

# DEMOCRATS *for* EDUCATION REFORM



President-Elect Barack Obama

Education Transition Memo

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## Table Of Contents

<b>Overview</b> .....	3
<b>Legislative Strategy Recommendations</b> .....	9
<b>Big Picture – Staffing</b> .....	12
<b>White House</b> .....	13
<b>White House Domestic Policy Council</b> .....	13
<b>Office of Management and Budget</b> .....	15
<b>Department of Education</b> .....	16
<b>Secretary of Education</b> .....	16
<b>Deputy Secretary/Undersecretary</b> .....	18
<b>Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education</b> .....	21
<b>Title I Director</b> .....	22
<b>Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education</b> .....	23
<b>Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Dev.,</b> .....	24
<b>Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs</b> .....	26
<b>Assistant Secretary for English Language Acquisition</b> .....	26
<b>Office of Innovation and Improvement</b> .....	27
<b>Office of Civil Rights</b> .....	28
<b>Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services</b> .....	29
<b>Institute of Education Sciences</b> .....	29
<b>Office of the General Counsel</b> .....	30
<b>Office of Communication and Outreach</b> .....	32
<b>Additional Recommendations</b> .....	32

# DEMOCRATS

## *for* EDUCATION REFORM

### Overview

This document is intended to serve as a blueprint/guide on education issues for the November 2008-09 transition of the new Democratic Administration. By framing the major challenges an Obama Administration will face on education, this document seeks to help inform strategy decisions that the next Administration will have to make early in its tenure.

The Democratic Party has become a “big tent” on education reform issues. The Obama campaign understandably has had to thread some difficult political needles and create some policy ambiguities during the election. The challenges to embrace the theme of *change* and keep the promises made for real reform will become even greater with the need to get more specific and make concrete policy decisions.

This document is designed to do two things:

First, it seeks to pose education policy questions, a possible message, and broad legislative ideas for the post-election transition that promote the campaign themes of change and reform and at the same time are politically viable, both vis-a-vis the party and the general public.

Second, it recommends staff for key federal posts involved in developing and executing federal education policy.<sup>1</sup> The people discussed here are diverse in their views on education and other issues but they share several common characteristics:

- They are accomplished education policy professionals who can inform the Obama Administration’s efforts in powerful, intellectual, logistical, and political ways.
- They all have the maturity to put aside their own agendas and work to enact President Obama’s education agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Education organizational chart appears in Appendix A.

- While reformers, they are also Democrats who in many cases have served in previous Democratic Administrations, worked for Democrats at the state level, and have been active politically in Democratic Party issues.
- Finally, and most importantly, they all share a passionate commitment to equity and the idea that all American children, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income deserve what the most fortunate American children enjoy today.

The candidates we are recommending here are not even necessarily the “ideal” candidates that DFER or its supporters would envision. Rather, they represent the kind of pragmatic “middle ground” reform which President Obama has owned throughout his campaign for president. We believe they embody the “yes we can” tone that can get things done with this president.

Having a team in place which can collectively implement the Obama education agenda will – it should go without saying – be crucial. While it is obviously important for the administration to be faced with a diverse set of voices and viewpoints, it is even more important, once a decision has been made, that each of those voices is unambiguously consistent in supporting the administration and communicating its views.

A “team of rivals” approach, or one in which the administration seeks to placate/nullify all of the various education interests by giving everyone a seat at the table will do very little to advance any sort of agenda which could possibly be considered “change” absent strong leadership at the top. Likewise, promoting individuals who are incapable of publicly backing the entirety of the president’s agenda will squander our opportunity as Democrats to make the most of our return from 8-year-exile. Put plainly, we are advocating for a strong team, comprised of savvy, trustworthy team players.

**About Democrats for Education Reform:** Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) is a New York City-based political action committee whose mission is to encourage a more productive dialogue within the Democratic Party on the need to fundamentally reform American public education. DFER operates on all levels of government to educate elected officials and support reform-minded candidates for public office. Members of DFER were early and consistent supporters of Senator Barack Obama’s run for president.

## QUESTIONS TO BE POSED

These are the questions we believe the new Democratic Administration should ask itself *before* the transition:

-- Is education a “first 100 days” initiative? (We suggest yes, at least in part; see below.) First year? Or beyond? What education goals could be accomplished in tandem with other early legislative efforts?

-- What do Democrats want to be *for* (instead of defining themselves according to what they are *against*) on education policy and what does President Obama want his legacy to be?

-- Should education be part of a broader economic policy agenda in the current economic and political context? A strategy of linking education and the economy has a number of political and policy advantages:

- 1.) Would capitalize on the biggest national public concern
- 2.) Would promote Congressional buy-in to an Obama agenda
- 3.) Would help move the debate above and beyond the policy and politics of No Child Left Behind
- 4.) Could put unions, businesses, and the education reform community on the same team – at least at kick-off as partners rather than adversaries

President Bill Clinton effectively used the broader economic theme to guide education policy in the first two years of his Administration. The result was at least 5 key education initiatives across 4 pieces of legislation (Goals 2000, IASA/ESEA, School-to-Work, Direct Lending, National Service). In addition to offering more opportunities for messaging and coalition building, this approach also offers allies and would-be allies on Capitol Hill more opportunities to engage on these issues, in turn building important political currency for the Obama Administration.

