
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR

FROM: RILEY

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ROD PAIGE, NOMINEE FOR U.S.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

DATE 1/18/01

CC: BOYD
MADER
SIMMONS
TELL

Personal:

- Born in Monticello, MS; mother was a librarian and father was a principal
- Bachelor's degree from JSU
- Master's and a doctorate from Indiana University
- Divorced
- Once told an interviewer that he split politically with his family and registered as a Republican because "the guys that were lynching us were all Democrats" (Washington Post, 12/30/00)

Awards

- Council of the Great City Schools' Richard Green Award as the nation's most outstanding urban educator in 1999
- McGraw Prize in Education (only the 5th American superintendent to win)

Philosophy

- Make sure that every student gets a first-class education, by keeping schools safe. Learning, backed by results, is the key. Parents are not customers, but partners. (NPR profile, 11/9/00)

Professional

- Served 10 years as Dean of the College of Education at Texas Southern University: established the Center for Excellence in Urban Education, a research facility that concentrates on issues related to instruction and management in urban school systems
- Served 10 years as member of the Houston Independent School Board: co-authored the board's *A Declaration of Beliefs and Visions* which called for fundamental reform through decentralization, a focus on instruction, accountability at all levels and development of a core curriculum across the district
- Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (HISD) since February 1994 (His selection did not include a national search, which incensed leaders of Houston's Hispanic community.):

1. supported a school voucher policy that allowed several dozen students from HISD's poorest-performing schools to attend nonsectarian private schools, using public funds. Few students made the move and the program has not caught on, not least because the private schools generally cost more than the taxpayer money provided to the students. Criticized for the policy, Paige said limited market competition can be a positive force and asserted that public schools will win the competition in the end. Paige required private schools taking vouchers to give state tests and to publish scores just like public schools. Paige wrote in an Education Week column in November that "we believe that public funds should go to students, not institutions, and there may be a time when vouchers will be part of the mix." During his January 10th confirmation hearing, Paige stated, "There's room for us to talk about this." He told Senators that he is not burdened "with any particular entrenchment as far as ideology is involved.";
2. created the Peer Examination, Evaluation and Redesign (PEER) program which solicits recommendations from business and community professionals for strengthening school support services and programs;
3. launched system of 20 charter schools that have broad authority regarding staffing, textbooks and materials;
4. beefed up graduation requirements (NOTE: I could not find details as to increases.);
5. implemented reading program that blends phonics and whole language, with an emphasis on phonics;
6. HISD was the first district in TX to institute performance contracts modeled on those in the private sector, whereby senior staff members' continued employment is based on their performance;
7. Principals work at the pleasure of the Superintendent, their contracts are linked to student performance, but their salaries jumped from \$45,000 to \$52,000. Principals have leeway in selecting staff members, spending money and contracting for services;
8. introduced teacher incentive pay which rewards teachers for outstanding performance and creative solutions to educational problems;
9. contracted with firms for food services, facilities, maintenance, payroll and personnel management;
10. contracted with an outside firm to operate alternative schools for hundreds of students with discipline problems; and,
11. adopted the innovative management system called Main-Event Management which is built upon [Model-Netics](#), a comprehensive management training and development program. It literally means "models in action." The Basic Course in Model-Netics is composed of 151 management models that function as guides to thought and action.

HISD Results

- Between 1994 and 1999, the proportion of students passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills rose from 49% to 74%.
- Under the district's own accountability measures, HISD has 20 "exemplary" public schools, twice the number as in 1999. The number of schools designated as "low-performing" and "low-acceptable" has dropped from 53 to 18 in the last year.
- Middle schools and high schools have been slow to reach the exemplary and "recognized" categories: just one high school and one middle school are rated "exemplary" this year.

