

**Remarks of Arlene Ackerman
Superintendent, San Francisco Unified School District**

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**“Problems with the E-Rate Program: Waste, Fraud, and Abuse Concerns in the
Wiring of our Nation’s Schools to the Internet”**

July 22, 2004

Good morning Chairman Greenwood, Ranking member Deutsch, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on the matter of the federal E-rate program and the extremely interesting and revealing experiences that we have had in San Francisco’s schools as participants in the program.

I began my current role as Superintendent of San Francisco Unified School District, which serves the 59,000 public school students in the City and County of San Francisco, in July 2000. Needless to say, as I went about my work in these first several months I had a considerable amount to learn about the detailed context and conditions of San Francisco’s schools.

In addition to dealing with the core work of a school superintendent, such as evaluating school performance, organizing the district office, and collective bargaining, I was also hired with a mandate to improve the District’s business practices. Although I had worked on difficult fiscal and operational issues in other school districts, I soon learned of activities that for me represented a new low in my thirty-plus years of public education. I

saw the beginning of a trail of evidence that was ultimately found to lead to a number of individuals and organizations who plotted carefully to enrich themselves by depriving children.

In the fall of 2000, two former staff members provided me a copy of an E-Rate application that had been submitted for \$50 million. As I reviewed the document, several elements of the application troubled me.

First, it indicated that the District had set aside the approximately \$8 million that was necessary to contribute as a matching requirement. I knew that this was not the case. One of my first priorities had been to become intimately familiar with our financial condition, and nothing I had studied or heard indicated that any District funds had been set aside for this purpose.

Second, the description of the equipment and infrastructure that was to be funded with the grant proceeds seemed incoherent and did not reflect a strategy to align technology with instructional objectives. I saw woefully little evidence of sufficient planning, especially for an investment of this size.

Finally, and perhaps most obvious, the document materially misstated facts in describing the District. Among other things, the grant indicated that the District covered 400 square miles, in contrast to the actual figure of forty-nine (49) square miles. It also claimed that there is no mass transit system in San Francisco when we actually have one of the

nation's largest public transportation systems. In many respects, the grant seemed to be describing another district altogether.

As Superintendent, I typically require that documents that bind the District to any funding or other commitments undergo legal review. In this case, my elevated concerns about this grant led me to contact then City Attorney Louise Renne for assistance in reviewing the document. As Ms. Renne, current City Attorney Dennis Herrera, and investigator George Cothran will describe in detail, so began an investigation that ultimately led to the extremely disturbing conclusions that necessitate this morning's hearing.

However, despite the disturbing and cautionary aspects of our experience with E-Rate, I very much hope the members of the Subcommittee and the public will interpret my comments as supporting reform of the program, not its elimination. I fully agree with the goals of the program — to increase all students' access to technology, paying particular attention to the digital divide that would otherwise place the internet out of the reach of many children of low income families.

While our experience and those of several other school districts have revealed serious problems with the E-Rate program, I would respectfully ask policymakers to consider that the program has brought technology to unprecedented numbers of public school students. Nearly all classrooms and school libraries are now connected to the internet, most as a direct result of the E-Rate program. The program certainly needs to be reformed. To that end, I am gratified that San Francisco schools and the extremely

capable attorneys and investigators who have assisted us have helped accelerate discussion about how to increase scrutiny of E-Rate applications and otherwise reduce the possibility of waste, fraud, and abuse in this important program.

At this point I would like to introduce San Francisco's former City Attorney and our school district's former General Counsel Louise Renne.

