

February 8, 1997

~~SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
EDUCATION - NAEP

MEMO TO: Bruce Reed and Mike Cohen
FROM: Terry K. Peterson
SUBJECT: NATIONWIDE MAJOR EVENT IN EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 27, 1997

BACKGROUND

On February 27, Secretary Riley will be releasing the first education achievement data, that roughly covers President Clinton's first term in office [Spring '92-Spring '96 -- as well as Spring '90 to '96]

The achievement data is in math from the National Assessment Education Program (NAEP), and it involves three different grades, 4th, 8th and 12th. The results will be positive news in all three grade from 1992 to 1996 and from 1990 to 1996.

In addition this test data will be reported by participating states, 43 and D.C., in grade 4 and 40 states and DC at grade 8.

POSSIBLE EVENT/S

An interesting media event could be for the President and Vice President to go to the 2 or 3 states that made the most progress and/or the two states that had the highest scores in math. It would demonstrate in concrete terms the President's and Vice President's commitments to better education -- community by community, and state by state across America. It would show that they are serious about Americas kids mastering the basics. It reinforces the President's State of the Union message about the need for meaningful national tests in the basics that individual students can take. The NAEP test uses sampling to give estimates of students' performance for a state and the nation, just as a public poll does, but does not provide individual student scores. The Administration's proposal for a National Math Test at grade 8 based on TIMSS (Third International Math Science Study) and NAEP would not only yield an individual student score, but also show how their scores compare to other states and, national and at times international averages.

The most improving states and highest scoring states in the NAEP math test offer an interesting set of bipartisan events. An ambitious agenda could possibly be for the Clinton's, Gore's and Secretary Riley to each visit a different state.

THE FOLLOWING ARE EMBARGOED UNTIL FEBRUARY 27,**LEADING STATES IN IMPROVEMENT:**

First in average gain in math is North Carolina, [the highest average gain in grade 4 and grade 8 from 1992-96.] Second in average gain is Texas, [from '92 to '96 in grades 4 and 8] (Michigan is close behind.) Two states, Maine and Minnesota, are tied for highest scores at both grade 4 and grade 8. Connecticut is tied for first in 4th grade but not 8th and North Dakota and Iowa are tied for first in grade 8 but not in grade 4.

THE MESSAGE:

While we have made significant improvements in math achievement as a nation during the past 4 and 6 years, we also know that as a nation we trail behind our international competitors in math. The President challenged the nation to reach even higher standards and that is why he wants individual students to have the opportunity to take the new national math test in the 8th grade in 1999. It will be based on and international (TIMSS) standards of excellence. The President could challenge parents, teachers, principals and school boards to start right now to get rid off the watered-down math curriculum in many middle schools and junior high schools and put in more algebra and geometry. He could urge them to participate in the national math test in 8th grade in 1999 to see how they do in mastering the basics and algebra and geometry by the end of grade 8. Finally, he could challenge school districts and colleges to give middle school teachers the time and training to teach well the rigorous math needed by 8th grade to succeed in the 21st Century and on this test.