

# Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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Education Speeches - HRC [1]

2013-0936-S

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Fig Summary John IS  
Per memo Childen  
COS/ 690.7431 Bureau  
today??

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
"RE-IMAGINING EDUCATION:  
A MATTER OF JUSTICE AND POSSIBILITIES"  
COLUMBIA TEACHERS COLLEGE  
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK  
APRIL 19, 1999**

Thank you. Thank you so much. I am absolutely thrilled to be here, and to see all of the energy and enthusiasm for education and for teachers and children that fill this auditorium. I want to thank my friends Jill for her dedication and for that introduction. I am very much aware – as those of you who know her are as well – that she is passionately committed to creating a more just world for all children. And she is a very good friend. Someone who listens and counsels and provides all kinds of support. It would not, therefore, be surprising that she and Ken would imagine this kind of lecture series. To create an opportunity for this revered institution to re-imagine education. To think clearly about justice and possibility in light of what we know about teaching and learning. To apply research and intuition. To reach out across the lines that too often divide us. And in the process, begin to translate into reality the vision of an educational system that would truly serve all of our children.

I want to thank everyone associate with the college for their kind invitation and for their warm welcome. I also want to thank the Margaret Douglas Elementary School Choir, who, I think, entertained us with a very original and honest song, which I for one was very impressed by. I particularly also want to acknowledge, if she's here, she's on my list but I haven't spotted her yet, my friend, Congresswoman Nita Lowey., and Congressman Anthony Winer, whom I'm told, both are here or will shortly arrive.

Now I have been introduced in many different ways, and described probably in more ways than I care to remember, but I think President Levine did an unusual job of staying true to his mission and creating a little excitement in the room. And that is certainly fitting, because he has brought to his position of leadership here a single-minded determination to reach every one of the students here to give that student the tools to become the very best teacher he or she could be.

And I too want to recognize the creative vision of Peter Cookson, whose Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation brings to the challenges we face some of the best minds, thinking about the hard problems of education and equity, justice and of community that you are so concerned about. And it isn't any accident. Because, as President Levine said, this institution arose from the thoughts and concerns of people very much like many of you in this auditorium, who in the

progressive era looked around and said to themselves, "What can we do in the midst of this rapidly changing society to create better opportunities and to educate more successfully all of the children. And the philanthropists and the college presidents and the bishops and others who came together understood that education was then, as it remains, the key to opportunity in our society. They also knew that people bring very different backgrounds and experiences, expectations to the educational process. And therefore they had to be far-reaching in their thoughts. They had to be willing to take some risks about what it meant to be an educator.

And so, then as now, you would find in this institution people who were on the front lines of educational research and practice. That commitment which you began with, you carry on today. And we see it in the work of Columbia's Teachers College. We see it in the results that your graduates are able to achieve. We see it in the way that help to change and shape institutions. We see it in the partnerships that you have created with schools, particularly here in New York City. You've initiated writing projects. You've helped to transform professional development courses. You've mentored first-year teachers. You have worked very hard to make sure that the promise of education within these ivy-covered walls doesn't just stay inside, safe from any challenges, but instead walks out into the bright sunlight – into every street, into every school – to bring the message of change, of justice, of possibility.

The collaborations that you have helped to pioneer between Teachers College and city schools are really creating positive results. And that's important. Because there is a lot of rhetoric about education these days that doesn't necessarily hold up under the scrutiny of research and objective concern. So what you have done is create a database. You created research designs. You've been honest in looking at what works and what doesn't work. And we need that more than ever.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that just as at the beginning of the founding of this institution, today we face serious challenges. Not only to how we will educate all children, but whether we will remain committed to public education. Will we be willing to do what is necessary to continue to support the changes, the reforms, the practices, that will guarantee that 100 years from today someone still can stand in an auditorium here, or more likely a virtual auditorium somewhere, and say that Columbia's Teachers College has continued to make its contributions to a strong, dynamic, vital public education system?

Now there are many stories, as well as research data that one could compile and tell about why its important that our country, in particular, remain devoted to public education. That we not give in to the naysayers who point fingers and place blame about what does and does not happen inside our public schools. But that instead we honestly, realistically look at what we do right, and what we need to improve

on, and how we can better provide possibility for every child. But without giving an inch in the overall debate about why it is critical that we maintain the strongest possible public education system that we can possibly have here in the United States at the end of this century.

Now I am privileged to travel to many different countries and visit with many different people. And I have become convinced over all of those travels that one of the great reasons that the United States has been successful and remains successful is because of our public education system. And when I talk about success, I am not merely talking about economic or monetary success. I am talking about how we have, through fits and starts and difficulties over our entire history maintained this unusual experiment in democracy. How we have welcomed to our shores and integrated into our society people from all backgrounds, cultures, walks of life, races, religions and ethnicities. If we need to be reminded of how essential it is that we still invest in and believe in common institutions that help to fill the public space that defines who we are as citizens, we have only to look around our world today.

I remember being in Belfast, Northern Ireland with a group of women who we had helped to bring together – Protestant and Catholics who had never been in a room with each other before. They had never listened to each other talk in any personal setting. And slowly, as they traded personal stories and experiences, they began to say what you and I would think of as commonplace. One would say to the other, “I didn’t know you felt that way.” Or, “I had no idea that’s how you people acted and thought.” All of this time that had gone by, with all of the troubles that had been endured, there had been so much separation, there was no opportunity to listen. And I particularly remember, at the end of one of the workshops, a woman saying to me, “You know, we have a very big obstacle to lasting peace in Northern Ireland, and that is that our children have never gone to school together. There’s a separate school system for Protestants, and a separate school system for Catholics, and our children don’t play together, they don’t learn together. And insofar as it’s been possible, when they grow up they don’t live or work together either.” And she went on to say, “We will never have a unified, peaceful society if we don’t have a public education system that is open to and encourages children from all backgrounds.”

I think about that when I look at what’s happening in Kosovo. You know, here in America it is easy for us to sometimes just shrug our shoulders and roll our eyes, isn’t it? We say, “My goodness, these people are still fighting over things that happened 600 years ago. How can that be?” Well one of the reasons it can be, is

that all sides to whatever historical event happened 600, 500, 200 years ago have kept alive the grievance and the problems that they feel are left unsolved and put them in a position of disadvantage. To the extent that their schools teach a brand of history that goes unquestioned because there's no one else sitting in a lot of the classrooms. If there's a particular ethnic view of history, and the teacher is promoting that and the children are dutifully writing it down, and there's no one to say, "But that's not what I'm taught at home. Maybe we should have a discussion about that." Imagine how unlike that is in the classrooms of the public schools of America. Now for many of you who are teachers, you may wish that it was a little more like that, because you can hardly get a word in edgewise sometimes when you start talking in front of a group of young people from many different backgrounds, all of whom have been perhaps told something at home or watched a certain version of an event on TV, and somebody else has a different or contrary point of view. But it is through that debate, it is through that dialogue, that discussion among differences that people have to work out what it means to be citizens in a democracy. You can not expect to maintain a democracy that requires debate and compromise among strongly held and often opposing viewpoints, if people have not been given that opportunity to work with and understand and relate to and yes I hope respect difference as they are coming through their own educational experience.

So the public education system, which you here at this college have been devoted to improving, is one that all of us have to be willing to stand up and support. Yet we know that our public schools are in many places under great challenge. And there are many reasons for that – more than we could possibly discuss in one lecture, but which you study and worry about here at the college. But the bottom line is that when our public schools do not work, and do not prepare to the highest possible standard the girls and boys entrusted to them, then several things happen. One, those young men and women are not prepared for this changing environment. Just as the immigrants who came in the great tidal waves of immigration at the end of the last century and the beginning of this, had to be in some way helped to understand what it would be like to live in this new society, to acquire skills that would be useful in the marketplace here, so as we face not the Industrial Age but the Information Age, do the young men and women from all walks of life, from every background, whether they've been here for many generations or just recently arrived, have to be prepared and challenged as well. So we don't do any service to the young men and women whom we hope to educate if they are not prepared.

Secondly, if our public schools don't work, it gives ammunition to those who don't want them to work for many different reasons, which I think are shortsighted and unfortunate because they would, as I believe, undermine what everyone in this country has come to take for granted. Our blessings. Despite our difficulties, a social stability and economic prosperity and opportunity for those who are prepared to seek it. And the undermining of the public education system leads to an

undermining of the public good. That intangible something that keeps us all connected together. That prepares the ground for all of us to meet despite our differences and disagreements.

So it is not only an issue of individual children, and the impact it has on their lives, and the impact it has on the economy with respect to future workers and citizens. But it also betrays our capacity to continue to support those public institutions that are vital for our common future.

So therefore, how do we face those issues of justice and possibility that should be addressed? And what kind of framework do we use to try to have common ground among us about what needs to be done in order to promote the best possible outcomes for the greatest number of students in our public schools? Well, clearly, if you see that challenges as I do, of unleashing the potential, the possibility and Ken and Jill's title, within every human being, every little boy and girl who was up here singing for us, then we can't be complacent and we can't just continue to do what we've always done if it doesn't work. And we have to do a better job of presenting the legitimate needs of our public schools, and particularly our public school teachers to the broader community, and we have to enlist more allies, and we have to be sure that parents understand their role and responsibility as well.

Now over the years, I've heard many different ways of expressing what we should be doing with our public schools. But I must say that the simple mantra that is used at public school #1 here in Manhattan, I think states it as well as any treatise I've ever read. Here's what it says: "All children can learn... No exceptions... No excuses."

Now if you think about that, that is a revolutionary and profoundly American statement. There are not many cultures who would say it, and far fewer who would mean it if they did say it. There are great groups of children all over this world who are written off from the moment of birth, or maybe at the age of 11, or maybe at the age of 14 or 17 when it comes to education. So by our commitment to this very simple value that all children can learn, we are already starting from a breathtakingly revolutionary point. Because we know that children learn differently. We know that some come with the nature/nurture combination that make them destined for educational success whether we do anything or not, to be honest. And we know that some have so many problems that it doesn't seem possible that any group of dedicated teachers in the best school in the entire country could make much of a dent. Yet we have to believe that. Because by believing it, we are constantly poised to do everything possible to make it as real as we can. And that requires re-imagining.

I have been privileged to be involved with re-imagining the education system for quite a number of years. Jill mentioned one of my earliest experiences first as a



law student working for the Children's Defense Fund, and then as a lawyer working for the Children's Defense Fund. We were concerned about children who were dropped out, kicked out, or never entered in to the public school system. We did an extensive survey, and I did, as Jill said, actually knock on doors and go into people's homes because we looked at Census tract data from the 1970 Census, and we looked at school enrollment, and we saw this great discrepancy. Where were all these children that were of school age? They certainly weren't in the schools in many states. And by going door to door, I personally saw a lot of the obstacles that thankfully we have reduced, not completely eliminated. But just think, it wasn't that long ago that children with even the slightest handicap were not welcomed anywhere in school. I remember going into a small apartment and a child had a very bright and eager look on her face, but she was confined to a wheel chair and had never been to school.

Not only the physical disabilities that were in many ways minor and other ways more profound, but in every case eliminated public school enrollment, but many social and family problems as well. In an immigrant community that I knocked on doors, there were children who were taken out of school when they turned 10 or 11 to help in whatever the family business was, or to care for younger children. So there were many reasons why justice was not served, and we began to try to remedy that by legislation and by education of public officials, parents, and others.

I had a further chance to re-imagine education when my husband asked me to chair a committee in Arkansas aimed at improving the educational system there. And that too was an incredibly eye-opening personal experience for me. Because I didn't just meet with people who were already convinced of the problems and the inadequacies, but I traveled to school districts, I met with all kinds of groups of people, and I saw that there was a real disconnect between some of the expectations that parents and teachers held, and some of the realities about what children would face when they left the protected environment of those small community schools.

Because of the hard work of a lot of people and the leadership that my husband gave, we began to create alliances with businesses to improve public school. We began encouraging parents to do more to understand what it meant to have a true education that would make a difference. We put in systems of accountability. We tried very hard to raise expectations across the board, and to try to say in a united way that we were not doing any of our children any favors by not having high expectations for them, and by not providing the means through which they could realize those high expectations. That worked. It was going on in Arkansas. It was simultaneously going on in a number of states all over the country because of the Nation At Risk report back in 1983 that flatly declared we were committing unilateral disarmament because we are not doing what needed to be done to keep our schools performing at the level that that generation of students required. And

then for the only third time in our history, the President – President Bush then – convened an Education Summit in Charlottesville, Va. And my husband was one of the co-chair. They came together with what was also a revolutionary concept: that we ought to have national standards. And those national standards would be useful for states and localities and even classrooms to have a better idea of how to measure themselves in terms of what they were achieving. Because there were many people around our country, and still are, who didn't know quite what it was they were supposed to measure up to. What was the benchmark? It's fine to talk about standards, but what does that mean if you're in a poor school district, on an Indian reservation, or in an inner-city? And you're told that this is what you're supposed to do, but you don't really know how you're supposed to get there. So that began a national effort, and when my husband became president, he set to work with another former governor, Dick Riley, who he made secretary of Education, to support national goals -- and to help schools, teachers, and students meet them.

Now we've made progress, I believe. Among the President's, and certainly the Administration's, proudest achievements in the first term were Goals 2000 and the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Because really, from the national level, you don't have all that many tools – you have the bully pulpit, and you do have the federal legislation that provides a very small amount of direction and money for the states and the cities, but if we didn't try to do what we could at that level, then how could we influence what went on further down the line?

So the idea was to go ahead and set goals. And for the first time, Goals 2000 required states to establish academic standards and develop assessments aligned to those standards. The newly revised Title I built on that requirement -- by mandating that states use these standards for disadvantaged students -- thus ending the practice of setting lower expectations for low-income students.

I recall very well speaking to a group of school superintendents from a number of states back in the early 80s. And I was asking them if they had had an opportunity to keep up on any of the research that could perhaps give them guidance about how to set and implement higher standards. And their basic response was, you know, they just couldn't keep up with all that because they were, you know, just trying to keep things going at home. And I knew of one school district that, through the help of some foundations and enlightened schools of education, had transformed the entire district in the way that it related to kids and what it expected of them. And I remember saying to these superintendents, "Well, have any of you thought about maybe traveling to district so and so, and spending the day and seeing what they're doing and maybe getting some help from them?" And I'll never forget this one superintendent looked at me and said, "You know, that just wouldn't work in my district. Our people just don't expect that sort of thing."

They know that most of our kids won't go to college. And there's just no point in getting all excited about it." And I said to him, "Well, how do you know that every child yet unenrolled in your school district won't want to go to college? You're making decisions that not only set low expectations, but set insurmountable obstacles because you're not providing the kind of curriculum and challenge that these kids need to be able to go on."

So Goals 200 said here are some standards, and here are some ways that you can meet them. And you have to make sure they're equally applicable to poor, disadvantaged students.

These two reforms fundamentally changed the federal role in elementary and secondary education. In the past -- our system had too often supported and even encouraged a two-tiered education system that did have and was satisfied with low expectations for poor children. And over the past six years, we have been working very hard to dismantle that unequal and unjust system -- and I think throughout the country, we've begun to see some results.

Now the most important ingredient in seeing those results is the quality and dedication of the teachers who are asked to try to meet those standards. There isn't any argument that there is no more important ingredient. And if we do not do more to support and respect and understand, and yes, pay better, our public school teachers, much of our hopes will not be realized.

We have learned that standards-based education reform that puts teachers in a position of authority and respect actually works. A recent study of education reform in North Carolina -- which has one of the best track records of improving achievement generally and closing racial achievement gaps -- shows us how it can be done -- particularly for disadvantaged students: you need to have a sustained commitment to raising academic standards. And that is critical. Not a commitment that comes and goes with different superintendents, or is viewed as some kind of a fad, but one that is truly incorporated into the operation, on-going, of a school system.

We need to provide schools with the flexibility, target resources to help low-performing students, and hold schools accountable for their results.

A few weeks ago the government released new data that tells us our nation's reading scores are up for the first time in all three grade levels that are tested -- 4th, 8th and 12th. Our achievement scores are up for math and science. SAT scores are once again heading in the right direction -- with the largest gains in mathematics. For the first time in history, SAT and ACT scores have increased each year for the past five years.

Now because we have seen these signs of success, and because we can look at states like North Carolina and districts that have made the sustained commitment -- we have a much better idea of what we need to do to help fulfill the possibility of every student.

The President has laid out a bold strategy for the future. Because once again we have the opportunity to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and through this process, we can, we believe, continue to push forward on the agenda of justice and possibility equated with high expectations and results.

Now the three-part strategy that is going to be employed with respect to this authorization is to first, provide federal support to help improve teacher quality. Second, target increased investments to disadvantaged children -- with particular attention to the early years of schooling. And third, promote real accountability for results.

John Sanford, the late superintendent of the Seattle schools system said: "The victory is in the classroom." And there is no doubt in anyone's mind that that victory only comes because you've got a dedicated, qualified teacher in that classroom. And certainly, I would argue, and I think any fair assessment would agree, that the vast majority of our teachers are both dedicated and qualified. But that doesn't mean that they are always given the support they need or the encouragement they desire to improve their skills, to have opportunities that are not just meaningless workshops, but sustained professional development that enable them to translate into action what they want to do for their students.

You know, today the President, back at the White House honored the 1999 Teacher of the Year, a gentleman from Georgia, Andy Baumgartner, who -- I love this description -- is an ex-Marine who now teaches kindergarten. And some would argue that that is probably one of the best qualifications for teaching kindergarten these days. But he was honored because of the dedication and the quality and the imagination that he brings to his classroom. And we could honor so many countless other teachers. But in order to do that, we have to make sure we fulfill our obligations to our teachers, that they are provided with the support they need, through training and other means.

Let's be very frank. Many teachers teach subjects for which they lack adequate preparation. Fully one quarter of secondary school teachers do not even hold a minor in their main teaching field. And that number is even higher in schools with high proportions of disadvantaged students.

