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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

*filed MB*

DATE: Dec. 5

TO: Mort Blackwell

FROM: Mike Horowitz

Per our conversation. Please  
note this is exceedingly rough and  
should not be circulated.

OMB FORM 38  
REV AUG 73

# DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUBJECT: Disorder in our Schools

## INTRODUCTION.

The Commission on Educational Excellence has focused long overdue concern on the quality of American education. To date, most of the proposals for addressing that concern have focused on higher salaries; more elaborate plant and equipment; new and expensive "educational initiatives". Whatever their merits as incremental improvements, however, it is now clear that they will not suffice to attain excellence. As James Coleman concludes in his recent book, High School Achievement:

"When study of the effects of school characteristics on achievement began on a broad scale in the 1960's, those characteristics that were most studied were the traditional ones[:] per pupil expenditures as an overall measure of resources, laboratory facilities, libraries, recency of textbooks, and breadth of course offerings. These characteristics showed little or no consistent relation to achievement. The characteristics of schools that are currently found to be related to achievement, in this study and others ... are of a different sort".

"The reasons for superior academic achievement in private as opposed to public schools "can be broadly divided into two areas: academic demands and discipline. For these are not only major differences

between the public and private sectors; as stated earlier, the schools within the public sector that impose greater academic demands (such as greater homework) and stronger discipline (such as better attendance) bring about greater achievement than does the average public school with comparable students".

There is broad agreement with Coleman's view of the importance of an orderly environment to learning:

- The Excellence Commission found that improved discipline is a prerequisite for improving our nation's schools.
- A bi-partisan merit pay task force in the U.S. House of Representatives cited improved discipline as essential to upgrading the quality of teachers and teaching.
- A forum of leaders of diverse educational organizations united in defining safe schools and discipline codes as "prerequisites" for maintaining teacher effectiveness.
- A number of other major critiques of American education have followed the Excellence Commission report in emphasizing that orderly and safe schools are requirements for effective education.

This widespread recognition of the importance of discipline to learning may not, at first blush, appear particularly insightful. What may not be fully understood, however, is the extent to which the disorder in America's public schools now transcends the routine difficulties of focusing a child's attention on learning. This paper details the extent to which order has deteriorated in all too many public schools -- and the magnitude of the obstacle that the problem consequently poses to quality education.

Moreover, it will become clear that the problem of school disorder is among the most significant, and perhaps the most overlooked, civil rights issue of the 1980's. As we shall detail, the problem has been allowed to become especially severe in the schools responsible for educating

the children of the poor (and particularly the minority poor). The resulting denial of equal opportunity should be as patent, and is in respects perhaps as cruel, as that which resulted from de jure segregation. Moreover, urban school violence is at the heart of the busing problem, both as cause (by generating the "de facto segregation" busing is demanded to "cure") and effect (giving rise to strong, frequently violent, parental resistance to busing orders).

Clearly, no raise in paychecks will increase educational quality -- and opportunity -- if the teachers who receive them are too afraid, or distracted to teach. And improved buildings, materials, or curricula will avail nothing if students are too afraid, or distracted, to learn.

Nor, as this paper will make clear, is this a problem that Government (at any level) can solve by itself -- although improvements in law enforcement and the procedures of the schools themselves are clearly necessary. The problem's roots can be addressed only by American parents acting individually -- and collectively through the schools. There is, this paper details, abundant evidence that parents, and Americans in general, are concerned about school discipline and the effects of its absence. Mobilizing such individual concern into community action is a task clearly within the President's responsibility not only to head the government but to lead the nation.

## I LEARNING DEPENDS ON GOOD DISCIPLINE.

The message of education research -- and of common sense -- is clear: if the American education system is to achieve excellence, the problem of disorder in the schools must be addressed. A consistent "portrait of an effective school" has emerged from educational research. Order and discipline have been established as determining factors of a productive school culture. In the words of one such study, "The seriousness and purpose with which the school approaches its task is communicated by the order and discipline it maintains in its building ... Students cannot learn in an environment that is noisy, distracting, or unsafe".