Praise of Paige

- Gayle Fallon, president of the Houston Federation of Teachers, says Paige has been good at getting a real reading program in Houston. “There is choice at the schools, but the program has to be research-based.” (Education Week, 10/4/00)
- “Our union and local leadership in Houston have enjoyed a good relationship with Mr. Paige during his tenure as Houston’s school superintendent. We hope to continue this spirit of cooperation at the national level. His experience in urban education will be helpful in keeping the nation’s schools on the path to reform. Urban school districts in particular have begun to show considerable progress in raising test scores and turning around low-performing schools.” (12/29/00 statement by Sandra Feldman, President, American Federation of Teachers on Paige’s nomination)
- Frederick Hess, assistant professor at the University of Virginia, said that Paige is going to look at vouchers only so far as they further the improved reading and improved learning, specifically of minority and low income children. (Washington Post, 12/30/00)

Criticism of Paige

- Some parents and teachers say he doesn’t listen to their needs. (NPR profile, 11/9/00)
- Gayle Fallon, president of the Houston Federation of Teachers, says Paige has given principals too much authority. Some principals try to save money by not hiring enough qualified teachers and this puts stress on the rest of the teaching staff. (NPR profile, 11/9/00)
- Paul Ofield, Executive Director of the Houston Association of School Administrators, worries that Paige’s rhetoric as to performance and accountability might be too strong. “It’s very easy to say that all schools will be exemplary, but it’s like saying every child will score 100% on a test. All kids can learn, but some learn at different levels.” (Education Week, 10/4/00)
- Iris Perkins, a past president of the Houston Council of PTAs worries that kinks in privatization of some HISD services need to be worked out: schools are not always clean and there have been complaints that the food is not always good. (Education Week, 10/4/00)

Areas of agreement

- Although our approach is different, we share the same goal of ensuring that every child receives a quality education which prepares them to enter into the workforce or into the higher education system.
- Dr. Paige is a proven leader in urban schools, however, most of our schools are not considered urban. This administration will continue to work with the Legislature and Mississippi’s educational leaders to identify effective programs for our students and to identify those areas in which we can improve.
- Dr. Paige supports increased accountability. With the 2000 education accountability bill and Dr. Richard Thompson’s leadership, our schools--their administrators, faculty and students—are measuring real progress, recognizing deficiencies and rewarding excellence. Encouraging progress from the classroom, we can expect great things for our schools and more importantly for our students.
- Dr. Paige recognizes the importance of business and community leaders’ support in improving education.
- Dr. Paige strongly supports reading programs and recognizes the impact that a student’s reading skills can have on the student’s educational experience.

Partisan Positions (Comments reflect the position of the DNC.)

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
• Federal Assistance for Education	Support	Oppose
Federal assistance for public education helps states and local school districts give all children a chance to achieve the American dream by preparing them to make a living, participate in our democracy, enjoy the arts, and succeed.		
• Voluntary National Reading and Math Exams	Support	Oppose
The Clinton-Gore Administration has begun developing voluntary national reading exams for 4 th graders and math exams for 8 th graders which make clear what students need to know in order to graduate and succeed in the emerging global economy.		
• Goals 2000	Support	Oppose
The Goals 2000 program helps states and local districts improve teaching and learning by supporting the development and implementation of touch academic standards in core academic subjects.		
• Education Infrastructure Improvements	Support	Oppose
The Clinton-Gore Administration has proposed helping states and local school districts repair crumbling schools and alleviate overcrowding.		
• Title IX	Support	Oppose
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 increases educational opportunities for all Americans by prohibiting gender discrimination in education programs and activities receiving federal assistance.		
• Bilingual Education	Support	Oppose
Bilingual education increases educational opportunities for our nation's 2.8 million limited-English proficient students by requiring them to spend a significant portion of their day learning English while allowing them to study core academic subjects in English and/or their native language until they master English.		
• Private School Vouchers	Oppose	Support
Private school vouchers undermine public schools, which are open to all students, and shift public funds to private schools, which can exclude students based on their ability to pay.		