We have to do a better job of creating an environment in which state licensing is based on demonstrated performance, knowledge of subject matter; teaching skills. And there are examples all around that we can look to if we can persuade states

and districts to really value that kind of preparation and continuing professional development.

The President's ESEA proposal will require states and school districts to phase out out-of-field assignments and emergency certification. We want to send a message that we really encourage school districts to put the resources into recruiting and retaining teachers who are fully qualified to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach by the districts. That sounds like itology??? But if you look at the data, indeed it seems not to be connected at all in the administration of school districts all over our country.

The reauthorization legislation will also ask states to adopt performance examinations for new teachers requiring demonstration of subject matter knowledge and teaching expertise, and will provide federal resources to help teachers meet those goals. Now because of retirement, we will need to hire up to two million new teachers over the next ten years. Now there are those who say it can't be done; but I believe it can if we do more to improve the opportunities and the teaching conditions for teachers. If we adopt new strategies to recruit talented candidates; if we show respect for our teachers; and if we provide the financing that teachers need to do their jobs.

One of the ways we have been planning to try to recruit more people into teaching is to get the word out to as many people in as many different settings as possible – from the Marine Corps to the Peace Corps – that teaching is an exciting, satisfying profession, and that our attitudes – our national attitudes – toward the importance of teaching and education are beginning to really turn around. After a period of, I think, unfair, unnecessary, unwarranted teacher bashing in too many quarters, we are finally back to a more sensible position, saying clearly, teachers are the most important resources we have if we expect education to work in America. And in order to do that, we need school boards, administrators, unions, and the entire community to work together to make sure that the best interest of students are the top priority, and that the interest of teachers are understood as absolutely linked to meeting that top priority.

Now there is a lot of interesting discussion among a lot of my friends who are teachers about what has been the reaction in the last several years as people have said, well, we need more professional development. I can not tell you how many times I have been told about the totally useless, one-shot workshops that last a half a day, that are required for teachers to attend, that have absolutely no relevance to their subject matter or the classroom environment. We do not need one-shot, for-profit, faddish workshops. We need a program of serious, sustained development based on research that works, which is relevant to a teacher's classroom needs. And in order to do that, we should use that data that has been collected at places of excellence like Teachers College, to design such programs.

And the President has proposed a fund of \$1.2 billion for true professional development activities.

We also believe it is imperative to reduce class size, particularly in the elementary grades. We're very pleased that Congress last year, at the very end of the Congressional session, made a down payment toward the goal of hiring 100,000 new teachers. But we have a lot of work to do if we are really going to fulfill that promise. And it's not just something that teachers tell us is a good idea. We know, based on research, it works. You would probably know more about the latest research than any of us who could come and talk to you, but I know that study after study over the last few years has confirmed that schools having a smaller classroom teacher-student relationship really does make a difference.

A recent five-year study of Milwaukee schools confirms that schools having a 17-1 student-teacher ratio outperform not only students in the public schools, but also those students who received vouchers under the Wisconsin plan to go outside the public school system.

Small class size is also good for teachers, not just students. I have been in classrooms where a single teacher is attempting to teach 25, 30, 35 students, and it is a daunting task, that some teachers, yes, can handle very well. But most teachers, with the variety of students and learning levels and backgrounds and languages and many other differences that our young people bring into our schools confront a teacher with, find it very difficult to give all the students the attention they need.

The Administration also supports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to create, as it has been since 1987, a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet higher standards. But, of course, we believe that if a teacher goes through that voluntary system, that teacher ought to be rewarded with higher compensation for having demonstrated the professional competence that the voluntary system at the Board requires.

So we're not there yet in terms of systems in place to give teachers the kind of support they need, but we have some good examples and models that we need to build on.

We also, very much, have to make a point, as I mentioned earlier, of helping our teachers have classrooms of students who are ready to learn. It is incredibly difficult for many teachers to stay in the profession in the face of the needs of students they know they can not meet. That is why we lose every year large numbers of teachers in their first, second or third year of teaching, who feel somewhat lost, unmentored and overwhelmed by the needs that their children bring in. I have met so many people who started out as teachers, and wanted to stay as

teachers, but didn't feel that they were given the support, and they certainly weren't given the compensation that they could easily find if they shut the door on those kids and walked across the street to push some paper and perform another task. It was a lot less demanding, but far more remunerative.

Until we clearly state that we will only have as good an education system as our teachers can make it, if we can recruit and retain vital, dynamic, intelligent, dedicated individuals, then we will not have done all we can to make sure our public school system not only survive, but flourishes. And as we raise standards, we ought to raise salaries as well.

I also believe that it is a simple question of justice as to how well prepared children are for school. The disparity among children begins even before birth. When a mother's access to prenatal care can make the difference between a healthy baby and one who will suffer lifelong disabilities. We now know from brain research what happens in those first three years of life as a child is either stimulated and those brain cells multiply and those synapses connect, or a child is not. It's very important that we continue to do what we can to provide better pre-school opportunities for as many children as possible. That is why I have supported increased federal support for programs such as home visiting, for Head Start, for child care, for early Head Start. And I'm pleased that we've made some progress, but we still have a long way to go to ensure that every child is school ready.

And there are many challenges to school readiness, and again, you know them well, those of you who are students and teachers here at teachers college. But just some of them that we need again to be honest about and confront. We still have not done the job that we need to do to persuade parents, particularly parents with limited educations themselves, that they must do all they can to encourage the highest expectations and the best performing schools for their children. We still have far too high a dropout rate among some of our communities. We have closed the dropout rate and the high school graduation rate for African-American students. And I am very proud, because that was a concerted effort by families, communities, educators. But we have not done a good job closing that gap with Hispanic students who still drop out at a very high rate. Or with Native American students who have probably the highest dropout rates of any population right now in our country. So parents must be more committed. And we have to give parents the tools to act on the commitment. That's why reaching them in the early years, giving them the opportunity to know what they can do to help their own children, understanding how simple things like telling stories, reading books can help prepare their child for school – that is the kind of investment we should be making in families. We know that if we target parents, we can make a difference. And we know if we target low-performing students we can break the cycle – so that if students don't have the help they need before school, they need to get it once they enter school. And if there are many, many students in a school which leads to a

low performing school, then we should make sure we do all we can to help turn that school around.

And there are a lot of plans and proposals for that. The President's proposal is to require states to identify the schools with the lowest achievement levels that will then be required to take corrective action. I have been in too many schools, and I know many of you have, where you can tell when you walk in the door what the attitude is, can't you? You can walk in a school in one part of a city, and you can walk in a school not very far away where the kids come from the same socioeconomic, racial backgrounds. But in one school, learning is happening. And in another school, there's a feeling of just being in a dead end. I have been in public schools where I have seen sixth graders sitting at their desks doing workbooks that have been erased and crossed over because they were so old and there was not money to buy new ones for the increase in the student population. And they're not even workbooks that challenge and 11- or 12-year-old. And I've been in the same kinds of schools not very far away where the sixth graders are alive with learning and energy, because there is that commitment and that understanding of what it takes. And there are still too many schools that are not performing well, and nobody is holding them accountable, and the teachers I know who are assigned to those schools, they shut their door in September and they hope nobody interferes with their kids so they can let them out in June and hopefully they will have learned something. But they get no help, no encouragement, no challenge from that school or from the community it serves.

Now that leads me to an issue that I alluded to earlier, and that is, what do we do about creating more competition, more challenge, more encouragement, within the public school system? Well, I believe strongly in giving parents more choices in selecting their public schools. I believe that charter schools and magnet schools are making a difference. Not only for the students and teachers they serve, but for the systems in which they operate. By giving schools greater flexibility and freedom, they can experiment with new approaches and still be held accountable.

When the President came into office, there was one independent, public charter school in America. Now there are 1,100. We hope there will be 3,000. And much of the reason for that hope rests in districts and examples like East Harlem, the first public school choice system. That district was ranked last, as many of you know, when it adopted public school choice over 20 years ago. It is now still performing better than schools in New York City with similar concentrations of poverty. I've seen it in other cities. I've seen the kind of change that can happen when teachers are empowered, when citizens feel obligated to once again be part of the public education commitment.

We need to make sure that as we move forward, we have greater accountability, we have higher standards, we have greater public school choice, and we do not



allow ourselves to be pulled off track by false debates, particularly by those who claim that using public money for vouchers for private schools are a solution to improving public education and fixing failing schools. At a time when we are beginning to see the fruits of the labor of many people over the last two decades to turn schools around, to understand the mix of socioeconomic and racial characteristics with teacher and learning characteristics, and community support when we are beginning to really unwrap that and understand it. We need to fix our public schools, not abandon them. And as a result I hope the re-imagining of education that Jill and Ken have asked us to do and that will be the theme of this lecture series, is truly committed to both of the goals they set: justice and possibility.

Now all of us know that schools by themselves – no matter how well staffed, not matter how many resources – can not, in and of themselves, give any child a world-class education. We as a nation, we as communities, we as citizens, not only must hold our schools accountable, we must hold ourselves accountable. What is it we will do to help schools succeed? What is it we will do the encourage parents to believe in the importance of education and to support their schools, their teachers, and most importantly, their children? What is it we will do to persuade businesses to really make an investment in the schools that will provide them an educated, skilled workforce? What is it we can do to sound out voices together on behalf of the value of public education, and on behalf of the changes that are transforming schools all over this nation?

We can never take for granted that America's public school system is a cornerstone of our democracy. And the interdependent world of the next century requires constantly expanding knowledge – at its base, not just at its elite top. Failure to spread that knowledge not only perpetuates injustice, but injures our common potential for growth, prosperity and social stability.

America's greatest markets for future opportunity are right here at home in our inner-cities, in our rural communities, in our aging suburbs. Their hope, and our hope, begin with a constantly revitalizing dynamic system of public education. Yes, the maintenance and reform of the public school system is not for the faint hearted. It requires imagination and daring, commitment and experimentation, resources. But standing here in front of all of you who are part of this great institution of teaching and learning, I'm absolutely convinced we are on the right track, if we will sustain our commitment, if we will learn from one another, if we will be unafraid to change what does not work and adopt what does. We can do no less, not only for our children, but for the future we hope to share together in the kind of America we value in the years to come.

Thank you very much.

# President Clinton's Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century

In his 1997 State of the Union address, the President made clear that his number one priority for the next four years is to ensure that Americans have the best education in the world. He issued a ten-point call to action for American education in the 21st century to enlist parents, teachers, students, business leaders, and local and state officials in this effort:

- **Set rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math to make sure our children master the basics.** Every 4th grader should be able to read; every 8th grader should know basic math and algebra. To help make sure they do, the President is pledging the development of national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math, and challenging every state and community to test every student in these critical areas by 1999. These tests will show how well students are meeting rigorous standards and how well they compare with their peers around the country and the world. They will help parents know if their children are mastering critical basic skills early enough to succeed in school and in the workforce. Every state and school should also set guidelines for what students should know in all core subjects. We must end social promotion. Students should have to show what they've learned in order to move from grade school to middle school and from middle school to high school. We must make sure a high school diploma means something.
- **Make sure a talented and dedicated teacher is in every classroom.** In addition to the talented and dedicated teachers already in the classroom, 2 million new teachers will be needed over the next ten years to replace retirees and accommodate rapidly growing student enrollments. We must take advantage of this opportunity to ensure teaching quality well into the 21st century by challenging our most promising young people to consider teaching as a career, setting high standards for entering the teaching profession, and providing the highest quality preparation and training. We should reward good teachers, and quickly and fairly remove those few who don't measure up. The President's education budget will make it possible for 100,000 master teachers to achieve national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards over the next ten years.
- **Teach every student to read independently and well by the end of the 3rd grade.** Reading is the key to unlocking learning in all subjects. While America's 4th graders read on average as well as ever, more than 40 percent cannot read as well as they must to succeed later in school and in the workforce. Research shows that students unable to read well by the end of the 3rd grade are more likely to become school dropouts and truants, and have fewer good options for jobs. The President's America Reads Challenge is a nationwide effort to mobilize a citizen army of a million volunteer tutors to make sure every child can read independently by the end of the 3rd grade. Parents, teachers, college students, senior citizens, and others can all pitch in to give children extra help in reading during the afternoons, weekends, and summers. At the same time, schools must strengthen the teaching of reading in the school day, and the President's budget invests more in programs that address reading achievement in school.
- **Expand Head Start and challenge parents to get involved early in their children's learning.** A child's learning begins long before he or she goes to school. That's why the President's budget expands Head Start to benefit one million children by 2002. Parents are their children's first teachers, and every home should be a place of learning. The President and First Lady will convene a conference this spring to review recent scientific discoveries on early childhood learning and to show how parents, teachers, and policy makers can use this new knowledge to benefit young children. And in June, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore will host their sixth annual family conference, and focus on the importance of parents' involvement throughout a child's education.

- **Expand school choice and accountability in public education.** The President has challenged every state to let parents choose the right public school for their children. Innovation, competition, and parental involvement will make our public schools better. We must do more to help teachers, parents, community groups, and other responsible organizations to start charter schools -- innovative public schools that stay open only as long as they produce results and meet the highest standards. The President's budget doubles funding to help start charter schools so that there will be 3,000 charter schools at the dawn of the 21st century, providing parents with more choices in public education.
- **Make sure our schools are safe, disciplined and drug free, and instill American values.** Students cannot learn in schools that are not safe and orderly and do not promote positive values. We must find effective ways to give children the safe and disciplined conditions they need to learn, such as by promoting smaller schools, fair and rigorously enforced discipline codes, and teacher training to deal with violence. We should continue to support communities that introduce school uniforms and character education, impose curfews, enforce truancy laws, remove disruptive students from the classroom, and have zero tolerance for guns and drugs. We should also keep schools open later as safe havens from gangs and drugs, expanding educational opportunities for young people in the afternoons, weekends, and summers, and providing peace of mind for working parents.
- **Modernize school buildings and help support school construction.** Just as we face unprecedented and growing levels of student enrollment, a recent report by the General Accounting Office shows that a third of our nation's schools need major repair or outright replacement. To keep children from growing up in schools that are falling down, the Administration has proposed \$5 billion to help communities finance \$20 billion in needed school construction over the next four years.
- **Open the doors of college to all who work hard and make the grade, and make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as high school.** To prepare ourselves for the 21st century, we must open the doors of college to all Americans and make at least two years of college as universal as high school is today. The President's HOPE scholarship, a \$1,500 tax credit for tuition paid for the first two years of college, would be enough to pay for a typical community college education or provide a solid down payment at four-year colleges and universities. The President also is proposing a \$10,000 tax deduction for any tuition after high school, an expanded IRA to allow families to save tax-free for college, and the largest increase in 20 years in Pell Grants for deserving students.
- **Help adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant.** Learning must last a lifetime, and all our people must have the chance to learn new skills. Basic literacy and adult education are more important than ever for adults as well as children. Adults should take on the responsibility of getting the education and training they need, and employers should support their efforts to do so. The President's G.I. bill for workers would provide a simple skill grant that would enable eligible workers to get the education and training they need.
- **Connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and help all students become technologically literate.** Our schools must now prepare for a transition as dramatic as the move from an agrarian to an industrial economy 100 years ago. We must connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000, so that all children have access to the best sources of information in the world. The President is proposing to double the funding for America's Technology Literacy Challenge, catalyzing private-public sector partnerships to put the information age at our children's fingertips. CEOs of some of America's most innovative technology and communications firms have already responded to the President's challenge to work with schools to get computers into the classroom, link schools to the Internet, develop effective educational software, and help train our teachers to be technologically literate.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
REMARKS AT THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
FEBRUARY 5, 1996

Thank you Roberta for that introduction and for your commitment to putting children first. I want to both welcome you all to Washington and thank you for this invitation to speak with you. But more than that I want to thank you for your commitment to education, your work won local school boards, your work through this organization on the national issues that confront us on in attempting to provide the kind of education that our children will need.

As my husband said in his State of the Union address, we live in an age of possibility. But that possibility is linked directly to how well we take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to us and that is a function of how well educated and skilled we are as we move into this new age. And it is an issue that is not just the province of those of you who are on a school board. It is one that should be debated and discussed by every single American. Too often we lapse into a false debate in our country about who really bears responsibility for the education of our children. There are those who say that the responsibility lies only with the parents. There are those who say that education should be the exclusive domain of the local school district. And there are those who say that the federal government should oversee what happens in our classrooms. I think all of those are not sufficient answers. The responsibility for educating our children should not be passed around like a hot potato. Before I came in I met two of your board members who are potato farmers from Idaho, and I thought to myself, is a hot potato politically correct as a form of comparison when I have Idaho potato farmers, but I was comforted by the thought that even mentioning potatoes would be good for **INAUDIBLE** that is being harvested. Whether we have children or not, as a responsibility of supporting the education system of our country and in particular supporting the public education system of the United States.

Roberta mentioned that I have been privileged to this past year to travel and see what is happening in other countries around the world. I know what many of you who have also traveled have seen. I have been in places that don't yet educate girls. I have been in countries that feel no national responsibility whatsoever to provide an infrastructure or schooling for their children. I have seen local communities and tribal organizations in countries desperately working to create enough school rooms so that all the children who wish an education can have one.

I have talked with people who understand the challenge that their particular societies face because they don't have a national commitment to educating all children, no matter who they are or where they come. The contrast could do not be starker. When one looks at the reasons why so many other nations have not achieved stable democracies, have not enjoyed rising standards of living, have not had the kind of free market economy that depends upon an educated work force and people who understand how to sell and produce products--and you compare them with what we take for granted here in the United States. It often makes me wish that everyone of our citizens particularly our young people could make these journeys with me. When I took Chelsea through South Asia last Spring during her vacation, I wish every American teenager could have been there with me. Both because they would have seen the obstacles in the way of so many other young people, and they are achieving their dreams and aspirations and how they sometimes walk three and four hours to get to the closest schools and how they work day in and day out to save enough money to attend secondary education. They would have seen our own teenagers, what other young people are up against but how they are taking to heart what American ideals have stood for. That with hard work, with education, with a commitment to the kind of opportunities that we provide here, they can be successful. They also would have seen when they returned home, the many blessings we have here, that too often we take for granted. And among those is an education system, that yes needs reform, yes can be made more effective, yes has to be more open to new ideas and new ways of thinking and teaching and learning, but which has served this nation so very well.

