachers and led to higher teacher absenteeism.

Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for students to concentrate on their lessons, but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work or, indeed on teaching anything beyond the barest minimum of required material. In addition, because teachers must constantly struggle simply to maintain order in an overcrowded classroom, the likelihood increases that they will suffer from burnout earlier than might otherwise be the case.

Modernize Schools for the 21st Century

In order for students to learn and to compete in the global economy, schools must be well-equipped and they must be able to accommodate smaller class sizes. To address these and other critical needs, the President's FY 99 Budget proposes Federal tax credits to pay interest on nearly $22 billion in bonds to build and renovate public schools. This is more than double the assistance proposed last year, which covered up to half the interest on an estimated $20 billion in bonds. The new proposal provides tax credits in lieu of interest payments for investors in two types of School Modernization Bonds: Qualified School Construction Bonds (a new proposal) and expansion of the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (created last year). The Department of the Treasury estimates that the revenue loss associated with the bonds would be $5 billion over 5 years and over $11 billion over 10 years.

Qualified School Construction Bonds

$19.4 billion in zero-interest bonds ($9.7 billion in 1999 and $9.7 billion in 2000) is proposed for construction and renovation of public school facilities. The Department of the Treasury would allocate the rights to offer these special 15-year bonds to States, territories, and certain school districts that have submitted school construction plans to the Secretary of Education.

· Half of the bond authority would be allocated to the 100 school districts with the largest number of low-income children, in proportion to their share of funds under the Title I Basic Grant formula in the preceding year. In addition, up to 25 additional school districts that are in particular need of assistance, such as districts with a low level of resources for school

construction or a high level of enrollment growth, could receive these allocations. These funds would be spent in accordance with the school district's plans.

· The other half would be allocated to States and territories to provide to school districts in need of assistance in accordance with each State's plan. The bond authority would be allocated in proportion to each State's share of funds under the Title I Basic Grant formula in the preceding year, after subtracting the Title I shares of the 100-125 school districts (above).

School Construction Plans

In order to receive a bond allocation, States, territories, and the eligible 100-125 school districts would be required to submit a plan to the Secretary of Education. The plans would: (1) demonstrate that a comprehensive survey has been undertaken of the construction and renovation needs, such as the need to provide access to students with disabilities, in the jurisdiction and (2) describe how the jurisdiction will ensure that the bond funds are used for the purposes intended by this proposal, including the requirement that they will supplement, not supplant, amounts that would have been spent on construction and renovation in the absence of the bonds. State plans would also describe how they will ensure that localities with the greatest need — as demonstrated by inadequate facilities coupled with a low level of resources to meet the needs — would be served.

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds

This program, created by the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, provides a tax credit to pay interest on bonds for a variety of expenses (including building renovation) related to certain public school-business partnerships. The FY 99 Budget would expand these bonds to cover school construction, and would increase and extend the bond authority by $2.4 billion (an additional $1 billion, to $1.4 billion, in 1999, and $1.4 billion in 2000). This bond authority is allocated to States on the basis of their respective populations of individuals with incomes below the poverty line.

Arizona's Share (Estimated Allocation 000s)

State Education Authority Allocation: $193,994

Mesa Unified School District $ 24,703

Tucson Unified District $ 39,280

State Total $257,957

HOW COULD SCHOOL MODERNIZATION BONDS HELP SCHOOLS IN MY AREA?

School Modernization Bonds would work differently in various communities. Below are three examples that illustrate differences among communities based on their: (1) school construction needs; (2) authority to issue bonds; and (3) ability to issue bonds.

School District A — A Rapidly Growing School District

School District A needs funds to construct additional schools to educate its rapidly growing enrollment. The State would allocate bond authority to School District A. When this community passes a bond initiative, it would then enter into an agreement with a financial company to sell the bonds to bond holders in order to raise funds to build schools in the community. The school district would use these funds to plan, design, and build additional schools. The community would repay the principal on the bonds to the bond holders, but it would not have to pay interest on the School Modernization Bonds. The bond holders would receive a tax credit equivalent to the amount of interest they would ordinarily have received on the loan.

School District B — A School District with School Buildings in Need of Renovation

School District B needs funds to renovate its aging school buildings. This school district would receive a direct allocation of bond authority from the Federal Government because it is one of the 100 school districts with the largest number of students in poverty. This community has already passed a bond initiative, so it does not have to go to its citizens to gain the authority to issue bonds. The district is still eligible to issue School Modernization Bonds because it has not yet issued all of the bonds its citizens authorized it to issue. It would issue the bonds through a financial company to raise the funds necessary to renovate its schools. School District B would use these funds to renovate its facilities, taking into account the need to accommodate modern educational technologies; provide access to individuals with disabilities; improve the energy efficiency of its buildings; and to bring its buildings, including its roofs and boilers, into good overall condition. The bond holders would be repaid as they would under the example for School District A. One difference would be that School District B would be able to use money saved from its energy bill to help it repay the principal on the loan.