Key questions:

- Does the Obama Administration want to tackle K-12 through the omnibus approach (one big ESEA reauthorization) or through a set of more focused

bills in which specific themes, issues, and constituencies could be highlighted?  
e.g., Economic policy via a high school reform and/or school-to-work type initiative as well as school accountability efforts, public education innovation efforts, or education human capital efforts.

e.g., College costs and volunteerism through a national service initiative

e.g., National security through a foreign language and international education initiative

e.g., Outreach to Hispanic-Americans through bolstering supports for limited English proficient children

-- Are there key sub-themes the Administration wants to emphasize as part of its education message and policies?

e.g., Social entrepreneurship; business-government partnerships; youth development; college completion

## Principles and Themes

These are the principles and themes that should undergird an Obama Administration's efforts on education policy throughout the first term:

Broad Themes:

**Educational Opportunity – Centrist.** Emphasizes government as a key force, ample resources *and* personal responsibility.

**Education As a Civil Right – Leverages** a strong federal role and builds buy-ins from key Democratic constituencies.

Sub-themes:

**Accountability –** As a means to the above ends, rather than an end in itself. As a foundation and springboard for good policy. Necessary but not sufficient.

In order for accountability to work on behalf of equal educational opportunity and civil rights, accountability systems *must* allow the comparability of data and disaggregation.

If comparability is lost (such as through an accountability system of local assessments) the whole game is lost. This issue can be easily framed as giving parents “apples to apples” information to compare schools and make educational decisions for their children.

**Teacher Quality –** While accountability will be primarily a game of defense and technical improvements, *teacher quality will largely involve offense and innovation.*

Research shows that improving teacher quality and effectiveness is the single most important thing policymakers can do to equalize educational opportunity. It is also the most difficult issue to tackle politically. Staffing of the new Administration should be tilted heavily toward those with expertise and commitment in this area.

If success is achieved on this issue, it could be one of the President's most important and lasting education policy legacies.

Innovation in Public Education – The concept of —change is one which this president has personified. There is a tremendous opportunity to showcase a new federal role in promoting innovative changes which assist schools in finding new ways to solve old problems. Incentives can and should be provided to promising reform models, and success should be aggressively taken to scale.

Resources (attached to quality) – Ample funding, well spent. It is often said of Congressional appropriators that blood is thicker than water – i.e., allegiances across parties within the appropriations committees often outweigh alliance to party and Presidential priorities. Budget hawks and conservative Democrat's will also want to fly the flag on fiscal discipline, and may make an example out of the President's first year budget. So groundwork needs to be laid *from the start* to ensure that the President's priorities are funded with prospects for increases in the out-years.

The big-picture goal should be to exceed Bush's first year increase in key education programs. Title I funding (NCLB) increased 19% in the first year of the Bush Administration. So an increase in the 20% + range would be required to claim the mantle of "largest education funding increase in history." Coupled with evidence of an Obama Administration's commitment to reform, President Obama could credibly say that his Administration will support schools more and demand more from them, than any administration in history.



## Legislative Strategy Recommendations

The new President will have to take control of the process, or the process will take control of the new President. (Remember: gays in the military was the first issue up for Clinton in 1993, but not by choice.)

We suggest moving at least one education bill speedily through in the first 100 days of the Administration. (If the administration feels it is in a position to push a reauthorized No Child Left Behind law which achieves comprehensive education reform, it should certainly do so. We remain concerned that the climate will not be conducive for a big legislative fight on education issues, however, making a “low-hanging fruit” approach - with some degree of actual substance - more likely.)

The Objectives:

- 1) Gain a sense of momentum on the education issue.
- 2) Build the impression that the President intends to take seriously his commitment to campaign promises.
- 3) Forge as strong a coalition as possible early on between the unions (NEA and AFT), civil rights, and businesses, on an easier set of issues in order to gear up for tougher fights down the road around key education reform.
- 4) Sustain the message of educational opportunity and economic competitiveness established during the campaign.

### Process

-- The effort would begin with an event (or events) immediately following the election with a bipartisan group of legislators and key leaders in a thematic location outside of Washington to announce the President’s intent to vigorously push legislation to promote educational opportunity and economic development.

President Bush successfully used this general approach with a bipartisan event in Austin in 2000.

Invitees would include Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Boehner (or his successor), the Chairs and ranking members of the appropriate Committees, and a sprinkling of influential centrists from both parties.

This or a separate event also could include statements of support by key business icons like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet.

-- To create an initial splash of proactivity, pragmatism, and bi-partisanship, Obama could form a Senate “Gang of 14” which would block attempts to filibuster any bill having to do with education and economic competitiveness, broadly defined, except in “extreme circumstances.”

## The Bill

The bill would promote links between high school, job training, and business and have the following general features:

- a) Provide high school students with skills that would prepare them for both college and the workplace.
- b) Emphasize education and training in math, science, and high-tech, across the full gamut of occupations (from engineering to computer science to automobile mechanics).
- c) Create partnerships, between K-12 and higher education, and between public schools and private industry.

For example, high school students could earn industry accreditation by the time of graduation (like the Cisco program). They would have the opportunity to earn college credits, like current Tech Prep and “2 + 2” (2 years high school, 2 years community college) programs.

Scientists and engineers would be recruited to tutor high school students and be funded for 1-year sabbaticals as high school instructors.

*Every* high school would, in effect, be a “career academy.”

- d) Emphasize the value of national service. Students would earn scholarships, tuition assistance, and loan forgiveness through public service, broadly defined.

e) Tackle a few harder-edged issues in secondary education, e.g., a uniform graduation rate and Obama's proposal to track student progress toward high school graduation beginning in middle school.

f) Begin the process of creating incentives at the federal level to spur the growth of successful public charter schools and teacher compensation reforms at the local level – two issues on which Obama staked clear and decisive claims during the campaign.

Handled properly, both issues could be framed in a way which attracts very little opposition, particularly if couched as part of a larger initial reform agenda. g) Support the expansion of high-quality models – ranging from college preparation to dropout recovery to workforce preparation.

This would set a reformist tone and foreshadow future themes and successes on bigger K-12 fights down the road without an extremely divisive political fight.