House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Witness Disclosure Requirement -
"Truth in Testimony" Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)

Your Name: _____

1. Are you testifying on behalf of a Federal, State, or Local Government entity? Yes No

2. Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government entity? Local Govn. Yes No

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 1999:

N/A

4. Other than yourself, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

SFUSD


5. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any offices or elected positions held or briefly describe your representational capacity with the entities disclosed in question number 4:

Superintendent

6. If your answer to question number 2 is yes, do any of the entities disclosed in question number 4 have parent organizations, subsidiaries, or partnerships to the entities for whom you are not representing? Yes No

7. If the answer to question number 2 is yes, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received by the entities listed under question 4 since October 1, 1999, which exceed 10% of the entities revenue in the year received, including the source and amount of each grant or contract to be listed:

N/A

Signature: 

Date: _____

ARLENE ACKERMAN

Curriculum Vitae

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Work: 415.241.6121

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Ed.D., Administration, Planning and Social Policy,
Urban Superintendent's Program, 2001

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Master of Arts in Education, 1993

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
Master of Arts in Educational Administration and Policy, 1981

Harris Stowe Teachers College, St. Louis, Missouri
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, 1968

EXPERIENCE

Superintendent

Aug. 2000 – Present San Francisco Unified School District – San Francisco, CA

Serve as School Superintendent providing overall leadership and management of the San Francisco Unified School District, serving a diverse population of 62,000 children, 117 schools, 8,000 employees a budget of 650 million dollars. Additionally, serves as the County School Superintendent for San Francisco County Office of Education.

Accomplishments:

Academic Achievement

- Developed and published *Excellence for All*, a five-year comprehensive plan to ensure academic excellence for all children
- Negotiated an incentive package to encourage principals to work in under-performing schools
- Obtained a \$300,000 grant from the Haas Foundation to create the Office of Teacher Affairs
- Created a task force to review and recommend strategies to improve outcomes for English Language Learners (ELL)
- Established performance measures for test scores and set site-specific targets for improving drop-out, attendance, suspension, and expulsion rates
- Instituted 10 academic goals for all students in the District

Community Participation

- Developed consistent dialogue with teachers through establishment of monthly round tables with teachers
- Reinforced site-based decision making by monitoring School Site Council (SSC) elections
- Developed consistent dialogue with parents through establishment of monthly round tables with parents
- Increased community access and facilitated outreach by attending regular meetings with the Mayor, Chamber of Commerce, City Governance, the unions, and legislators in Sacramento

School Environments

- Proposed new and revised Board policies designed to clarify and strengthen various Facilities processes and strengthen the Citizen's Bond Oversight Committee

1998 - 2000 District of Columbia Public Schools - Washington, D.C.

Serve as Chief Executive Officer providing overall leadership and management of the Washington, D.C. Public School District. Responsible for a \$600 million operating budget with more than 9,000 employees.

Serve as the Chief Educational Officer providing leadership for the improvement of academic achievement in the development/implementation of all systematic reform initiatives. Supervise 146 principals.

Advise the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees, Board of Education, D.C. City Council Education Committees, D.C. Financial Control Authority, and U.S. Congress on compliance issues with relevant state and federal laws and regulations. Formulate policies and directives to support the district operations.

Serve as the Chief State School Officer providing state oversight for charter and non public schools.

Accomplishments:

Academic Achievement

- Increased test scores for two consecutive years
- Implemented academic standards (content and performance) and new assessments
- Increased instructional time for more than 30,000 students through the implementation of extensive summer, after school and Saturday academies designed to remediate and accelerate student achievement

Accountability

- Implemented new performance-based evaluations for principals and teachers
- Initiated annual parent/teacher and student surveys designed to provide accountability data
- Produced annual school profiles which delineate performance data
- Implemented performance targets for all schools
- Provided school incentive awards for schools reaching performance targets
- Negotiated new teacher and principal contracts which include pay for performance clauses

Improve Services to Support Schools

- Extended central office operational hours from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to better serve teachers and principals
- Put in place a satisfaction service center to improve response time to schools and parents
- Hired the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to oversee and manage capital improvements projects
- Successfully hired 1,100 new teachers as a result of an aggressive recruitment plan

Finance Reform

- Implemented the Weighted Student Formula, a school-based funding methodology to ensure equity
- Developed zero-based budget for each local school
- Gave schools authorization and control over budget and staffing needs
- Closed a \$62 million budget deficit

Public Engagement

- Established Office of Parent Affairs and trained more than 75 parents to become parent trainers
- Established Parent Centers in all schools
- Collaborated with businesses, philanthropic foundations, universities and community organizations to develop a business alliance
- Held extensive community awareness forums to educate public about a variety of district reform initiatives

Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer

1997 – April 1998 District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, D.C.

