President’s Education Plan
The President issued *No Child Left Behind* on January 22, 2001 (http://www.ed.gov/inaits/nclb/index.html), as noted in the Washington Education News of February 2001. The House Committee on Education and the Workforce has a series of questions/answers regarding the plan, available on their web site at http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/107th/education/nochildqa22801.pdf. The content of the plan is being prepared as a bill, HR 1, currently in the drafting stage.

President Bush’s Budget

For elementary and secondary education, the President announced he would provide the Education Department with a $1.6 billion increase and increase education funding to other Federal agencies by $340 million. In outlining his priorities, the President states he has committed almost $1 billion for reading programs and $2.6 billion for states to improve teacher quality and recruitment.

His blueprint was an outline and does not have specific program-by-program funding levels. A much more detailed budget is expected on April 3rd.

The blueprint assumes combining the Safe and Drug Free Schools program with 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school program, as well as all technology programs, including the E-Rate, into one technology grant.

The blueprint is not totally clear on increased funding for IDEA. The President is proposing that states be authorized to reallocate funds from the new $1.2 billion school renovation program towards either IDEA, technology, or school renovation [as is the case with this new line item, with funds to be received in Illinois in July 2001 for distribution].

Traditionally, the President sends Congress his budget in early February, and Congress begins work on budget resolutions later in the month. Congress is expected to mark up a budget resolution as early as March 19, with possible floor action in early April, although the timetable remains unclear. Complicating the process is the new tax cut language as well as ESEA reauthorization this spring. ESEA reauthorization is on a fast track and the new Administration is hoping to finish Committee and floor action on the bill prior to the introduction of the President's detailed FY2002 budget in April.

First Lady Laura Bush’s Focus on Education
On February 26, 2001, First Lady Laura Bush announced her plans to focus America's attention on recruiting the best and brightest to the teaching profession and ensuring that all young children are ready to read and learn when they enter the classroom. “From the crib to the classroom, children need parents, teachers and
others to help them prepare for success in school and in life," said the First Lady. "President Bush has a plan to help schools succeed in their mission to teach children. I want to help him keep that promise."

As First Lady of Texas, Mrs. Bush took an active role in sharing critical information with Texans to help them better prepare young children for success in school and life. As the nation's First Lady, she will use her public platform to promote efforts that give parents, teachers and caregivers information about child development and learning - factual information based on years of research and sound science.

She will also highlight the need for more Americans to answer the call to teach. From young adults to retirees, she will encourage people to bring their talents, energy and enthusiasm to classrooms throughout the nation.

Mrs. Bush's first priority centers on the need for parents to give young children the skills to succeed before they enter their first classroom. Learning to read starts long before a child enters school, and reading skills help make children good students. Reading skills make all other skills possible. In 1989, a program known as Reach Out and Read (ROR) that incorporate early literacy efforts into standard pediatric care was created at Boston City Hospital. In ROR clinics, doctors actually "prescribe" that parents read to their children, volunteers in waiting rooms show parents creative ways to read to their children and every child leaves with a new book. In 1997, Mrs. Bush helped initiate ROR in Texas. With her support and funding from private foundations, more than 60 ROR clinic sites have opened around the state. As the nation's First Lady, she is committed to supporting this vital program in communities across the country.

Mrs. Bush's second priority focuses on ensuring pre-schools have the tools to teach what works. She encouraged the state to create the Ready to Read Pre-school Grant Program. Mrs. Bush will continue to encourage and promote strong cognitive activities and teacher training models in Head Start Centers and other pre-schools.

Finally, Mrs. Bush will encourage others to pursue teaching as a career. "As a former public school teacher and librarian, I have tremendous respect for people who answer the call to teach," she said. "Teaching is challenging, sometimes thankless, but incredibly rewarding. We need many more dedicated Americans to teach our children how to learn so that they may ultimately lead successful lives." She will encourage America's best and brightest college students, professionals and military retirees to bring their talents and experiences to classrooms across the nation, especially in inner-city schools where the need is greatest. Specifically, she will promote three innovative efforts already underway to recruit new teachers: Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and Troops to Teachers. [For more information on Illinois' Troops to Teachers program, contact Bob Albracht of the ISBE at 217/557-6763.]