And I believe, that what has worked well, certainly since I was a child -- is the partnership, a partnership among the home and parents who believe in the importance of education, who supports schools, support teachers, who like my father used to say, you get in trouble at school you get in trouble at home no questions asked. And local school districts that respect teachers, that work to represent what is best in a community, but are open to new ideas and understand the challenges not of yesterday but of tomorrow that children will face. Of states that put education at the top of the list that understand we cannot possibility solve our social problems unless we educate our young people, and of a national government that is committed to helping all along the way these very functions be fulfilled.

I know that in my own growing up that Sputnik that went up, there are some of you in this crowd that are old enough to remember that, all of a sudden President Eisenhower started talking about how American children needed to do better in math and science. And the teachers in my classroom would things to us like you need to study harder, your President wants you to do that. And then the money started to flow. Money for enhanced math and science teaching, money for better equipped science labs and classrooms so that young Americans could have the same opportunities that we thought our competition behind the iron curtain was

enjoying.

Nobody stopped and said that's not proper for the United States to try to meet its challenge as a union of states as a great nation, but nobody also told Miss**NAMES?????** in fourth grade or **NAMES??** in fifth grade how they were supposed to teach math and science. They were just supposed to put more emphasis on it. And the local school board decided what they would do to try to make it possible. The decision about what we would try to achieve as a nation was decided at the national level, whether we would try to be competitive was decided in favor of doing so, but the how was left to those individual teachers, those individual school boards. And when that decision was made, parents were expected to be supportive. That's how public education has to work. Each of us in our own roles taking responsibility. When I look at the debate that is currently raging about public education in our country, I think that we all should take a deep breath, we should all recognize that for most of us, the public education system has worked well. But at every stage of great change in our history, we have to make adjustments. Compulsory education became a widespread phenomenon in part in the late 19th century into the early 20th century because it became clear that as we move into an agricultural to an industrial based economy, children who had done very well in rural setting, children who had even moved into the city with parents and had been able to do very inaudible work, the children of immigrants--all of them are going to need more skills than they had to have or that their parents had to have. That system worked well for most of us into the late part of this century.

Well now we're facing some new challenges. And any time we live through an age of uncertainty and challenge, questions will be raised and they should be raised. Are we doing what we need to do the right way? How can we do it better? What will make the biggest difference in improving teaching and learning? Those are the questions that should be debated in every teacher's lounge, around water coolers in businesses, in supermarket aisles. That is good, that is part of what makes democracy work. But those questions should not lead to the conclusion that we throw out the system that has worked so well for us. That would be a very unfortunate decision. Or that we begin to eat away at the capacity of local school districts to do the work that they know needs to be done.

There are a few federal programs that I wanted to mention because I think they are the kind of programs that help support you in the work that you are trying to do. The first and one that I know is controversial in some quarters, but thankfully not in most, is Goals 2000. The Goals 2000 Act provides funds to states and communities to improve local schools, to raise student academic achievement, to involve parents and to bring technology into the classroom. To upgrade teacher's skills and knowledge and create partnerships with business and community groups. Forty-eight states have already received funding under this

program. I think that that illustrated what I at least see as part of the partnership to ensure quality education outcomes.

The federal government helped to bring together people from all over the country some of you who were involved in that process on the various task forces. I know that the National Association was deeply involved to try state what it is that American children should be able to do. Whether you are born in Arkansas or Arizona or Alaska, you may not live there given our time of mobility, so if you cross a state border what is it that you are expected to know as a minimum, as an American student.

But then to turn the responsibility for meeting those goals to local school districts. Even down to the building level--so that what would work in a community in rural Alaska or in metropolitan New York could be tailored for the particular students who were the ones we are trying to have educated.

I know that of those who opposed Goals 2000, they worry about the federal government taking over school districts and telling school districts what to do. I think that is a misplaced worry that has used up a whole lot of energy that could be better spent with people working together to help improve the quality of learning in the classroom. Having lived now in Washington for three years, it would be mighty hard for Washington to tell anybody what to do on the local school district **inaudible**

I also want to talk a minute about Chapter 1, Title 1. I know that you have had concerns about this and they are well placed concerned. In 1993, under the direction of the President, the Secretary of Education, Richard Reilly, and again a group that included representatives from education groups such as the National Association School Board, made a very honest appraisal about what works in the remediation of math and reading skills. And pointed out that we needed to do some things better. That's exactly what should happen with any government program. They should be evaluated, they should be held accountable, and changes were recommended by the Secretary of Education that were implemented into the law when it was re-authorized.

Title 1 aims at giving schools the resources they need to do the work, to help children as early as possible to improve their skills. We are learning more about what works for certain children. For a long time, those who were reading specialists and math specialists didn't have a very deep knowledge base to fall back on. We were building it up. Why is it that some children respond better to computers and others respond better to one on one mentor and teaching? Why does reading recovery work in some districts and in other districts other methods seem to work? But that's what it took to try to understand what was going to be effective in helping these children. We now know that school **inaudible** programs that utilize the best, state of the art knowledge about remediation, that target the

students that need the help and make a difference. It is not the time, now that we have reformed the program, now that we have better targeted the funds of the program, to severely cut back the program. Now is the time to take the reformed program and implement it so that local school districts can see the results of this kind of effort.

Another innovation that the President and the Secretary felt strongly about because they both had been governors. My husband as you know served as the governor very active on behalf of education in our state and on the national level as did Secretary Reilly ??? And they know, despite the best efforts, legislators in the Congress and those responsible for implementing legislation in the agencies--One size does not fit all. There cannot be a cookie-cutter approach to implementing the federal programs that we hope will help you at the local level. That's why waivers from federal statutory and regulatory requirements have become more common and are in fact urged by this Sec. of Education wherever a local school district or a state has an idea that something could be done better. For example, the Fort Worth, Texas, school district received a waiver allowing it to target an extra portion of its Title 1 to four, high poverty, inner city schools. Those schools were chosen for a complete overhaul due to low achievement and other factors of their student demographics.

Each school uses the Title 1 funds to improve ??? for all its students and to reorganize its staff and to lengthen the school year, to focus on teaching reading and math in the classroom, not just as a pull out program. That school district saw a way that it could use federal funds by giving a waiver that would enable it to skip a lot of the regulations that are frankly put into place to make sure that nobody gets an advantage over somebody else. That because a state or a city has a powerful member of congress they will get more than they should--so it has to be some level playing field. But there also can be opportunities then to come back and say we've got a better idea, give us a chance to use these funds and these programs to reach students the way we think will work. As part of Oregon's comprehensive school improvement efforts the State Department of education there received a waiver for innovative groupings of school districts including community colleges where the use of Perkin funds. And that's to help them provide high quality vocational education. One of the real opportunities that I see is more cooperation among school districts between school districts and community colleges. We know, for example, we have to remove disruptive students from the classrooms. We cannot pretend that they can be fit in mainstream and not let it affect the education of all the other students. Yet at the same time we know that it is expensive to run alternative programs. So now school districts are looking for ways that they can pool their resources to create maybe one alternative program for the students from a number of school districts. Just as with the vocational education example from Oregon. This is the kind of new thinking about how to make the federal involvement and the federal funds more effective at the local



level. The Department of Education has also established what they call Educational Flexibility Partnership Demonstration Program--EDFLEX for short--so that there can be opportunities for the Secretary of Education to waive certain requirements so that again there can be ways that local school districts and states can create their own response to what our nation goals, national aspirations, and to use national funding.

The development of charter schools is a very important new strategy. There is room for choice in a public school system. I believe that embracing charter schools instead of being worried about them gives public schools and local school districts new opportunities to recast what they are always doing to bring in some new ideas and to present a new face to their public. One of the challenges that we confront is the often unfair and distorted view of public education that is too often the only subject that the media talks about when it talks about public education.

Like any great enterprise, there are failures, there are problems, we know that. Name any other enterprise in which there isn't? The private sector has no greater fame to success, businesses go bankrupt, problems develop. So why should the public education enterprise be held to a higher standard than any other human institution? But it is true that after years of pounding on our public schools and blaming them for everything when in fact so many of the changes we are dealing with are a result of deep economic and cultural changes the schools have tried to cope with. The biggest single reason I believe children are harder to teach and that children have more difficulties is the combination of high divorce rate and out of wedlock birth rate and what they see on television and not only the content of what they see but the process of watching it. And that is not the fault of the public education system. That is what the public education system has to work with. With students from the age of two have been handed a remote control device so that can amuse themselves never having to work hard for something, never even playing the way I played as a child, so that I had to make up my own entertainment and the all of a sudden they are put into a classroom and their eyes glaze over because something else is expected of them. That is not the fault of the public education system. That is the public education system having to cope with cultural changes that were driven by the private sector, the commercialization of entertainment and by the desire to trap as many children in front of tv sets for as many hours as possible ???

So I think that we have a role to play in raising our voices on behalf of public education today. Speaking out in favor in what has been one of America's greatest accomplishments and contributions to the rest of the world and speaking up in favor of the unique partnership which we have pioneered in this country. Many European countries that have high levels of education, many Asian countries that have high levels of education have a top down system where literally they do turn the page at the same time on the same day to keep up with the national standards

and expectations. Other countries such as those I described before have no national commitment. It is every child for him or herself and whenever it can happen--happens on the local level and it's not bound together in any social statement about what is important. We have as we have done so often in our history, pioneered a different approach that has stood us well. When people start talking about a new American revolution whether it applies to the economy or education, I stop and think I thought we had a pretty good one about 218 years ago and I believe what we have done since then is to create a unique country where people are responsible at different levels and we create a community where all of us have obligations to each other.

I want to end with a story about our own country because it is what motivated my husband and me to become so involved in education in the state of Arkansas. I was lucky to grow up in a suburb of Chicago where my father was a lifelong die in the war Republican until he met Bill Clinton. He moved us from Chicago to the suburbs, knowing he would pay higher property taxes and wanting to do so--because he wanted to get the best education he could for his children. So I was blessed beyond words, with excellent teachers, wonderful facilities, challenging courses. Other students came from homes like mine where parents were urging them on to be all that they could be. And I didn't realize it, even in other parts of my home state of Illinois and certainly in many other parts of the country, those ?? had not yet jelled. And so when my husband was elected Governor of Arkansas now 1978 and took office in 79--he and I started a tradition to honor our student academic stars the way student athletes were honored. Every small town in Arkansas would have a huge banquet for all their athletes at the end of every year. There were very few who did that for their valedictorians and their ??(salutatorians)?? or their best student in science or math. So we invited all of the honors graduates from all of the schools to come to the Governor's Mansion and we stood in line and shook the hands of the students and their parents because I think parents have to be encouraged and thanked for being the ones who motivate our students. And I will never forget meeting a young man from a rural part of our state, and I was asking all of the students what they were going to be doing because it was already May and at that point 17 years ago only about half were going to college, a lot of financial obstacles in their way, and so they were telling me about their plans. And I asked this one man what he planned to do, he said well you know I know what I want to do, I want to be a doctor--I said that's wonderful, and his mother was with him--just swelled up with pride you could tell that this young man had done everything his mother would have wanted him to do--I said well where are you going to go to college--and he kind of dropped his eyes and he said he didn't know yet because when he went to apply to college they said you did real well at that school but that school didn't prepare you--You don't know enough to be in a pre-med curriculum at the university. And the young man asked the college advisors what could he do--and they said well you could go and try but I don't think you'll make it--or you could go down the road and take a fifth year of high school. I remember standing in the living room of the Governor's

Mansion thinking to myself--there's a young man in a family that did everything that they were supposed to do as their part of the bargain. He stayed out of trouble, study hard, he'd done well by the standards he was supposed to meet. But unfortunately, through no fault of anyone, his local school didn't quite know what the standards were for this particular young man's aspirations. But they were teaching him algebra????? schools across the state or up the road. It was at that moment I think that both my husband and I ???? the products of public schools that were in the 50's and 60's responding to the national aspirations as well as local hopes with parents who supported that--decided that it should not matter where you are born in a state or what state you are born in--you should be held to high standards, we should have high expectations for students behavior, a student's performance. We should have the kind of partnership among adults that my father used to threaten me with. He would say--get in trouble at school--get in trouble at home. Adults presented a united front. My dad didn't know exactly what I was learning everyday but he trusted the school that what I learned prepared me for whatever I chose in life. Every parent in America should have that same feeling of confidence and every local school district should have the support it needs from its local community from its state and from its country to be able to produce that for every single child to live up to his or her god-given potential. That's the dream and the reality of a public education in America and we have to fight to make it to continue to be so.

Thank you very much.

For Further Information:  
NEA Communications: (202) 822-7200

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 20, 1998**

**Statement by  
Bob Chase  
National Education Association President  
on Poll Showing Declining Support for  
Vouchers**

The information contained in today's release of a public opinion poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a strong endorsement of America's public schools and the ongoing efforts of teachers and parents to improve them.

According to the poll, almost two-thirds of Americans want more government funding for public education, and 54% say their public schools are doing a "good" or "excellent" job. In contrast, the poll shows that support for vouchers has declined sharply over the past year among both black and white Americans.

These findings add to the growing body of research suggesting that the more the public knows about the impact of voucher proposals, the less inclined they are to support them. Just yesterday, the *Washington Post* reported that support for vouchers declines by almost half when people realize that voucher programs reduce funding for the public schools.

Given the choice, it's now clear that a strong majority of Americans would rather improve public schools for all children than drain public school budgets in order to finance vouchers for a select few.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 18, 1997

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
AT THE CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Chicago, Illinois

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much. I am always glad to be back in Chicago and today I'm especially pleased to have a chance to be here at this museum on this auspicious occasion of the first Annual Lewis Manilow Lecture. I want to thank Lew Manilow for inviting me to be here, and I want to convey my appreciation, and I'm sure that of many of you here, to both Lew and Susan for their generous support of the cultural and civic life of this city, and particularly their support of institutions such as this Children's Museum and others which do so much for children.

I was delighted that Diane could give me the tour, and she had many helpers -- very small helpers -- who showed me around. And I was able to meet some of the staff and could see on their faces the enthusiasm they have for the work they do here. I am pleased that we could be joined by your senior Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, and I thank her for being here. And I thank Congressman Danny Davis also for joining us.

And I want to add my word of appreciation to Berniece and to Irving, because there are, I don't believe, two people who have done more to raise awareness about the importance of families and children anywhere in the United States. And I share the pride of all of you that they have done this work and have led on behalf of children from right here in Chicago.

I hope that as we sit here in the midst of this museum and as many of you who have had the chance to tour through here to see the exhibits that are designed carefully to provoke children of every age, that we realize we stand on the brink of an extraordinary opportunity and challenge. And that opportunity and challenge is that we now know -- we know what works for children. We know what children need. We understand that from the very earliest days of life a child is constantly learning. We now know what it requires for the brain to develop. Science has opened up all kinds of information to us that good mothers and fathers and grandparents knew instinctively for generations, but now we know for sure.

And that knowledge imposes grave responsibilities on all of us. Whether or not we are parents, we all, as adults, have an obligation to refuse to make any more excuses about what our children need.

And so I come today to reflect upon what I have learned and seen here at this museum and around our country, because I have been privileged to visit many places like this museum where we are taking what we now know about children and putting it into practice; where adults are banding together to build communities and strong families that will enable as many children as possible to live up to their God-given potential.

And yet, at the same time, we know that in this great city, as in every city and every suburb and every small rural town in America, there are too many of our children who will not reap the benefit of this opportunity and challenge that we face. We can pick up the newspaper, turn on the television, listen to the radio every single hour and hear too often of the lost life, the missed opportunity, the tragedies that befall our children.

So this is a good news, bad news report. The good news is we know what works. We know what every child needs. We know what they need in their families, what they need in their schools, what they need in their communities. We know what parents require to feel that they are able to give the time and energy that children require. We know what makes for good schools and good teaching and active learning. And we know that in countless places around America everything that we know that is good for children is happening. And we also know that in countless other places what we know will destroy the body, the mind, the soul of a child is also happening.

Now, there is no way for anyone to write a prescription or pass a law that tells people, be good parents, be loving grandparents, be caring teachers, be sensitive employers, be thoughtful public leaders, and always consider first and foremost what children need to develop and grow. But we know that in many ways we have the tools at our disposal, and they don't require laws, and lots of times they don't even require a lot of money. What they require is a different attitude and a set of expectations, both about our children and about ourselves.

Now, my husband says that we live in an age of possibility. And by that he means a time of great promise as well as uncertainty; an age that requires us to think in new ways about how to meet old and new challenges; an age that offers few guarantees for the future, but many opportunities. And though change is certain in this age of possibility, progress is not. Progress depends on the choices we make today and tomorrow, and whether we meet those challenges, particularly to our children, and protect our values.

We can start by admitting that we have to recommit ourselves to making America a level playing field for all children; by coming together as one community committed to helping all children lift themselves up to better lives; by making sure that the tools of opportunity are available to every person who is willing to work hard and take responsibility. Those tools are obvious ones -- obviously, education, health care, access for adults to jobs and credit, legal

protections where necessary, the ability to participate fully in the civic and political life of our country. But more than those tools of opportunity, we have to think about the attitudes and expectations that must be joined together in order for those tools to be used effectively.

Just today, here in Chicago, I have seen how the tools of opportunity and those higher expectations and positive attitudes can make a difference. This morning I saw at the Kinsey School on the South Side a school that works -- a public school of pre-K through 8th grade where the principal empowers the teachers, where the teachers collaborate and cooperate with one another, where the children who are older mentor and tutor the ones who are younger, a school where when you walk in the door you know that learning is occurring.

