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FRAGMENTATION AND CENTRALIZATION: STATE EDUCATION REFORM PROJECTS AND THE ORIGINS OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Jesse H. Rhodes, University of Virginia

Although it built on themes contained in the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 represented a revolution in federal education policy – as Patrick McGuinn (2006:1) has written, "it was the most sweeping transformation of federal education policy since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965." The great significance of the Act was that it sought to transform the ESEA, the venerable Great Society education program, from a compensatory education program that targeted resources to disadvantaged students into a powerful mechanism for raising educational standards for all students and for holding schools accountable for results.

No Child Left Behind represented a major expansion of the federal role in leading the education reform movement. The legislation's main thrust is its "historic attempt to impose a results-based accountability regime on schools across the land (Hess and Finn 2007:2)." In undertaking this effort, the Act imposed major, and highly prescriptive, new mandates on the states. In exchange for access to ESEA funds, states were to test every student in grades 3-8 each year; establish a plan for bringing all students to "academic proficiency" by 2014; ensure that each group of students within each school made "adequately yearly progress" toward proficiency; implement an escalating series of consequences for schools in which groups of students did not make adequate yearly progress; undertake wide-reaching reforms to ensure that all students were taught by "highly qualified" teachers; and participate biannually in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a national student achievement test. While the Act also increased regulatory flexibility and better targeted federal spending on the neediest students, its major impact was to extend, in dramatic fashion, the federal presence in the realm of education.

Why did the federal role in leading standards based reform expand so dramatically with the passage of No Child Left Behind? Why was the Act so prescriptive and detailed in its demands on the states? As this chapter shows, the expansion of prescriptive federal authority in reforming education was

intimately tied to states' lackluster efforts to implement standards-based reforms during the 1990s. Key educational reformers – most importantly, civil rights and business leaders – came to perceive a major divergence between their beliefs about what needed to be done to reform education and the reality on the ground in most states and localities. By the end of the 1990s, this disjuncture led them to embrace much more extensive federal involvement in the politics of education reform as means for overcoming the unevenness and low quality that they believed characterized state education reforms. These reformers found common cause with New Democrats, liberals, and Republican moderates disillusioned with the pace of standards-based reform and with President George W. Bush, who believed that the Texas reform model should be extended to the entire nation. Ultimately, disillusionment with the pace of decentralized reform was the central factor propelling the expansion of central prescriptive authority.[1]

Although electioneering in anticipation of the 2000 election precluded the passage of major reforms in 1999-2000, most of the pieces for increasing the prescriptive federal role in education were in place by that time. The election of George W. Bush, a staunch proponent of education reform, was the final piece in the puzzle. After the election, ascending reform groups marginalized other interests in order to preserve a political compromise centered on government-directed standards-based reform. On one hand, New Democrats and disillusioned liberal Democrats isolated traditional liberals, who objected to standards-based reforms or emphasized increased spending as the key to true education reform. On the other, President Bush and his allies circumscribed the influence of conservative forces that championed decentralizing reforms such as block grants and vouchers as educational panaceas. Both worked to limit the influence of governors, who objected to what they perceived as "unfunded mandates." Ultimately, No Child Left Behind is the most prominent educational example of a dynamic in which the decentralized processes of reform diffusion that generally characterize policy development in federal systems ultimately – and ironically – augment the authority of the federal government.

In a period of conservative ascendance in national politics, No Child Left Behind is incongruous insofar as it represents the expansion of centralized authority *and* the intensification of federal attention to disadvantaged students in the nation's worst schools. The history of the Act suggests the need to rethink

simple narratives of the politics of the past generation that stress "backlash" against the governmentalism of the Great Society period and the ideological polarization of left and right. In this case, conservative ideas – raising standards for all, holding schools accountable, and challenging the emphasis on spending – were leveraged in part in an effort to raise the prospects of the most disadvantaged students (Abernathy 2007:Chapter 1). The story of No Child Left Behind also highlights an intractable tension in American political life. Americans fear the extension of centralized administration, but they are also skeptical of the states' collective will and capacity to undertake complex, painful reforms. The challenge for future educational policymaking is to establish a new policymaking balance that eschews both the inflexibility and bureaucracy that may characterize centralized administration *and* the flaccid enforcement and inattention to the disadvantaged that too often afflict state and local education policy.

The Republican Revolution, Lax Administrative Enforcement, and the States' Collective Failure to Implement Standards Based Reform

Perhaps counter-intuitively, No Child Left Behind grew out of the Republican Revolution of 1994. During the 1994 campaign, conservatives vociferously challenged the Clinton administration's ambitious educational agenda, which had leveraged federal education funds to propel standards-based reforms in the states, for impinging on states' traditional authority over education (Jennings 1998:155).[2] Having seized control of Congress, Republicans waged an all-out assault on Clinton's program, attempting to eliminate Clinton's initiatives, strip funding from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and set the Department of Education on the road to extinction (Schwartz and Robinson 2000; McGuinn 2006:108-109). While Clinton skillfully deflected conservatives' efforts to cut education spending, the onslaught forced him to reconsider his plans for implementing the Improving America's Schools Act, the most ambitious component of his reform program. As will be recalled, the Act required states to adopt educational content and performance standards, to develop assessments aligned to these standards, and to create plans for holding schools accountable for performance. Fearing that vigorously enforcing the law would incite conservatives' wrath, the White House granted generous regulatory waivers to states and declined to impose sanctions when states failed to meet deadlines for establishing standards-based policies specified by the law (Cohen 2002a, 2002b; Personal interview with Gordon

Ambach, December 11-12, 2007; Personal interview with Patricia Sullivan, January 22, 2008; Wong and Sunderman 2007:5).

In the absence of strong federal prompting, the states were in a position to pursue standards-based reform at their own pace. In practice, this meant that the major reforms envisioned in the act would diffuse throughout the states in a haphazard and uneven manner (U.S. Department of Education 2001; Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights 2001; U.S. Department of Education 2003; Education Commission of the States 2002; Goertz, Duffy, and LeFloch 2001). In particular, many states failed to implement aligned assessments or measures for holding schools accountable for performance, or to ensure that *all* students – including the disadvantaged – were brought under a single accountability system, as the act (and its supporters) had intended.[3] The congressionally-mandated Independent Review Panel concluded in a 2001 report on states' progress toward implementing standards-based education reforms that "the sobering reality is that many states have not raised their academic standards to a high enough level, especially in low-performing schools, and few have sufficiently aligned their curriculum development, student assessment, and teacher preparation efforts with their standards (Independent Review Panel 2001:13)."

The Core of the Interest Group Coalition for the Expansion of the Prescriptive Federal Role

Civil rights and business leaders formed the core of the interest group coalition favoring the expansion of the prescriptive federal role in reforming American education. Though these groups had different underlying motivations and concerns, they both saw the uneven diffusion and low quality of state-level education reforms as serious problems that demanded more vigorous federal intervention. Between 1994 and 2000, these groups developed proposals for reforming the federal role and built alliances with important governmental officials. After the 2000 election, they continued their advocacy in support of a more ambitious federal role, establishing close working relationships with the George W. Bush administration. As the following two sections will make clear, the ideas championed by these groups had a profound impact on No Child Left Behind.

Civil Rights Groups' Disenchantment with Federal Enforcement and State Policymaking 1994-2000 and the Call for Vigorous Intervention

Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, an important fraction of civil rights and poverty advocacy leaders had become strong proponents of standards-based reform, believing that raising standards for *all students* and holding schools accountable for performance would be powerful levers for improving the education received by disadvantaged and minority students (Personal interview with Kati Haycock, November 13, 2007; Personal interview with William Taylor, January 14, 2008; Personal interview with Sandy Kress, January 3, 2008; Personal interview with Cindy Brown, March 14, 2008). Groups such as the Education Trust, the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, and the Center on Law and Education were at the forefront of these efforts, and were often joined by the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund and the Council on La Raza. Drawing on their civil rights roots, these reformers firmly believed in strong federal leadership of the standards-based reform movement, because, in their view, states could not be trusted to reform schools in ways that redounded to the benefit of the disadvantaged (Haycock and Wiener 2007; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008; Personal interview with William Taylor, January 14, 2008). Civil rights leaders had vigorously supported the IASA, hoping it would produce a "revolution" in educational policy that would force states to finally bring disadvantaged and minority student achievement to the forefront of the education agenda (Personal interview with Kati Haycock, November 13, 2007; Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights 1999:11).

Though relatively few were paying close attention to how the IASA was being implemented during the mid-to-late 1990s (Personal interview with Patricia Sullivan, January 2002, 2008), civil rights leaders were. And they were aghast at the Clinton administration's record (e.g. Piche 1999c). In the view of civil rights reformers, the Clinton administration had lost its nerve in the wake of the 'Republican Revolution,' acquiescing to states' and localities' flagrant violations of the law's letter and spirit (Personal interview with Kati Haycock, November 13, 2007; Personal interview with William Taylor, January 14, 2008; Personal interview with Cynthia Brown, March 12, 2008; Personal interview with Phyllis McClure, March 20, 2008). While the Education Trust and other civil rights groups strenuously lobbied the administration to enforce the implementation of the law, they perceived that the White House turned a deaf ear to their entreaties (Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008; Personal

interview with Cynthia Brown, March 12, 2008; Personal interview with Phyllis McClure, March 20, 2008).