House Education and Workforce Committee
On March 2, 2001, the Committee held a Field Hearing at the Chicago International Charter School (Bucktown Campus). State Superintendent McGee presented on the panel to the Committee regarding Illinois education issues.

On March 8, 2001, the Committee’s Education Reform Subcommittee heard how accountability standards are important and necessary for the most disadvantaged students to be able to achieve academic success. Challenging accountability standards for the nation's students are a cornerstone of President George W. Bush's plan to reform federal education policy. The subcommittee invited experts to testify from the areas of business, child development, language acquisition, and student testing. Information on the proceedings is available on their web site at http://edworkforce.house.gov/.

Edward B. Rust Jr., co-chairman of the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education and chief executive officer of State Farm Insurance Companies, testified that successful businesses constantly monitor their progress against projected goals. Measuring progress is essential to success. "Companies measure progress in all operations," Rust said. "And they use the information gained from assessments to make continuous improvements. Just as business must constantly monitor and make adjustments for progress, schools focused on performance and student achievement cannot succeed unless they know what they are trying to accomplish and can measure their progress towards these goals."
Speeches by Secretary Paige, to the House Education and Workforce Committee and in other venues, supporting No Child Left Behind, may be found at [http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/index.html).

ESEA Reauthorization

Three major bills before the Senate are:

- **The Better Education for Students and Teachers Act (BEST)** by Senator Jeffords (R-VT) would authorize about $28 billion in elementary and secondary funding, mandate annual testing grades 3-8, authorize funds for high-performing schools and establish sanctions other than vouchers on failing schools, consolidate funding and establish two new literacy programs. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee approved this measure, as yet unnumbered, on March 9th.

- **SR 167, the Academic Achievement for All Act ("Straight A’s"),** by Senator Frist (R-TN), would allow states to opt into a performance agreement with USDE, giving them freedom from federal regulations under several (not all) federal K-12 programs in exchange for a five-year plan to improve student achievement and reduce the achievement gap. As of this writing, it was referred to Senate Committee on 1/24/01.

- **SR 303, the Public Education Reinvestment, Reinvention and Responsibility Act ("Three R’s"),** by Senator Lieberman (D-CN), would boost federal education funding by at least $35 billion over the next five years, channeling most of the increase into disadvantaged districts, consolidate ESEA programs into five titles (closing the achievement gap between minority and white children, helping immigrant students master English and meet high standards; improving teacher quality; promoting public school choice; and stimulating high performance education initiatives), and peg funding to demonstrable performance standards that would reward success and punish chronic failure. As of this writing, it was referred to Senate Committee on 2/13/01.

Since BEST is the only bill that has made it through committee as of this writing, a more detailed review follows. The bipartisan bill does not include the more controversial provisions in the Bush education proposal, such as vouchers and portability, charter states and districts (Straight A’s), and charitable choice. Fifty amendments had been filed for Committee markup. The Committee adopted 13 amendments:

- Make community-based organizations eligible as sites for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, but give Title I-eligible schools the priority for funds under this program;
- Facilitate the transfer of discipline records among public schools;
- Raise authorization for 21st Century program noted above from $846 million to $1.5 billion;
- Study portability of teacher pensions and credentials;
- Increase authorization for homeless education from $40 million to $70 million [right now Illinois receives $1.219 million and will be receiving $1.462 million next school year];
- Add scholarships, signing bonuses and accelerated training programs as allowable uses for teacher recruitment federal funds;
- A $3 million campaign to raise public awareness of the need to attract and hire new teachers;
- Add recruiting, training and mentoring as allowable uses for school leadership funds;
- Advise states and LEAs to provide the results of school testing as soon as practically possible;
- Study the impact of high-stakes tests on students, teachers and curricula;
- Establish a grant program to train schools on dealing with the effects of child abuse and domestic violence on students;
- Prioritize poor school districts to receive school technology funding; and
- Create Child Opportunity Zone Family Centers within schools to coordinate mental health, physical health and counseling services, and to provide information and support to families.