Alternatively: If the overall legislative climate come January would make such an education package unlikely or a significant uphill battle, the president could achieve some of the overarching policy victories outlined here through the budget/appropriations process. The president might focus on key education-related campaign promises like additional funding for public charter school replication and teacher pay reform pilot programs.

No matter what approach is taken, we believe it would be best for the administration to steer clear of getting involved in any aspect of the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind until it has firmly gotten its footing. There will clearly be a lot of noise surrounding the issue, and seemingly innocuous policy changes in the form of waivers and regulatory tweaks could be counterproductive over the long haul.

## Big Picture – Staffing

What is Needed: Job Requirements for Education Staff at the White House and the Department of Education

**Experience** – Both real-world and practical. A mix of practitioners from the states and localities and Washington insiders who know all aspects of the legislative process is optimal.

A lack of experience put the Clinton Administration off-balance in 1993 for at least a year. (Recall the key moment when David Gergen was called in to “rescue” an inexperienced White House staff; this type of scenario is obviously best avoided.)

**Managerial skill and leadership** – As a multi-billion dollar agency, the department is not without its own set of unique management challenges. Candidates must be able to survive and manage effectively.

**Commitment** – Candidates should have a strong commitment to reform and the principles and themes stated above. One weak link can be fatal in a sustained public and legislative campaign.

**Backbone and Confidence** – Education reform is not for the faint of heart or the weak-kneed. The importance of being able to listen to and hear diverse viewpoints but also withstand cajoling and pressure is not to be underestimated.

**Facility with Facts** – The details in education reform matter. Policy is increasingly data-driven. Facts are the key antidote to misinformation and interest group-driven bias. Data is what is finally driving civil rights groups to be vocal, active, and reliable players on reform.

**Loyalty** – Individual candidates cannot view themselves as being greater than the sum of the administration’s parts. In many respects, the ability of the new administration to make the most of this opportunity to bring change to American public education will depend on team discipline and fidelity to the overall mission.

**Staffing Issue Note:** Much of what we will outline here assumes that the existing administrative structures of both the White House and Department of Education will remain in tact. We are not specifically advocating for either keeping or eliminating this status quo, but rather we are using the existing structure to capture and identify the types of individuals who should be included to make the new

administration effective and impactful. It is worth noting that the Department of Education, with nearly 30-years under its belt, is probably ripe some reorganization, along with other bureaucracies/programs such as Head Start to ensure maximum effectiveness.

## White House

Big picture work is likely to be done from the White House in the first several months of the new Administration.

John Podesta –Podesta brings White House experience and management expertise. He was well-liked on the Hill in the Clinton years and had a reputation for candor, discretion, and fairness.

In addition to his experience as White House Chief of Staff, Podesta's Center for American Progress(CAP) has done some of the best work on education (and other) policy issues over the past few years. While not an education policy expert, Podesta clearly understands the key issues in the debate.

Podesta would be the best person to oversee White House policy operations dedicated across various themes around a key set of education reform principles.

## White House Domestic Policy Council/National Economic Council

The Domestic Policy Council coordinates the domestic policy-making process in the White House and offers policy advice to the President. The DPC also works to ensure that domestic policy initiatives are coordinated and consistent throughout federal agencies. Finally, the DPC monitors the implementation of domestic policy, and represents the President's priorities to other branches of government.

Jon Schnur – We recommend Schnur to fill the slot of Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and Director of the Domestic Policy Council (DPC). We envision Schnur ably and enthusiastically playing a role similar to the one that Margaret Spellings assumed in the first administration for President George W. Bush.

Well-known to the Obama campaign, Schnur has undoubtedly been the campaign's top representative on education reform issues and has served as co-chair of the campaign's education policy team. Schnur is co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools, which aims to attract and retain outstanding school leaders.

Schnur has served as Special Assistant to Secretary of Education Richard Riley, President Clinton's White House Associate Director for Educational Policy, and Senior Advisor on Education to Vice President Gore. He has developed national educational policies on teacher and principal quality, after-school programs, district reform, charter schools, and preschools.

**James Kvaal** – Kvaal was the Policy Director of John Edwards' Presidential campaign and is now working on education policy at CAP. As such, he can do macro (message) to micro (policy). Kvaal could be a key liaison between the “big picture” folks and those who iron out the policy details. We believe he would make an excellent special assistant on education issues.

Kvaal has White House and Hill experience, particularly on higher education, but his experience with Edwards has allowed him to weave education and economic development – with strong civil rights and equal opportunity themes – into a broader set of domestic policies.

As a strong supporter of direct student lending, he knows how to stand-up to entrenched interests and debate issues in a public forum even when out-gunned. He is also facile with numbers and knows his way around a budget-- a huge plus, as quantitative skills are as valuable as gold (and twice as rare) in education policy in Washington.

**Roberto Rodriguez** – Rodriguez is the top education aide to Senator Ted Kennedy, pre-NCLB to present. He has the policy chops, is ideologically committed to education reform, and possesses excellent people skills. Roberto knows ESEA and most other federal education laws inside out, and is committed to its basic principles of equity, accountability, and teacher quality. He is highly skilled and experienced at coalition-building and reaching consensus on tough issues.

There may be no one who is more well-liked on the Hill, and like Kvaal, we believe he would make an excellent special assistant on education issues.

**Michele Jolin** – Jolin was Chief of Staff for Council of Economic Advisors under Clinton. She is now heading up a Presidential transition project at CAP and has specific focus on social entrepreneurship.

## Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Michael Dannenberg – Dannenberg currently works at the New America Foundation and was previously with Kennedy and Pell. He holds a rare combination of budget, K-12, and higher ed knowledge and skills. He's a reformer and he's creative, which will be sorely needed in this fiscal environment.