Studies done in other industrialized countries have found a the same strong relationship between good behavior and high achievement. For example, a study of schools in London, England, found that:

"... schools which did better than average in terms of children's behavior in school tended also to do better than average in terms of examination success ... and delinquency ...".

Clearly, disorder and violence in our public schools are very real barriers to educational excellence.

Grant's account emphasizes that much of the disorder in our schools is imposed from without, often by the courts. In the above example, the teacher's need for "witnesses" to secure punishment for an outrage that would have been handled with dispatch in the not-far-distant past results from a series of Supreme Court court decisions, timidly allowed to be extended beyond their original meaning by government and school officials. The Tinker and Gault decisions have been read as requiring schools to exhaust cumbersome legalistic procedures before imposing discipline. The Boston public schools provide a measure of the extent to which the disciplinary process had become distorted. Until very recently, students who entered the Boston public schools receive a twenty-five page document, called "The Book", which, according to Grant:

"contains thousands of words on student rights but only eleven lines of type referring to their responsibilities. From this pamphlet, a student learns that there are five different types of suspensions and that the least serious is the short-term suspension for three days or less. Before even the latter can be meted out, a student has the right to request an informal hearing with the principal and his parents, and, if he is dissatisfied, to appeal to the community superintendent ...".

The tide of so-called "student's rights" decisions (such as a recent New Jersey Supreme Court ruling prohibiting principals from searching student lockers for drugs) has also handcuffed the schools in dealing with the concurrent (and closely related) problem of student abuse of alcohol and drugs. The result is that chronically drug-dependent students are becoming casualties in the classroom.

Lest Grant's observation that anything which is not illegal is permitted be dismissed as exaggeration, there is constant pressure on Federal courts and agencies to impose just such a "no standard standard". In a widely circulated document, the ACLU has called for "a recognition that deviation from the opinions and standards deemed desirable by the faculty is not ipso facto a danger to the educational process". Predictably, the US. Commission on Civil Rights has also demanded the alteration of "standards deemed desirable by the faculty":

- Each month 2,400,000 students have their personal property stolen in America's secondary schools.

In the Boston school system alone, 4 out of every 10 students surveyed reported that they had been the victims of robbery, assault, or larceny. Nationally, three million secondary school children are victims of in-school crime each month, and almost 8 percent of urban junior and senior high school students miss at least one day of school a month because they are afraid to go to school.

As bad as the crime statistics are, they are only the visible "tip of the iceberg" of the problem of disorder in the schools. Absence of basic order is the norm in many public schools. According to Gerald Grant, author of a recent important article in The Public Interest magazine ("Children's Rights and Adult Confusions", Fall, 1982):

"In many urban schools today, hall guards or quasi or actual police officials are expected to maintain order in the halls and to some extent even in classrooms. The presence of raw power indicates that authority has been lost. All behavior is regarded as tolerable unless it is specifically declared illegal. Jurisdiction is so narrowly defined that a student who comes to a school principal after lunch complaining of being beaten-up is asked which side of the street he was standing on when the beating occurred. If he was across the street, it would be out of the school's jurisdiction and hence of no concern to the principal... One teacher, explaining why she hadn't interefered with a girl who clawed another in her classroom, said 'You'll only be after trouble if you physically handle them'. Another teacher was still shaking as she told us about a group of students who had verbally assaulted her and made sexually degrading comments about her in the hall. When we asked why she didn't report the students, she responded, 'Well, it wouldn't have done any good'. 'Why not?' we pressed. 'I didn't have any witnesses' she replied".



## II DISORDER IN THE SCHOOLS: HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

"Learning is impossible where behavior is disruptive".  
-- New York Times editorial, December 20, 1982

A Nation At Risk documents the threat posed to our country by "a rising tide of mediocre educational performance".