Served as Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer responsible for academic achievement and all District-wide educational support services including the supervision of 146 school principals. Implemented new content assessments, standards and accountability systems

Served as Chief Executive Officer of the District in the absence of the Superintendent. Provided overall leadership and management of administrative and educational support services. Managed \$340 million budget.

Deputy Superintendent

1996 - 1997 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington

Served as Chief Educational Officer responsible for academic achievement and all District-wide educational support services.

Served as Chief Executive Officer of the District in the absence of the Superintendent. Provided overall leadership and management of educational support services. Managed \$80 million budget.

Established, maintained, and monitored the overall effectiveness of all schools within the District. Schools not meeting established standards were placed on plans for improvement through the Effective Schools Process.

Supervised and provided administrative direction, leadership, coordination and management over curriculum, instruction and academic achievement functions: Curriculum Services, Early Childhood Programs, Special Education, Bilingual Education, Compensatory Education, Pupil Support Services, Magnet Programs, Professional Technical Programs/School-To-Work, Professional Development, Gifted Education, Athletics, Comprehensive Health Services, Visual and Performing Arts, and Curriculum/School-Based Reform Initiatives.

Served on the Executive Administrative Review Team, a structure designed to facilitate consistent, equitable, and informed financial decision-making in alignment with District goals.

Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and Academic Achievement

1994 - 1996 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington

Provided administrative direction, leadership, coordination and management of the following services and programs: Curriculum Services, Early Childhood Programs, Instructional Technology, Special Education, Bilingual Education, Compensatory Education, Pupil Support Services, Magnet Programs, Professional Technical Programs and Gifted Education.

Established division goals and objectives, division organizational structure and provided direction for the development, operation, supervision and evaluation of programs within the division.

Advised the Superintendent and Board of policies, regulations and laws which affected District academic operations. Supervised staff, recommended hiring, assigned work and established clear performance expectations for staff. Maintained state-of-the-art expertise in K-12 urban education.

Assistant Superintendent, Special Services

1991-92 University City School District, St. Louis, Missouri

Served as a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet offering expertise on instructional, student personnel and related issues. Developed agenda items for Board packets and made presentations at Board of Education meetings and professional development sessions. Developed and monitored all district policies related to special services.

Responsible for the administration and supervision of District-wide student services including special education and the Gifted and Talented Education Program. Supervised district counselors and school nurses. Served as the district's hearing officer for all long-term suspensions and expulsions.

Supervised the administration of all district assessment activities providing schools with staff development and interpretation of test results.

Principal

1990-91

Brittany Woods Middle Schools and Ronald E. McNair
Sixth Grade Center, University City, Missouri

Assumed the principalship of two separate schools serving a student population of more than 1,200 sixth, seventh and eighth graders and a staff of 135. Initiated major middle school restructuring initiatives including the implementation of a student advisory program, exploratory and enrichment classes, as well as, crisis intervention teams. Developed and implemented, in conjunction with local business partnerships, a banking system, employment program and community service projects for students.

Principal

1987-91

Ronald E. McNair Sixth Grade Center, University City,
Missouri

Provided administrative and instructional leadership for the creation of the district's first Sixth Grade Center and major restructuring initiatives at the middle school level including the implementation of technology for teachers and students.

Developed an instructional program that included team teaching, interdisciplinary instructional units, block scheduling, an advisory program and full inclusion of students with special needs.

Coordinated the development of a study skills program and student organizer. Established partnerships with local businesses including a role models and literacy program with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Provided staff with extensive staff development in the areas of learning styles, 4-MAT lesson design and Jeff Howard's Efficacy Training. Student achievement increased over a three-year period.

Director of Funded Programs and Strategic Planning

1985-87

University City, Missouri

Supervised and monitored all federal and state programs. Served as the major grant writer for the district. Supervised the Gifted and Talented Program. Provided the superintendent with information and interpretations of state and federal legislation.

Responsible for the coordination and development of the district's strategic five-year plan. Assisted in the development of professional inservice for staff and coordinated the district-wide textbook adoption process.

