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MEMORANDUM

TO : Education Reporters
FROM: Lissette S. Bishins, Director of Communications
RE: : Twenty Ways to Evaluate the Activity of School Board Members
DATE: March 30, 2000

As the *National School Boards Association* convenes this weekend in Orlando, Florida, reporters are often faced with a barrage of interesting but often competing view points from which to craft a story.

Now for the first time, The Center for Education Reform is providing you with some concrete ways to determine whether the school board leaders are doing what they say and saying what they mean. What follows are twenty questions that you should ask in crafting your reports on the changing face of school board members.

The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization founded in 1993 to provide support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at www.edreform.com.



TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- 1) To date more than ten lawsuits have been filed by individual school boards challenging the validity of charter school laws. Most states have dismissed these or upheld the constitutionality of charters. Do you plan to continue challenging charter schools?
- 2) Many school principals and superintendents have mimicked what they see in charter schools or bemoaned the fact that they don't have that flexibility. Are you still in favor of mandate relief and if so, what are your plans to see that all schools in your jurisdiction receive more control?
- 3) Research and polls show that the public wants higher standards in schools and consequences for those standards at the student, school and system level. What is your position on high stakes testing aligned with state standards and how are you working to achieve your position?
- 4) Teacher quality is one of the top subjects being debated today, with solutions proposed ranging from merit pay to getting rid of tenure. Are there any school board positions advocating real performance-based pay for individual teachers (not bonuses) and how do you plan to pursue this policy with policymakers?
- 5) Do you favor alternative certification for teachers? For Principals?
- 6) What is the biggest factor that can help ensure quality teaching? Is certification a measure of quality?
- 7) Should teachers whose students repeatedly fail to learn be held accountable? If so how?
- 8) What is your opinion of the strength of the National Teachers Examination or Praxis?
- 9) Should students be required to take "high-stakes" tests that determine their suitability for the next grade? For graduation?
- 10) What role does standardized testing play in evaluating our education system? Would you support district and school level comparisons?
- 11) A handful of states make membership of school board members in their state school boards association mandatory. What states besides New Jersey do this and why is this necessary?
- 12) Milwaukee's school board now advocates the city's voucher program. What is the NSBA's views about this member school board?
- 13) Are state-sanctioned report cards of school achievement (e.g. like Florida's A-F rating or Colorado's recently passed report card) a good addition to the data available to the public or a hindrance?
- 14) Please rank the following programs facing our nation's schools in order of significance.
_____ financing
_____ lack of accountability
_____ regulation
_____ lack of parental choice
_____ lack of focus on core subjects
- 15) What three goals do you hope to accomplish during your tenure in office and why?
- 16) Are the community's/state resources (tax dollars) being used as efficiently as possible? What changes would you make?
- 17) What role do parents play in the education process?
- 18) Do you believe poor children should have the opportunity to attend a private or religious school of their choosing? Should everyone?
- 19) What is your position on contracting out services in schools under your authority? Contracting with private organizations to run a school or school district?
- 20) What is the most neglected aspect of school board involvement in education