However, a mediocre academic performance may be the best we can expect from students who are afraid to attend school.

Students, teachers, and taxpayers are all victims.

### Students.

As George Deukmejian stated when (as Attorney General of California) he filed suit against Los Angeles city, county, and school officials for failing to provide safety in classrooms and schoolyards beset by violence: "It is cruel and unusual punishment to compel students to attend public schools where there is an excessive level of violence". Far too many students experience such punishment on a daily basis. Schools are failing in their basic responsibility to assure that their classrooms, hallways, and grounds are safe:

- Each month 282,000 students are physically attacked in America's secondary schools.
- Each month 112,000 students are robbed through force, weapons, or threat in America's secondary schools.

range of discretion of the principal and teacher, and change[d] the balance of power within the school. As a consequence, a student who is violent toward other students or teachers has less fear of apprehension and punishment". Nor have these policies worked to the benefit of students (particularly minority students, who bear the particular brunt of the consequences). Again Coleman states what should be obvious:

"This reduced authority of the schools, to the point where violators need not fear punishment, does not favor the interests of the students but sacrifices their interests to the violators".

There are, however, principals who are attempting to buck this trend. At George Washington Preparatory High School, a school in Watts that once considered one of the most violent public schools in Los Angeles, students now receive a different kind of "Book": A six page pamphlet listing student's obligations that students and their parents are required to sign. The Supreme Court has recently granted certiori review in the case of State of New Jersey v. T.L.O., which involves the question of whether drugs discovered by a school official while searching a students' purse constitutes "illegally siezed evidence". In the concluding section of this paper, you will be asked to direct that the Justice Department file briefs in this and/or other appropriate cases.

## Teachers

"Frank Skala was teaching a ninth-grade class ... when five young intruders entered and turned his classroom into a national news event. While horrified students screamed and cried, the intruders broke the teacher's nose, threw him to the floor and stomped on him. Television shows and newspapers recounted Mr. Skala's experience as an example of the violence that could occur even in a 'good school' ".

New York Times, February 8, 1981.

"... We are not going to get people interested in English or mathematics or social studies and languages unless we solve discipline problems and take out of our schools those students who prevent teachers from teaching".

Albert Shanker, President, American Federation  
Teachers

For many teachers, schools have become hazardous places to teach and definitely places to fear. Self-preservation rather than instruction has become their prime concern.

Brutal outbreaks of violence in the schools are one cause of teacher fear. Examples abound:

- A New Orleans teacher watched while two boys threw a smaller child off a second-floor balcony. She was afraid to interfere because the boys might attack her.
- High school girls in Los Angeles, angry over low grades, tossed lighted matches at their teacher, setting her hair on fire. The teacher subsequently suffered an emotional collapse.

National statistics demonstrate the magnitude of the problem which teachers must continually confront:

- ° Each month, 6,000 teachers are robbed in America's secondary schools.
- ° Each month, 1,000 teachers are assaulted seriously enough to require medical attention in America's secondary schools.
- ° Each month, 125,000 teachers are threatened with physical harm in America's secondary schools.
- ° Each month, 125,000 teachers encounter at least one situation where they are afraid to confront misbehaving students in America's secondary schools.

In the Boston school system alone, fifty percent of the teachers surveyed had been victims of robbery, assault, or larceny.

As previously emphasized, however, the crime statistics describe merely the "tip of the iceberg" of school disorder:

- ° The American Federation of Teachers found, in a survey of a cross-section of California schools in both urban and rural areas, that "teachers spend between 30 percent and 80 percent of their time on discipline".
- ° In a 1983 National Education Association poll about one in two teachers reported that student misbehavior interfered with teaching to a "moderate or great extent".