School District C — A School District on a Poor Indian Reservation

This poor public school district needs funds to renovate a school and build a new school but is unable to issue bonds itself because of its small tax base. School District C would receive a heavily subsidized loan from the State. The State would subsidize the loan either by contributing the State's own funds toward the loan or by decreasing the amount of the subsidy other communities would receive under School Modernization Bonds in the State. School District C would not issue the bond itself; the State would issue it on behalf of School District C and several other school districts. School District C would use the funds to plan, design, and construct its new building and to renovate its existing school. The State could guarantee that School District C would repay the loan by retaining State aid in the event that the school district stopped making payments. School District C would pay only a portion of the principal on the loan to the State because the loan is subsidized. The bond holders would be repaid as described in the above examples, except the State rather than the community would repay the principal to the bond holders.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am.

Thomas A. Kube, Executive Director of CEFPI made a presentation providing the attendees with an overview of the national need for school construction and modernization. Mr. Kube invited the attendees to render their opinions and voice their thoughts on the importance of fixing schools and what factors should be considered that will make these schools fill community needs.

The meeting was turned over to our moderator, Tom Rushin and panel members were introduced:
David Berliner, Dean of the College of Education at the Arizona State University
Lori Walk, Principal of the Phoenix Preparatory Academy
Barbara Clark, Manager of External Education, Motorola
(representing the High School Partnership Program)
Carol Irvin, Parent
Ron Peters, President of AIA Arizona
Tom Rushin, Associate Superintendent of Yuma School District #1, in Yuma, Arizona
(member of the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International)

The format of the meeting was explained _- The panel was asked two specific questions. After the panel's response to those questions, the microphones were turned over to the floor for comment. At the conclusion we participated in a phone call with Secretary Riley and Vice President Gore.

Question 1: Why is it important to build, repair and modernize our schools?

· Our educational theories change, our views of what is important as a way of instructing change, yet our classrooms look like they did around 1900.

· The schools we built are too large. We need to find a way to build smaller schools, schools-within-a-school, house systems, or find a way to group cohorts of students.

· The function of schools has changed _ they are more community oriented. Full service health facilities need to be part of school-community use, as do libraries. Adult education should also be a regular part of the school.

· Schools should be:
- Community centers, as they were in the 1920's.
- Places where after-school programs are a featured part, not a program run by others.
- Places where technology is featured.
- Places to handle small group work.
- Places to handle cross-age tutoring programs.

· There is a large gap, even within the same district, in the range of services provided to students.

· Schools can show that inner-city students are important. They should reflect our pride, expectations and hopes for their future. Every child should have that affirmation from their community and have schools that support them.

· If we don't provide technology and educational opportunities within our schools we will see a gap develop between the "have" and "have nots".

· While a building is not the school experience, it certainly can be designed to support it.

· Equity should be for all students.

· Workplace productivity increases when the environment is friendly to the employees. Common sense translates that back to students and teachers.

· A building is a reflection of the value we place on the learning experience.

· Our workforce has to be flexible. Our learning environment must reflect that flexibility and continuous change. If workplaces were designed to remain static _ we would be out of business.

· We do better if we are in a nice surrounding. Every child should have the opportunity to be the best that they can be.

· Educational facilities are more than just a building to house students in.

· Many of our schools are aging. Curriculum is changing.

· Electrical and mechanical systems must be updated to respond to new curriculum needs.

Question 2: Can you point to success stories where buildings have been remodeled or constructed that are making a difference in the way children learn?

· Architects are being asked to create environments that are not traditional 30x30 classrooms.

· Massive renovations are being made by the Phoenix Union High School District to change their schools over to the house system. Making these modifications will allow these schools to function in the current educational market.

· A research study done in Buffalo, NY schools show a direct correlation between quality facilities and math scores.

· A new building alone does not make for a good school. A hard look must be taken at the administrators and the curriculum.

· The Arizona Science Center _ a concrete building _ is a good example of a building being aesthetically pleasing and educationally current, yet not made of tremendously expensive building materials.

· Aesthetics send the message "We value you."

· State-of-the-art is not a reality for most districts. Most districts must deal with making do with the facilities that they have.

· Schools are "what takes place within them."

· Kennelworth Elementary in Phoenix is a good example of structural improvements, but more importantly of the school becoming the community center.

· The Phoenix Preparatory Academy would be of no use to the Phoenix community if they did a wonderful job from 7:45 to 3:00 and then the doors were closed. The computer labs need to be used by parents. Several City programs are coordinated with the Prep. The doors need to be opened, and the community invited to "Please come to the Prep."

· All schools must meet the basic needs of their students. What takes place within the walls must then be a community effort _ supportive of the students, the parents and the community.

· Do you know of successes is a hard question to prove, but we know that there have been failures. Kids that have been turned off by schools that don't present themselves as important in their lives.

· Schools can send a signal to the kids in a community saying "You're not important to us. You're throwaway kids not worth spending a dime on."

