

Appendix B

How the Department Consulted with Congress and the Public to Develop this Strategic Plan

The Vision of the President, Secretary and Congress

This plan has been in development for over two years. Its vision was first communicated in September of 1999, when then-Governor George W. Bush started discussing his plans to improve the quality of America's education system. This vision was further refined and communicated during the course of the presidential campaign and became even more concrete and actionable when President Bush issued his landmark education plan, *No Child Left Behind*. This vision was ratified when Congress passed the *No Child Left Behind Act* by an overwhelming bipartisan margin in late 2001.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* directly informs much of this Strategic Plan. For over two years the American public, stakeholder organizations and Congress discussed the merits of NCLB. Many of the measures in this strategic plan—such as the Adequate Yearly Progress targets—were debated at length. Therefore, while the Strategic Plan itself was not the subject to lengthy discussions, many of its ideas and measures were.

Management Reform

This Strategic Plan represents the marriage of the president's *No Child Left Behind Act* with the President's Management Agenda. This work started with the efforts of the secretary's Management Improvement Team, a strike-team of senior career managers who identified long-standing management challenges and developed the Department's Blueprint for Management Excellence. It was enhanced by the work of the secretary's Culture of Accountability Team, which interviewed employees and suggested ways to focus the whole agency on results. And it was greatly strengthened with the release of the President's Management Agenda (PMA), a comprehensive plan to improve the performance of the federal government.

Many of these management improvement efforts, reflected in Goal Six of the Strategic Plan, respond directly to concerns raised by the General Accounting Office, the Office of Management and Budget and the Department's Inspector General.

Consultation on the Strategic Plan

Therefore, the majority of this Strategic Plan embodies policies and initiatives supported by Congress or its investigative arm and discussed at length with the American public. Nevertheless, the Department still welcomed input on this plan. We did this in several ways:

- 1) Soliciting feedback from the White House and the Office of Management and Budget. At the very beginning of the process, the Secretary presented a list of priorities and strategic goals to the President for his approval. In addition, throughout the development of the plan, the Department worked closely with the

OMB to ensure the alignment of the plan with budget policy and the President's management initiatives.

- 2) Soliciting feedback from Congress. Several drafts were sent to relevant committee staff for review and comment. Briefings were offered at several points in the process.
- 3) Soliciting feedback from organizations. Laurie Rich, Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, e-mailed a letter to over 200 advocacy and membership organizations involved in education, sharing with them the draft strategic plan and asking for their comments. Deputy Secretary Bill Hansen also announced the release of the draft strategic plan at a February press conference on the Department's proposed 2003 budget. We received and considered comments from over eighty individuals and organizations.
- 4) Soliciting feedback from the public at large. An announcement was posted at the top of our web site homepage for two weeks, pointing users to the draft strategic plan and encouraging their comments. Several education web sites and e-mail services encouraged public comment on the plan.

In the end, we received and considered comments from over eighty individuals and organizations. This Strategic Plan is stronger because of those suggestions.