Attempting to control daily actions of disruption and disorder under the current constraints takes its toll:

- ° The International Labor Organization concluded in 1981, after studying schools in the United States and two

other countries, that "up to 25% of teachers suffered from severe stress that is 'significantly' affecting their health. This stress is mainly due to pupil violence". (Wall Street Journal, July 9, 1981)

- ° One psychiatrist who has treated many victims of teacher burnout describes it as producing symptoms identical to those found in World War I shell shock victims. This psychiatrist calls teacher burnout "a combat neurosis".
- ° Out of 7,000 teachers responding to a recent survey, over 85 percent answered yes to the question 'were there chronic health problems stemming from teaching? Twenty-seven percent of those in the sample indicated that they were victims of stress-related illnesses, and 40 percent said that they took prescription drugs to treat health problems resulting from teaching".
- ° A study of teacher burnout among Chicago teachers "painted a picture of teachers who were 'physically alive but professionally dead' ... Some teachers, who had all but depleted their stockpile of teaching vitality, were simply going through the motions of teaching, marking time until either retirement or a better job offer came along".

Even Charles Boyer, Commissioner of Education in the Carter Administration, has noted that:

"'Beaten down' by some of the students and unsupported by the parents, many teachers have entered into an unwritten, unspoken corrupting contract that promises a light work load in exchange for cooperation in the classroom. Both the teacher and the students get what they want. Order in the classroom is preserved, and students neither have to work too hard nor are too distracted from their preoccupations. All of this at the expense of a challenging and demanding education".

(High School, p. 144).

It is thus unsurprising that studies repeatedly show that poor student discipline, not income, is the primary factor in driving teachers out of their profession:

- The Oklahoma City Federation of Teachers discovered that 66 percent of the city's middle-school teachers and 52 percent of all teachers have considered quitting because of the verbal and physical abuse they receive from students.
- As the following results of a NEA nationwide poll indicates, teachers who experience significant problems resulting from student misbehavior are more than twice as likely to say they would not become a teacher again:

Misbehavior Affects the Desire to Become a Teacher Again

	Percent Who Would Become A Teacher Again	
	Yes	No
Attacked by a student.....	3.8	7.0
Personal property damaged or stolen.....	24.5	47.1
Study behavior interferes with teaching to a great extent.....	15.6	28.5

Source: National Education Association Teacher Poll, 1980

If America's schools are to be improved, good teachers must be attracted to and held in teaching. But lack of discipline, and the resulting stress placed on the teachers, have the opposite effect.

## Taxpayers

"Because of concern about rising crime on school campuses, the [Los Angeles] school board voted last year to spend an extra \$1 million to hire additional security guards ... at a time when other district programs were being cut because of budget restraints". (The Associated Press, May 21, 1980).

While students, teachers, and learning are the most direct victims of classroom disorder, the taxpayer is also victimized. The taxpayer pays teachers to teach, but teachers cannot because they are too busy working as police. The taxpayer builds schools that the students burn down. The taxpayer buys books and equipment and student vandals destroy them. The taxpayer pays his taxes for education, but buys burglar alarms, break-proof glass, and police patrols for the halls instead.

The statistics are striking:

- Each month, 2,400 school fires are set.
- Each month, 13,000 thefts of school property occur.
- Each month, 24,000 incidents of vandalism occur.
- Each month, 42,000 cases of damage to school property occur.

The National PTA has observed that the annual cost of vandalism -- probably in excess of \$600 million a year -- exceeds this nation's total spending for textbooks. Vandalism, however, is only one component of the bill for school violence and discipline problems -- a bill that would include the cost of lost teacher time and the medical bills teachers incur from stress or physical violence.