In the view of civil rights leaders, the Clinton administration's lax efforts to enforce the IASA were so disturbing because they ensured that states would fail to implement the reforms that most benefited disadvantaged children (Piche 1999c:25; Haycock and Wiener 2007). In 2001, a report by the CCCR, *Closing the Deal: A Preliminary Report on State Compliance with Final Assessment and Accountability Requirements under the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*, emphasized that "…with a few exceptions, the states are still far behind in establishing systems that will provide tangible benefits to children (Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights 2001:3; see also Piche 1999b:49)." A 1999 Center for Law and Education analysis of two states' testing and accountability systems echoed this conclusion, maintaining that "…in each of the above examples the state failed to meet even the basic criteria that Congress set forth in the Improving America's Schools Act (Rogers and Stoneman 1999)."

These civil rights leaders perceived specific ways in which states' uninspired implementation of the standards and accountability agenda threatened the well-being of disadvantaged and minority students. In general, these criticisms revolved around the contention that too few states had fully integrated disadvantaged students into their regular systems of standards, assessments, and accountability, as the IASA had required (e.g. Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights 1998; Education Trust 1999b; Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights 2001). These finding were particularly worrisome to civil rights leaders who believed that a primary purpose of standards based reforms was to advance the achievement of the disadvantaged. However, these groups also maintained that the very ambiguities and statutory silences of the law itself discouraged states from adopting policies that best served the needs of the disadvantaged. For example, the Harvard Civil Rights Project, after examining state accountability systems, found that many states did not hold schools accountable for improving the performance of subgroups of students (Orfield and DeBray 1999). Although the original IASA did not require school or district accountability based on *subgroup* performance (DeBray 2006:48), civil rights leaders widely feared that the states' failure to adopt this policy allowed schools and districts to avoid accountability by

presenting misleading ‘average’ scores that hid the lower performance of disadvantaged groups (see also Education Trust 1999a; Haycock and Wiener 2007). Similarly, civil rights groups savaged an IASA provision that required states to show that schools and students made ‘adequate yearly progress’ in improving academic performance, contending that weak statutory language permitted states to create a standard of progress “that is far too low and far too slow (EdTrust 1999a; see also Center for Law and Education 1999).” Civil rights leaders bemoaned the absence of federal mandates directed at closing the achievement gap on similar grounds (Ed Trust 2000).

Civil rights leaders’ conclusion that state intransigence in the face of IASA requirements, anemic federal enforcement, and blind spots within the statute itself had undermined the promise of standards-based reform for disadvantaged and minority students undergirded their advocacy of more aggressive federal efforts to reform education (Personal interview with Gordon Ambach, December 11-12, 2007; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008). Drawing on many of the same networks that had shaped the original Improving America’s Schools Act, civil rights leaders began work on plans for the new reauthorization almost as soon as it became clear that the IASA had not panned out as expected (Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008; Personal interview with Cynthia Brown, March 12, 2008). Their proposals anticipated No Child Left Behind in remarkable ways; indeed, Sandy Kress, George W. Bush’s chief education advisor, credited the civil rights groups as the intellectual “fathers” of NCLB (Personal interview with Sandy Kress, January 3, 2008).

The Education Trust’s proposals, issued in September 1999, called on Congress to revise the ESEA to require states, schools, and districts to be held accountable for raising the achievement of all *groups* of students and closing achievement gaps, and to create a ten-year time-table for all *groups* of students to reach academic ‘proficiency’ (Ed Trust 1999a). The Trust’s recommendations also took aim at states’ weak accountability systems, maintaining that the Act should require states to establish comprehensive accountability systems, including rewards for school success in raising achievement, assistance to struggling schools, and sanctions for recurrent school failure (Ed Trust 1999c). Additionally, the Trust proposed that states be required to substantially improve the quality of teachers assigned to

disadvantaged students (Ed Trust 1999d). On the whole, the Trust envisioned a much more prescriptive ESEA, which would leverage federal funds to achieve major changes in state and local education systems. While the Trust's proposals were extremely ambitious, they were not unique; other civil rights organizations, such as the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the National Urban League, were advocating similar agendas (Leadership Conference on Civil Rights 2000; Price 1999).

To promote their ideas, a Title I working group, led by the Education Trust and the Center for Law and Education but including organizations such as the Council of La Raza, the Urban League, and the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, formed during the 106th Congress (DeBray 2006:47; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008). The civil rights leaders' liberal credentials helped attract the support of liberal Democrats on the education committees, including Representative George Miller of California, Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, and Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts (Personal interview with Gordon Ambach, December 11-12, 2007; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008). At the prompting of the civil rights leaders, both Miller and Bingaman would champion important school accountability measures during the failed 1999-2000 ESEA reauthorization discussions, which nonetheless would ultimately be reflected in No Child Left Behind (Lawmakers Debate Accountability Meaning 1999; Rudalevige 2003:32; DeBray 2006:48; 71-2; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008).

The civil rights groups' criticisms of state and federal policies and their proposals for reforming the federal role would also fit extremely well with those of Texan George W. Bush, who was on the presidential campaign trail at the time (Personal interview with Sandy Kress, January 3, 2008). Indeed, many of these civil rights leaders were great admirers of Texas's school accountability model, which they believed provided the "disaggregated" accountability that most benefited disadvantaged students (Yardley 2000; Chaddock 2000; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, November 13, 2007; Personal interview with Michael Petrill, February 1, 2008; Personal interview with Cynthia Brown, March 12, 2008).[4]

While the civil rights leaders were able to build alliances with liberal Democrats and Bush administration officials, their push for standards and accountability also had a broader impact on the

reauthorization process. As Andrew Rotherham, whose own influence on the ESEA reauthorization is described below, argues, the civil rights groups were important because

> "of their moral authority. I don't think you can underestimate when you have one of these big fights going on, where you have some vested interests that really control the policymaking process and then you have some insurgents who are trying to get their ideas on the agenda. I don't think you can underestimate [how important it is] when you can tout that you have these civil rights groups with you (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008)."

Business Groups' Frustration with the Limitations of State-Level Policymaking and Growing Interest in Federal Leadership, 1994-2000

Like the civil rights leaders, business leaders were firmly committed to the standards-based reform agenda (Augustine, Lupberger, and Orr 1997; Smith 1996; Rust 1998?).[5] Business leaders also formed a core constituency for federal leadership in education, throwing their support behind George H.W. Bush's and Clinton's education initiatives during the early 1990s. Significantly, when conservative Republicans sought to eliminate or cut Goals 2000 and other federal education programs during the "Revolution" in 1995-1996, corporate leaders lobbied heavily to protect education spending and maintain Clinton's education reforms (Garland 1995; Jennings 1998:160-161; Personal interview with Michael Cohen, January 31, 2008; Schwartz and Robinson 2000).

Following the passage of the IASA, business leaders worked assiduously to propel standards based reforms in the states. Through a coalition of 13 large business organizations, including as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Committee for Economic Development, business leaders tried to coordinate business coalitions within every state to provide technical assistance, advice, and information (as well as "political cover") to state and local political leaders overseeing implementation of Goals 2000 and the IASA (Personal interview with Tom Lindsley, January 24, 2008). Other business groups organized throughout the states to promote standards-based initiatives. For example, the Business Roundtable had begun organizing state-level, business-led coalitions in almost every state to advocate standards-and-accountability as early as 1989-1990 (Rust 1999).

The ‘Republican Revolution’ of 1994 drove home the message to business leaders that, at least in the short term, the impetus for educational change would have to come from the states rather than from the federal government. But the “Revolution” produced what must have been, from business leaders’ perspective, a highly disturbing trend; several states with conservative Republican leadership, including Montana, Virginia, New Hampshire, Alabama, and California, declined to participate in the Goals 2000 program (Jennings 1998:163). Additionally, some new conservative governors, worried that the standards-based agenda was a front for liberal cultural values, appeared to question the entire reform enterprise.

Thus, business leaders, led by Louis Gerstner, chairman and CEO of IBM and an important figure in BCER and BRT circles, moved aggressively to pursue standards-based reform through a partnership with the governors and the National Governors’ Association. An invited speaker at the NGA’s 1995 meeting, Gerstner “embarrassed” the governors by sharply criticizing what he perceived as their lackluster leadership of the reform movement (Personal interview with Patricia Sullivan, January 22, 2008; Jennings 1998:164; Schwartz 2003:142-143; Applebome 1996). Gerstner’s challenge led then-NGA chairman Tommy Thompson, a conservative Republican from Wisconsin, to call for the convening of a second “Education Summit” at the IBM Executive Conference Center (Gerstner’s home turf) in Palisades, New York in March 1996 (Personal interview with Robert Schwartz, February 1, 2008; Applebome 1996; Sanchez 1996).

Business leaders were extremely dissatisfied with the pace of state-led education reform, and came to the meeting determined to devise a strategy for speeding up the process (Jones 1996; Sanchez 1996; Gerstner 1996). At the Summit, business leaders took a leading role, “[sending] a very powerful signal to the governors that education reform was a major priority for corporate America (Schwartz 2003:143).” Ultimately, business leaders strong-armed reluctant governors into agreeing to the creation of a new “entity”, called Achieve, which would benchmark state standards and monitor states’ progress toward standards-based reform (Personal interview with Patricia Sullivan, January 22, 2008). Through

Achieve, which was created in 1996, states were able to share information about standards-based reform and benchmark their own policies against external standards.