Two major bills before the House on this topic are:

- **HR 340, the Excellence and Accountability in Education Act,** by Representative George Miller (D-CA), was introduced in January. The bill would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve the quality of public education and raise student achievement by increasing investment, strengthening accountability, raising standards for teachers, improving professional development and
teacher compensation, rewarding successful schools, and providing better information to parents, and for other purposes. It would boost federal education funding by $110 billion over the next five years. As of this writing, it was referred to the House Committee on 1/31/2001.

- **HR 345**, the Public Education Reinvestment, Reinvention and Responsibility Act, mirrors that of SR 303 by Senator Lieberman and was introduced by Representatives Romer (D-IN), Dooley (D-CA) and Smith (D-WA). As of this writing, it was referred to the House Committee on 1/31/01.

HR 1 is currently being drafted in order to introduce the President’s Plan into the House chamber.

For a review of the full language of these bills, see [http://thomas.loc.gov/](http://thomas.loc.gov/)

### Full Funding of IDEA

There will be several bills before Congress this year. They will address full funding in several ways:

- incremental changes until FY2006, adding 5% a year from the current 15% APPE to the 40% APPE;
- having the payment become an entitlement; and
- removing from the law the possibility of using 20% of additional funding annually for local purposes.


### Education Savings Accounts Proposed Again

The Bush FY2002 budget proposal includes education tax provisions that would expand education IRAs to allow families to withdraw up to $5,000 to pay for K-12 expenses into Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). Parents could use ESA funds to cover K-12 expenses, including tuition for private and religious schools. The ten-year projected revenue cost of the program has been estimated at $5.645 billion. Recently, Senators Hutchinson (R-AR) and Torricelli (D-NJ) have also proposed an expansion of ESAs. The bill (S 306) would authorize smaller contributions of $2,000 per year, but expands the provisions to allow third party contributions from individuals and entities such as grandparents, unions, or employers. Last year the Senate passed a similar bill, which was sponsored by the late Senator Coverdell (R-GA). Critics argue that ESAs would disproportionately benefit wealthy families, provides nominal assistance relative to cost, and diverts funds from critical education programs. While the bill was never passed in the House, ESAs are currently popular in Congress and could possibly pass this year. The Senate Finance Committee is expected to hold a hearing on ESAs, and may attach an education tax bill including ESAs to ESEA on the Senate floor.

### Changes at the US Department of Education

Secretary Paige has recently named several senior staff. One of them is *Bill Hansen* as Deputy Secretary of Education. He is presently the Executive Director and CEO of the Education Finance Council. He served in the Department of Education from 1981 to 1993, excluding one year of service as Deputy Director for Public Affairs at the Department of Commerce from 1988 to 1989. At the Department of Education he served in several positions including Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget and Chief Financial Officer from 1991 to 1993, Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Congressional Affairs and Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Planning, Budget and Evaluation.

Paige also announced that *Susan Sclafani* will serve as counselor to the secretary and *Beth Ann Bryan* will be senior advisor to the secretary. Sclafani was most recently chief of staff for educational services for the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Bryan was education policy director to George W. Bush during his first year as governor and most recently served as an advisor on education issues to the Texas Governor's Business Council. She was also manager of the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force and director of the First Lady's Family Literacy Initiative for Texas.

The Administration still has not named other key department officials, including the Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education. In the White House, Margaret LaMontagne was named the new director of the Domestic Policy Council in the office of the Vice President and is responsible for covering issues in education.
School Safety


Information from the report’s Executive Summary follows:

- Schools should be safe and secure places for all students, teachers, and staff members. Without a safe learning environment, teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn. In fact, as the data in this report show, more victimizations happen away from school than at school. In 1998, students were about two times as likely to be victims of serious violent crime away from school as at school (Indicator 2).

- In 1998, student’s ages 12 through 18 were victims of more than 2.7 million total crimes at school (Indicator 2). In that same year, these students were victims of about 253,000 serious violent crimes at school (that is, rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault). There were also 60 school-associated violent deaths in the United States between July 1, 1997 and June 30, 1998—including 47 homicides (Indicator 1).