### III MINORITIES HAVE A PARTICULAR STAKE IN RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

"[George Washington Carver High School Principal] Hogans' ultimate and uncompromising power is not without focus or reason... he believes that he will only be able to realize his goals for Carver if her runs a tight ship ... His commitment is powerful and genuine. He believes that schools are transforming institutions that offer black children the chance to participate menaningfully and productively in society... But before they can learn, Hogans believes they must be strictly disciplined and mannerly. A chaotic school setting and a permissive atmosphere can only lead to ruin and failure. So there is a preoccupation with rules and regulations at Carver. Radios and basketballs are confiscated by the vice principal, boys can't wear caps or walk around with Afro-combs stuck in the back of their hair, and girls are not allowed to wear rollers in their hair. Visible conformity, obedience, and a dignified presence are critical concerns. In fact, the mood on campus is one of order and decorum. There is not the edge of fear or the potential of violence that one often experiences going into large urban high schools ...".

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, The Good High School, p. 35

Minorities are even more worried than whites about the lack of discipline in the public schools. This concern reflects the fact that minority students are doubly affected by violent and disruptive schools. First, they are more likely to be the victims of attack. Second, they are more likely to have their learning disrupted.

Minority students are especially likely to be attacked while at school. As the following chart makes clear, serious attacks on black, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian students occur at least twice the rate for white students.



**Minority Victimization Rates Expressed As a Percentage of Rates for White Students**

	<u>Serious Attacks</u>	<u>Robbed of Over \$10</u>
Indian.....	200%	330%
Asian.....	200%	33%
Hispanic.....	233%	267%
Black.....	256%	300%

Moreover, minority students are more likely to attend in which discipline has broken down and learning is schools disrupted. Students in predominantly minority secondary schools are twice as likely to be the victims of serious crimes as students in predominantly white schools. Teachers in these schools are five times more likely to be victims of attacks requiring medical treatment and three times more likely to be robbed. White teachers who teach in predominantly minority secondary schools are seven times more likely to be attacked and need medical attention.

Polls show that over 80 percent of minorities believe disorder in the public schools to be a serious problem -- and about half consider it a very serious problem. This is a higher proportion than the white population (although about 60 percent of the white population also consider discipline a serious problem).

There is sound basis for their concern. Minority families are more likely to have children in school -- 71% of all black and 75% of all Hispanic households had school age children in 1981, compared with 52% of white households. For too many of those minority students, discipline problems have effectively stolen the tickets to upward mobility that public schools have traditionally provided -- and not solely by

frustrating the achievement of academic excellence. Historically, the mingling of children of different backgrounds and income levels in America's urban public schools has given the poor a "leg up" the economic ladder while me at the same time promoting the development and maintenance of a common national culture. In far too many American cities (and increasingly in smaller communities as well), however, the abandonment of urban public education by all who can afford to do so has long since denied this advantage to the children of the poor, particularly poor minorities. And discipline is clearly a key factor in the abandonment of urban public education for private schools (or public schools in the suburbs).

The Secretary of Education's report to Congress on the financing of private elementary and secondary education reported that discipline was considered to be a very important factor in choosing their children's current school by 85.6% of public school parents who had considered other schools and 87.1% of private school parents. Among parents in both groups, this factor outranked even Academic Standards in importance and only the quality of teaching staff was regarded as more influential.

Even more revealing were the reasons for transferring a child from one type of school to another. Among surveyed parents who had transferred a child from public to private schools, discipline was the second most frequently cited reason. By contrast, none of the surveyed parents who had transferred a child from private to public schools cited discipline as a reason for transferring.

And these phenomena are without regard to race. Indeed, the proportion of black students enrolled in private schools increased by over 52% between 1969 and 1979, while the

proportion of white students enrolled in private schools declined by about 17%.

Those who have argued that school discipline is a synonym for anti-minority school policies thus have the matter precisely backward: The hard-won right of minority children to an equal educational opportunity is being jeopardized by unsafe and disorderly schools. Permitting the current deterioration of order in the public schools to continue would be "anti-minority" in the most fundamental sense.

#### IV WHAT CAN BE DONE?

"We believe that the discipline that we teach them here eventually leads to self-discipline that they will carry with them the rest of their lives ... We've been able to transform an urban high school with all the traditional ills into what we feel is one of the safest high schools in the country".