Despite these developments, there were significant tensions between business leaders, who were impatient with the pace of change and wanted to see quick results, and governors, some of whom believed that each state should be permitted to chart its own course and resented the pressure from corporate leaders (Personal interview with Patricia Sullivan, January 22, 2008; Personal interview with Michael Cohen, January 31, 2008; see also Innerst 1996). While business leaders kept the pressure on to make Achieve work, Ray Scheppach, who worked closely with business leaders as executive officer of the National Governors' Association, and Robert Schwartz, who served as President of Achieve from 1997-2002, contended that business leaders' strategy was based more on political pragmatism than on a philosophical commitment to federalism: business leaders would work with the states if the circumstances required it, but would pursue vigorous national efforts to goad states to implement standards-based reform if the opportunity presented itself (Personal interview with Ray Scheppach, January 15, 2008; Personal interview with Robert Schwartz, February 2, 2008). The behavior of large business groups during the late 1990s and early 2000s would confirm this perception.

Of course, business leaders acknowledged that states had made significant progress toward standards-based principles since the beginning of the 1990s (e.g. Krol 1998). However, by the late 1990s, business leaders were chafing at the slow pace and uneven distribution of reform in the states. Explaining why business leaders ultimately supported the expansion of federal authority contemplated in Democratic reauthorization proposals in 1999-2000 and in No Child Left Behind, Milton Goldberg, who headed the National Alliance of Business during the 1990s, argued that

> "Business leaders began to feel thwarted by the lack of progress in the states. They were coming to the realization that the 'tunnel' of education reform was extremely complicated. They were attracted by No Child Left Behind because it at least promised light at the end of the tunnel in terms of requirements for proficiency, student progress, and so forth (Personal interview with Milton Goldberg, January 21, 2008)."

Tom Lindsley, who served as the national coordinator for the Business Coalition for Education Reform and its later iteration, the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education, agreed:

> "By the time it came to think about the reauthorization [of the ESEA in 1999], it was clear that something needed to be done. Just leaving things to the states and the pace of change were insufficient. Our experience led us to the idea of looking to the federal government to lead the agenda (Personal interview with Tom Lindsley, January 24, 2008; see also personal interview with Susan Traiman, February 12, 2008)."

Business leaders were not merely passive "policy takers" of others' policy ideas. During the 1998-1999 period, they were working out their own principles for the upcoming ESEA reauthorization, primarily through the Business Coalition for Education Reform (Personal interview with Tom Lindsley, January 24, 2008). This work resulted in an official *Statement of Principles for Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Business Coalition for Education Reform 1999). To be sure, business leaders were sharply critical of existing federal regulations on state and local use of education funds, which they perceived as imposing excessive obstacles to states' and localities' effective use of the monies to improve student achievement, and argued that states should be given substantial flexibility to use the resources as they saw fit. Nonetheless, business leaders insisted that federal funds propel state development of standards-based reform policies. As Ed Rust emphasized in explaining business's views to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in July 1999, federal aid should be leveraged to ensure that all states developed strong academic standards "with substantial depth and breadth," created "sound accountability systems…measured by student performance results" and provided public reports that let "parents and the community at large…know how well their schools are doing and how they compare with schools elsewhere (Rust 1999b)." In what can, in light of the limited diffusion of accountability reforms at the state level by the late 1990s, only be considered a criticism of the limitations of state policies and the laxity of federal enforcement, the *Principles* maintained that

> When [federal] investment decisions are made, a commitment must also be made to measure the results of those investments. Accountability for flexible funds must be measured by results, not by administrative compliance. *Within states and local districts, accountability systems must be explicit about the consequences for the schools that fail to improve student achievement* (Business Coalition for Education Reform 1999; emphasis added).

With the election of George W. Bush, corporate leaders remobilized to press their agenda forward as forcefully as possible. In the period between the election and Bush's inauguration, members of the

Business Roundtable met with President Bush to discuss the upcoming reauthorization, and came away pleased that the administration's priorities reflected its own (Manna 2006:119; Billups 2001). These business leaders agreed to lobby on behalf of shared proposals for the reauthorization. To ensure a coordinated business approach to the ESEA reauthorization, the Business Coalition for Education Reform was expanded to a network of more than 70 major national and state business organizations, and rechristened the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education in early 2001 (Personal interview with Tom Lindsley, January 24, 2008; Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001a; Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001b; National Alliance of Business 2001). The Coalition agreed on a set of *Principles for K-12 Education Legislation* that elaborated the BCER's earlier *Statement of Principles for Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and significantly anticipated core elements of the final No Child Left Behind in its calls for annual assessments, systems of rewards and sanctions for schools based on performance, the full integration of disadvantaged students into state standards and accountability systems, and new initiatives to improve teaching (Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001c; Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001a).

The Coalition planned an all-out blitz to influence the reauthorization after the presidential election. According to the organization's own internal documents (Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001d; Business Coalition for Excellence in Education 2001b), the BCEE held 6 congressional staff briefings on the BCEE and its *Principles*, testified before congressional committees on 3 occasions, transmitted more than 31 letters to congressional committees, members, and congressional leadership, arranged over 180 visits with congressional staff, and held "regular" meetings with Sandy Kress, the White House's key education staff member.

The Core of the Reform Coalition in the National Government: Lagging State-Led Reform and Policy Ideas of National Elites

Just as civil rights and business leaders were coming to embrace more vigorous federal involvement in the politics of reform, so too was a heterogeneous coalition of national political elites, spanning various factions within the Democratic and Republican parties, converging on the idea of expanding the national government's role in raising standards and holding schools accountable. The

reauthorization process during 1999-2000 was derailed by the presidential election campaign; however, Bush's election set the stage for the expansion of federal authority in mandating testing and holding schools accountable for results.

THE DEMOCRATS

The Clinton White House and its Allies

Although its lax enforcement of the IASA had slowed the progress of standards-based reform after 1994, the White House increasingly saw the need for expansive new federal action in the pursuit of standards-based reform. Aware of his limited influence after the 1994 midterm elections but frustrated by the slow pace of reform in the states, Clinton had attempted to use the bully pulpit to promote state and local education reforms, pushing the governors and business leaders to adopt more comprehensive reforms in an address at the 1996 education summit (e.g. Clinton 1996; Background on President Clinton's Education Challenges 1996; Reed and Sperling 1996). In subsequent years, the administration accrued strong evidence that the states and localities had not hewed to the standards-based reform agenda, especially in the areas of accountability, assessment, and teacher quality (Reed and Cohen 1998; Cohen 1996; Strengthening Title I Accountability Requirements 1998).

During its second term, the administration had touted new, and politically popular, spending measures, such as reducing class sizes, subsidizing school construction, and promoting the diffusion of educational technologies (e.g. Hoff 1998). Concomitantly, the administration's plan for reauthorizing the ESEA also included significant new spending initiatives in these areas, which elicited the enthusiasm of congressional liberals who saw increasing federal aid as the key to school improvement (e.g McGuinn 2006:138). However, the administration's strategy also bore the mark of its frustration with the pace of state and local education reform (see especially Reed and Cohen 1998; Strengthening Title I Accountability Requirements 1998). Addressing the nation's governors again in 1999, Clinton had berated the states for their collective failure to hold schools accountable for results. According to Michael Cohen, Clinton's Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the time,

> By '99, according to Ed Week, there were about 20 states that had that kind of policy [accountability] in place, right? Which turns out to be, over a 13-year period [since *Time for Results*, the governors' influential 1986 statement on education reform], a growth of one state per year. And Clinton's message to the governors was, at this rate, it will be another 30 years before we get this agenda enacted. We don't have time to wait. That's why the feds have to take a stronger role. And they didn't have a good answer for that… (Interview conducted by Kathryn McDermott, November 6, 2003; cited in McDermott and DeBray-Pelot, n.d.).

Indeed, Clinton officials had perceived that it would be essential to amend the law to speed up intervention in low-performing schools (Personal interview with Michael Cohen, January 31, 2008; Personal interview with Marshall Smith, February 22, 2008). Administration officials had also protested states' anemic efforts to improve their teaching forces (e.g. Riley 1999).[6]

The administration's plan for reauthorizing the ESEA in 1999, the "Educational Excellence for All Children Act (EEAC)," reflected these concerns, proposing significant and prescriptive new mandates on the states as conditions of receipt of federal dollars. In content and form, these mandates reflected the concerns that had been raised by civil rights and business leaders. In addition to reaffirming IASA's requirement that states adopt content and performance standards and aligned assessments, the EEAC urged new accountability requirements that would require states to: publicly identify and provide assistance to the lowest-performing districts, and require districts to identify and provide assistance to lowest-performing schools; implement strong corrective actions, including the altering of school structures and instructional programs, if low-performing schools failed to improve; and publish and publicly disseminate report cards of school performance that disaggregated performance measures by subgroups (U.S. Department of Education 1999: 9-10). Expansive new mandates were also proposed in the area of teacher quality, including new obligations to ensure that virtually all teachers attained full certification and that teachers taught only in subjects in which they were certified (U.S. Department of Education 1999: 8).