Now, are the children at Kinsey the brightest children in Chicago? Were they genetically chosen to go to the Kinsey School? Were the teachers singled out because they were the best and most sensitive, charismatic teachers in Chicago? No. Instead, what happened at the Kinsey School can happen at any school. People were given the support and the motivation and the tools required to change how a school worked.

So there I was in a class of pre-K children, some of them with disabilities and particularly hearing impairments because those children are being included at the Kinsey School -- watching as little boys and girls talked and did their work together; and in a kindergarten class, watching as they determined what floated or sank -- much as I saw in the waterways exhibit here -- and I could see very clearly that what we had at that school is what we need at every school, but what we still don't have at enough schools.

Later this morning, I visited the Women's Self-employment Project, not far from here -- a non-profit organization created a decade ago to provide training and assistance, peer support and loans to low-income women who were interested in starting small businesses and becoming economically self-sufficient. These women are seldom thought of except in stereotypical terms. They're not considered independent -- many have been or still are on public assistance. They're certainly not considered entrepreneurial. The majority have household incomes of less than \$15,000 a year.

And yet, in every case, higher expectations for themselves and about them combined with tools of opportunity were changing lives. Women were telling me about the businesses they had started, how they had moved off of welfare. And over and over again, they said to me, I'm doing this for my children; I'm setting an example for my children. Because they understood how important expectations and attitudes and tools of opportunity are, not only for them, but for their children.

Today I want to focus on one of those tools and a particular set of expectations, and that concerns education. The President issued a national call in the State of the Union, a call to action for American education in the 21st century. This call for action outlines 10 proposals that the President believes if implemented would make a significant difference in our schools and in our children's futures.

We know that to prepare America for the next century we need strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline, and we need talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom. Now, what have we learned over the last years because of work by people like Berniece and Irving and others of you in this audience that would enable us to meet that goal?

Well, the President believes that we have learned enough to support each of the 10 points that he is advocating: First, that we have to set rigorous national standards with national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade mathematics to make sure our children master the basics.

Now, there is controversy about national standards and national tests. I understand that. But I also understand that in the absence of a national --- (inaudible) ----- results, and we will be unable as a nation to say that we have met the challenge that modern education poses to our children.

What this proposal calls for is voluntary national standards to be implemented at the local level, but to use tests that are created at the national level to determine whether or not children in Chicago or New York or Los Angeles are actually learning what they need to know.

This process will enable us to be sure that we have set benchmarks of excellence for our children -- not to put any child down but to enable all of us to lift children up. There is no difference between algebra in Chicago and algebra in Boston. There is no difference between reading in Los Angeles and reading in New York. How we get the best results in working with our children will be left to the local level, but we have to conclude, as the Mayor here in Chicago concluded when he took the courageous step of taking on the responsibility for the public schools here, that we cannot have any more excuses. We cannot pretend that we all live in Lake Wobegone, where all the children are above average, and where they are socially promoted and where they are not expected to do well because of who their parents are or what their address happens to be. Setting those national standards will, for the first time, say to every child, we have high expectations for you.

Secondly, we have to be sure that there are talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom. That means we have to do a better job with preparation for teachers and with in-service training for teachers. And we have to be honest about teachers who do not measure up. And we have to reward teachers who go above and beyond the call. And we have to enable more teachers to succeed by staying in the classroom and not being promoted into administration and taken out of the classroom. In order to maintain the kind of core of excellent, dedicated teachers, we need to make teaching, not administration, the primary goal of educators.

Third, we have to help every student to read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade. Now, for those of you who have worked with and studied children, you know very well that if a child is not reading well on his or her own by the age of 8 or 9, it is going to be very difficult for that child ever to catch up.



The President has called for a national effort, with volunteers helping teachers, with parents becoming involved, with tutors who are willing to give their time, to make sure that every child is able to read. If we could focus on that one goal as a nation and put our hearts and hands to work on it, we would not only help many children to read, we would involve many adults in the lives of our schools, because as I go in and out of schools today all over the country, I see clearly that our schools need more partners. They need people who will be there to assist in the classroom, to help solve problems, to provide resources. And the more Americans we have involved in our public schools, through tutoring and mentoring and in other ways, the stronger community support will become for our schools.

Next, we have to expand preschool and early childhood education, and challenge parents to become involved early in their children's learning. Irving Harris has been a pioneer in our efforts to focus on the earliest years of life and learning. And now, with what neuroscience is telling us, he is a man ahead of his time, because we now know that it is not only an important way to prepare a child for school by reading and talking with that child, stimulating that baby, we now know that it makes a physical difference in the way that child's brain develops.

Now, we can't take this the wrong way. I've had friends of mine ask me, you know, now that I know all about this brain research that's going on, do you think I read enough to my child? We can't go overboard about this. Most parents who ask that question have done just fine. What we have to do is to reach out and take this powerful information and enlist every parent and empower every parent.

Oftentimes, parents will say to me, why would I talk to the baby; he can't talk back. Or I don't feel comfortable reading to my daughter because I'm not a very good reader. And my response always is that for a baby it doesn't matter how good a reader you are. It even doesn't matter how good a talker you are. Just having that interaction on a regular, ongoing basis, pretending to read the book until the child is older, doing whatever it takes to enlist that child's active learning is what will make a difference.

And it's not only the family that has to take early childhood education seriously. We all do. We have to be more committed to programs like Head Start and Early Start and pre-k programs so that we give every child a chance to be exposed to stimulating educational opportunities as early as possible.

Next, we have to expand choice and accountability in public education. The President's plan for charter schools is one of the best ways that any state or community can begin to provide other options within the public school system. As I have been in and out of charter schools around our country, I have seen dramatic differences. I think of the charter school in the San Fernando Valley outside Los Angeles that was in a neighborhood where literally on the school property drug deals were happening. There was a crack house across the street. And parents and community members got fed up with having their complaints about the safety of the school fall on deaf ears at the downtown administration. And they banded together to form a charter school. And they drove out the drug dealers. And they closed down and destroyed the crack houses. And they created opportunities for parents to become actively involved in their child's

schooling. And the difference is as clear as it could be, to walk into that school now and see the learning that is taking place.

Accountability such as that that is being imposed here in Chicago will turn schools around. And again, we know what works to make schools accountable and effective. It's a matter of will whether we will be sure to implement those changes.

We have to make sure our schools are safe and disciplined and drug free, and instill our basic American values. That's where programs like uniforms, such as I saw at the Kinsey School today, come in, creating an atmosphere of structure and routine, particularly for children who come from situations that are chaotic. They need that external structure in order to begin to internalize structure. And curfews and uniforms and strict disciplinary codes -- all of that begins to send the signal that this is how we expect you to behave and how we're going to enforce our discipline in this school so that you will be able to grow and learn while here.

We have to modernize our school buildings and help support school construction. Many of our schools around our country, particularly in urban areas, are in deplorable condition. This morning, I heard from Gary Chico of the school system here in Chicago about the numbers of schools that have serious repair and maintenance problems. Many other schools in fast-growing districts have no space for children. If we expect our children to learn, there needs to be a partnership between the federal government, the state and local school districts to make sure our schools are safe to learn in.

We also have to hold something out to kids who are in school so that they will stay in school. And that's why the President has emphasized why we need to open the doors of college to all who work hard and make the grade. We need to make college more available after high school to many youngsters. Now, some people say, well, not every youngster needs to go to college. I wouldn't argue with that. But sometimes the youngsters who don't go to college are ones who would like to, who think they need to, but who for financial reasons are unable to.

Also, we now have in our community colleges the most extraordinary array of vocational and technical programs that will be available to assist young people and those who go back to school after having been in the work force to acquire skills that will make them more employable in the future. So college is not just about the four-year degree, although we should make sure that any young person who works hard and is willing to study has a chance to compete for that. But college is also about our community colleges and the preparation that they can provide to all Americans for the future of their work lives. We have to help adults improve their education and skills by transforming the tangle of federal training programs into a simple skill grant so that the individual can make the choice about where to go to get the training that that man or woman needs.

Focusing on the learning needs of adults is one of the most important ways we can help the children of those adults. Making it possible for Americans to increase their skills and their employability will provide more security in the future for the entire family. And that is good news for children who live in poverty in America -- far too many of them -- and for working

parents who are always struggling about where they're going to be able to find that paycheck or that college tuition or that rent money in the future.

We also have to be sure that every classroom and library is part of the Information Age. And the President has urged that every single one be connected to the Internet by the year 2000 and that we help all students become technologically literate. Again, technological literacy is not a magic panacea, but it is certainly something that those of us in this room are providing for our children. And if we don't provide it for all children, we will create two classes of young people in our country: those who are able to navigate the Information Age and those who can't get off the shore. So it's a matter of simple fairness to expose every child to the kind of technology that we provide for the children in our own families.

Now, if you look at these points in the President's plan -- standing alone or even passing them in legislation is not all that we need to do. Yes, we need every one of them if we're going to create the conditions required for making it possible for us to feel that we are educating our children. But we also have to change our attitudes and expectations as a society. We have to begin looking at the promise of every child.

Now that we have ended the entitlement to welfare, let us also end the stereotype about welfare. Let us begin to recognize that in Cabrini Green, in the Robert Taylor homes, there may be children who are just as able as any child of ours, and that it is in our interests to do everything we can to find and foster that potential, to see that child as a gift to America, and to recognize that we have a lot of ground to make up.

But if we change our attitudes, then we also have to expect more from every child and every parent. We have to try to make it clear that parenting is the most serious responsibility that anyone can assume, that it cannot be entered into lightly or irresponsibly, that it is a lifelong obligation. We have to do all we can to make sure that only those young men and women who are ready for that obligation assume it.

We also have to be prepared to speak very clearly to every young boy and girl. You will not succeed in America if you cannot speak English. You will not succeed in America if you do not take schooling seriously. You will not succeed in America if you do not believe you can succeed. You will not succeed in America if you engage in self-destructive behaviors or violence toward others because there will be no place for you in the kind of America we are trying to build for everyone else.

So, yes, we have a lot of work to do. And we have a lot of attitudes to change among all of us. But we also have to expect more from every American, and we have to enable every boy and girl to feel that he or she can succeed.

I think a lot about what the 21st century will be like because it is hard for me to believe that I will be living in a new century and a new millennium. I don't know if any of you are in millennial shock yet, but I am. And I wonder what this century holds for my daughter and for her friends and for all the children I see. And I know deep in my heart that my husband and I have

tried to do all we can for our daughter and give her every advantage we knew to give her -- starting from the time she was a very small baby. I also know that there is no predicting what life holds for her or for any of us.

But I want all of us to live in a country where the future's unpredictable pattern can be met by every child being as well prepared as we have tried to make our daughter. There is no guarantee, but we have to give every child that basic, fundamental confidence about who she or he is. And that's a job that can't just be left to parents. It's a job that all of us have to do. It is a job that is being done in this museum. It is a job that all of us have to recommit ourselves to.

I think that America is ready for that job, that challenge, that opportunity. And I'm hoping that every one of us will do our part in the next years to make it possible for us to say, we have no more excuses for what happens to the children in America and we don't need any because we have done our best.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

END

**HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER SYMPOSIUM  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT  
APRIL 30, 1998**

Thank you, Dr. Comer. It's wonderful to see you again, to be back here at Yale, and to be able to join Mayor DeStefano and Yale University's President Richard Levin as we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the School Development Program -- and recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of its founder. As some of you may know, I worked at the Yale Child Study Center when I was a law school student here. It was here that I first learned how critically important the early years of a child's life are to his or her ability to grow and learn. And it was that experience that sparked my lifelong interest in children and how they develop. So today I feel I truly am coming home.

The root of the verb to "educate" means to "lead forth" -- and that's what Dr. Comer has done with great vision and passion over the past three decades. Before it became conventional wisdom, Dr. Comer knew that parental involvement was essential to the success of a child's education. Before it was a major field of study, Dr. Comer recognized that learning is tied to a child's level of development. Before charter schools or magnet schools became household words -- Dr. Comer was busy designing schools in which parents were involved in everything from curriculum development to social activities.

Dr. Comer launched his school development program to change the learning environment in some of our nation's toughest schools -- and he's taught us many lessons along the way. He's shown us the critical importance of educating teachers in the field of child development -- and his more recent call for schools of education to increase that focus underscores his commitment to the issue. He's demonstrated that it's possible to create a framework for adults to collaborate with principals and teachers to create a positive, supportive school climate. And he's taught us that we must work especially hard to get the parents who themselves are at risk, and for whom school had not been successful, to be positively involved in their own children's education.

Perhaps more than anyone I know -- he's taken the wisdom of the African proverb -- "It takes a village to raise a child" to heart -- and put it into practice.

That the Comer plan is now being implemented in over 700 schools in 26 states around the country -- and around the world in nations like Trinidad and South Africa -- is a tribute to the Center's committed staff. The impact of the Center's work can be seen in improved student test scores and higher self esteem in schools nationwide. The work of the Center has also left its mark on national legislation like the Obey/Porter school reform legislation passed last year -- which provides \$50 million for school reform efforts. I want to congratulate all of you at the Center for what you've accomplished -- and continue to accomplish -- in turning schools into true places of learning and support.

I find it particularly appropriate to be honoring a man who has earned the title of "Father of modern school reform" at a time when debates over school reform are raging in the Hall of Congress, in city halls, and in family living rooms across the country. Currently in Washington there is a growing debate about using public tax dollars to support private school vouchers. Today, the House of Representatives will be debating another attempt to create a voucher program in the District of Columbia, -- our nation's capital.

We know what it takes -- in time, effort, resources, and successful strategies -- to create schools that work. Yet too often, we're getting pulled off track by false debates -- particularly about vouchers -- that claim to be the real solutions to improving public education, and fixing failing schools. I believe that vouchers, in fact, do the opposite. They divert attention and taxpayers dollars from public schools, at a time when public schools need those resources more desperately than ever. They also divide communities -- at a time when one of our greatest challenges as a nation is to pull communities together, across racial and economic lines.

Even at their best, vouchers would be available to only a very small portion of the population -- leaving the vast majority of schools and students with fewer resources, and even less hope. And recent reports on the voucher program in Cleveland show that vouchers simply don't work. After two years, students using vouchers made no significant academic gains.

The problem with the voucher debate is that it distracts us from the real work of improving public education, which is what we are celebrating here today. Almost 90 percent of America's children attend public school. For them -- and for us, nothing is more important than a good education. Nothing else offers us such a significant opportunity to create a better future for our children and for our nation. And nothing else so limits an individual's future when it is denied.

I have visited too many of those schools that are failing their students -- where expectations and levels of achievement are low, and drop out rates and despair are high. But I've also been to so many schools -- like the Jane Addams Elementary School that I visited in Chicago this week -- where communities and teachers are working together to nurture and motivate their students, and where students -- from even the poorest neighborhoods -- are excited about learning.

We know what works. And much of it boils down to a rather simple wish list -- much of it drawn from the Comer book of wisdom. Successful schools provide clear expectations that all children can and should learn; small class size; an orderly classroom environment; the close personal involvement of teachers; a commitment to tailor instruction to how different children learn; and perhaps most importantly -- parents actively participating in all aspects of the school and their children's education. Reciting that list, of course, is the easy part. It's figuring out how to put those principles into practice that's the greatest challenge of all.

I believe we need to fix America's schools, not walk away from them. And that means we must continue to support proven school reform efforts, including raising standards, placing a strong emphasis on early childhood development, getting more parents involved, and improving

teacher quality, and increasing after school opportunities to keep children safe and excited about learning. We must hold everyone -- teachers and principals, schools and students -- accountable for ensuring every child can learn and succeed.

Over the years, in my conversations with parents across the country, I've heard growing support for creating greater competition among schools and districts. That's why I strongly favor promoting choice among public schools, including charter schools, magnet schools, schools within schools, and district wide controlled public schools choice. Above all, every education dollar needs to be targeted to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

My husband, and his Administration, have set a bold education agenda that will truly create a revolution of standards, accountability and choice in America's public schools, by implementing these strategies that work. In calling for an historic investment in our K-12 schools, the President has set the following priorities:

- Reduce class size;
- Modernize and build schools to improve student learning;
- Promote high academic achievement through voluntary national standards and tests;
- Make sure every child can read independently by the third grade;
- End the practice of social promotion;
- Give communities the flexibility to decide what their schools need.

These mandates are the building blocks for better public schools. They also form the foundation for preparing students for the challenges of college. Both the President and I have benefitted from the extraordinary opportunities that come with a college education. Those same opportunities should be available to every child in America. That's why the President has expanded the HOPE scholarships -- so that everyone who graduates from high school can afford to go to at least two years of college. And that's why he strongly supports the lifetime learning tax credit -- to help students -- of every age -- to complete their college years.

Dr. Comer's vision for the school development program is a compelling one -- not only for our schools, but for our nation. It states: "Our vision is to help create a just and fair society, in which all children have the educational and personal opportunities which will allow them to become successful and satisfied participants in family and civic life." Today, we celebrate a man who has committed his life -- and work of this Center - to fulfilling that vision. And we rededicate ourselves -- as educators, elected officials, community leaders, and parents -- to making our schools and our communities the healthy and empowering environments our children need to grow and flourish.

As we look toward a new century, and a new millennium, we should feel a particular urgency to act. Universal public education is the bedrock of our democratic society, and the one American institution that has given every generation the opportunity to overcome injustice and inequality, and fulfill its destiny. The degree to which we fight to strengthen and support our historic commitment to public schools will determine whether we fail our children and ourselves, or whether we graduate to a new era of progress and prosperity in the 21st Century. Knowing what all of you here today have accomplished over the years on behalf of our children and our schools, I'm filled with optimism for our nation's future.



**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**  
**ANNUAL CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS' LUNCHEON**  
**CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER**  
**JUNE 3, 1998**  
as delivered

Thank you. Thank you very much. I am just delighted to be here for many different reasons to see this beautiful room filled with all of you who are on the front lines of improving public education and doing such a tremendous job for the children of Chicago.