-- Principal, Detroit Southwestern High School

"When Joseph Clark was assigned as principal to Eastside High School in Patterson, N.J., he found teacher assaults, students carrying guns, drugs being bought and sold on campus, and sexual intercourse in the school's corridors and bathrooms. All that has changed ... What complex program did Joseph Clark use to bring about a learning environment at Eastside? During his first week as principal he expelled 300 of the school's 3,000 students. The word spread like wildfire that anyone that even looked crosseyed would answer to Principal Clark. Back in my day we called that kicking a certain part of the anatomy ...".

--Walter Williams

There will be discipline problems as long as there are students. The problems of school discipline, however, can be reduced to the more tolerable levels of the past. Research on schools where severe discipline problems have been "turned around" -- be those schools in Los Angeles or Atlanta or Detroit or Patterson, N.J. -- all points to a consistent prescription for disorderly schools. The striking feature of the measures involved is their common sense nature. They do not require massive spending -- only motivation and leadership. These include such simple steps as staff agreement on the rules students are to follow and the consequences for disobeying them, and involvement of principals and parents in the disciplinary process.

School after school has successfully implemented effective disciplinary programs -- almost always with results, often quite dramatic. The two schools cited above are especially striking examples of what steadfastly enforced discipline codes can accomplish. The American Teacher describes the change at Southwestern High School in inner city Detroit:

"Once one of the city's most violent, racially polarized high schools with the highest truancy rate, Southwestern is now a place where teachers can teach without fear of verbal or physical abuse, where students no longer roam the halls during classes, and where attendance has soared from around 53 percent to close to 87 percent".

And Walter Williams describes the transformation of Eastside High School in Patterson, N.J.:

"At Eastside, where the enrollment is two-thirds black, one third Hispanic, in the space of one year 82 percent of ninth graders passed a basic math test, compared with 55 percent the previous year. Fifty-six percent passed an English skills test, compared to 39 percent the previous year".

V ACTION IS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, UNLESS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE  
ARE MOBILIZED TO DEMAND IT

"The issue in the 1980's no longer centers on whether or not violence in American schools is serious; the issue no longer centers on whether violence is increasing or decreasing; the issue no longer centers on technical anomalies concerning under-or-over reporting of incidents. In the decade of the 1980's, the primary issue before large proportions of our urban schools (and sizeable numbers of our suburban and even rural schools) revolves around the continued viability of American education as it existed a generation ago".

--Contemporary Education Magazine

As noted above, the solutions to the problems of school discipline and violence are simple -- they just aren't easy. Because they are not easy, it is clear that school administrators will continue to ignore the problem unless the public is mobilized to demand action -- and the evidence that the problem is being ignored is overwhelming:.

- Only 1 of every 6 robberies or attacks recognized by school principals is reported to the police (NIE, Safe Schools Study, 1978).
- Over 60% of teachers who were victims of attacks felt that school principals failed to take appropriate action (NEA Teacher Poll, 1981).
- 43% of the students who attacked teachers received only the proverbial "slap on the wrist" -- or no punishment at all (NEA Teacher Poll, 1983).
- Over 75% of all principals reported that crime was little or no problem in their schools -- during the same period in which 3 million students and teachers every month were victimized by crime in America's secondary schools. According to the principals, only 157,000 illegal acts occurred each month -- two thirds of which were never reported to the police (NIE, Safe Schools Study, 1978).

The point bears repeating: over 3,000,000 crimes occur each month in America's secondary schools -- and school officials report only 51,000 of them to police. For every criminal act school officials report to the police, 58 go unreported. The National PTA puts it succinctly: "Students should be punished by the law when they are involved in assaults or violence".

If students who commit criminal acts go unpunished, other students -- and their teachers -- have even more to fear.