The administration's proposal attracted considerable support in Congress, with 41 Democrats in the House and 9 in the Senate agreeing to cosponsor the legislation. Ultimately, the EEAC was destined to be forlorn, as it emerged just as the 2000 presidential election campaign, in which education was a prominent issue, was heating up. In this context, neither Democrats nor Republicans had much appetite

for the details of legislation, and used the period primarily to differentiate themselves from one another on educational and other issues. However, Democratic support for the president's proposal indicated that some congressional Democrats were willing to rally to a vision of the federal role that substantially stepped up prescriptive federal leadership of the standards-based reform movement.

Additionally, the ideas it embodied in the areas of accountability and teacher quality were clearly operative during the 2000 election campaign and the discussions over No Child Left Behind. Clinton's vice president and heir apparent, Albert Gore, took up much of his education agenda (Cooper 2000; Dao 2000). Gore's education strategy combined initiatives to increase federal mandates to hold schools accountable and raise teacher quality with a call for major new investments in education (Gore's Education Plan 2000). The Democratic candidate would have required states to test their students three times during the K-12 period, implement sanctions or rewards on schools based on performance, and participate biannually in the NAEP. At the same time, Gore advocated significant new spending, including $50 billion for Head Start, $16 billion to promote teacher recruitment and training, and $8 billion for school renovation (Cooper 2000; Sack 2000a; Sack 2000b).

Education was a primary theme in the vice president's campaign; indeed, the vice president competed closely with George W. Bush, his Republican opponent, on the issue. Reflecting the concerns articulated in the EEAC, Gore hammered on accountability and teacher quality issues.[7] Though Gore lost the election when a ruling by the Supreme Court halted a ballot recount in the contested state of Florida, his policy proposals provided further evidence that Democrats close to the administration sought to expand the federal role in raising teacher quality and holding schools accountable for performance.

New Democrats and the Rotherham Plan

The moderate New Democrats played a critical role in discussions over the reform of the ESEA. At the Progressive Policy Institute, the think tank arm of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, Andrew Rotherham and his staff would develop a white paper, "Toward Performance-Based Federal Education Funding," which would influence both New Democrat and "Compassionate Conservative" approaches to reforming the ESEA (McGuinn 2006:154-155; Rudalevige 2003: 31; DeBray 2006:74).

Rotherham was sharply critical of the ESEA. In part, Rotherham's frustration focused on the Act's highly prescriptive regulation of states' and localities' use of federal education funds and its fragmented categorical structure (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008). As he complained, ESEA's "crucial purposes are lost in a maze of programs that stifle ingenuity, flexibility, and innovation and as a result under-serve the children they are intended to help (Rotherham 1999:11)." Ultimately, Rotherham charged, ESEA's focus on assuring state and local compliance with categorical funding dictates discouraged reform in the states by leading them to displace achievement as a primary goal of education and by reducing their ability to respond flexibly to the needs of their students (Rotherham 1999:4). As Rotherham would later note, this critique would receive a great deal of press during the campaign, in significant part because it reflected a substantial break from traditional Democratic thinking on education, which praised detailed categorical requirements as fiscal accountability measures (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008).

A significant portion of Rotherham's ire, however, focused on the consequences of states' lack of accountability for their use of federal funds and the federal government's unwillingness to hold the states to the terms of the IASA (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008). In a view that echoed the arguments of civil rights leaders, Rotherham suggested that states, in the absence of strong federal enforcement, often failed to institute the strong educational policies that promoted student achievement.[8] Approvingly citing the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights' *Title I in Midstream*, Rotherham noted that, abetted by virtually unrestricted access to federal funds, states and localities had been negligent in implementing the IASA and in holding disadvantaged students the same high standards as their advantaged peers (Rotherham 1999:5-6). Rotherham was particularly distressed that, in the absence of strong federal enforcement, state progress toward standards-based reform had been limited, with limited hope for future progress (Rotherham 1999:6-7).[9]

These criticisms provided the motivation for Rotherham's ambitious proposal to reform Title I and the rest of the ESEA. Consistent with his concern about the ESEA's inflexible, compliance-oriented regulatory structure, Rotherham advocated the consolidation of ESEA's numerous categorical programs

into five broad grants, within which states and localities would have tremendous discretion to use the funds as they so chose. In his view, the consolidation of ESEA's widely dispersed programs would provide the flexibility that states needed to deploy resources in ways that best served their students. However, reflecting his critique of states' and localities' slow progress toward adopting standards-based reforms, Rotherham called for significant new mandates that would drive forward standards-based reform in the states. To receive Title I funding, states would have to "demonstrate that they have a plan in place to identify and reconstitute failing schools, are ending social promotion by identifying and intervening to help students in need, and have a standards and assessment plan in place so they can be held accountable for the performance of impoverished students (Rotherham 1999:15)." Access to Title I funds would be contingent on the progress of students (particularly disadvantaged students) toward performance goals, and the Department of Education would be authorized to shut off funding to schools in which performance did not improve. Rotherham also proposed leveraging Title I funds to require states to improve their teaching corps, maintaining that states demonstrate clear steps to reduce out-of-field teaching, establish more rigorous tests for all teachers, and develop strong alternative certification procedures (Rotherham 1999:16).

Congressional New Democrats eagerly rallied around the PPI proposal, believing it stood the best chance of attracting majority support in Congress (Rotherham interview, March 4, 2008). Introduced by Evan Bayh and Joseph Lieberman in the Senate, the Three R's bill integrated Rotherham's ideas with Bingaman's accountability measures and liberal Democrats' proposals for increased education spending, and was touted as a "Third Way" proposal that could break the deadlock between traditional liberals' demands for more spending and conservatives' calls for educational devolution. However, because of political posturing during the election season, including conflict between the New Democrats and traditionalist liberals who objected to the bill's flexibility and accountability requirements, the Three R's only received 13 Senate votes in 2000. Nonetheless, this New Democratic core would prove critically important after the election: because the Senate was deadlocked, with 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, and Vice President Cheney casting the deciding vote, the New Democrats represented a pivotal voting

bloc. New Democrats' pivotal position granted them an opportunity for influence after the election, which they would exploit.

Key Liberal Democrats Come Onboard

As they had since the Great Society era, liberal Democrats tended to view federal education policies primarily as means for conveying compensatory resources to groups that were often ill-served by state and local education policies (e.g. Davies 2007; McGuinn 2006:Chapters 6-7). Liberals strongly supported the federal government's historic role in promoting equity in education through the ESEA, Head Start, IDEA, and other initiatives that channeled resources to historically disadvantaged groups such as low-income students, limited English speakers, and the disabled. Unlike the Clinton/New Democrats, who favored granting states and localities more flexibility in the use of federal resources, the Liberals believed that strong categorical controls on federal funds would ensure that federal resources were targeted to the neediest students and were used as Congress had intended. Additionally, many liberals were skeptical of standards-based reforms, fearing that standards and tests would divert attention from resource-based inequities and unfairly stigmatize disadvantaged students. During the 1990s, liberal Democrats in the House and Senate had vocally supported President Clinton's class size reduction and school renovation programs, believing that these new spending programs would redound to the benefit of the disadvantaged (e.g. Daschle 1998; Rangel 1998; Clay 1998; Reid 1999). However, many liberals had been far more critical of the president's national tests proposal out of concern for its potentially disparate impact on minority and disadvantaged students (see especially McGuinn 2006:Chapters 6-7; Kosar 2006:Chapters 4-5).

While many liberal Democrats continued to praise traditional categorical spending initiatives and criticize standards based reforms, however, others had begun to warm to the standards based approach. In this view, which resonated with the arguments made by civil rights leaders, standards based reform represented the true path to educational equity. Moreover, the states' collective failure to implement needed reforms, and the federal government's unwillingness to enforce existing law, propelled these

liberals to support the ambitious initiatives advocated by civil rights leaders and administration/New Democrats. Congressman George Miller of California and Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, who played critical roles in the passage of No Child Left Behind, were emblematic of this group.

Miller, the second-ranking Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee, had worked on education issues ever since becoming a congressman in 1974. Miller had long been a champion of federal aid to disadvantaged students. However, by the late 1990s, he had become very frustrated by the poor track record of the ESEA in raising disadvantaged students' achievement and closing achievement gaps (Personal interview with Robert Schwartz, February 1, 2008; Personal interview with Kati Haycock, February 1, 2008; Personal interview with Charles Barone, January 16, 2008). Additionally, however, Miller perceived that states had made only limited progress in adopting standards based reforms he believed would help the disadvantaged. In particular, Miller and his legislative aides were angered that the practices of disaggregating student performance by demographic categories and grounding accountability in sub-group performance had not diffused widely among the states (Personal interview with Charles Barone, January 16, 2008). Miller saw significant promise in the strong Texas model of accountability, which required schools to show progress in the achievement of all student *groups* in order for the school to be considered in good standing (Barone 2007). Additionally, as early as 1994, Miller had expressed dissatisfaction with what he saw as the weakness of states' and localities' teacher quality measures (Personal interview with Charles Barone, January 16, 2008).[10] As previously mentioned, Miller had worked closely with the civil rights groups during the 1999-2000 reauthorization, and was on board with the idea of leveraging ESEA to dramatically strengthen states' testing and accountability policies for the benefit of disadvantaged students.