As the mayor said, I've been in a number of your schools -- not nearly enough -- and I hope I will be able to visit more in the next several years. And I've seen the changes; I've seen them slowly but surely, really taking root. I know that the work that is being done in all of the schools represented here can only happen because there are leaders like you in those schools, and in this public education system.

I take nearly any invitation I am given to come back to Chicago. Especially during the NBA Playoff season. (Laughter) I have to say though, Sunday night I thought I was going to lose ten or twelve years off my life. I don't know about you, but when I watch a sporting event on television--that I have any emotional investment in--I have to get up and leave the room from time to time. I've become convinced that in some totally bizarre way that the reason we're not scoring is because I'm watching. (Laughter) So rest assured that I'll leave the room a lot in the next days.

But it is great to be here to help celebrate the accomplishments of this city and, particularly, the accomplishments of this school district. I want to thank the extraordinary Commissioner of Culture, Lois Weisberg. I don't know that she's gotten exactly the credit she deserves for all the work she does, but I try to give it to her every time I'm in Chicago, and in this Cultural Center, and doing anything in the city that Lois has had any role in. She's made such a difference. She celebrated my 50th birthday here at the Cultural Center. I could have gone without having a celebration of my 50th birthday. But, between my friends--some of whom are here from my school days in Park Ridge both elementary, junior high, high school, and in between--Lois, who celebrates everybody's birthday, takes any occasion to do so. Which, I happen to think is a fabulous idea to promote the celebratory aspects of living in this city. She's done a very, very good job. (Applause)

I'm also always pleased to be with Maggie Daley. Maggie Daley has been

such a voice for children, and for the arts, and has really spear-headed one of the most influential and creative projects that I know of anywhere in the country, called Gallery 37. (Applause) It has made an extraordinary difference not only in the lives of individual children and artists, but also in the artistic landscape of this city and other places. If you come to the White House, and come to my office sometime, you'll see a lot of the benches that the young people who work at Gallery 37 make and decorate. I'm always proud to point out that they were made in Chicago.

I too am very impressed by, and grateful for, the leadership of this city by the Mayor. It is so exciting for me every time I am with the Mayor because he has about a million ideas a minute. I always feel that he could, on his own, probably supply the power for a small city for a year, because the electricity and the energy is just coming out. But I so enjoy that, because we do know how to solve our problems. We do know what makes sense. We do know that as tough as things are, we can make a difference. Who would have thought that 5 years ago we'd be able to say that crime has fallen 5 years in a row? Well, the President and the mayor thought so. That's why they adopted strategies like community policing, instead of just ringing their hands and talking about how bad things were. (Applause)

Who would have thought that we would have, in my opinion, the most successful Democratic convention ever in 1996 because the city was as beautiful and hospitable as it is now. (Applause).

But the real crown jewel in what you, and the mayor, and this city is doing, is what you've done in the schools. I want to pay a special word of thanks to everyone who is associated with the school board, with the school's administration, but particularly to all of you. Because that's really why I'm here. Because I know that we're lucky to have a President who cares about education. And Chicago is very lucky to have a mayor who cares about education and who can recruit talented people to come and work on this problem. But none of the progress that we are seeing could have been possible without each of you. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

You've given a lot of us around the country hope. I go to a lot of cities that are still trying to figure out how to make heads or tails about the problems they have in their schools. And I'm always saying, look at the decisions that they're making in Chicago. Look at how they're facing up to their problems. Look at the results that they are beginning to get. It didn't happen overnight, but they didn't point fingers at each other. They didn't spend their time in anarchy, engaging in the blame game. They rolled up their sleeves and they decided to do what needed to be done.

You have proven that we can adopt sensible strategies that will once again

make our public schools the kinds of institutions we can be proud of, because of the products they are producing and the children's lives that are being turned around.

It's happening all over the city. In fact, Paul Valance told me at lunch today that some of the biggest turn-arounds are happening in those areas of the city that have the poorest kids. I want to commend you, because I am sick and tired of hearing people in education elsewhere in the country say to me, "Well what do you expect? Look at the kids we get." That is a cop-out. That is an absolute cop-out. (Applause)

A hundred years ago we took people from all over the world that were flooding into this city and cities like it. We took people who were coming up from the South who had been slaves, and the children of slaves, and who had never been educated. We started putting them in public school, and maybe they only went to the sixth grade, or the eighth grade, or the tenth grade. But, nobody made excuses for them. Nobody sat around and said, "Poor old Joe. He's just come over with his parents from the boat. Or poor old Mary, she's just one generation from the fields." We had a belief that if we worked hard enough, and if we worked together and if we didn't give up on any kid, we wouldn't make geniuses out of them. They weren't all going to be Nobel Prize winners, or Pulitzer Prize authors, but they'd find a place in this society. And they'd lead honorable, respectable lives, and they would raise kids, and they'd make a contribution.

And then times changed on us, and we lost a little bit of control. We couldn't quite figure out how we were going to do the work that needed to be done when the economy was changing so fast. Because there used to be a lot of jobs; I remember growing up here there were jobs in the factories on the south side. There were jobs in the meat packing plants. There were all kinds of jobs, where you didn't need a whole lot of education, where a strong back, and a willingness to work would get you there. But all that began to change and the public education system didn't keep up with it, at first. And how could it? It was overwhelmed by the changes. With the economy moving so quickly, and jobs disappearing so fast, and the demand for more education coming at such a rapid rate, how were we going to meet the obligations to the next generation of children?

I understand--and I think we all do--why we lost our way for awhile there. Because it was difficult to figure out exactly what we were doing in terms of educating. For what? For what kind of future?

But finally it dawned on us. That there weren't going to be many, if any, jobs left for good, hard working decent people, who were willing to get up at the crack of dawn and work, 8, 10, 12 hours a day. There just weren't going to be those jobs, and we had to do something to enable everybody to be as well prepared as

possible.

And I'm beginning to see the country and the people kind of catch up with that awareness as well. We're seeing a lot of success, for example, in people moving off of welfare. Because, a lot of people are recognizing that they've got to set an example for their children. They've got to go to work. They've got to encourage their children to go to school. We're seeing a lot of people who never thought that their kid needed to go to college, all of a sudden recognizing that they do need to get as much education as possible.

So the circumstances were poised for the hard decisions that needed to be made, but we had to have leadership. We had to have people at all levels of the education system. We had to have leaders in the business and labor community. We had to have political decision makers, citizens and parents who all reached a new consensus about the importance of education.

That's what I think is happening now. And I believe Chicago is leading the way in forging that consensus. And I'm always telling people, we'll go see what they're doing in Chicago. And when I travel around the country, and people talk to me about things like vouchers for schools, I say, "Go to Chicago!" We don't need vouchers, we just need a public education system that works for every single child. (Applause)

So now that we have a strategy, and you all are leading the way here in the country by what you're doing in Chicago. What does that mean, and where do we go from here?

Well, we need to do more to give you the tools to do the work that you know needs to be in each of your schools. The President has an education agenda that he's worked out with people like the Mayor, and the people who are involved in running the Chicago schools. He knows that we have to reduce class size, and we have to repair school buildings and build new ones. We have to insure safer schools. We do have to set high standards. We have to do what needs to be done to expand after school programs and pre-school programs so the kids are both prepared and able to get the extra help they need.

Now this agenda--particularly the President's call for 100,000 more teachers, which echoes the call he made in 1993 for 100,000 more police. Because how are you going to make the streets safer if you don't have more police on the streets? And how are you going to lower the class size and give a lot of these kids more attention, as you know better than I, if you don't have the teachers to do the job? And it's not just a Chicago issue, it's an American issue, which is why the federal government should step in and help provide the funding for 100,000 more teachers. (Applause)

And what kind of message does it send to a youngster, if we're telling this young person, maybe a first generation American, or certainly a child of hard working people who never went to college, or a child of somebody who has just gotten off of welfare. What does it mean if we say, we really believe in education but, by the way, we really want you to attend that school that's fallen down around your ears? That school that hasn't been repaired, the one where the toilets don't work, we want you to go there. We want you to believe we care about you and your education.

Well, most kids I know are smarter than that and most teachers deserve better than that. We need to do more to make the infrastructure of our public education system the best it can be and we certainly need to do what is required to make our school buildings safe, and accessible, and available to people, not just during the school day but to the neighborhood during the off school hours as well.

The President has proposed such a plan. So there is some very important work that the federal government can do if the Congress would focus on real education reform and quit trying to design ways to undermine the viability of the education system with these voucher plans. If the Congress would adopt a real education agenda, then the United States government could be a better partner to the city schools here in Chicago and around the country.

We also need to recall what it was about the education that many of us received that stood us in such good stead. My husband and I have talked about this a lot. He went to school in the public schools of a state that never got off the bottom in terms of per capita spending for children. But the elementary school and the high school that he went to, they had art classes, they had music classes, they had band, they had a full range of sports and recreation activities, they had clubs.

A lot of kids education -- and mine, going to a suburban Chicago school district -- didn't just happen during the academic classes, it happened when the music teacher was introducing us to opera, or the art teacher was attempting to show me how to get some sense of perspective which I've never gotten to this day. So, we knew there was a lot going on that was beyond reading, writing and arithmetic. And so much of that has been cut out in the first years.

When the budget has had to be tightened, what's gone? After-school programs, recreational programs, art programs, music programs. I think that we have missed such an opportunity with a whole group of children, to find their talents, to give them something to believe in themselves. (Applause) And even to take people like me, who have no talent, but to expose us to the talent of other people, to develop in someone like me an appreciation for those who can create, for the students who go to Gallery 37 that sculpt and paint, and do what I saw them

do when I visited.

And I think one of the challenges we face as we're moving along the reform agenda, and we're seeing test scores go up, is to not lose sight about what a well rounded education means. What the full range of exposure for all of our children should mean.

I have a wonderful quote I heard recently from the choir director of a youth choir in Oakland California. When he was justifying his efforts before the school board to get additional funds to enroll more kids in his choir because the choir had taken off, and more kids wanted to get in. He said, "You know a child can be in a gang, or a gang of singers."

We've got to create safe places where the children can find their own identities again: maybe on the sports team and on the field, and maybe in a choir as well, or maybe sitting quietly and practicing an instrument, or trying to draw something that a teacher has already modeled. And I think that it's so critical in these days when so many kids have so much going on in their lives. You know. You know what they bring to school. And, it's not just poor kids, it's all kids. There's just so much going on around them that they have to sort out.

Even if they come from stable two parent families, they see a whole lot of stuff on TV that I wish they wouldn't see. They're are exposed to a whole lot more than I was ever exposed to until I was well into adulthood. How can they make sense of all that? And then, you've got teachers standing in front of classrooms of kids, and I've had a good friend of mine that has taught for years and she calls it the "remote control phenomenon." She said, "I stand up there and what worked 20 years ago no longer works." She said, "I feel like these kids are just mentally clicking me off. Running through the remote control looking for a better channel." (Laughter)

Well what can you expect when the first thing a child is able to do--remember when we used to learn about and talk about hand-eye coordination, when we worried about learning how to tie their shoes so they could develop their mental capacity--well now they just learn to use the remote control. It amuses, it entertains them, it doesn't ask anything from them. So then we expect them to go to a school, and sit in a classroom, and not be mentally using the remote control.

That's why we have to get them engaged in learning, and I've seen wonderful examples of that in many of the classrooms of your schools that I have visited. I've seen hands-on programs in the sciences. I've seen kids working with blocks and other materials to do math problems, that were well beyond what I thought a first or second grader could do.

I've seen lots of interactive learning going on. And I think that's one of the roles that the arts has to play because you have to be involved. You can't just watch and expect that picture to show up on that paper. You can't just sit there and pretend that you're listening, when you have to play that instrument. You have to participate.

So there are many reasons why we have to look for ways to bring the arts back into our schools. But we've also learned something. It's not just a nice idea or nostalgia for people in my generation thinking about what we had when we were in public school. It's not even one of my favorite films, "Mr. Holland's Opus," that made me think of all those years back with all those plays, and performances, and variety shows that we used to do.

It's also because we now have very significant and compelling research that arts education can be a powerful force in boosting academic performances, particularly when it's moved into the core curriculum of a school. A four year study involving an elementary school in Dallas, Texas, has proven what educators, and cultural supporters, have been saying for years. That integrated arts curriculum can dramatically improve academic success. A recent North Carolina study demonstrates that math learning is enhanced by these hands-on visual experiences. We know that when it comes to SAT scores, students of the arts continue to outperform their peers who don't have such programs in their schools.

 I can remember back in 1983, when my husband asked me to work on education reform in Arkansas. I went and visited lots of schools, and I just could not believe that so many of the students didn't have in 1983 what I had in 1963. They didn't have the libraries, they didn't have the arts programs. They didn't have the exposure that I'd grown up taking for granted. As a result, they didn't have the tools at their disposal to manipulate information, to think about, to make synthesizing ideas work as they learn things, and weren't able to add to their academic accomplishments.

A study a few years ago called "Coming Up Taller" that was released by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities--on which Maggie Daley has so well served--offered compelling evidence that the arts provide young people, particularly those from homes and neighborhoods where there is little exposure to the arts, with creative alternatives to destructive behavior.

The study reported many research studies, and anecdotes, but I particularly like the ones where an individual student will all of a sudden find an opportunity to be in an artistic program during school, or after school, and all of a sudden caught fire. The kid who'd never been interested before all of a sudden was.

I've gone around and visited some of those programs like Gallery 37, and others in other cities, and I have seen with my own eyes what a difference it can

make. We also know from educational psychology that people learn in different ways. Some people are visual learners, some people are auditory learners. Some people are kinesthetic learners, some people learn by doing. Some people, in a way, have an absorptive ability with their whole body. Some of them become our greatest athletes if they're given the chance to develop the discipline.

We are all different and introducing the arts, particularly for young people who don't have the outlets for that kind of expression otherwise, really demonstrates clearly that we can capture something, light a fire in some of those kids.

We also know that the future work world--this information age that we are now a part of, that looks like its only going to continue to accelerate in its development--prizes exactly the skills that the arts themselves use, skills like creativity and innovation. If you go and talk to companies like GE or Microsoft, they are encouraging their employees to be exposed to the visual and performing arts, because they want people to be creative and come up with new ideas and think about how to do things differently.

So its not only that it will help a child--and particularly an at-risk child that perhaps might get hooked into academic learning--but it will also help prepare a child for the world of work as well.

I think that the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education is a very good way of beginning to make sure that we have the arts well represented in our schools here in this city. I also applaud the partnership between the Chicago public schools and Columbia College--which is training 900 high school math and science teachers to use art, music and dance to enrich the teaching of their subjects. Albert Einstein once said, "The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing knowledge," and imagination, that we have to trigger in everyone, for them to feel that they have a real claim on their own future.

A few weeks ago, I went to one of the toughest neighborhoods in Washington, where the student body, and the school across from the housing project, was predominantly very poor and disadvantaged. I went to something called a poetry slam. I don't know if any of you have seen such a thing, but they are projects that are funded by the Americorps Writer's Corps--where young writers and poets are sent into the classrooms in some of our toughest neighborhoods where they work with young people in helping them to write their own poetry and where they have contests, like sports contests. It's like going to the Olympics, because you have one school represented by their four best poets, and the other school represented by their four best poets. Then you have an audience of people who hold up cards like an ice-skating contest ranking the kids from one to ten.



It has the excitement of a sporting contest. Who could have thought that these kids would have labored over these poems. And the poems were so evocative, they told stories about their lives. There was one young girl who got up and told a poem about the homeless man she has to walk by everyday on her way to school. Another talked about what went on in his housing project, and the noise that sometimes just made him feel like he was going to shatter into a million pieces. One had a poem about the legacy of Duke Ellington. One student said, "I'm so good at music, that when you hear my song, you'll sing it for the rest of your life." (Laughter)

Every one of these young people talked about how being in this poetry program had helped them put their anger on paper, instead of taking it out on their fellow classmates in the hallways, or on the streets. That it gave them a confidence that they hadn't had before.

This program was funded by, as I said, Americorps and the National Endowment for the Arts, because they believe, and my husband and his administration believe, that art is not a luxury, it's a necessity. And, that as we know more about the challenges we're going to face in the future, it should be an integral part of our lives, and particularly of our education system.

So we at the federal level do what we can to try to promote arts projects like the Writers Corps, arts programs, and provide funding for local projects every chance we can get. But I also in the next two years intend to embark on a national campaign to get arts education back into our schools. (Applause)

I think as our nation moves toward the end of one century--and the beginning of a new millennium--its time for us to decide about the legacies we want to leave for future generations. Earlier this morning Maggie Daley and I were at the Art Institute, where the Sara Lee Corporation announced a magnificent gift. Twelve paintings from their private collection to the Art Institute, one to the Contemporary Art Museum here in Chicago, and other museums around the country. I sat, and I looked at those works--most of them 19th century, early 20th--and I thought, just think in a 100 years, somebody could be making a contribution to the Art Institute of work that was done by Chicago artists who got their start in the Chicago public schools. (Applause)

And when Sara Lee made that announcement, the Chief Executive, John Bryant said that it was going to be a Millennium gift to America. I said how pleased I was because, last summer, the President asked all of us to think about the gifts we can give to America for the Millennium.

You give gifts every day in your schools. You give gifts that may not make headlines, but as the mayor said, will be remembered in the hearts of students and

teachers and parents in years to come.

I remember those gifts. I have with me today one of my favorite teachers from high school. A math teacher, that was not my favorite subject, but he was one of my favorite teachers. (Laughter)

And I remember extremely well how he conducted himself, how he encouraged us, he was our class sponsor, he was always there in our corner trying to make sure we behaved in an appropriate manner. But I remember, and thousands of hundreds of thousands of people remember your legacies, and we have to think about how we will build on that and what gifts we will give.