Director, Upward Bound Program

1982-84 St. Louis, University
 St. Louis, Missouri

Responsible for the administration of a pre-collegiate program for first generation college-bound students. Directed the overall administration of instruction and budget, as well as the supervision of staff.

Coordinated the development of an Advisory Board of 25 corporate, civic and educational leaders who secured additional funding, college scholarships and instructional equipment for the program.

Director of the Basic Skills Academy

1980-82 St. Louis, Missouri

Provided instructional leadership in the creation of a non-traditional tutorial program for academically "at risk" high school youth from a service area of ten school districts countywide.

Facilitated the development of learning style specific instructional curriculum and supervised the development and implementation of a recruitment plan for over 100 literacy volunteers.

Teacher

1968-80

University City School District - Teacher and coordinator of the elementary gifted program (1978-80)

University City School District - Early Education and classroom teacher (1974-78)

St. Louis Public Schools, Ritenour School District and Chicago Public Schools - Elementary and middle school classroom teacher (1968-74)

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty

1995-1997 Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Washington

Taught course for the Superintendent's Preparation Program on Improving Student Learning.

Adjunct Faculty

1995-1997 Antioch University, Seattle, Washington

Taught three-hour course for the Teacher Education Program on K-12 Issues in Education.

Superintendent's Intern

1992-93 Edmonds School District

University Supervisor - The PRINCIPALS' Center

1992-93 Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Responsible for supervising a 150-hour practicum experience for aspiring school principals. Facilitated the development of appropriate practicum experiences, monitored progress and implementation of standards for state certification.

Adjunct Faculty

1987 - Summer, 1993 Webster University - Graduate School of Education,
St. Louis, Missouri

Taught graduate level course in motivation and gifted education.

Adjunct Faculty

1989-92 National Louis University - Teacher Education Program,
St. Louis, Missouri

Core instructor for the Masters of Arts in Education Program. Taught methods, research and curriculum courses.

Regional Facilitator

1988-92 National Coalition of Marginal Learners and Responsive
Schools, Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri

Coordinated the collaboration efforts of ten schools involved in major program redesign with an emphasis on high-risk students.

Trainer, World of Difference Prejudice Reduction Program

1987-1992 St. Louis, Missouri

Facilitated prejudice reduction awareness seminars for area school districts and businesses

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Leadership St. Louis - Civic Progress and Danforth Foundation - Sponsors
Women in Leadership - CORO Foundation - Sponsors
Jeff Howard Efficacy Institute
Seminar on School Desegregation, Yale University
I.D.E.A. School Improvement Training
World of Difference - Facilitator Training, Prejudice Reduction Program
Total Quality Management Training
Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) Training

HONORS AND AWARDS

Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities
Uniquely University City Award for Outstanding Service
Apple for the Teacher Award - Iota Lambda Sorority
Distinguished Alumni Award - Harris Stowe Teachers College
McDonnell Douglas Fellow - Urban Superintendents Program
Harvard University's Urban Superintendents Program

AFFILIATIONS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
American Association of School Administrators
National Association of Black School Educators
Phi Delta Kappa (Harvard University Chapter)
D.C. College Access Board
Reading is Fundamental, Inc. - National Advisory Board Member
Council of the Great City Schools
National Urban Alliance - Advisory Board Member
Private Industry Council - Advisory Board Member (Past)
Washington Performing Arts Society - Board Member
Wesley Theological Seminary - Board of Governors
Haberman Educational Foundation - Board Member
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington - Board Member
Seattle University - Dean's Advisory Board (1996-97)
Seattle Pacific University - Superintendent's Preparation Program - Professional

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Education Advisory Board Member (1996-97)
Pacific Oaks College Northwest - Professional Educational Advisory Board
Member (Past)
Seattle Coalition of Educational Equity - Past Board Member

PERSONAL REFERENCES

Maudine Cooper

President, Washington Urban League

President, Washington D.C. Public Schools, Board of Trustees

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Washington, D.C. 20002

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Dr. Robert (Bob) S. Peterkin

Executive Director, Harvard Urban Superintendents' Program

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