He launched New America's Federal Education Budget Project (a mini-Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for education) and their Higher Ed Watch blog that broke the 2007 student loan “pay for play” scandal.

Dannenberg is arguably the best quantitative person on education policy on the DC scene, and is able to link those quantitative skills to idea generation.

Dannenberg deserves primary credit for the \$18 billion financial aid and public service bill that went through Congress in 2007. He pushed the policy details for years with Kennedy and then created the political environment off the Hill to make it happen.

During the NCLB formation period, Dannenberg was one of Kennedy's strongest reformers. He wants to see more accountability, not less. Dannenberg is resolute in his commitment to the interests of poor and minority children. Delivered huge NCLB funding increases to high poverty, high minority areas. Few know the education formulas better. He holds a degree from Yale Law and a Masters in Education Policy from Stanford.

## Department of Education

It has been no secret that Democrats for Education Reform has been a strong backer of school leaders like New York City Chancellor Joel Klein and Washington, DC Chancellor Michelle Rhee. We believe that their intensity and urgency is necessary at the local level considering the severity of the nation's K-12 education problems. We acknowledge, however, that the need for them to occasionally —break some chinal in order to affect much-needed change puts them (and other hard-charging reformers like them) in an unlikely spot to be selected for a role like Secretary of Education (a role for which either would be well-suited,) We believe that there are, nonetheless, several strong reform-minded candidates who represent a closer alignment with President Obama's bold policy agenda and his less-confrontational style.

### Recommended Candidates for Secretary of Education:

**Arne Duncan** – Duncan has served as the CEO of Chicago Public Schools since 2001, and we believe he offers the strongest chance of advancing a realistic reform agenda based on current political realities.

In 1992 Duncan became Director of the Ariel Education Initiative, a program to enhance educational opportunities for children on Chicago's South Side, and in 1998 he joined the Chicago Public Schools as Deputy Chief of Staff for former Schools CEO Paul Vallas.

Under Duncan's leadership, Chicago has become a leader in school restructuring and in improving teacher quality. In his seven years at the head of the nation's third-largest school district, Chicago Public Schools has demonstrated sustained improvements in student achievement, graduation rates, and college-going rates, Duncan has credibility with various factions in the education policy debate and would allow President Obama to avoid publicly choosing sides in that debate in his most high-profile education nomination.

If Duncan was unable/unwilling, we would strongly recommend proven, inspirational, entrepreneurial reformers like Jon Schnur or Wendy Kopp.

**Wendy Kopp** – Put bluntly, Kopp's work with Teach For America has inspired an astonishing number of our nation's best and brightest college students to consider teaching in public school classrooms. At a time when the popularity of the public education franchise was suffering, Kopp's leadership ushered an optimistic breeze



of reform and has created an entire army ready to fight to save and improve public education.

In 1988, Kopp proposed the creation of Teach for America in her undergraduate thesis at Princeton University. She was convinced that many in her generation were searching for a way to assume a significant responsibility that would make a real difference in the world and that top college students would choose teaching over more lucrative opportunities if a prominent teacher corps existed. Kopp is well-known, well-liked, and widely respected, and would undoubtedly make a great team player for the Obama administration.

Jon Schnur – As previously mentioned, Schnur has epitomized the incoming administration's optimistic, entrepreneurial spirit on the education reform front. Schnur is co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools, which aims to attract and retain outstanding school leaders.

Schnur has served as Special Assistant to Secretary of Education Richard Riley, President Clinton's White House Associate Director for Educational Policy, and Senior Advisor on Education to Vice President Gore. He has developed national educational policies on teacher and principal quality, after-school programs, district reform, charter schools, and preschools.

Other possibilities:

Hugh Price - Price is a Nonresident Senior Fellow of Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution.

He is best known as the former President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League, where he gained expertise on education, civil rights, equal opportunity and criminal justice. At the Urban League he conceived and launched the Campaign for African-American Achievement, among other initiatives.

Price was an early and courageous voice for accountability-driven school reforms beginning as early as the late 1990's, ahead of most other civil rights leaders.

Alan Bersin – Bersin is best known as the former San Diego Schools Superintendent, after which he was California State Secretary of Education under Governor Schwarzenegger. He currently serves on the California State Board of Education.

Bersin is a resolute advocate of serious education reform and has shown strong commitment to bringing the Democratic Party into the 21<sup>st</sup> century on education issues in the face of countervailing political pressures. He is a seasoned veteran of the education reform war, has weathered some fierce storms, and has come out stronger and wiser for it.<sup>2</sup>

Mike Easley – Easley has served as the Governor of North Carolina since 2000. Education reform has been a major hallmark of the Easley Administration. Easley is best known for implementing “More At Four,” the first statewide pre-K program for at-risk four-year-olds. Easley’s *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative was named as one of the Top 50 Innovations in American Government by Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2008. He has shown the ability to navigate a politically difficult state and at the same time remain popular with the public and important Democratic constituencies.

Other Governors/Former Governors – Kathleen Sebelius, Janet Napolitano, Roy Barnes, Bob Wise all would be poised to lead the department.

## Deputy Secretary/Undersecretary

The Deputy Secretary of Education oversees and manages the development of policies at the United States Department of Education. The Deputy Secretary focuses primarily on K–12 education policy, such as No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The Deputy Secretary also has responsibility for carrying out the intergovernmental relations of the Department. The Deputy Secretary becomes Acting Secretary of Education in the event of the Secretary's absence, disability, or a vacancy in the Office of Secretary.

The position requires the ability to act as a nexus between all operations of the Department – policy, legislation, enforcement, oversight, and research. The job thus requires a person with both policy knowledge and political skill, and ability to work closely with the White House and Congress.

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<sup>2</sup> Bersin also serves as a board member for Democrats for Education Reform.