I want to leave you with some words of Rita Dove, who was our poet laureate a few years ago. Recently at the White House, as part of our Millennium Celebration, we had our present poet laureate, and our two former poet laureates, of whom one was Rita Dove. She served from 1993 to 1995. She said,

"If children are unable to voice what they mean, no one will know how they feel. If they cannot imagine a different world, they are stumbling through a darkness made all the more sinister by its lack of reference points. For a young person growing up in America's alienated and disparate neighborhoods, there can be no greater empowerment than to dare to speak from the heart--and then to discover that one is not alone in one's feelings. Once hope and self esteem have been engendered, the work of redefining the future can begin."

Well, thank God for our poets like Rita Dove, and thank God for our artists who help us give voice to what we feel. And thank God for all of our teachers and our principals who do what you do everyday to try to light that spark in our children. I hope that you will find in the next years even greater satisfaction because you'll see you're better supported in the work you do. You'll see the results of your hard work, and you too will feel that the gifts you're giving to the future are well respected and appreciated, and that you are part of building what we need to have as we move in to the Millennium. Thank you very much.

Speech by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton  
April 30, 1998

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be here with President Levin and with the Mayor and I know that the Mayor and the City and the University are working hard to enhance opportunities for the people of New Haven and provide opportunities such as the high school that we just heard about. Dr. Cohen and your colleagues at the Yale Child Study Center, Dr. Reggie Mayo, Dr. Edward Joyner, other elected officials and Yale officials, educators, ladies and gentlemen, I am really paying a great debt by being here. It is a debt that I incurred many years ago when, at the urging of Jay Katz and Joe Goldstein, I found my way from the Yale Law School over to the Yale Child Study Center. I had the rather odd idea that there was a relationship between the (law and the) values and rules of the law and the way children were raised. So I was encouraged by my law school professors to look for an opportunity to work with the experts and professionals at the Yale Child Study Center. I m not sure that Dr. Solnit knew exactly what to do with me when I showed up, but he was his usual very gracious but quite penetrating self. And we worked out an arrangement where I was able to spend time at the Center, to make observations of the work of people like Sally Provence, actually to sit in on case conferences and to really be mentored about many of the issues that were the province of the Child Study Center but which I thought also had implications for the law.

I spent a very exciting and challenging time working with the staff at the Yale-New Haven Hospital around the issue of child abuse, which in the early 1970s which is the time period I m discussing, was seen as a relatively new medico-legal phenomenon. I made rounds with some of the physicians, I visited patients and was often asked, even though I was still a mere law student, for my opinion about a range of issues presenting very thorny questions, such as sterilization, whether or not to remove a child from a home and the like. But it certainly was that work and that exposure to the Medical School, the Hospital, the Yale Child Study Center which deepened my belief in the need for interdisciplinary discussion, dialogue and cooperation when it came to doing the best we could in providing the support that families needed in the raising of children.

So I feel very lucky to be back here today and particularly to be part of the 30th anniversary of the School Development Program. I am very honored to be among those who recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of Jim Comer. Because it's been Dr. Comer's lifelong vision and passion and mission over the past three decades to make us understand what

education is really all about. Before it became conventional wisdom, Dr. Comer knew that parental involvement was essential to the success of a child's education. Before it was a major field of study, Dr. Comer recognized that learning in school, before school and after school, is tied to a child's level of development. Before charter schools or magnet schools became household words, Dr. Comer was busy designing schools in which parents were involved in everything from curricular development to social activities.

Dr. Comer launched his School Development Program to change the learning environment in some of our nation's toughest schools, and he has taught us many lessons along the way. He has shown us the critical importance of educating teachers in the field of child development, and his more recent calls for schools of education to increase that focus underscores his commitment to the issue. He has demonstrated that it is possible to create a framework for adults to collaborate with principals and teachers to create a positive, supportive school climate. And he's taught us how hard it is to do any of this. How hard we have to work to get parents, especially parents whose experience with schooling was not very successful, involved on behalf of their children. Perhaps more than anyone I know he has taken the wisdom of the African proverb I borrowed for my book, 'It takes a village to raise a child,' to heart and has put it into practice.

That the Comer plan is now being implemented in over 700 schools in twenty-six states around the country and around the world in nations like Trinidad and South Africa is a tribute not only to Jim Comer, but to the Center and the Center's committed staff. The impact of the Center's work can be seen in improved student test scores and higher self-esteem in schools nationwide.

The work of the Center has also left its mark on national legislation like the Obey-Porter School Reform legislation passed last year which provides \$50 million for school reform efforts. I want to congratulate everyone associated with the Child Study Center for what you have all accomplished and what you will continue to accomplish in turning schools into true places of learning and support for children. I find it particularly appropriate to be honoring a man who has earned the title of 'Father of Modern School Reform,' a kind of clumsy title but a descriptive one, at a time when debates over school reform are raging around our country and in the hall of Congress, in city halls, in family living rooms.

Currently in Washington, for example, there is a debate going on about using public tax dollars to support private school vouchers. In fact, today the House of Representatives is debating

another attempt to create a voucher program in the District of Columbia, our nation's Capital. Yet lost in these debates, which often generate more heat than light, are the lessons of the last thirty years from education reform. We know what it takes in time, effort, resources and successful strategies to create and maintain schools that work. Yet too often we get pulled off track by false debates, particularly about vouchers, that claim to be the real solutions to improving public education and fixing failing schools. At a time when more than ever we should be devoting more resources, attention and intelligence to improving our public schools, some want to drain off these resources and give them only to a few, making it even more difficult for public schools to improve. Vouchers also divide communities at a time when one of our greatest challenges as a nation is to pull communities together across racial and economic lines. Even at their best, vouchers would be available to only a very small portion of the population, leaving the vast majority of schools and students with fewer resources and even less hope. And recent studies of voucher programs in Cleveland show that vouchers haven't worked. After two years students using vouchers made no significant academic gains. Dr. Comer could have told them that, that there needs to be a broader, more comprehensive approach to education than that.

★ The real problem with the voucher debate is that it distracts us from the hard work of improving public education, which is what we are celebrating here today. Almost 90% of America's children attend public schools. For them and for us nothing is more important than that they receive a good education. Nothing else offers the children or ourselves the chance for a better future and nothing so limits an individual's future and denies the nation the talents it needs when education is in some way denied. I have visited many schools around our country and I have almost come to the point where I can tell upon walking in the door what kind of school I will find. I have seen schools where within just a couple of blocks or miles from one another one school is failing the students who come from the same racial and economic background and one school is succeeding against very formidable odds. I have been to schools where the teachers proudly show me work that is being done by students in the sixth grade that I have seen done better by students in other schools in the second grade. I have been in schools where the ceiling plaster is falling down, whole corridors are barred off, windows are broken and yet children are supposed to believe they are valued by their community.

I have also been in schools that have turned around because of a concerted effort by parents and teachers and by local political leaders and civic groups and business people who understood that it would take the kind of attention to detail and the long-run changes that Jim Comer has advocated to make a difference. In the last few years I have seen firsthand how a

commitment to change and the fortitude to carry it out has really paid off. Just this week I was in a school in the inner city of Chicago primarily composed of Hispanic youngsters that has done a complete turnaround. Ever since the Mayor of Chicago took control of the schools and said there would be no more excuses and listened to teachers and experts, they have made some real progress. I've also been in schools in the suburbs of Chicago just this week where I have seen people who have the best that you can offer in American public education. They have the money from their tax base to be able to pay for every bit of technology and they are using it to make sure their children who start ahead stay ahead. And so I've also been encouraged and discouraged as I have traveled around our country.

Now there is no cookie cutter formula, ~~there is no single recipe~~. What really makes Jim Comer's program work so well in so many different settings is its understanding of the need to create a climate in the school and to involve all the adult actors. Jim Comer knows that successful schools provide clear expectations. That you have to set those expectations for children and then encourage them to meet them. He also knows you need an orderly classroom environment, the close personal involvement of teachers, a commitment to treating individual students as individuals, and if that means tailoring curriculum or providing special help, then that's what should be done.

But probably most important of all ~~and the lesson that has really reverberated around the world because of Dr. Comer's work is that parents have to be actively involved~~. Now we know, those of us in this Harkness Auditorium, that we are perhaps too involved in our children's lives and education. We read to them when they're babies, we go to the parent/teacher conferences, we're there every time we are invited at the school. We try to be as involved as we can. But that is not the case for many, many parents, many of whom are really prohibited by conditions of their working hours to be involved in their children's school and there are no accommodations made by so many schools to reach out to such working parents. Others who feel that they are left out of their child's life because of a divorce or a single-parent family so they, too, don't become involved. But mostly because for many parents they believe the responsibility for education really rests in the school and once they send their child to school, then it should be the teachers who will make that child learn and make that child behave and they don't really understand and they are not told what their responsibility happens to be.

So for all of the reasons why we celebrate the success of Jim Comer's approach to schools, we need to redouble our commitment to carrying out what his reform strategies have

taught us. That means we have to continue to advocate hard for raising standards, placing a strong emphasis on early childhood development, getting more parents involved, improving teacher quality, increasing after-school opportunities to keep children safe and excited about learning. And we have to hold the adults in the system accountable. We can't let another year go by. We've let too many go by so far. Where adults, whether they are teachers or principals or school board members or elected officials or parents or anyone else in the community, are permitted to point fingers at somebody else for the failure of any child.

One of the ways that I think we can create more room for reform and what I've heard from more and more educators and parents is that we do need to create within the public schools greater competition among schools and districts. That's why I strongly favor promoting choice among public schools, including charter schools, magnet schools, schools within schools and districtwide, controlled public school choice. If a school is not desirable to the parents and children who would otherwise be required to attend, because the outcomes are not good, because it's not an orderly environment, then let us provide the means for those parents and children to go elsewhere and let's encourage public schools to learn from each other and adopt the strategies that work. I've been involved in public school reform since 1983 and the most frustrating of all my experiences has been how difficult it is to replicate positive school change. I have been in many meetings with educators and I have said 'Well, what about the Comer model?' or 'Have you visited the school down the road that seems to be doing such a good idea?' And time and again I've either been met by a blank stare or I've actually had superintendents, principals, school board members tell me, 'Well, you know, we have different kinds of kids. We can't really learn anything from those people.' Every time an educator turns his or her back on a reform effort that has worked, that educator is doing a grave disservice to the children in that educator's care.

If I could wave a magic wand, I would want to see every teacher in America, every teacher union in America, every principal, every superintendent, every school board member agitating for positive change that works in our schools. I would want to see them holding forums, I would want to see them critiquing themselves and admitting what they have or have not done right or wrong, looking for ways to make our schools work. Now the President and his administration under the leadership of Secretary Dick Riley, have set forth a bold education agenda that truly would help those of you on the front lines working on behalf of reform. It would create a revolution of higher standards, accountability and choice. And it would not be difficult for any of you to list off the ingredients of this agenda: reducing class size, modernizing and building schools to improve student learning, promoting high academic achievement through

voluntary national standards and tests, making sure every child can read independently by the third grade, ending the practice of social promotion, giving communities the flexibility to decide what their schools need, hiring 100,000 new certified teachers and wiring every school so that it would have access to the Internet.

Now those are the ingredients. They have to be put together in the right way to produce the result we all want, but so far the President has not even been successful in getting the Congress to address those seriously. Instead we have the diversionary debate about vouchers.

These are the real building blocks for better public schools. They form the foundation for preparing students for the world of work or college. And I, for one, have been so grateful

★ throughout my entire life for my public school education outside Chicago. Times have changed I know, but it is disheartening when I go into schools today that provide less for their students than I was provided forty years ago. Schools that have cut out music and art, which make a big difference in many children's lives. Schools that have cut out after-school athletics and clubs and other kinds of activities that engage children and make them feel that school is a safe and welcoming place. Schools that have cut out recess for little children thinking that they can sit at their desks endlessly doing paperwork. Schools that don't have any real idea about the new methods of teaching that are more interactive and involving of individual students. All these changes which we have seen in the best of America's public schools we should work to make sure are part of all of America's public schools.

★ Dr. Comer's vision for the School Development Program is a compelling one, not only for our schools but for our nation. That vision states: Our vision is to help create a just and fair society in which all children have the educational and personal opportunities which will allow them to become successful and satisfied participants in family and civic life. Today we celebrate a man who has committed his personal and professional life and the work of this Center to fulfilling that vision. And we should, while we celebrate Dr. Comer and recognize the Yale Child Study Center, rededicate ourselves as educators, elected officials, community leaders, parents, citizens, to making our schools and our communities the healthy and empowering environments our children deserve to have to grow and flourish. Thank you very much.



## TALKING IT OVER

BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 1998, AND THEREAFTER

Ten years ago, nervous neighbors crossed the street to avoid Chicago's Du Sable High School, where, in 1987, a student was shot to death inside the building.

Now, people cross the street to enjoy the school's gardens, blooming with flowers and vegetables, and to marvel at the peacocks, pheasants and macaws in the courtyard atrium.

Down the hall, in teacher Emil Hamberlin's biology class, you'll find more animals -- boa constrictors, pythons, a pot-bellied pig, an alligator, ferrets and even a badger. When Dr. Hamberlin, who's taught at Du Sable for 35 years, notices that students are having trouble getting to school, he assigns them an animal.

"We see a dramatic improvement in attendance when we give the students responsibility," he explains. One ninth-grader, Charles Armstrong, loves feeding the animals -- the peacocks are his favorite. He's going to work with Dr. Hamberlin this summer and plans to major in biology in college.

Now, the school wants to renovate the atrium as a memorial to friends slain in the neighborhood. Last November, Du Sable's Gospel Choir members joined their suburban counterparts at the top-ranked New Trier High School for a fund-raising concert at Chicago's Orchestra Hall.

Du Sable was once one of the jewels of the Chicago school system -- not unlike New Trier -- boasting famous alumni including former Mayor Harold Washington and Nat "King" Cole. But when Principal Charles Mingo arrived in 1988, the outlook was bleak.

It wasn't unusual to find more students hanging out in the hallways than in class, and on any given day, only about 65 percent showed up at all. Mingo himself bought alarm clocks for some students, went to their homes and knocked on doors to roust them out of bed. Nonetheless, he says, attendance is still his biggest problem.

Mingo also rid the halls of graffiti and declared Du Sable "neutral turf" in the gang wars that rage outside the door. He banned hats, coats, radios and sunglasses inside the building. He has to be strict, he explains, because he's dealing with "kids who've grown up without a whole lot of order." Eighty percent of Du Sable students live in the Robert Taylor Homes, one of the nation's three poorest communities.

It wasn't just the kids, though, who were underachieving. Some teachers, disheartened and uninspired, didn't issue books, claiming students would lose them. And many locked up classroom computers so that students couldn't use them. One teacher explained, "I don't want kids to steal them." Now, Du Sable prides itself on being the first public school in Chicago to be wired for Internet access.

Despite the restoration of order, Du Sable's reading test scores still lagged far behind national norms, so Mingo and his staff set out to create a "Culture of Reading."

Teachers volunteer in after-school and summer reading programs. Everyone learns a new vocabulary word each day -- it's not unusual to be quizzed by a security guard on the "word of the day." And the daily curriculum now includes a 30-minute reading class -- almost unheard of in high school.

Meanwhile, in 1995, the entire Chicago system undertook a major reform initiative. Mayor Richard M. Daley took control of the schools, imposing strict new standards and accountability. Schools that didn't perform on national tests were placed on probation, and the worst schools were "reconstituted" -- teachers and principals had to resign and reapply for their jobs.

Two years ago, in a devastating blow for a community that was trying so hard, Du Sable was reconstituted. Mingo held onto his job, but many teachers did not. He looks back now and calls the move a "blessing."

The school board assigned a new associate principal, Katherine Owens-Smith, to deal solely with academics. She marvels at the way the school -- "everyone from the engineering staff to the cafeteria workers" -- pulled together. And, now, their hard work is beginning to pay off.

Last year, only 4.9 percent of Du Sable students met national standards in reading. On the latest test, the number climbed to 12.4 percent -- not enough to take the school off probation but demonstrating they're moving in the right direction, although they still have a long way to go.

The Chicago school system's CEO, Paul Vallas, can't talk about Du Sable's success without taking a moment to boast about the city's other schools. He notes that every school in the violent State Street Corridor, which includes Du Sable, and in the area of the infamous Cabrini-Green projects improved their scores. The four Cabrini-Green elementary schools are even eligible to come off probation now.

He's right. When we celebrate the success of Du Sable, let's also congratulate the students, teachers, staff, parents and neighbors who are working every day in schools all over Chicago to create safe havens of learning for our children. And let's spread the word that even in our country's toughest neighborhoods, we know how to make our schools work.

To find out more about Hillary Rodham Clinton and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

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## TALKING IT OVER

### HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

May 20, 1998

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America is facing a critical choice -- whether to honor and strengthen our commitment to our public schools or to retreat.

A truly free public education is a cornerstone of our democracy. Nearly 90 percent of the 52.2 million students in this country are enrolled in public schools.

Expanding the commitment to public schools is one of my husband's highest priorities. He has proposed legislation that would reduce class size in the early grades, modernize and build new schools, implement high standards of achievement and help every child read independently by the end of third grade.

It would also link every school to the Internet, end the practice of automatically promoting every student and give communities the flexibility to decide what their schools need.

Some members of Congress, however, have chosen to reject these meaningful improvements in favor of political expediency. They want to take dollars away from the public schools and use them to pay for private-school vouchers.

One proposal that has passed both houses of Congress would provide vouchers of up to \$3,200 for private- or parochial-school tuition to approximately 2,000 families in the District of Columbia.

Many of you have read news reports about the dismal state of the D.C. public schools, sadly referred to as among the worst in the nation. We must fix them, but vouchers are not the solution.

Vouchers divert attention and taxpayer dollars away from the schools that serve the vast majority of our students just when they need these resources to make fundamental changes. That's why my husband has promised to veto the bill.

Recently, a new superintendent took over the reins of D.C.'s troubled schools and has already begun to bring much-needed reform to the system. Now is not the time to siphon off desperately needed money for a program that will affect at most 3 percent of the system's 70,000 students at a cost of more than \$6 million.