Senator Edward Kennedy, the "liberal lion" from Massachusetts and senior Democrat in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, also emerged as a proponent of expanded governmental involvement in the standards-based reform agenda in the late 1990s. Kennedy had long been – and remained – an advocate for expanding federal funding for K-12 education, campaigning for causes such as class-size reduction, school construction, drug-free schools, and Head Start. However, like

Miller, the Massachusetts senator had become disgruntled with the pace of education reform in the states. Kennedy had indicated this dissatisfaction by serving as the primary sponsor of the "Educational Excellence for All Children Act" in the Senate. Even as Kennedy lauded the plan's proposals to boost education spending, he accused states and localities of not doing enough to help disadvantaged students succeed (e.g. Kennedy 1999). Like the Clinton Democrats and his House counterpart, George Miller, Kennedy was particularly discontented with the states' slow pace in adopting school accountability measures (Kennedy 2000).[11]

The cooperation of these two liberal leaders was essential for any reauthorization of the ESEA, especially one that heralded a major departure from previous policy. However, because of their reputations for staunch liberalism, it was initially unclear just how they would factor into a reauthorization that emphasized standards-based reform, rather than traditional liberal prescriptions for more funds and programs. As we shall see shortly, these liberal leaders were wooed by administration officials following the 2000 election, and "bought" further influence by agreeing to compromise.

Though administration officials, New Democrats, and disaffected liberals did not agree on all the issues, they were converging on a vision of federal intervention in education that would vigorously promote education reform and impose significant new mandates on the states and localities. This development helped set the stage for the augmentation of the federal role in education.

THE REPUBLICANS

Alternative Visions of Education Reform in the Republican Party

In the aftermath of the "Republican Revolution", many conservative education intellectuals and their Republican congressional allies harshly criticized the Clinton education agenda.[12] As the ESEA reauthorization period approached, conservatives continued to question the federal role in education. Conservatives savaged existing federal policies, charging that they had failed to achieve their objectives of improving education for disadvantaged students. As Nina Shokraii Rees of the Heritage Foundation, discussing Title I, the Eisenhower teacher development grant program, and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools act, exclaimed, "If the record of these three programs is any indication, Washington had best step

aside; their results are less than notable (Rees and Curnutte 1999)." They were also extremely skeptical of the Clinton administration's EEAC, characterizing it as another "top-down", bureaucratic strategy that imposed new mandates and regulations on the states (e.g. Finn and Petrilli 1999; Rees and Curnutte 1999; Rees and Garrett 2000; Finn 1999). Indeed, Lamar Alexander charged that Clinton was advocating a "national school board (Sack 1999)."

While civil rights leaders, business leaders, and New Democrats/disaffected liberals were criticizing states for failing to hold schools accountable and calling for more ambitious efforts to reform education, conservatives were applauding states for their effective policies, and blaming the federal government for stifling state-level innovations (e.g. Finn, Manno, and Ravitch 2000:4). Conservatives' skepticism of federal involvement and confidence in state and local education policymaking led them to develop policy ideas that would devolve much more discretion and authority to sub-national governments (Personal interview with Jennifer Marshall, February 11, 2008; Personal interview with Krista Kafer, January 25, 2008). Beginning in 1998, conservative intellectuals at the Fordham Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, the Family Research Council, Empower America, the Traditional Values Coalition, and other conservative groups began to work together to develop a proposal for reforming ESEA (Personal interview with Jennifer Marshall, February 11, 2008; Personal interview with Krista Kafer, January 25, 2008). These meetings ultimately led to the development of the "Straight A's" proposal, which would be touted in Congress by conservatives such as Jim DeMint of South Carolina and Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania in the House and Trent Lott of Mississippi and Judd Gregg of New Hampshire in the Senate. In essence, Straight A's would have given participating states and localities federal ESEA funds with virtually no regulatory strings attached, in exchange for an agreement by the participating units to increase student achievement and reduce the achievement gap (Rees 1999). Continued state enjoyment of the regulatory flexibility contained in Straight A's – and ultimately state and local access to federal education funds - would hinge on improvement of students' achievement. A series of meetings and conferences orchestrated by Chester Finn and the Fordham Foundation resulted in a volume, *New Directions: Federal Education Policy in the 21st Century*, which promoted yet another core conservative

idea – the notion of ESEA Title I "portability" (Kanstoroom and Finn 1999). In essence, portability was a form of voucher targeted to disadvantaged students: it would permit disadvantaged students in failing schools to use their Title I funds to pay for private schools or to buy private supplemental services (DeBray-Pelot 2007).

While the conservatives called for more flexibility and more accountability, their proposals diverged from those of civil rights leaders, business groups, and the Democratic supporters of a reformed ESEA by shying away from prescriptive efforts to ensure accountability. The Republicans vision of reform embodied in "Straight A's" suggested not only more state flexibility from traditional spending regulations, but more flexibility from the kinds of performance-based regulations – requirements for standards, testing, and accountability institutions – that the other reform groups were touting. Democrats and their allies were always extremely skeptical of Republicans' decentralizing understanding of accountability, believing that "Straight A's" would not actually hold schools accountable for performance (Robelen 1999; Robelen 2000; Sack 1999b; DeBray 2006:75).[13] Republicans' voucher proposals also departed from Democrats' understanding of accountability because they did not, in Democrats' view, ensure that the institution ultimately *receiving* the funds (in this case, a private institution) was held accountable for performance. In other words, vouchers offered a form of market accountability for public schools, but did not provide a form of governmental accountability for private schools.

However, while conservative Republicans rallied around a vision of devolution, a relatively small band of Republican moderates, including figures such as Representatives Michael Castle of Delaware, Vernon Ehlers of Michigan, Nancy Johnson of Connecticut, and former Representative Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin, Senators Olympia Snow of Maine, James Jeffords of Vermont, and John Chafee of Rhode Island, and governors Christine Todd-Whitman of New Jersey and George Pataki of New York, criticized the party's conservative direction, both generally and in education. In the view of these moderates, conservatives' education ideas made for both bad policy and bad politics (e.g. Castle 1997). Similar to Bush, these moderates maintained that Republicans' failure to explain their proposals, and the overwhelming negativity of their education messages, were counter-productive in an environment in

which major interest groups and the general public were clamoring for Congress to "do something" about education. They warned that the party's negative image on education and other social issues were partially responsible for its lackluster showings in the 1996 and 1998 elections, and would threaten its control of Congress and its ability to reclaim the White House in 2000 (K. Sack 1999; Turcol 1999; Poll Says Moral Agenda Could Hurt GOP 1998).

While these Republicans, who formed a "Main Street" working group – also called the "Tuesday Group" - of about 40 members in the House, and a "Mod Squad" of at least a half-dozen members in the Senate, believed that states and localities should receive greater flexibility in the use of federal education funds, they also acknowledged that the federal government had an important role to play in education. In particular, they supported federal efforts to assist disadvantaged and disabled students, establish voluntary national standards and testing, and hold schools accountable for results. On the whole, these Republicans counseled a "centrist", bipartisan education agenda that embraced cooperation with the Democrats.

Although their numbers were relatively small, as the margin of Republican control (particularly in the House) steadily declined after 1994, moderates formed a pivotal voting bloc in each House. Using their strategic voting strength, the moderates wielded considerable influence in shaping the education debate during the late 1990s. For example, on multiple occasions, moderates combined with the Democrats to block conservatives' proposals to voucherize federal education programs and to create "education accounts" – tax shelters for income that could be used to pay for private schooling (Cassata 1997; McQueen 1999; GOP Abandons Voucher Plan for Poor Students 1999; Nather 2000). Moderates in the House also stymied conservative efforts to permit all states to waive categorical regulations on the use of federal funds.

After the 2000 election, the moderates sought to consolidate their influence on education policy. In a letter to Bush signed by 60 moderates in the House and Senate, and in a meeting with vice president Richard Cheney, they counseled the newly crowned president and vice-president to drop the school voucher proposal from their plans and to make bipartisan, reform-oriented legislation their first priority (Godfrey 2001; Welch 2001; Entous 2001; see also In Bush Era, GOP Centrists Pledge Comity 2000;

McQueen 2001; Entous 2001b).” As the moderates suggested, Bush would likely achieve the other components of his reform strategy if he would compromise on vouchers to placate centrists in both parties. The administration was already inclined toward this position, as the following will suggest; but the moderates’ support for bipartisan reform strengthened its hand against conservatives supporting the further devolution of governmental authority.

The Bush Model of Test-Based, Governmental Accountability

Bush had pressed the Republican Party to embrace a much more positive educational vision in significant part for political reasons, believing that Republicans’ largely negative message on education issues during the 1980s and early 1990s had hurt it at the polls (e.g. McGuinn 2006; Rudalevige 2003). As governor of Texas, Bush led the charge to develop a positive agenda for education reform following the Republicans’ defeat in the 1996 presidential election. During his 2000 presidential campaign, Bush clearly used his attention to education to symbolize his moderation on education issues and distance himself from far-right congressional conservatives (Personal interview with Jack Jennings, February 13, 2008; Personal interview with Mike Petrilli, February 1, 2008). However, to understand why Bush and his advisors embraced standards-based reform and adopted a vision for reforming ESEA that required a dramatic expansion of federal authority, it is necessary to look to Bush’s own education as a Texas governor and his diagnosis of the problems facing American education.

