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January 13, 1983

MEMORANDUM

TO: Citizens League Board of Directors  
FROM: CL Community Information Committee (CIC)  
SUBJECT: Implementation of the CL Education Report

After much study and debate our committee has decided upon the following strategy as a first step in the implementation of the 1982 CL education report. It is submitted here, to the Board for your information.

SYNOPSIS: A Proposal for Legislative Action

relating to education; permitting low-income families to participate in a state-wide educational scholarship program; allowing all eligible participants to select the most appropriate educational opportunity for their children's needs regardless of whether said program is a public or private school, within the present district of residence or outside it, establishing guidelines for private school participation; encouraging educational innovation and the stimulation of new educational providers; promoting greater equity between all economic classes of parents and furthering racial integration.

PURPOSES TO BE SERVED BY THIS PROPOSAL

1. To enable lower-income parents to obtain much the same freedom to choose schools as wealthy and middle-class parents already have by allowing state dollars to follow parents' choices.
2. To further the course of racial and economic integration by striking down existing inequities in both the public and private school sectors. In the public sector this proposal will allow low-income parents to transcend school district boundaries which tend to perpetuate present racial and economic class distinctions. The proposal will further metropolitan desegregation and integration rather than confine those cherished societal notions to the inner cities alone. The proposal will also strike at any vestiges of racial or economic discrimination remaining in such private schools as choose to participate.
3. To provide alternative learning opportunities to those students who are not learning well in traditional public school settings. Much research indicates that such students tend to learn more in alternative environments than traditional ones.
4. To determine to what extent the quality and delivery of educational services are affected by economic incentives.

- No vendor eligible for public reimbursement may charge supplementary tuition to persons judged to be below the poverty threshold. Additional charges to others must be on an income-adjusted basis.
- Every school must publicly indicate the basis on which it's selection of student applications will be based.
- All eligible vendors must disclose aggregate performance data and other indicators of "effectiveness."
- Any participating vendor found to act in a fraudulent manner in relation to the above shall be denied access to public reimbursement for a period of five years.

3. Encouragement to Teachers and Administrators to Develop Innovative Programs

It is the intent of this legislation not merely to broaden access of low-income students to quality educational programs but to stimulate educators to develop new alternatives which, by altering conventional practices, may pave the way for systemwide improvements. By unfreezing a portion of educational aid payments towards parents' choices it becomes easier for educators and new educational providers to initiate new and creative options.

As a result, there may be many new vendors interested in providing services in return for public reimbursement. These alternative vendors may be present or former public school employees, non-public schools, social service agencies or businesses. Specifically, members of teachers unions are encouraged to create alternative schools for eligible students within their district or in other districts. Such alternative schools would be entirely union run, owned and operated, and would be essentially deregulated schools working with the district and under its supervision through a contract for services arrangement. Such schools would be able to allocate their own budgets according to priorities set by educators at the school site. Public school districts could allow such schools to operate in empty educational facilities or in extra space in currently operated facilities.

Teachers could align themselves in unconventional ways, perhaps banding together along the lines of a "group practice model" so common to fields such as medicine and law. (Given the strong need for additional mathematics and science teachers this act could provide the economic incentives necessary to encourage former teachers in these areas to return to education.) Such arrangements might see the principal or administrator working directly for teachers.

This legislation could also serve as a stimulus to a variety of other educational practices including greater use of para-professionals, development of master teachers and differentiated staffing, new mixes of classroom personnel and computers, school site management and budgeting and the potential for new contractual relationships between school districts and a variety of educational vendors.

4. Choice Procedures -- The Application Process

\* Parents/guardians intending to exercise choice must submit an application to the school of choice not later than February 1 the preceding fall term.

- \* In some cases a pupil may desire to transfer, even though his residence has not changed. In such cases the pupil may transfer upon mutual agreement of the school he is leaving and the school he would desire to attend. However, any pupil may change schools on the annual date for receipt of applications, irrespective of the agreement by the schools themselves.

7. Maintenance of Educational Standards

- \* All vendors providing educational services to scholarship students shall be in general compliance with all educational and academic standards required by law.

8. Compulsory Attendance Law

- \* The school district in which the pupil is attending shall be responsible for enforcing the compulsory attendance law.

9. Miscellaneous

- \* It shall be permissible for school districts and programs to explain their programs and services to students and parents living in other public school districts or who are attending private schools.
- \* It shall be permissible for public school districts and district personnel to establish innovative programs to serve scholarship students in school districts other than their own in order to broaden students access to a variety of educational opportunities close to their own neighborhoods.