Vouchers will not bring one more math teacher into the classroom or repair one broken window. Vouchers will not restore art, music or after-school activities. And vouchers will not rekindle a sense of pride in our public schools.

Vouchers raise fundamental questions about whether the federal government can use taxpayer dollars to send children to religious schools. And vouchers provide funds to schools that are not accountable for what their students learn or how the schools manage their money.

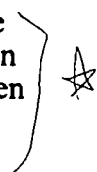
The evidence is mixed on whether children who participate in voucher programs actually do better in school. The most recent study of Cleveland's voucher program concludes that students who use vouchers do no better than

their counterparts in public school.

At a time in our nation's history when it is critical for every student to have better teachers, higher standards and more modern facilities, vouchers drain our public schools. Giving a few students a ticket out of the public schools is the wrong approach. The right approach is to fix the schools that are failing and to offer choices within the public school system.

We know how to fix our schools.

More than 10 years ago, Chicago's schools were singled out as the nation's worst. That's when the Mayor, the business community and parents got serious about fixing their schools. This week, Mayor Daley announced that test scores in the city have risen for the third straight year -- proof, he says, of the success of tough reform initiatives. The Mayor singled out DuSable High School, which has created a "culture of reading," including a special summer reading program and security guards who quiz kids on vocabulary words in the halls. 

We also know how to provide meaningful choices for parents within the public schools -- such as charter schools. Charter schools are public schools that give parents and teachers the opportunity to design their own programs but are open to all students and strictly accountable for the education of their students. When my husband was elected, there was one charter school in the country. Today, under his leadership, there are almost 800. 

Bill and I have visited charter schools all over the country that are leading the way in offering important choices to public-school students and their parents. Many of these schools are meeting the needs of students who had trouble succeeding in more traditional public schools.

As we prepare to enter the new millennium, we can choose to walk away from our public schools or we can choose to roll up our sleeves and make them work again. Let's not opt to give just a few students a way out at the expense of giving every student a way up.

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**Talking it Over**

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**  
**SCHOOL MODERNIZATION DAY**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**SEPTEMBER 8, 1998**

Thank you, Lenora [Steinkamp] for that kind introduction, and for your friendship over the years. It's a pleasure to be here at John Eaton School, and to join you and the many other committed and inspiring teachers here. It's an honor to join District Superintendent (Arlene) Ackerman, who has done so much to inspire a spirit of reform and renewal in the DC school system; our tireless supporters in Congress, Senator Jeffords and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton; and perhaps most important, the students, parents, and friends of John Eaton. A special thanks to your principal, Jean Tate, for hosting us today.

It's wonderful to see so many friends and advocates who are committed to giving these young people one of the greatest gifts we can ever give them: a good education. There is no more important work taking place in our nation's capital than what you do here in these classrooms every day on behalf of our children.

I'm also pleased to be meeting here in the school library - surrounded by the books that will open up the minds of your students, and encourage their love of reading. I understand that the parents of this school helped raise funds last year to buy a whole new set of books for this library - a lasting investment in the future of these students - and a testament to the level of parent participation that has always been the hallmark of John Eaton's legacy over the years.

First, I want to congratulate everyone here for a highly successful first week of school. I've been very impressed that every school in the system opened on time (for the first time in four years); with teachers ready to teach, students ready to learn; and facilities repaired. And today, many of DC's sixteen new charter schools are opening their doors -- another cause for excitement and hope. A few weeks ago, Superintendent Ackerman testified on Capitol Hill, about the progress that's being made, and her vision to "create an exemplary school system that prepares our students for college, for good jobs, and for life in the 21st Century." And from what I've seen over the past few months, I have no doubt she and all of you will succeed.

I'm also very pleased to be here at John Eaton, which serves as a model of excellence throughout the District -- not only for its high achieving students and outstanding staff, but also as a training site for teachers and administrators across the DC public school system. This wonderfully diverse school proves that every child can learn -- and excel. All of us here today already know what Redbook has just recently discovered -- that John Eaton is not only one of the best schools in DC, but in all of America.

Yet even the best schools face difficult challenges. As all of you know too well, some of your students had to be moved out of their classrooms into the library last year -- because a leaky roof made teaching almost impossible. And on some winter days, these bright young students would come to a school with no heat -- because the boiler didn't work properly. So I was very pleased to just learn that these problems have been fixed, and kids are now back in their classrooms -- ready to learn. But as we all know, there is much more that needs to be done here and in schools across the country to fully prepare our students for the 21st Century.

How to meet that challenge is what brings us together this morning. Today, I'm joining the President and Cabinet members and other Administration officials who are visiting schools like this one in communities nationwide to celebrate "National School Modernization Day." We're here to underscore the urgent need to improve and modernize our schools and to highlight this Administration's initiatives to meet those needs -- by repairing old schools and building new ones; creating smaller classes with well trained teachers; and ensuring every school has access to the technology of the 21st century.



This year, the Administration has proposed a \$22-billion school construction plan to renovate, modernize, repair or build 5,000 schools. Half of that assistance would go to the 100 school districts with the most low-income children. Under the President's plan, District schools will receive \$85 million for repairs and new construction. The President is also proposing to hire 100,000 quality new teachers for the first three grades, to help reduce average class size to 18 students. And he's asked Congress to fully fund his education technology initiatives -- so that every child in America has access to computers and the Internet -- the tools of the future. Today, only 27 percent of America's classrooms are wired to the Internet.

The challenges before us are daunting. Most of America's schools are overcrowded, understaffed, and in desperate need of repair. A 1996 GAO report revealed that here in D.C., 97 percent of our public schools needed to be upgraded or repaired. In fact, one third of all schools in America need extensive repair or should be replaced.

We know that teachers can't teach, and students can't learn, when roofs are falling in, the heating system doesn't work, and too many students are demanding a teacher's attention. Yet while much work remains to be done, DC's schools are clearly making progress in this area. As you know, all schools opened on time this year because many important repairs were made before the school year started. And I'm pleased that the Clinton Administration has been your partner in this modernization effort, committing over \$60 million on repairs and construction throughout the DC public schools over the past year. But the job is far from finished. It will cost over \$2 billion to fully modernize the District's schools.

Schools systems here and around the country are also facing major problems of overcrowding -- caused in large part because there's not enough space -- or sufficient funding -- to build new schools. If we don't begin solving these problems of deteriorating schools and overcrowded classrooms today, we will be overwhelmed by them tomorrow. A report being released today by the U.S. Department of Education reveals that for the third year in a row, record numbers of America's children are attending schools -- over 52 million students -- and that this dramatic wave of new students will remain high for another ten years. Schools already stretched to the breaking point will face even steeper challenges, as they scramble for more space and new teachers. Short term solutions won't work. We must act now to hire new teachers, repair aging schools, and build new ones, if our children are to succeed in the 21st Century.

We can view these record number of new students as an insurmountable problem. Or we can seize this time as an historic opportunity to provide each and every one of them a world-class education, so that they can grow up safe and healthy and fully prepared to become active citizens in their community, and keep America the greatest land of opportunity and promise in the world. And make no mistake -- this Administration is committed to meeting that challenge.

So far, Congress has refused to support the Administration's modernization proposals -- but there is still a month left in this legislative session, and the President believes, as I do, that it's time to reach across partisan lines to give all of America's children the quality education they deserve.

Here in DC, we are seeing progress toward that goal on every front. Thanks to inspired new leadership at the top, committed allies in Congress, and dedicated teachers and parents like yourselves, the District is engaged in a concerted school reform initiative based on accountability and standards. The results so far: higher test scores at every grade level, and a highly successful Summer enrichment program. I also want to commend Superintendent Ackerman and others for a significant investment in teacher training; and a concerted effort to engage parents and the community in the education of their children -- at home and at school.

The Clinton Administration has strongly supported these reform efforts in the past, and it is my particular pleasure and honor today to announce two new grants that will help strengthen and sustain your ongoing progress. First, a new \$10 million U.S. Department of Education grant will help every school in the District of Columbia improve the quality of teaching and learning -- particularly in the area of reading. Most of these new funds will be used to acquire reading specialists in every school -- to help teachers develop a strong reading instruction program.

Reading is the very foundation of learning -- and hiring a reading specialist in every school was one of the top recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences as an effective way to improve literacy skills. As you know, the President's America Reads Challenge seeks to ensure that every child can read by the end of third grade -- and this grant will clearly help all of you meet that important goal and unlock the wonders of these books that surround us here today. These funds will also be used to improve the overall quality of teaching by creating a professional development resource center, and by developing a parent and community outreach program. Next year, a similar grant will help place a math specialist in every District public school -- so that we can improve math instruction as well.

I am also very pleased to announce a \$1.8 million award aimed at helping our students make that critical transition from the classroom to the work place. This new partnership between the city and the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will encourage academic excellence, and open the doors to the high skill, high wage jobs of the future. The entire community must play a role in making sure our kids have a realistic view of what it takes to succeed in the 21st Century, and the District's School to Careers plan does just that -- by calling on employers such as BellAtlantic, the World Bank, Clyde's Restaurant Group, the AFL-CIO and city government itself to provide adult mentors and work-based learning opportunities.

These federal grants are designed to further support the District's comprehensive school improvement program, and build upon other federal initiatives, including a \$5 million grant by the Education Department that I announced last March, aimed at keeping the doors of 80 DC public schools open this past summer. And I've heard that program was a resounding success.

I'm here today to underscore this Administration's and my own personal commitment to stand by you and support your efforts -- in whatever way we can -- to ensure that the students in our nation's capital receive the world-class education they deserve and need to flourish in the 21st Century. Much hard work remains to be done ahead. But today, we see the progress that's being made; we know we're on the right track; and we recognize that we're all in this together for the long haul.

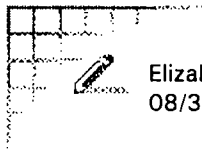
There's an old saying: "Fix the roof when the sun is shining." The sun is shining on this nation right now. Our economy is strong. We have the resources to make these investments in our children's and nation's future. What better way to invest in that future than by rebuilding and modernizing our schools and training new teachers -- so that students at John Eaton and every school in America can reach their fullest potential and embrace the extraordinary opportunities of a new century.

Thank you.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
PRESCRIPTION FOR READING EVENT  
LEARNING IDEAS  
DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MARYLAND  
MARCH 2, 1998

- It's a pleasure to be here at Learning Ideas, and to join Representative Stenny Hoyer; Barbara Bonds Thomas (American Booksellers Association); Bob Chase (National Education Association) and all of you, to celebrate the joy -- and importance -- of reading to children. Thank you for coming.
- We're gathered here today to mark the culmination of the Prescription for Reading Partnership's *Read to Your Bunny* Campaign -- a unique effort to bring the book industry and the health care industry together to ensure good reading habits -- along with good health habits -- for our nation's children. Since last November, doctors have given "prescriptions" redeemable at participating bookstores for a copy of *Read to Your Bunny* to about 200,000 children. Over 1500 bookstores have participated. And today, we're announcing that at least 5,000 remaining books will be donated to local hospitals in this area, health centers across the country, and to Prescription for Reading partners Reach Out and Read and First Book.
- We are also here to join children and parents in communities nationwide who are participating in the National Education Association's "Read Across America" project, as a way to celebrate the birthday today of Dr. Seuss, one of the world's most beloved children's authors.
- The Prescription for Reading Partnership grew out of a simple idea: Nearly every new parent has contact with a pediatrician or a health care provider during those first critical years of a child's life. If that doctor or nurse were to prescribe reading -- and take it a step further by handing that new parent or caregiver a book -- parents are likely to follow the doctor's advice. And what a difference that simple prescription for reading will make in a child's life.
- We learned at last year's White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning that science proves what we've always known instinctively -- that time spent sharing a favorite book with a child, even a newborn, not only strengthens the bond between a parent and child. It also helps a baby's brain to grow, and prepares him or her for a lifetime of reading and learning.
- I believe that few things will make a more dramatic difference over the next ten years in this country than to persuade young parents -- of all educational and economic levels -- to take seriously this mission of reading to and talking with their young babies. So a year ago, I challenged booksellers, publishers, libraries, hospitals, pediatricians, health centers and others to work together to make this simple idea a reality.

- The result was the formation of the Prescription for Reading Partnership -- a national coalition of health care organizations, booksellers, libraries, publishers and foundations, who have spearheaded wonderful programs like this *Read to Your Bunny* campaign.
- The success of the *Read to Your Bunny* campaign is due in large part to the strong commitment of the American Bookseller's Association; in partnership with the Association of Booksellers for Children; Scholastic Publishing and First Book; the Ingram Book Company, and local bookstores and educational centers like this across the country. Thank you all for your valuable contributions. Special thanks also to Rosemary Wells, author of *Read to Your Bunny* -- whom I will join in a moment to read her wonderful book.
- As America moves into the Information Age and the global economy, our children will be presented with boundless opportunities and unprecedented challenges. It's up to us to ensure that every one of them has the skills and confidence to seize those opportunities, and meet those challenges. All of these reading initiatives that we're talking about today are bringing us closer to fulfilling the President's America Reads challenge for the nation: to make sure that every child -- of every background and income -- can read independently by the end of third grade.
- I'm very excited to announce that in a moment, we will be joined by some very special guests -- 15 children from the John Howard Elementary School Head Start Program. Accompanying them will be a very special friend to all children -- the Cat in the Hat. The Cat is wonderful reminder of how many children over the years have fallen in love with reading and books because of zany Dr. Seuss characters like him.
- Dr. Seuss once said: "A person's a person, no matter how small." Today, let's renew our commitment to ensure that every child in America -- no matter how young or how small -- gets the love and attention and stimulation they need to grow and flourish. And one of the best ways to give them those building blocks for the future is to do what Rosemary Wells and I are going to do right now: read to our children.



Elizabeth R. Newman  
08/31/98 01:28:18 PM

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Subject: 8/31/98 Opening Remarks by the President at Education Roundtable

## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 31, 1998

### REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT OPENING OF EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

Herndon Elementary School  
Herndon, Virginia

11:40 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. First of all, let me thank all of you for that warm welcome and, Michele Freeman, thank you for welcoming me to Herndon Elementary School. All of you know, better than I, that this is the beginning of a new school year where parents and children are meeting their teachers for the first time and there is excitement and anticipation of what everyone hopes will be a very successful year for the children, and insofar as it is, it's a good year for America.

I have done everything I knew to do for the last six years to try to focus the attention of the American people on the whole question of education, because I think it is one of the big questions which will determine the shape of our children's future and the world in the 21st century.

If you think about the other major challenges we face as Americans -- reforming Social Security and Medicare so that we baby boomers don't bankrupt the country when we retire -- (laughter) -- providing quality affordable health care to all of our people, proving we can preserve and improve the environment and grow the economy, building one America across all the racial and religious and other lines that separate us, something I've been very involved in, in the last several weeks, as all of you know, trying to construct a world free of terrorism and more full of peace and prosperity and security and freedom -- every single one of those challenges depends upon our ability to have educated citizens, not just educated presidents, not just educated secretaries of education -- but citizens who can absorb complicated information and all these things that are flying at them all the time and evaluate it and measure it, who can develop reasoned principles, passionate responses, to keep the idea of America going into this new century.

That's why I wanted to come here today. Many of you know that I am leaving, when I go back



from you, I go back to Washington and then the First Lady and I are going to Russia and then to Ireland with a team of people to deal with the issues there, and I'd like to just say one word about it, because it's my only real opportunity to talk with you and through you, thanks to our friends in the press here, to the American people. Because this trip is an example of one of the most important lessons every child needs to learn in America from a very early age. And that is, we are living in a smaller and smaller world.

This global economy, the global society is real. Information, ideas, technology, money, people, can travel around the world at speeds unheard of not very long ago. Our economies are increasingly interconnected. Our securities are increasingly interconnected. I'm sure all of you have followed the events in the aftermath of the tragic bombing at our embassies in Africa, and you know that there were far more Africans killed than Americans, even though America was the target. And you know that the person responsible did not belong to any government, but had an independent

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terrorist network capable of hitting people and countries all around the world.

So there's been a lot of good. We've benefitted a lot from this global society of ours. We have over 16 million new jobs in the last six years, and we're about to have our first balanced budget surplus in 29 years. We have benefitted from the world of the 21st century. But we have a lot of responsibilities. And the reason I'm going to Russia is because we have learned the hard way that problems that develop beyond our borders sooner or later find their way to our doorstep unless we help our friends and our neighbors to deal with them as quickly and promptly as possible.

Now, the Russian people are to be commended for embracing democracy and getting rid of the old communist system. But they're having some troubles today making the transition from communism to a free market economy and from communism to a democratic society that has supports for people who are in trouble.

What I want to do is to go there and tell them that the easy thing to do is not the right thing to do. The easy thing to do would be to try to go back to the way they did it before, and it's not possible; but that if they will stay on the path of reform, to stabilize their society and to strengthen their economy and to get growth back, then I believe America and the rest of the Western nations with strong economies should help them, and indeed have an obligation to help them, and that it's in our interest to help them. (Applause.)

If you say why, let me just give you a couple of reasons. First of all, Russia and the United States still have the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. And at a time when India and Pakistan have tested nuclear weapons, we need to be moving the world away from nuclear war, not toward it. We have to have the cooperation and the partnership with Russia to do that. (Applause.)

We don't want terrorists to get a hold of weapons of mass destruction. A weakened Russia, a weakened Russian economy would put enormous pressure on people who have those technologies and understandings to sell them. We don't want that to happen. We know we need Russia's partnership to solve problems in that part of the world. If it hadn't been for Russia's partnership, we could not have ended the war in Bosnia, which all of you remember a couple of years ago was threatening the entire civility of Europe. Next door in Kosovo, there is a similar problem today; we've got to have Russia's partnership to solve that. So if Russia will stay on the path of reform, I believe America and the rest of the West must help them.