Since the origins of the “excellence in education movement”, Texas has been one of the earliest states to adopt new education reforms (e.g. Toch 1991; Haney 2000). During the 1990s, it was a leader in adopting elements of the standards-and-accountability paradigm, especially in the area of accountability (Jerald 2001:2-3). Though Bush did not preside over the creation of Texas’s standards and accountability system (these were initiated during the governorships of Democrats Mark White and Anne Richards), he became a strong proponent of standards-based education during his governorship, proposed new testing requirements and an end to social promotion, and defended the state system against its critics (Personal interview with Sandy Kress, January 3, 2008; Goldstein 2001). Working with principal education advisors Sandy Kress (Donaldson 2000) and Margaret LaMontagne (Spellings)(Goldstein 2001;

Chaddock 2004), Bush's education agenda focused on raising standards and holding institutions accountable for results, deregulating the schools, and increasing education funding. Over the course of his governorship, Bush gained a strong reputation for working on education issues.

During Bush's tenure as governor, the state experienced what was dubbed the "Texas Miracle", in which average student performance improved and black and Hispanic test scores apparently rose dramatically (Klein et al 2000). While serious empirical questions would be raised during the 2000 campaign and afterward about the validity of the "Texas Miracle" and its relationship to Texas's accountability system (e.g. Haney 2000; Klein et al 2000; Toenjes and Dworkin 2002), Bush, Kress, and LaMontagne (Spellings) believed that they had found an effective model for reforming education, especially for disadvantaged students. However, when they examined the state of American education reform, they were dismayed to find that, even since the passage of the IASA, relatively few states had followed the trail they had blazed. The Bush team reviled what they perceived as the statutory limitations of the IASA and the apparent laxity of federal enforcement of the Act (personal interview with Sandy Kress, January 3, 2008; Personal interview with anonymous Bush administration official, February 26, 2008). The slowness of state progress toward standards-based reform – particularly in the area of accountability - was perceived as a serious problem. Thus, according to Sandy Kress (Personal interview, January 3, 2008), "There was a real sense that we needed to get everyone moving in the direction of the leader states [such as Texas, North Carolina, and Massachusetts]. We needed to push the laggards to really emulate the leaders." Michael Petrilli (Personal interview, February 1, 2008), who worked in the Bush administration during the formulation and implementation of No Child Left Behind, agreed: "Bush believed that many of the states would be mealy-mouthed on accountability without a prominent federal role. He believed that it was essential to extend the Texas model to all states."

As early as 1999, as then-governor Bush was gearing up for his run for the presidency, Kress proposed (and the president agreed) that federal education resources should be leveraged to extend what they believed were the key to success to every state in the Union (Lemann 2001). Bush and his education advisors hoped that lodging Texas-style accountability in federal legislation would ensure that students in

all states reaped the apparent benefits of the Texas approach. Drawing on Kress's policy ideas (Rudalevige 2003b), which were substantially borrowed from Rotherham's PPI brief (as Kress acknowledged; Kress interview, January 3, 2008; Gorman 2002), these concerns animated Bush's campaign rhetoric. Bush heavily emphasized education reform issues, and especially the issues of standards, testing, and accountability for results on the campaign trail in 2000.[14] The *Washington Post* would ultimately characterize Bush's emphasis on education reform and the "Texas Miracle" as the "cornerstone" of his 2000 presidential campaign (Mintz 2000; Yardley 2000b).

In discussing his "blueprint" for education reform after the election, Bush emphasized that "change will not come by disdaining or dismantling the federal role in education (quoted in Manna 2004:128)." Indeed, consistent with his administration's analysis of the problems facing education, Bush's blueprint, *No Child Left Behind*, contained proposals that would create important new mandates on the states (Bush 2001). Specifically, the proposal called for all states to devise content standards in science and history, create mechanisms for rewarding or punishing districts and schools based on performance, establish annual tests for all students for grades 3-8, and develop annual report cards that reported disaggregated student performance trends. Additionally, the blueprint signaled that the administration would take regulatory steps to improve the quality of teachers (Bush 2001: 5). To be sure, in a nod to conservative priorities, Bush's blueprint included a proposal to permit students in failing schools to use Title I funds to attend private schools, as well as a plan to provide states and districts with dramatically increased flexibility in exchange for performance accountability. However, as we shall see below, Bush would ultimately abandon these conservative priorities in favor of centralizing accountability measures.

Toward the Final Legislation: Marginalizing Alternatives during House and Senate Consideration of No Child Left Behind

The election of George W. Bush provided the final piece in the puzzle for the coalition advocating the expansion of prescriptive federal leadership in standards-based reform. However, it still had to defeat challenges from the left and the right that opposed this policy direction. In 2001, the coalition, drawing on the political support provided by civil rights and business leaders, took important

steps to limit the influence of other groups inside and outside Congress which, for one reason or another, objected to the expansion of federal authority.

Reformers' cooperation in working toward compromise legislation centered on prescriptive federal leadership was built on a series of meetings and communications between the principal players, in which Bush and other administration officials played a pivotal role. The president assiduously courted New Democrats during his transition and early in his term, inviting them to consult on how to reform the ESEA (Rudalevige 2003:35; Eilperin 2001). In addition, Bush publicly praised the New Democrats' reform proposals, and declared that he wanted to work with both Republicans and Democrats to reform education (Anonymous 2001). Bush also appealed to the disaffected liberals. At House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner's recommendation, the president made concerted efforts to woo Miller, inviting him to the transition-period meeting with New Democrats and moderate Republicans (Lemann 2001; Nather 2001). Bush was successful in convincing Miller that he was serious about raising the achievement of disadvantaged students and would compromise with the Democrats, and Miller agreed to push for bipartisan legislation (Gorman 2001). Although Kennedy was not invited to the transition period meeting, he was consulted by the president prior to the release of the White House "blue print (Baker 2007)." Subsequently, during Senate consideration of various reform proposals, administration officials elicited Kennedy's cooperation by drawing him into unofficial negotiations outside the regular committee structure, in which the White House had invested primary responsibility for the development of the Senate version of its proposals (Rudalevige 2003:37). Building on these discussions, key New Democrats and liberals, on one hand, and reform-oriented Republicans, on the other, would pledge to work for bipartisan ESEA reform, and would rally against "killer amendments" that would upset reform-oriented legislation (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008).

Reform Democrats Limit the Influence of Liberals

Following the 2000 presidential election, liberal Democrats continued to stress increased resources as the key to school improvement (e.g. Nather 2001b). Many liberals also remained ambivalent

about shifting the federal role to focus on standards and accountability, fearing that these would unfairly penalize disadvantaged students. During debate over NCLB, liberals would propose amendments that challenged the reform elements supported by the reform Democrats, the president, and their civil rights and business allies.

However, reform Democrats would work diligently to ensure that liberal Democratic initiatives would not undermine reform. At several moments Democrats within the reform coalition helped block provisions championed by liberals that would have eliminated key proposals favored by Bush and other proponents of prescriptive accountability. In one critical example during committee consideration of the legislation, Miller used a parliamentary maneuver to undermine a popular amendment that would have stripped the mandatory testing requirement from the bill (Nather 2001). In another crucial example from the Senate floor, key Democrats voted against (or failed vote on) a proposal by Christopher Dodd of Connecticut that would have upset a delicate compromise on a block grant pilot initiative brokered by Edward Kennedy and Judd Gregg; the amendment was defeated 47-50 (Nather 2001c). Indeed, consulting with Gregg and the White House, Kennedy and his reform allies regularly worked to vote down amendments that threatened the standards-based reform core of the legislation (Mykoff and Pika 2008:52).

During consideration of No Child in committee and on the floor, Republicans maintained party discipline to block new spending for class size reduction and school renovation advocated by liberal Democrats (e.g. Sack 2001b; Eilperin 2001b; Alvarez 2001). To be sure, reform Democrats often voted with their more liberal colleagues on spending issues during the debate over No Child Left Behind. On the whole, the Democrats were ultimately quite effective in increasing the federal commitment to education spending; the final conference committee report on the bill called for a 20 percent increase in education spending, even though the initial administration proposal only called for a 3 percent increase (McGuinn 2006:176).

However, in certain key instances on the chamber floors and in conference, reform Democrats voted against spending proposals that threatened Republican support for the broader reform project. For

example, on the House floor, Miller voted with a virtually unified Republican contingent against a popular Democratic proposal to extend the federal government's commitment to providing resources to states and localities for school construction; the proposal was defeated 49-50 (Nather 2001d). In a similar development on the Senate floor, Kennedy, along with Lieberman and Bayh, voted against a proposal by liberal Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota that would have allowed states to defer annual testing until funding for Title I was tripled; the amendment failed (Nather 2001e; Rudalevige 2002:35). Reform Democrats also voted to help defeat a "deal-breaker" floor amendment by Senator Christopher Dodd that would have required states to even out the financing disparities between rich and poor school districts; the proposal was defeated 42-58 (Nather 2001c). In perhaps the most significant instance of this dynamic, Democrats in the reform coalition agreed in conference to the final conference report on the legislation even though it did not contain new mandatory funding for federal special education, a major Democratic priority for the reauthorization (Mycoff and Pika 2008:57).