The Under Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education now oversees policies, programs, and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid. The Office of the Under Secretary (OUS) currently is responsible for helping to implement the Secretary's Action Plan for Higher Education, which calls for expanding the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of higher education for more Americans. This position has had varying degrees of importance and various portfolios under previous Administrations. Its role would depend on what an Obama Administration would want to make of it.

Andrew Rotherham - Rotherham leads Education Sector, a non-partisan think-tank based in Washington. Over the course of just a few years, Education Sector has grown into one of the largest and best-regarded education policy shops in the country. We believe he would make an excellent deputy secretary.

Rotherham is one of the most visible Democrats on education policy, publishing books, papers, op-eds, and writing a column for U.S. News & World Report as well as commentary pieces for National Public Radio. Rotherham is also a state board of education member in Virginia (appointed by former Gov. Mark Warner) so he has a state policy perspective as well.

In the 1990s, Rotherham helped make the Progressive Policy Institute a key policy player on education. His work there led to his subsequent appointment as Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton in the White House.

Rotherham has a diverse network in education. In addition to launching two policy ventures of his own, he sits on the Board of Directors of several non-profits including Democrats for Education Reform. Rotherham also serves on advisory boards for a diverse group of foundations, universities, and non-profits in the education space including the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. He also advises state and national Democratic officeholders and candidates on education policy issues, and is active in Democratic politics in Virginia.

Although he works in the non-profit sector, he and his wife have raised and donated considerable amounts to Democratic candidates over the last several election cycles. He has helped raise funds for the Obama campaign during this cycle as well as helped on policy and surrogate work.

Russlynn Ali – Ali serves as Vice President of the Education Trust and Founding Director of the Education Trust-West, the west coast partner of the Education Trust.

As Director of the Education Trust-West, Ali has been on the frontlines in the fight to raise the academic achievement of all students at all levels, with an emphasis on serving Latino, African American, Native American and low-income students.

Ali is as comfortable gleaning key points from a spread sheet as she is speaking in front of large audiences, in person and on radio and television. There would perhaps be no better public spokesperson for an Administration that is serious about education reform aimed at equalizing opportunities for all Americans.

Ali is also highly skilled at building coalitions between legislators, business, and civil rights groups.

Ali is a member of the State Bar of California and prior to her non-profit advocacy career she practiced corporate and civil rights law. She has held several senior positions at various organizations serving youth education, including: Liaison to the President of the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, DC; Chief of Staff to the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education President; and Deputy Co-Director of the Advancement Project.

Ali serves on the boards and advisory committees of a number of education related organizations, including the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education's Curriculum and Instruction Committee and the California Governor's Committee on Education Excellence.

James Shelton - Shelton is currently employed as Program Director for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a position that he has held since July 2003. From July 2002 to June 2003, he was NewSchools Venture Fund's East Coast Partner. From July 2001 to May 2003, he launched the consulting division of Edison Schools, after Edison acquired LearnNow, a for-profit education management company that he co-founded in September 1999. Prior to LearnNow, Mr. Shelton worked for Knowledge Universe for one year, where he developed, acquired and operated several education-related businesses. Prior to Knowledge Universe, from Spring 1993 to the Fall of 1998 he served as a senior management consultant with McKinsey & Company. Mr. Shelton received his B.S. degree in computer science in 1989 from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and his Masters degrees in

Business Administration and Education in 1993 from Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

Ted Mitchell – Mitchell is the CEO of the NewSchools Venture Fund, which has had a hand in incubating many of today's most promising entrepreneurial education endeavors.

Prior to joining NewSchools, Mitchell served as the 12th president of Occidental College in Los Angeles. Mitchell's tenure at Occidental was marked by a dramatic improvement in both the College's national reputation and its engagement in the community, as well as by unprecedented financial growth. A former deputy to the president at Stanford University and vice chancellor at University of California, Los Angeles, he currently chairs the Governor's Committee on Educational Excellence. The committee is charged with making recommendations to improve California's system of K-12 finance and governance, and is President of the California State Board of Education. He also serves on the boards of a variety of nonprofit education organizations.

### Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

The Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education oversees the bulk of formula discretionary grant programs at the Department of Education, including Title I, Title II (professional development and teacher quality), Migrant Education, and a plethora of smaller programs. The current Assistant Secretary, Kerri Briggs, has not been very visible, but has been highly influential in guiding Administration K-12 policy. The Assistant Secretary under President Bill Clinton, Tom Payzant, was both influential and visible, as was Michael Cohen in the final years of the Clinton administration. This slot is crucial in terms of the federal government's ability to hold states' feet to the fire in terms of accountability.

Michael Bennett – Superintendent of Denver Public Schools. Bennett is both a very progressive and a very pragmatic reform-oriented Superintendent. Denver is a diverse district, with one of the strongest and best-known teacher pay plans in the nation. Teacher pay will be one of the top issues next year for NCLB re-authorization, and the one with the least amount of legislative history at the national level. Bennett would bring crucial skills and knowledge, especially on teacher issues, in particular the ability to work with teachers unions on reaching a deal on comparability of teacher quality across schools and teacher merit pay. This would be the crown jewel in any K-12 package.

**Anthony Alvarado** – Alvarado became well-known as the successful Superintendent of District 2 in NYC, and subsequently became Alan Bersin’s Lieutenant Superintendent in San Diego. Alvarado is now at Stanford University. He has a Cuban and Puerto Rican background; Spanish is his first language.

**Patricia Harvey** – While Patricia Harvey has not been mentioned in national speculation on Administration appointees, and she may be better known to Senator Obama than to some of us, we think Harvey, or someone like her, should be seriously considered for a high-level post.