I'm also going to Ireland, which is the homeland of over 40 million Americans. We trace our ancestry there. And they've been working a long time on a peace process in which we've been intimately involved and I'm going to do my best to advance that. I think we have a good chance to do so. But I want you to understand that I do these things because I think they are in America's interest. They're not just the right things to do, they're not just nice things to have happen.

But every child -- you look around this room and see how many children are here who come from different cultures themselves, whose ancestors come from different countries themselves. There is no nation in the world

better positioned than the United States to do well in the 21st century, because we're a people from everywhere. If our values -- (applause) -- if our values and our ideals can spread around the world and we can create a peaceful, secure world. So that's what I'm trying to do.

But to get back to the main point, the ultimate national security of any country rests in the strength of its own citizens. And for us, that means we have got to prove that no matter how diverse we are, we can still offer a world-class education to every single American child. (Applause.)

I'm sure all of you know this, but virtually every one in the world believes that America has the finest system of higher education anywhere. We are flooded every year with students and graduate students coming from every other country in the world to our colleges and universities because they think they're the best in the world and they have made us very strong. But we now know that in the world we're living in, it's not enough just to educate half the people very well through university; you must educate 100 percent of the people very well in elementary and secondary schools. (Applause.)

We know we've got a lot of challenges. Our kids come from different places. A lot of them have different cultures, they have different learning patterns, they speak different languages as their native language. A lot of them are poor. A lot of them live in neighborhoods that are difficult. And so this is a great challenge for us. But it is a worthy challenge. It's a worthy challenge for a great country to prove that we can take all this diversity, not just racial and ethnic and religious diversity, but diversity of life circumstances, and still give every single child a shot at living his or her dream. That is what this is all about, and that's why I'm here today.

This is just as much a part of our national security as that trip I'm taking to Russia, and I want you to understand that I believe that. (Applause.) So when we finish the roundtable, I want to say a little about what we can do to help and what's going on in Congress and what will happen in Congress over the next month because it's very important. But the most important thing, as the Secretary said, is what's happening here. So I'd like to stop talking and start listening now, and we'll do the roundtable and I think we should start with Michele Freeman and let her talk about this school and her experiences and her challenges and what she's doing about it.

END      11:50 A.M. EDT

Message Sent To: \_\_\_\_\_

Lori E. Abrams/WHO/EOP  
Jeannetta P. Allen/WHO/EOP  
Brenda M. Anders/WHO/EOP  
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Patrick Aylward/PIR/EOP  
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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODAHM CLINTON  
SCHOOL MODERNIZATION DAY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
SEPTEMBER 8, 1998**

Thank you, Lenora [Steinkamp] for that kind introduction, and for your friendship over the years. It's a pleasure to be here at John Eaton School, and to join you and the many other committed and inspiring teachers here. It's an honor to join District Superintendent (Arlene) Ackerman, who has done so much to inspire a spirit of reform and renewal in the DC school system; our tireless supporters in Congress, Senator Jeffords and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton; and perhaps most important, the students, parents, and friends of John Eaton. A special thanks to your principal, Jean Tate, for hosting us today.

It's wonderful to see so many friends and advocates who are committed to giving these young people one of the greatest gifts we can ever give them: a good education. There is no more important work taking place in our nation's capital than what you do here in these classrooms every day on behalf of our children.

I'm also pleased to be meeting here in the school library - surrounded by the books that will open up the minds of your students, and encourage their love of reading. I understand that the parents of this school helped raise funds last year to buy a whole new set of books for this library - a lasting investment in the future of these students - and a testament to the level of parent participation that has always been the hallmark of John Eaton's legacy over the years.

First, I want to congratulate everyone here for a highly successful first week of school. I've been very impressed that every school in the system opened on time (for the first time in four years); with teachers ready to teach, students ready to learn; and facilities repaired. And today, many of DC's sixteen new charter schools are opening their doors -- another cause for excitement and hope. A few weeks ago, Superintendent Ackerman testified on Capitol Hill about her vision to "create an exemplary school system that prepares our students for college, for good jobs, and for life in the 21st Century." And from what I've seen over the past few months, I have no doubt she and all of you will succeed.

I'm also very pleased to be here at John Eaton, which serves as a model of excellence throughout the District -- not only for its high achieving students and outstanding staff, but also as a training site for teachers and administrators across the DC public school system. This wonderfully diverse school proves that every child can learn -- and excel. All of us here today already know what Redbook has just recently discovered -- that John Eaton is not only one of the best schools in DC, but in all of America.

Yet even the best schools face difficult challenges. As all of you know too well, some of your students had to be moved out of their classrooms into the library last year -- because a leaky roof made teaching almost impossible. And on some winter days, these bright young students would come to a school with no heat -- because the boiler didn't work properly. So I was very pleased to just learn that these problems have been fixed, and kids are now back in their classrooms -- ready to learn. But as we all know, there is much more that needs to be done here and in schools across the country to prepare our students for the 21st Century.

Meeting that challenge is what brings us together this morning. Today, I'm joining the President and Cabinet members and other Administration officials who are visiting schools like this one in communities nationwide to celebrate "National School Modernization Day." We're here to underscore the urgent need to improve and modernize our schools and to highlight this Administration's initiatives to meet those needs -- by repairing old schools and building new ones; creating smaller classes with well trained teachers; and ensuring every school has access to the technology of the 21st century.

The challenges before us are daunting. First of all, this nation is facing a school facility crisis. A 1996 GAO report stated that here in DC, 97 percent of our public schools needed to be upgraded or repaired. In fact, one third of all schools in America need extensive repair or should be replaced. A recent government report on the state of our nation's schools informs us that one high school's heating depended on a fireman stoking a coal furnace by hand; raw sewage backed up on the lawn of a junior high school because of defective plumbing; and students at an elementary school were exposed to chipping and peeling lead paint -- and boarded up windows.

These examples are taken from schools across the country. But we don't have to look farther than our own backyard to see how disruptive these kinds of conditions can be to the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms. While much work remains to be done, DC's schools are clearly making progress. As you know, all schools opened on time this year because many important repairs were made before the school year started. And I'm pleased that the Clinton Administration has been your partner in this effort, committing over \$60 million on repairs and construction throughout the DC public schools over the past year. Yet the job is far from finished. It will cost over \$2 billion to fully modernize the District's schools.

Schools systems here and around the country are also facing major problems of overcrowding -- caused in large part because there's not enough space -- or sufficient funding -- to build new schools. And again, studies show that students in overcrowded classrooms score significantly lower in both math and



reading than their counterparts in better facilities.

If we don't begin solving these problems of deteriorating schools and overcrowded classrooms today, we will be overwhelmed by them tomorrow. A new report by the U.S. Department of Education reveals that for the third year in a row, record number of America's children are attending schools -- and that this dramatic wave of new students will remain high for another ten years. Short term solutions won't work. We must act now to hire new teachers, repair aging schools, and build new ones, if our children are to succeed in the 21st Century.

We can view these record number of new students as an insurmountable problem. Or we can seize this time as an historic opportunity to give each and every one of them a world-Class education, so that they can grow up safe and healthy and fully prepared to become active citizens in their community, and keep America the greatest land of opportunity and promise in the world. And make no mistake -- this Administration is taking up that challenge.

This year, the Administration has proposed a \$22-billion school construction plan to renovate, modernize, repair or build 5,000 schools. Half of that assistance would go to the 100 school districts with the most low-income children. Under the President's plan, District schools will receive \$85 million for repairs and new construction. The President is also proposing to hire 100,000 quality new teachers for the first three grades, to help reduce average class size to 18 students. And he's asked Congress to fully fund his education technology initiatives -- so that every child in America has access to computers and the Internet -- the tools of the future. Today, only 27 percent of America's classrooms are wired to the Internet.

So far, Congress has refused to support these proposals -- but there is still a month left in this legislative session, and the President believes, as I do, that it's time to reach across partisan lines to give all of America's children the quality education they deserve.

Here in DC, we are seeing progress toward that goal on every front. Thanks to inspired new leadership at the top, committed allies in Congress, and dedicated teachers and parents like yourselves, the District is engaged in a concerted school reform initiative based on accountability and standards. The result has already led to higher test scores at every grade level, and a highly successful Summer enrichment program. I also want to commend Superintendent Ackerman and others for a significant investment in teacher training; and a concerted effort to engage parents and the community in the education of their children -- at home and at school.

The Clinton Administration has strongly supported these reform efforts in the

past, so it is my particular pleasure and honor today to announce two new grants that will help strengthen and sustain your ongoing progress. First, a new \$10 million U.S. Department of Education grant will help every school in the District of Columbia improve the quality of teaching and learning -- particularly in the area of reading. Most of these new funds will be used to acquire reading specialists in every school -- to help teachers develop a strong reading instruction program.

Reading is the very foundation of learning -- and hiring a reading specialist in every school was one of the top recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences as an effective way to improve literacy skills. As you know, the President's America Reads Challenge seeks to ensure that every child can read by the end of third grade -- and this grant will clearly help all of you meet that important goal and unlock the wonders of these books that surround us here today. These funds will also be used to improve the overall quality of teaching by creating a Professional development resource center, and by developing a parent and community outreach program. Next year, a similar grant will help place a math specialist in every District public school -- so that we can improve math instruction as well.

I am also very pleased to announce a \$1.8 million award aimed at helping our students make that critical transition from the classroom to the work place. This new partnership between the city and the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will encourage academic excellence, and open the doors to the high skill, high wage jobs of the future. The entire community must play a role in making sure our kids have a realistic view of what it takes to succeed in the 21st Century, and the District's School to Careers plan does just that -- by calling on employers such as BellAtlantic, the World Bank, Clyde's Restaurant Group, the AFL-CIO and city government itself to provide adult mentors and work-based learning opportunities.

These federal grants are designed to further support the District's comprehensive school improvement program to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Among other federal initiatives, they build upon a \$5 million grant by the Education Department that I announced last March, aimed at keeping the doors of 80 DC public schools open this summer, so that 20,000 of our young people could take extra academic instruction in reading and math. And I've heard that program was a resounding success.

I'm here today to underscore this Administration's and my own personal commitment to stand by you and support your efforts -- in whatever way we can -- to ensure that the students in our nation's capital receive the world-class education they deserve and need to flourish in the 21st Century. Much hard work remains to be done ahead. But today, we see the progress that's being made; we know we're on the right track; and we recognize that we're all in this together for the long haul.

There's an old saying: "Fix the roof when the sun is shining." The sun is shining on this nation right now. Our economy is strong. We have the resources to make these investments in our children's and nation's future. What better way to invest in that future than by rebuilding and modernizing our schools and training new teachers -- so that students at John Eaton and every school in America can reach their fullest potential and embrace the extraordinary opportunities of a new century.

Thank you.

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First, I want to congratulate everyone here for a highly successful first week of school. I've been very impressed that every school in the system opened on time (for the first time in four years); with teachers ready to teach, students ready to learn; and facilities repaired. And today, many of DC's sixteen new charter schools are opening their doors -- another cause for excitement and hope. A few weeks ago, Superintendent Ackerman testified on Capitol Hill, about the progress that's being made, and her vision to "create an exemplary school system that prepares our students for college, for good jobs, and for life in the 21st Century." And from what I've seen over the past few months, I have no doubt she and all of you will succeed.

I'm also very pleased to be here at John Eaton, which serves as a model of excellence throughout the District -- not only for its high achieving students and outstanding staff, but also as a training site for teachers and administrators across the DC public school system. This wonderfully diverse school proves that every child can learn -- and excel. All of us here today already know what Redbook has just recently discovered -- that John Eaton is not only one of the best schools in DC, but in all of America.

Yet even the best schools face difficult challenges. As all of you know too well, some of your students had to be moved out of their classrooms into the library last year -- because a leaky roof made teaching almost impossible. And on some winter days, these bright young students would come to a school with no heat -- because the boiler didn't work properly. So I was very pleased to just learn that these problems have been fixed, and kids are now back in their classrooms -- ready to learn. But as we all know, there is much more that needs to be done here and in schools across the country to fully prepare our students for the 21st Century.

How to meet that challenge is what brings us together this morning. Today, I'm joining the President and Cabinet members and other Administration officials who are visiting schools like this one in communities nationwide to celebrate "National School Modernization Day." We're here to underscore the urgent need to improve and modernize our schools and to highlight this Administration's initiatives to meet those needs -- by repairing old schools and building new ones; creating smaller classes with well trained teachers; and ensuring every school has access to the technology of the 21st century.

This year, the Administration has proposed a \$22-billion school construction plan to renovate, modernize, repair or build 5,000 schools. Half of that assistance would go to the 100 school districts with the most low-income children. Under the President's plan, District schools will receive \$85 million for repairs and new construction. The President is also proposing to hire 100,000 quality new teachers for the first three grades, to help reduce average class size to 18 students. And he's asked Congress to fully fund his education technology initiatives -- so that every child in America has access to computers and the Internet -- the tools of the future. Today, only 27 percent of America's classrooms are wired to the Internet.

The challenges before us are daunting. Most of America's schools are overcrowded, understaffed, and in desperate need of repair. A 1996 GAO report revealed that here in D.C., 97 percent of our public schools needed to be upgraded or repaired. In fact, one third of all schools in America need extensive repair or should be replaced. A recent government report on the state of our nation's schools describes one high school's heating depended on a fireman stoking a coal furnace by hand; raw sewage backed up on the lawn of a junior high school because of defective plumbing; and students at an elementary school were exposed to chipping and peeling lead paint -- and sat in a classroom with boarded up windows. How can teachers teach, and students learn, under these conditions?

These examples are taken from schools across the country. But we don't have to look farther than our own backyard to see how disruptive such deteriorating conditions can be to the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms. Yet while much work remains to be done, DC's schools are clearly making progress. As you know, all schools opened on time this year because many important repairs were made before the school year started. And I'm pleased that the Clinton Administration has been your partner in this modernization effort, committing over \$60 million on repairs and construction throughout the DC public schools over the past year. Yet the job is far from finished. It will cost over \$2 billion to fully modernize the District's schools.

Schools systems here and around the country are also facing major problems of overcrowding -- caused in large part because there's not enough space -- or sufficient funding -- to build new schools. And again, studies show that students in overcrowded classrooms score significantly lower in both math and reading than their counterparts in better facilities.

If we don't begin solving these problems of deteriorating schools and overcrowded classrooms today, we will be overwhelmed by them tomorrow. A report being released today by the U.S. Department of Education reveals that for the third year in a row, record numbers of America's children are attending schools -- over 52 million students -- and that this dramatic wave of new students will remain high for another ten years. Schools already stretched to the breaking point will face even steeper challenges, as they scramble for more space and new teachers. Short term solutions won't work. We must act now to hire new teachers, repair aging schools, and build new ones, if our children are to succeed in the 21st Century.

We can view these record number of new students as an insurmountable problem. Or we can seize this time as an historic opportunity to provide each and every one of them a world-class education, so that they can grow up safe and healthy and fully prepared to become active citizens in their community, and keep America the greatest land of opportunity and promise in the world. And make no mistake -- this Administration is committed to meeting that challenge.

So far, Congress has refused to support the Administration's modernization proposals -- but there is still a month left in this legislative session, and the President believes, as I do, that it's time to reach across partisan lines to give all of America's children the quality education they deserve.

Here in DC, we are seeing progress toward that goal on every front. Thanks to inspired new leadership at the top, committed allies in Congress, and dedicated teachers and parents like yourselves, the District is engaged in a concerted school reform initiative based on accountability and standards. The results so far: higher test scores at every grade level, and a highly successful Summer enrichment program. I also want to commend Superintendent Ackerman and others for a significant investment in teacher training; and a concerted effort to engage parents and the community in the education of their children -- at home and at school.

The Clinton Administration has strongly supported these reform efforts in the past, and it is my particular pleasure and honor today to announce two new grants that will help strengthen and sustain your ongoing progress. First, a new \$10 million U.S. Department of Education grant will help every school in the District of Columbia improve the quality of teaching and learning -- particularly in the area of reading. Most of these new funds will be used to acquire reading specialists in every school -- to help teachers develop a strong reading instruction program.

Reading is the very foundation of learning -- and hiring a reading specialist in every school was one of the top recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences as an effective way to improve literacy skills. As you know, the President's America Reads Challenge seeks to ensure that every child can read by the end of third grade -- and this grant will clearly help all of you meet that important goal and unlock the wonders of these books that surround us here today. These funds will also be used to improve the overall quality of teaching by creating a professional development resource center, and by developing a parent and community outreach program. Next year, a similar grant will help place a math specialist in every District public school -- so that we can improve math instruction as well.

I am also very pleased to announce a \$1.8 million award aimed at helping our students make that critical transition from the classroom to the work place. This new partnership between the city and the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will encourage academic excellence, and open the doors to the high skill, high wage jobs of the future. The entire community must play a role in making sure our kids have a realistic view of what it takes to succeed in the 21st Century, and the District's School to Careers plan does just that -- by calling on employers such as BellAtlantic, the World Bank, Clyde's Restaurant Group, the AFL-CIO and city government itself to provide adult mentors and work-based learning opportunities.

These federal grants are designed to further support the District's comprehensive school improvement program, and build upon other federal initiatives, including a \$5 million grant by the Education Department that I announced last March, aimed at keeping the doors of 80 DC public schools open this past summer. And I've heard that program was a resounding success.

I'm here today to underscore this Administration's and my own personal commitment to stand by you and support your efforts -- in whatever way we can -- to ensure that the students in our nation's capital receive the world-class education they deserve and need to flourish in the 21st Century. Much hard work remains to be done ahead. But today, we see the progress that's being made; we know we're on the right track; and we recognize that we're all in this together for the long haul.

There's an old saying: "Fix the roof when the sun is shining." The sun is shining on this nation right now. Our economy is strong. We have the resources to make these investments in our children's and nation's future. What better way to invest in that future than by rebuilding and modernizing our schools and training new teachers -- so that students at John Eaton and every school in America can reach their fullest potential and embrace the extraordinary opportunities of a new century.

Thank you.