Thus, while liberal Democrats were successful in securing significant new funding for education, reform-oriented Democrats were willing to help defeat particularly controversial spending initiatives that would have undermined support for the broader legislation. Reform-oriented Democrats also challenged liberal efforts to eliminate standards-based reform policies from the legislation.

Bush and his Allies Limit the Influence of the Conservative Intellectuals

Although Bush's "blueprint" included block granting and voucher proposals, the administration recognized that modifying or abandoning these proposals was the best way to win Democratic votes and achieve bipartisan reform.[15] Given that Republican margins in Congress were razor-thin and that reform Democrats and Republican moderates might defect from a sharply conservative bill, Bush knew that blood-letting over these conservative policy items would not promote his objective of furthering standards-based reform (Robelen 2001b). Additionally, the truth was that government-based accountability, which was being touted by New Democrats and liberals and their business and civil rights allies, was more consistent with Bush's own experiences and ideas about reforming education.

From the beginning, the president signaled that he would be willing to jettison the conservative elements of his bill in order to preserve a bipartisan compromise (Personal interview with Andrew Rotherham, March 4, 2008). This dynamic was most apparent in the case of school vouchers. The president hardly mentioned vouchers during his campaign, and downplayed the issue in announcing the "blueprint" (Kornblut 2001; Tait 2001). Additionally, administrative officials stressed that education reform would not be sacrificed on the altar of private school choice (Sack 2001c). During the negotiations over No Child Left Behind in April to May 2001, administration negotiators apparently accepted the removal of voucher planks in the House and Senate versions of the bill (Nather 2001). After vouchers were cut from the House bill, Sandy Kress "made it clear [Bush] would declare victory even if the House bill stays as it is", according to *CQ Weekly* (Nather 2001f; Fine 2001). Bush's intervention, coupled with members' realization that vouchers would scuttle the bill, led to strong floor votes against proposed voucher amendments in both houses, which featured the defection of key Republicans from the pro-voucher party line (Rudalevige 2003:38-40).

The president provided more consistent rhetorical support for "Straight A's." This stance was both ideological and strategic. On one hand, Bush did prefer more regulatory flexibility; on the other, after the loss of vouchers, conservative enthusiasm for reform rested on it (Personal interview with anonymous Bush administration official). During Senate negotiations on the legislation in April and May of 2001, Democratic senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts had supported a limited block-granting proposal as an olive branch to conservatives, which made it into the Senate version of the legislation (Nather and Carey 2001). However, on the House side, Congressman Miller declared that "Straight A's is a deal-killer", and threatened to pull Democratic support from the bill (Kiely 2001; Nather 2001c). The president implored Miller to accept some version of "Straight A's", but he refused. At the advice of Boehner, Bush agreed to support a version of the legislation that had been shorn of "Straight A's" in committee (Nather 2001f). The president then called 23 House Republicans who he believed he could convince to support the bill to the White House. At the meeting, he extracted a promise from Jim DeMint

of South Carolina, who was planning to offer a "Straight A's" proposal on the floor of the House before the chamber vote, to withhold his amendment (Schlesinger 2001; O'Beirne 2001).

Despite considerable dissatisfaction with the bill among conservatives, the president and the moderates were able to hold enough Republicans in line for the legislation to pass both houses. To be sure, during the conference negotiations, provisions permitting the use of Title I funds for the purchase of private supplemental services and a limited "Straight A's" pilot (both of which were in the Senate bill) were agreed upon in order to sweeten the deal for conservatives (DeBray 2006:121); but these developments hardly placated them, as the legislation substantially extended federal mandates on the states, provided only very limited flexibility, and retained many of the categorical programs that conservatives found so objectionable (Kafer 2001; Finn 2002). Ultimately, though the final votes on the conference reports were overwhelming, many congressional Republicans, knowing that Bush needed a "big win" to make good on his campaign promises and show leadership in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, held their nose and voted for the final legislation in significant part out of loyalty to the president.

Bush and the "Big Four" Limit the Influence of the Governors

As the previous chapter has suggested, many governors, especially the southerners, supported the expansion of federal authority that came with the passage of the Goals 2000 and the IASA in 1994. It is likely the case that the governors supported these developments because they desired the resources and believed they would have a great deal of flexibility in implementing the acts. However, as noted above, unanticipated developments, especially the dramatic increase in the number of conservative Republican governors that followed in the wake of "Revolution" of 1994, led the governors to become, on the whole, much more skeptical of federal intervention in the politics of education reform.

As the reauthorization process began in 1998-1999, many state governors hoped that they would enjoy continued *de facto* flexibility or additional *de jure* flexibility to implement reforms as they chose. Patricia Sullivan, then the NGA's director for education legislation, contended that the National Governors' Association wanted Congress to "fix some of the obvious errors" in the IASA, but "stay out

of the way" and "keep supporting the good work we do" (quoted in McDermott and DeBray-Pelot n.d.:18). Important Republican governors such as Christine Todd-Whitman of New Jersey and John Engler of Michigan requested more flexibility and significant block-granting (DeBray 2006:56; Sack 1999c), and NGA policy statements authorized for 1998-2000 called for more flexibility in federal education policies in exchange for results-based accountability (Governors' Role in Supporting Standards-Based Education Reform 1999 n.d.; NGA Principles for ESEA Revisions n.d.). During this period, the NGA also proposed "performance partnerships", which were similar to Straight A's block grants, except that they would require states to continue to leave compensatory education funding formulas intact (DeBray 2006:69).

The governors' proposals obviously clashed with those of reformers who perceived limitations in state education policymaking, but resonated to a degree with conservatives' ideas, even if they did not go as far as conservatives wanted. During the failed 1999-2000 reauthorization process, the NGA worked closely with members of congress, particularly in the Senate, to push forward their proposals. However, the elections brought major changes in the dynamics of gubernatorial involvement in the reauthorization process. Governors were relatively reticent during the debate over No Child Left Behind, no doubt in part because the majority of the governors were Republicans and did not want to be perceived as disloyal to their president. However, in an August 17, 2001 letter to the primary congressional sponsors of the legislation, the governors did criticize proposals to require new accountability structures in all states, mandate that 100% of students in each state achieve proficiency, create new testing demands absent "full funding", and establish new expectations for teacher "quality" (National Governors' Association 2001) – all of which ultimately became part of the law.

To be sure, President Bush consulted with governors on his education reform proposals on several occasions during and immediately after his transition period (e.g. Manna 2006:118-119). However, it is unclear whether these meetings cut the governors in to the ongoing debate over ESEA reform. Indeed, some observers with links to the NGA suggest that the president and his advisors used the meetings to warn the governors not to openly criticize the president's proposals or the ongoing

negotiations over the legislation (Personal interview with Ray Scheppach, January 15, 2008; Personal interview with David Shreve, January 23, 2008).

There is also indirect evidence that the most important congressional leaders in the education negotiations – George Miller and John Boehner in the House, and Edward Kennedy and Judd Gregg in the Senate – may have isolated the governors during consideration of the bill. Rather late in the game – on October 5, after versions of the legislation had already passed both houses of congress, and during the conference process – the NGA sent what can only be characterized as a plaintive letter to this "Big Four", which suggested that the governors perceived that they were not being consulted.

> As those who bear the greatest responsibility for implementing any changes enacted by Congress, we would hope there would be full consultation with the nation's Governors prior to any agreements on key issues. Governors want to ensure the success of any congressional action, so such consultation will be critical for any new law to work… As policymakers responsible for education programs in states, the nation's Governors continue to be deeply concerned about these and other issues and strongly urge that you share prospective education proposals once they become available (National Governors' Association 2001b).

Interviews with Ray Scheppach of the NGA and David Shreve of the National Conference of State Legislators confirm the governors believed that they were left out of much of the process of policy formulation (Personal interview with Ray Scheppach, January 15, 2008; Personal interview with David Shreve, January 23, 2008).[16] Ultimately, the legislation imposed significant new mandates on the states, which the governors had hoped to avoid.

Conclusion

No Child Left Behind represented a major expansion of the prescriptive federal role in propelling standards-based reform in the states and localities. The tough new testing, accountability, and teacher quality requirements significantly out-paced the policies in place in most states at the time of the Act's passage, and imposed substantial new implementation burdens on state and local officials (Education Commission of the States 2002). The Act's passage was built on the ascendance of a coalition including civil rights leaders, business groups, New Democrats and disaffected liberals, and reform-oriented Republicans, who supported a vigorous new government-based educational accountability system. The emergence of this coalition was founded in the states' collective failure to embrace standards-based

education reforms, in particular those in the areas of school accountability and teacher quality. These patterns struck reform leaders as major problems requiring remedy through the expansion of prescriptive federal authority. Thus, the story of No Child Left Behind clearly shows that the barriers to the widespread adoption of political reforms created by federalism can ultimately propel the expansion of prescriptive federal authority. While federalism and state-level diversity are often portrayed as a major brake on the expansion of federal power, they may also have the opposite effect.