Harvey made her reputation as a highly successful principal in Chicago, where she was renowned for her ability to use Title I funds wisely to accomplish school reform goals, at a time when Title I got much less scrutiny than it does now. She subsequently became Chief Administrator for Accountability under Superintendent Paul Vallas. After leaving Chicago, Harvey became Superintendent in St. Paul, Minnesota where she was a strong proponent of public school choice. She is now a faculty member of the University of Minnesota.

**Bart Peterson** – Peterson was a centrist Mayor of Indianapolis, particularly known for championing public charter schools and creative public sector reform efforts. Peterson lost re-election in ’07 because of a tax-revolt in the city. A mayor would be a non-traditional appointment for this post and Peterson’s appointment would send a clear signal that urban school improvement is a key priority of an Obama Administration.

### Title I Director

**Zollie Stephenson** – Stephenson currently holds this position and is a knowledgeable, respected career educator. We see no reason to have to change course, necessarily.

**Brad Jupp** – Jupp currently serves as the Senior Academic Policy Advisor to Superintendent Michael Bennett, Denver Public Schools. Jupp served as a union representative in negotiations between the district and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association on the achievement-driven teacher compensation system. Jupp would be a good progressive candidate for a number of slots in the administration. Any of the other candidates above would be ideal for this spot if they are not taken for a higher-level position.

## Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education

The Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) formulates federal postsecondary education policy and administers programs that address access to quality postsecondary education.

**Kevin Carey** – Carey is the Research and Policy Manager at the Education Sector.

In addition to managing the organization's policy team, Carey has published numerous articles, reports, book reviews, and op-eds, including two Education Sector reports: *College Rankings Reformed*, a blueprint for a new system of college rankings, and *Hot Air*, an analysis of how states inflate education progress under NCLB. In addition, Carey regularly contributes to the "Quick and the Ed" web log.

Carey has previously held positions with the Indiana State Legislature, The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Education Trust, focusing on budget issues in K-12 and higher education, school finance, and teacher quality.

Carey knows the ins and outs of higher education politics, policy, student aid, and data. He also has the ability to think K-16, which is important in the current policy environment, especially if the Obama Administration plans to make economic competitiveness and government-business key themes of its first term.

**Barmak Nassirian** - Nassirian is the Associate Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. He is principled on loan issues and spoke out early on the loan scandal that Andrew Cuomo spearheaded, which became national and resulted in the largest education measure passed in the 2008-09 Congress.

Nassirian has a long history of involvement in student loan issues and has usually been on the side of students while at the same time managing to work within organizations that represent administrators and institutions of higher education.

**Bob Shireman** - Shireman is the president of The Institute for College Access and Success, a non-profit policy research organization best known for the Project on Student Debt and the Economic Diversity of Colleges database. One of the nation's leading experts on college access and financial aid, Mr. Shireman served as an education policy advisor at the White House National Economic Council, in the

U.S. Senate, and at foundations and think tanks. He has played leading roles in student loan reforms, the creation of the GEAR UP college preparation program, the implementation of the federal higher education tax credits, and other initiatives. Kvaal or Dannenberg could also be slotted in here.

### Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development

The Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (OPEPD) oversees planning, evaluation, policy development, and budget activities in the U.S. Department of Education (ED). OPEPD coordinates these activities with ED principal offices and outside organizations such as Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and state education agencies. OPEPD is home to ED's Budget Service, Performance Information Management Service, Family Policy Compliance Office, and Policy and Program Studies Service. OPEPD coordinates activities of the Office of Educational Technology.

**Robert Gordon** – Gordon is a Senior Fellow at American Progress, where he focuses on education and domestic policy. Gordon is particularly knowledgeable on testing and teacher performance pay. While on leave from the Center in 2006 and 2007, Robert served as a senior advisor to the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, leading an overhaul of the city's multi-billion dollar school budgeting system and developing new human capital initiatives.

As a former clerk for Justice Ginsburg, policy director for John Edwards, and long-time CAP staffer, Gordon has strong credentials and contacts with progressives. At the same time, he is deeply committed to reform. In addition to teacher issues, he knows the budget side well. Besides running a complicated budget reform in New York City, Gordon has studied and written about the intricacies of Title I. Gordon has served as a consultant to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the last year on their education strategy and has worked with leadership in several school districts on emerging reform proposals.

**Kevin Hall** - Hall is chief operating officer of the Broad Foundation. He oversees the foundation's development of innovative education initiatives and investments.

He previously was a co-founder and senior vice president of business development of Chancellor Beacon Academies, which manages public charter and private schools across the U. S. Prior to working at Chancellor Beacon, Hall was a senior vice president of infoUSA, a publicly traded information services company. He has also held positions at McKinsey & Co., Goldman, Sachs & Co., and Teach For



America. Hall also worked as an elementary school teacher and as a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University. Hall received a bachelor's degree with honors in political science and economics from Swarthmore College and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School.

Alice Johnson Cain – Cain is a top education aide to Rep. George Miller for the past 5 years, and has demonstrated throughout her career a commitment to using policy to improve opportunity for kids and families.

Deeply committed to education innovation, accountability, and equity, knows ESEA well -- including the policy, players, and politics of the House. Particular expertise in performance pay, career ladders, mentoring/induction, and other teacher and principal quality issues. Proven record of working well across the aisle and of standing up to -- and standing firm against -- protectors of the status quo.

Previous experience includes: HELP Committee staffer for education champion (and Obama mentor) Paul Simon, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Clinton Administration, where she led the policy office at the National Institute for Literacy. Was also selected by Jon Schnur for a one year "detail" assignment to collaborate with him on a 21st century skills initiative for Vice President Gore.

Also, with his think tank and strategy background, Andrew Rotherham would be an extremely strong candidate for this role and our top choice for this position if he is not nominated for the role of Deputy Secretary (see above).