· "We all know you can be deeply religious in a store front church, but all the major denominations try to build grand cathedrals, hugh temples _ for the Muslim faith, for the Jewish faith, for the Christian faith. Why do they go out of their way to build these hugh cathedrals _ to signal something very important. There is grandeur here. There is awe to be inspired. This is a place of respect, a place of sanctuary. Every reason to build a grand cathedral in the middle ages can be echoed for our reasons to build a grand school for kids. It signals a place of awe, of inspiration, if you want _ divinity in a way, because that is how we hold learning in this country. It is important to recognize that in a sense, education in America is our secular religion. We all treat education as if it leads to salvation. That used to be how we regarded religion. In the United States, education is salvation. It gets you the jobs. It gets you the incomes. It gets you the good life. The more of it the better. The more immersed in it the better off you are. If we are going to keep in mind the notion that education is our secular religion, then we really need our temples _ our places of worship to reflect the high regard we hold for it.

Comments from the floor:

A teacher commented:

· Program changes must be in line before we should expect to make building changes.

· Adult education programs and early-childhood programs are needed, but we must first serve the students we have after 3:00.

· Vo-tech should be provided to our current students not necessarily on an academic track.

A community member commented:

· Concerns should be with overall adequacy, continued funding, a long-term proposal.

· Arizona School Funding Law: There will be a $500 million school construction cost in year 2-3 of the bill. In a time when you are trying to cut taxes, any law that requires you to revisit it in 2-3 years is a bad one.

An architect commented:

· American schools teach our kids to synthesize, to learn as an individual rather than a rote point of view. The trend from a dependent to an independent learner means that we need to do things differently. The space to do it is limited because of the traditional thinking of `how' we do it.

· Independent and small group learning takes more space.

· School designs that were very classroom oriented are not very flexible. Facilities must be designed that don't let the buildings get in the way of education.

· Minimum square footage standards usually translates as "though shalt build a school of xx square feet" not taking into account the curriculum and needs of the district.

A senior citizen related a personal story:

· To make a go of his business, he required more training. One course was offered upstairs in an old foundry building, the other was offered in a very up-to-date, modern building. In writing his `thank you' for both of the classes, he mentioned the facility difference. The company that had used the foundry building was concerned, they didn't want to be second to anyone so they built a new building. Five years later he repeated the course with his wife in the new building. The building was modern and right next to the executive offices, and made him feel that he was important. That is what our public schools need to be _ a place to teach academics with discipline. The building should be our "cathedral."

A superintendent and representative of Arizona's small schools commented:

· 75% of the schools in US are small and rural. In Arizona 49% are under 1000 students.

· Rural schools have a lower assessed valuation and lower tax base and therefore cannot leverage like the larger areas. Per pupil cost are higher in rural schools.

· A sixty-year-old school did not qualify for funding in his district.

· There is a concern in how the state distributes funding.

A local businesswoman commented:

· Buildings, teachers and curriculum impact learning, but the biggest impact on students is the adult that they live with.

· A lateral solution is needed to handle construction along with improving other factors.

· 85% of kid's time is spent with their family and their neighborhood. 15% is spent in the schools.

If we put all of our efforts in fixing society on our schools, we are concentrating on the 15% instead of the 85% which is where their character is developed, their values are developed, their hearts and minds are developed.

· After-school programs, neighborhood programs, community programs all have to become part of what an educational system is. An educational system is not the schools alone, it's the churches, the boys club, the little league, the hockey and soccer teams, the community involvement. All of this constitutes the educational system.

A city representative commented:

· Basic structural and personal needs should be addressed simultaneously.

· Schools need to be the focus, the hub of the community.

· School social workers are charged with being `change agents' yet many of our largest districts do not have a social worker in house. Student's personal needs must be a part of the equation.

A school board association representative commented:

· Arizona per pupil square footage requirements show that AZ will have some of the largest and most crowded schools in the country. This fact is distressing and contrary to the research that smaller schools provide better a education.

· School construction in AZ has been "pay as you go."

· There is not a direct correlation between assessed property wealth and the actual income of parents in the district. Phoenix Elementary has high property wealth, yet one of the lowest per parent income in the state.

· Distribution of funds should be based on the actual needs of the district. Rural districts historically have had difficulty in accessing federal dollars.

A student commented:

· My school has leaky roofs, a 16-year-old sound system that broke in the middle of our school musical, and lights that always break.

· We have portable classrooms in some places and modern schools in others. Kids should have the same amount of opportunities.

A state board representative commented:

· If the AZ bill passes that does away with bonding, the poorer districts will not be helped by the federal monies proposed. The only districts that will benefit are our rich districts that will opt out of the state program and continue to bond.

· Schools used to be community-based schools. When we started to bus our students,

schools became citywide schools, not community schools.

· Community means a lot to schools. Schools used to be built on Main Street not on the back streets. Education was in the forefront, not an afterthought. Education should be brought back to Main Street, making it an important part of the community again.

A Phoenix architect commented:

· A concern with federal or state funding sources is that they will go beyond setting policy and establishing outcomes. Individual school districts need the ability to implement the programs they need or want to achieve the outcomes.

· Do not allow minimum standards become the maximum for the entire community or state.

· Trust the creativity, intelligence, and the vision of individual districts and communities.

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