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**Statement of John R. Pfeiffer  
Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools  
July 10, 1995**

**At the request of Congressman Steve Gunderson, Parents United joined with members of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Committee on Public Education to formulate a comprehensive strategic framework for public school reform to present to the Education Task Force established by Speaker Gingrich and chaired by Congressman Gunderson. After intense negotiations under a very tight deadline, we reached consensus upon the plan we circulated to you and other members of our community in mid-June.**

**Some programmatic elements of the plan will be familiar to you, as the Superintendent had already begun to implement them over the past three years. These programmatic initiatives represent the best current thinking nationwide on effective educational practices and individual school management structures. At the same time, we recognized that these programmatic reforms were not being effectively implemented and were not producing the desired results.**

**The group acknowledged that despite lip service to the contrary, children too often do not come first in the D.C. Public Schools. Our entire city government is characterized not by a commitment to excellence but by a debilitating culture of mediocrity and incompetence at every level and in every city agency. Providing high quality services to our citizens far too often has ~~never~~ been ignored in the interest of preserving the bureaucratic status quo and protecting the jobs of District employees, regardless of their willingness and ability to perform their jobs.**

**The group concluded that this situation could not be allowed to continue any longer. Too many thousands of our children's lives are being damaged by our government's unwillingness to make the tough policy and management decisions necessary to give them a decent education.**

**The group concluded that if educational reform efforts were ever going to move beyond glossy publications and rhetoric and really produce meaningful results in terms of improved student outcomes, there must be a radical departure from the established ways of doing business in our city, which are now producing dismal educational results for the majority of our children.**

**In essence, what this plan proposes that is different from others is to create a school system that sets objective standards of excellence and holds its employees accountable at every level for achieving them. It will promote and reward excellence; it will help its employees to do their jobs well; but it will no longer tolerate mediocrity and incompetence.**

**There are no simple solutions, or they would have been adopted long ago. The troubled home conditions from which so many of our children come make the task of school**