Again, Rotherham, who leads the Education Sector, is one of the most visible Democrats on education policy, publishing books, papers, op-eds, and writing a column for U.S. News & World Report as well as commentary pieces for National Public Radio. Rotherham is also a state board of education member in Virginia (appointed by Governor Mark Warner) so he has a state policy perspective as well as solid Democratic credentials.

## Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs

The Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) has a leadership role in planning, developing, and implementing the Department's legislative goals and strategies, notifying Congressional offices of grant awards and Department initiatives, addressing appropriations and budget matters, and monitoring the status of legislative proposals. OLCA also works with employees throughout the Department to respond to written and oral inquiries from individual members of Congress, prepare for legislative hearings, and schedule and facilitate meetings between members of Congress and ED senior officers.

Roberto Rodriguez – Rodriguez is the top education aide to Senator Ted Kennedy, pre-NCLB to present. Rodriguez is the —total package. He has the policy chops, is ideologically committed to education reform, and possesses excellent people skills. Roberto knows ESEA and most other federal education laws inside out, and is committed to its basic principles of equity, accountability, and teacher quality. He is highly skilled and experienced at coalition-building and reaching consensus on tough issues. There may be no one who is more well-liked on the Hill.

## Assistant Secretary for English Language Acquisition (Was formerly **“bilingual”**)

This office oversees all ESEA Title III (bilingual) formula and discretionary grant programs, foreign language formula and discretionary grant programs (Title V), discretionary grants funded under the former Title VII of ESEA and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA).

Peter Zamora – Zamora is currently at MALDEF. Formerly a bilingual education teacher, Zamora is very stalwart and knowledgeable on accountability. He is a leader among the civil rights groups that support education reform and knows the Hill. Zamora would be a team player on K-12 in general and could be deployed on the Hill to great effect on bilingual issues and in general.

## Office of Innovation and Improvement

The Office of Innovation and Improvement is the self-described “nimble, entrepreneurial arm of the U.S. Department of Education.”

It makes strategic investments in innovative educational practices through two dozen discretionary grant programs and coordinates the public school choice and supplemental educational services provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by No Child Left Behind.

It also serves as the Department's liaison and resource to the nonpublic education community. The Office helps to develop guidance on provisions and programs related to its work under No Child Left Behind.

**Kim Smith** – Smith is the Co-Founder of New Schools Venture Fund. Well-connected, Smith is one of the most knowledgeable and successful players with regard to entrepreneurial education reform ventures. She was on the ground floor of some of the most successful education reform initiatives of the last decade.

**Kevin Chavous** – Chavous specializes in education, corporate diversity counseling and public law and policy strategies for the Firm of Schonnesschein, Nath, and Rosenthal. He is regularly sought out for his advice regarding emerging charter school development issues in jurisdictions throughout the country.

Mr. Chavous served three terms in the Council of the District of Columbia where he was at the forefront of education reform within the D.C. public school system.<sup>3</sup>

**Shirley Sagawa** – Sagawa spearheaded Bill Clinton's National Service initiative. She now runs her own consulting business. Sagawa is smart, creative, and connected. She has the managerial, entrepreneurial, and creative skills to run with an idea and oversee a vibrant and productive educational policy office.

**Michele Cahill** – Cahill serves as the Vice-President of Carnegie. Previously, Cahill was Senior Counselor to the Chancellor for Education Policy under Bloomberg. Cahill played a pivotal role under Joel Klein in Mayor Michael Bloomberg's first term.

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Chavous also serves as a board member for Democrats for Education Reform.

## Office of Civil Rights

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is a sub-agency of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that is primarily focused on protecting civil rights in Federally assisted education programs and prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or membership in patriotic youth organizations.

OCR is one of the largest federal civil rights agencies in the United States, with a staff of approximately 650 attorneys, investigators, and staff. The agency is located in twelve regional offices and in Washington, D.C., headquarters. The Office for Civil Rights is responsible for ensuring compliance by recipients of federal education funds with several federal civil rights laws, including:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975

This is a position that needs to be re-charged under a Democratic Administration.

Carmel Martin - Carmel is General Counsel and Chief Education Advisor to Senator Kennedy for the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. She was Kennedy's point person on many of the key issues in the last ESEA reauthorization, including accountability and the equalization of teacher quality.

Prior to joining Senator Kennedy's HELP Committee staff, Martin worked as the Associate Director for Domestic Policy at the Center for American Progress. She previously worked in the Senate as Chief Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Jeff Bingaman and special counsel to Senator Tom Daschle. Earlier, she practiced as a trial attorney for the Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section at the Department of Justice.

Russlynn Ali – Ali is the Vice President of the Education Trust and Founding Director of the Education Trust—West, the west coast partner of the Education Trust. She is on the list for Undersecretary, but we also think she would be a perfect choice here.

Goodwin Liu - Liu is an assistant professor of law at Boalt Hall. His primary areas of expertise include education policy and civil rights, and the Supreme Court. Liu is widely published on these subjects in law reviews and the general media. Before joining the Boalt faculty in 2003, Liu was an appellate litigator at O'Melveny & Myers in Washington. He clerked for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Supreme Court and for Judge David Tatel on the U.S. Court of Appeals. He is a Stanford alumnus, Rhodes Scholar, and graduate of Yale Law School.

### Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

OSERS primarily oversees the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Vocational Rehabilitation. There are a number of compliance issues with IDEA that require special attention. With NCLB, the disability community has become increasingly outcome focused. There is, in turn, a serious demand for better assessments and accommodations for persons with disabilities, and this will likely be a key focus in the coming years.