While conservatives have dominated national politics for most of the past generation, No Child Left Behind demonstrates that conservative ascendance is not inconsistent with national state-building. Indeed, as the layering of No Child Left Behind on top of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act suggests, No Child is a testament to the uneasy marriage of conservatism and liberalism, in which conservative ideas of achievement, accountability, and competition have been wedded to liberals' historic concern for disadvantaged and minority groups. Recent conflict shows the strain inherent in such an incongruous pairing; however, what we know about the path dependence of major policy changes suggests the marriage, for good or for ill, may endure.

No Child Left Behind also suggests that the tension between centralization and fragmentation is more dynamic – and more intractable – than is often realized. Though, as critics on both the right and left suggest, aspects of the law are clumsy and heavy-handed, it was precisely the inability or unwillingness of states to voluntarily adopt education reform measures – in particular, accountability measures – that provided the impulsion for the Act. This dynamic does not bode well for the future of American educational policy, which is stuck between the Scylla of tentative and uneven decentralized reform and the Charybdis of heavy-handed centralized policymaking. The real challenge for the future of education policymaking is to find a balance that creates flexibility for states that implement high-quality educational programs while maintaining an accountability baseline that ensures that no children are left behind.

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[1] To be sure, reformers perceived limitations in the content of federal education policy itself, and made efforts to redress these perceived limitations in new legislation. Reformers contested the historic orientation of federal policy toward ensuring state and local compliance with federal dictates on the spending of education funds, and sought to relieve some of these regulatory burdens in order to promote state and local focus on student achievement and school performance. Many reformers also objected to the inadequate targeting of federal resources on the most disadvantaged students. However, while the winning coalition that championed No Child Left Behind was successful in reducing compliance-oriented regulations and improving its targeting, its major achievements were in *shifting* federal policy toward performance-based regulation and in dramatically increasing the scope and specificity of this regulation.

[2] The administration's first initiative, "Goals 2000", enshrined eight national education goals, provided for the creation of voluntary national education standards, and disbursed funds to promote state development of educational content and performance standards and aligned assessments. The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, a reauthorization of the venerable Great Society program, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,

required states to adopt content and performance standards, aligned assessments, and accountability plans in exchange for access to ESEA compensatory education funds. The act also increased the flexibility in the use of funds.

[3] Though all states had developed educational content standards in reading and math by 2001, as required by the IASA, only 28 had completed performance standards (US Department of Education 2001). The fact that many states had not yet established performance standards undercut their efforts to develop aligned assessments, because such assessments presupposed agreement on performance expectations (Department of Education 2001: 25). Ultimately, according to a report by the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights (2001), which relied on data from the Department of Education, only 11 states' assessment systems had received full approval from the Department by 2001, with 20 others receiving either conditional approval (6 states) or a timeline waiver (14 states) to finish their examination systems (departmental reviews of the systems of other states had not yet been completed by 2001). There was a great deal of variation in states' commitment to implementing accountability measures; in truth, accountability was not widely popular in the states (Education Commission of the States 2002: 21). Yet another issue was states' inclusion of disadvantaged students in their regular accountability systems (6). The intention of the IASA was to create a unitary system of educational accountability within each state in which students and schools receiving ESEA Title I assistance (that is, schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students) were held to the same standards and performance criteria as all other students. This requirement was seen by its proponents as the only means for ensuring that disadvantaged students were actually held to high standards. However, according to a Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights report in 2001 (25), "About half (28) of the states operate dual systems of accountability in which either: 1) Title 1 and non-Title 1 are held accountable using different sets of indicators and/or performance standards or 2) only Title 1 schools are held accountable by the state or district outside of the performance reporting structure (see also SRI International/Policy Studies Associates 2004:ix; Goertz, Duffy, and LeFloch 2001:34)."

[4] "Disaggregated" accountability means school accountability based on the performance of disaggregated *groups* of students (e.g. demographic groups), rather than merely on the performance of the "average" student.

[5] The 1996 National Alliance of Business publication *Standards Mean Business* affirmed that: "Here is a capsule summary of the themes that should be present in a standards-driven reform plan: Content standards in each area of the curriculum, reflecting the knowledge and skills needed for productive work and effective citizenship. Performance standards that spell out the level of mastery expected in each domain. Alignment of teaching, technology, administration, and other school processes with the goals and objectives laid out in the standards. Assessments that measure student achievement against world-class levels of excellence. Information aplenty -- so that students, parents, educators, and elected officials know how students and schools are doing. Accountability for results: rewards for success and clear consequences for failure (Smith 1996)."

[6] As Riley complained in congressional testimony, "…more than 30 percent of newly hired teachers are entering the teaching profession without full certification, and over 11 percent enter the field with no license at all. Our ability to raise academic standards also is hindered by teachers teaching "out of field." Overall, nearly 28 percent of teachers have neither an undergraduate major nor minor in their main assignment fields. Another significant concern is the practice of using teacher aides as the primary instructors. All of these individuals are trying to do their best, but where they are being asked to take the place of a teacher we are shortchanging our students (Riley 1999)."

[7] An analysis of Gore's national press releases shows that Gore discussed education reform in 40.6% of his releases, slightly more than did George Bush (Marschall and McKee 2002:101), though the vice president discussed health care and taxes in more releases (in contrast to Bush, for whom education was his primary issue). Gore also heavily emphasized standards, accountability, and testing in his press releases, mentioning them in 27% of sampled policy statements on education issues (more than any other issue except teacher quality and reform, which was also cited in 27% of statements); on this issue, he competed closely with Bush (who discussed them in 33%) (Marschall and McKee 2002:104). During the campaign, Gore devoted 10 policy days to education and family policy issues, more than any other issue, and more than his opponent (who devoted 8 days to the issue) (Pomper 2001:215).

[8] Indeed, as Rotherham charged, "…it is important to note that Title I isn't a singular program at all. Rather, it is a funding source for state and local compensatory education activities which take many forms. *That Title I hasn't shown more encouraging results is not proof that these dollars can't be made to work. Overall results of Title I are evidence that without consequences for results, all states and localities haven't been forced to make Title I work.* Ineffective practices such as the use of unqualified teachers, especially around the most needy students, would certainly be curtailed if funding were contingent upon results. Accountability provisions are only as effective as the will to enforce them is strong. In the case of Title I, that will has been weak (6; emphasis added)."

[9] Rotherham (2002; emphasis added) would later explain his support for increasing federal accountability for results through ESEA in similar terms, highlighting the limitations of state implementation of standards-based reforms:

"*The states' haphazard results in complying with the 1994 requirements and improving low-performing schools overall are precisely why the law's accountability provisions ought to be strengthened and clarified.* In a host of policy areas inside and outside of education, history shows that clear federal prescriptions accompanied by real consequences bring results. That's why, for example, you can't buy an alcoholic drink almost anywhere in the country if you're under 21. It's why our cars and airplanes are increasingly safe. And it's why the vestiges of discrimination are being eradicated from our schools and society, through laws like the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Federal policymakers did not wait for states to address these issues on their own. Nor did they lament the states' incapacity to do so. Rather, they mandated clear standards and demanded results." In the same article, Rotherham also noted that "It's true that the accountability movement has been state-led, to a large extent. *Yet most states have yet to meet the requirements of the 1994 law, and it's clear that some won't move forward in any aggressive way without federal action* (emphasis added)."

[10] Indeed, during the 1994 ESEA reauthorization, Miller had authored an amendment (which ultimately failed) that would have required public school teachers to be certified in the subjects they taught (Nather 2001).

[11] As he complained in one speech on the Senate floor, "Since 1986, governors of both parties have emphasized the need to institute state accountability systems that include vigorous state intervention to help low-performing schools. But, the number of states that intervene in failing schools or school districts has increased only from 9 to 19. More than 30 states still do not have effective mechanisms for helping to turn around low-performing schools. A 1999 report by the Independent Review Panel for the National Assessment of Title I found that state support teams lack the capacity to serve all schools. Only 9 states report that school support teams are able to serve at least half of all schools in need of improvement. Among schools that reported in a 1998 survey that they had been identified as in need of improvement, less than half (47%) reported that they had received additional professional development or technical assistance from the state (Kennedy 2000)."

[12] Ironically, many of these conservatives, including Lamar Alexander, Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, and Bruno Manno, had contributed to the nationalization of the education agenda through their work during the first Bush administration.

[13] As Andrew Rotherham explains, "You had this conversation going on [among Democrats] that [Straight A's accountability] was sort of meaningless. What are you going to do if you have a whole state and you don't meet the benchmarks? Take the federal funding away from the whole state? So that was the concern around Straight A's accountability – that there would really be any incentive for a state to do the right thing, because at the end of the day there would be no real consequence (Personal interview, March 4, 2008)."

[14] According to a content analysis of Bush's national press releases (Marschall and McKee 2002), Bush mentioned education reform issues more than any other during the campaign (in 38% of press releases; the closest competitors, taxes and health care, were mentioned in 35.5% and 33.7%, respectively); and among education reform issues, Bush mentioned standards/accountability/testing issues most of all (in 33% of releases; the closet competitor, funding, was mentioned in only 22% of releases).

[15] When the president's proposal was announced, Democrats interested in reforming ESEA had made clear in a letter to the president that while they supported many elements of the Bush "blueprint," they would not accept significant block granting or vouchers.

[16] Other research suggests that governors felt frustration at being left out of consultation, though they "tended to keep these opinions under wraps (Manna 2006:137)."