An additional problem is that too many parents don't care, a fact recognized by the public at large: 72 percent of the public cite lack of discipline in the home as the reason there is a discipline problem. Moreover, instead of supporting teacher actions, parents often interfere -- sometimes in violent ways. A 1983 Detroit Free Press survey of teachers found almost a quarter of all teachers had been threatened with violence by parents.

## VI THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

"I'm going to do everything in my power to call attention to the successes achieved by our educational system, but I won't hesitate to raise issues like parental choice, discipline, course requirements, and merit pay that go to the heart of our current crisis".

-- President Reagan, Letter to the National School Board Association

School environments can be dramatically improved -- if the American people act, and the evident national concern over disorder in the public schools can be translated into action. The issue of school disorder represents an opportunity for the exercise of leadership on a national problem tragically ignored by prior administrations.

The following actions that our respective Departments are prepared to undertake involve no Federal intrusion in the local schools. Rather, they are designed to support (and, where necessary, defend) the efforts principals, teachers, parents, and students themselves undertake to restore an orderly learning environment. The critical role that we shall ask you to assume at the conclusion will be to set those efforts into motion.

### Department of Education

The Department of Education plans to undertake the following actions:

- Focus the research capabilities of the Department and the National Institute for Education on the problem. One of the NIE centers would be directed to conduct extensive research into the prevention of school discipline/violence problems. Components of the Department itself would be directed to evaluate



anti-crime activities currently underway in local education agencies and to collect and disseminate examples of effective school discipline. In addition, the Department plans to give greater visibility to the its joint project with the National Institute of Justice to identify how local jurisdictions might better use their own resources to reduce school crime.

- Sponsor regional hearings on school discipline to seek possible solutions and highlight successful local efforts.
- Make schools' records regarding discipline and crime a major factor in selecting winners in the Secretary's Exemplary Elementary and Secondary School Competition.

#### Department of Justice

The Department of Justice will file "friend of the court" briefs in appropriate pending cases on the side of increasing the authority of teachers, principals and school administrators to deal with school discipline problems.

In addition, the Department will be establishing a National School Safety Center, which George Nicholson from Governor Deukmejian's staff has agreed to direct. In coordination with the Department of Education, the center will collect and disseminate data on school safety problems and their solution. Key elements of this program will include:

- A computerized national clearinghouse for school safety resources.
- A major campaign to increase public awareness of school violence/discipline problems and effective local approaches to them.
- Publication of handbooks and other publications apprising principals, teachers, and parents of their legal rights in dealing with disruptive students and information on successful approaches to specific discipline problems.

Proposed Presidential Actions

major

We urge that you deliver a ~~rationally selected~~ address on the school violence/discipline problem, and how Americans can overcome it. Such an address could emphasize the importance of excellence in education -- to all Americans, but particularly the disadvantaged -- and identify the lack of discipline as the greatest enemy of excellence in our public schools today. The importance of uniformly enforced discipline codes, parental support of the discipline process, and other solutions to the problem could be emphasized.

Additional actions that you might undertake include:

- Issuance of an Executive Order directing all appropriate Federal departments and agencies to review their activities and requirements and report to you on their impact on the ability of local officials to maintain discipline and prevent crime in the classroom.
- Initiate a program encouraging individual parents and students to sign contracts agreeing to school discipline codes of conduct, dress, attendance, and homework, and containing a commitment not to abuse alcohol or drugs and not to drink and drive.
- Create a Presidential Safe School Award to be presented to the principals of the winning schools in a White House ceremony.
- Declare 1984 Safe Schools Year or create a National School Safety Week.

Problems of school disorder have grown to intolerable proportions because past Presidents have ignored their responsibility to lead; and because Federal courts and agencies have too often undermined the ability of schools, communities and parents to act. If excellence -- indeed the basic ability to educate -- are to be restored to our nations schools the opportunity should be seized to reverse what past misguided attention, and tragic inattention, have wrought.