Martha Thurlow – Thurlow serves as Director of the National Center for Educational Outcomes and is fantastic on the link between accountability systems and special education. Thurlow would be a candidate for other posts as well (e.g., planning and evaluation) that deal with accountability systems and special populations. A rare level-headed academic who bridges the research and policy worlds, Thurlow understands how data can be used to strengthen and broaden educational opportunities.

### Institute of Education Sciences

The Institute of Education Sciences oversees all research and collection of statistics at the Department of Education across four national centers: Education Research (NCER); Education Statistics (NCES); Education Evaluation & Regional Assistance (NCEE); Special Education Research (NCSER).

IES was established by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. The Administration made this into a relatively big deal, promising that IES would bring a new level of scientific rigor to the research arm of the Department. Grover (Russ) Whitehurst, the Director of IES since its inception, has set a high bar for

objectivity and fair-mindedness and has respect on both sides of the aisle and within the research community.

Jane Hannaway – Hannaway has done some highly notable work at the Urban Institute, particularly with regard to teacher quality and collective bargaining.

Catherine Freeman – Currently at the National Academy of Sciences, Freeman is a Republican who was formerly an aide to Assistant Secretary for Education and was then Deputy Secretary. Freeman knows accountability issues and knows where to look in state applications and state data systems for strengths and weaknesses. She is able to work in a bipartisan fashion and has strong ties to the progressive and pragmatic academics. Her NAS and Department of Education rolodex would be highly useful.

#### Office of the General Counsel

Dianne Piche – Piche' is Executive Director of the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights (CCCR), a key voice on education reform in Washington and in states and school districts throughout the country. She brings a wealth of experience in education and civil rights law, advocacy, lobbying, and policy research.

Piche has 22 years of experience litigating education cases in federal court and has played an integral role in two ESEA reauthorizations, assisting Congressional staffers in writing key parts of the law and lobbying for stronger provisions on behalf of underserved populations. She has served on three peer review panels for Secretary Spellings and served in other advisory capacities to the Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Kerri Briggs. Under Piche's leadership, CCCR has published seminal papers on state and federal policies related to magnet schools, school choice, state assessment and accountability programs, and teacher quality.

The Citizen's Commission has been the primary catalyst in organizing the nations' leading civil rights coalition, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, to mobilize on federal education issues. In 2008, LCCR, at the urging of CCCR, was instrumental in blocking attempts to suspend enforcement of NCLB's accountability and corrective action provisions.

Piche is a dogged reformer, with a clear sense of the link between civil rights and education, a lifelong commitment to poor and minority students, a strong legal background, and close attention to detail.<sup>4</sup>

**Kent Anker** – Partner at Friedman Kaplan Seiler & Adelman in New York City, Anker is strong on education reform and very sharp. Has the ability to work with teachers unions and tackle the tough legal issues around things like collective bargaining agreements.

Anker is a progressive Democrat who serves as a board member of Harlem Success Academy Charter School and Education Reform Now Advocacy.<sup>5</sup> Anker led subcommittees and participated in programs on NCLB and charter schools for the NYC Bar Association (1999-present). He served as a legislative aide to the UFT in the 1990's.

**Ross Wiener** – Wiener serves as Vice President for Policy at the Education Trust. Wiener is one of the most knowledgeable education policy experts in Washington.

Prior to joining the Education Trust, Wiener spent four and a half years as a trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. As an attorney in the Educational Opportunities Section, he investigated and prosecuted violations of federal civil rights laws in schools and school districts across the country, including cases involving desegregation, disability rights, harassment, and services for limited-English proficient students.

Wiener would be an asset across the Department: he can handle both concepts and data with equal ease; knows all the players; pays great attention to policy detail and presentation.

**Robert Gordon** – Profiled previously, also is a member of the New York bar and is well-versed in education law.

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<sup>4</sup> Dianne Piche serves as a board member for Democrats for Education Reform.

<sup>5</sup> Education Reform Now Advocacy is a non-partisan NYC-based 501-c-4 organization with some ties to DFER.

## Communication and Outreach

Rodney Ferguson – Ferguson serves as Managing Director & Principal of Lipman Hearne. Ferguson oversees the firm’s Washington, D.C. based public relations practice. Some of the clients Rodney has served include The Brookings Institution, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Aspen Institute, Pew Charitable Trusts, The College Board, the U.S. Department of Education, RAND, Scholastic Inc., the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the United States Selective Service System, and Seton Hall University.

Ferguson also serves on the board for the Education Writers Association, the largest national organization representing journalists who cover education.

Julie Petersen – Peterson serves as Communications Manager for the New Schools Ventures Fund.

**Additional Recommendations** This list includes seasoned professionals, as well as some young “up and comers.” These, especially those toward the top of the list, would be strong contenders for Special Advisor to the Secretary or other key roles as the Administration saw fit.

Steve Robinson- Obama’s Senate education aide

J.B. Buxton – Deputy State Superintendent, North Carolina Former aide to Governor Mike Easley

Sara Mead – Early childhood analyst now at New America Foundation, and board member of Democrats for Education Reform

Peter Groff – President of Colorado State Senate and Founder and Executive Director of the University of Denver Center for African American Policy

Erin Dillon – Education Sector staffer, and school choice analyst

Gina Burkhardt- Director of Learning Point Associates

Ethan Gray - Director of Education Policy at —Be The Change,|| former employee of Education Sector



Chris Cerf – Deputy Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education under Joel Klein, former executive with Edison Schools

Kristan Van Hook - Senior Vice President, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, Which develops and implements strategies on teacher quality and performance compensation initiatives

Patrick McGuinn – Assistant professor, political science department at Drew University, Prior to graduate school, Patrick worked for the Institute for Strategy Development, a political consulting firm in Washington, DC, and spent three years as a high school teacher in Maryland.

Appendix A – Department of Education Organizational Chart