- The total nonfatal victimization rate for young people declined between 1993 and 1998. The percentage of students being victimized at school also declined over the last few years. Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10 percent to 8 percent (Indicator 3). This decline was due in part to a decline for students in grades 7 through 9. Between 1995 and 1999, the prevalence of reported victimization dropped from 11 percent to 8 percent for 7th graders, from 11 percent to 8 percent for 8th graders, and from 12 percent to 9 percent for 9th graders.

- However, for some types of crimes at school, rates have not changed. For example, between 1993 and 1997, the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past 12 months remained constant—at about 7 or 8 percent (Indicator 4). The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported being in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months also remained unchanged between 1993 and 1997—at about 15 percent (Indicator 5).

- As the rate of victimization in schools has declined or remained constant, students also seem to feel more secure at school now than just a few years ago. The percentage of students ages 12 through 18 who reported avoiding one or more places at school for their own safety decreased between 1995 and 1999—from 9 to 5 percent (Indicator 14). Furthermore, the percentage of students who reported that street gangs were present at their schools decreased from 1995 to 1999. In 1999, 17 percent of students ages 12 through 18 reported that they had street gangs at their schools compared with 29 percent in 1995 (Indicator 16).

- There was an increase in the use of marijuana among students between 1993 and 1995, but no change between 1995 and 1997. In 1997, about 26 percent of these students had used marijuana in the last 30 days (Indicator 19). Furthermore, almost one-third of all students in grades 9 through 12 (32 percent) reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property—an increase from 24 percent in 1993 (Indicator 20). Therefore, the data shown in this report present a mixed picture of school safety. While overall school crime rates have declined, violence, gangs, and drugs are still evident in some schools, indicating that more work needs to be done.

Reading

From the USDE, information for parents on reading (http://www.ed.gov/inits/rrrl/guide.html).

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

How Do I Know a Good Early Reading Program

When I See One?

- Every teacher is excited about reading and promotes the value and fun of reading to students.
All students are carefully evaluated, beginning in Kindergarten, to see what they know and what they need to become good readers.

Reading instruction and practice lasts 90 minutes or more a day in first, second and third grades and 60 minutes a day in Kindergarten.

All students in first, second and third grades that are behind in reading get special instruction and practice. These students receive, throughout the day, a total of 60 extra minutes of instruction.

Before- or after-school help is given to all students beyond first grade who need extra instruction or who need to review skills. Summer school is available for students who are behind at the end of the year.

Reading instruction and practice includes work on letters, sounds and blending sounds. Students learn to blend letters and sounds to form new words.

Learning new words and their meaning is an important part of instruction.

Students have daily spelling practice and weekly spelling tests.

The connection between reading and writing is taught on a daily basis. Students write daily. Papers are corrected and returned to the students. By the end of second grade, students write final copies of corrected papers. Corrected papers are sent home for parents to see.

All students are read to each day from different kinds of books. Students discuss what they read with teachers and other students.

All students have a chance to read both silently and aloud in school each day and at home every night.

Every classroom has a library of books that children want to read. This includes easy books and books that are more difficult.

The school library is used often and has many books. Students may check books out during the summer and over holidays.

Assessment

The National Association of State Boards of Education has issued *A Primer on State Accountability and Large-Scale Assessments* (March 2001). The document gives a brief overview of different types of tests and discusses elements of effective assessment systems. It is available by calling NASBE at 703/684-4000 or contacting them at [www.nasbe.org](http://www.nasbe.org).

Dates to Remember for the 2001 Congressional Calendar

**HOUSE**

Spring Recess: April 7 – 22
Memorial Day Recess: May 26 - June 3
Independence Day Recess: June 30 - July 8
August Recess: August 4 - September 3

**SENATE**

Spring Recess: April 7 – 22
Memorial Day Recess: May 26 - June 3
Independence Day Recess: June 30 - July 8
August Recess: August 4 - September 3