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PRESERVATION

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Newswatch
article

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
DRAFT OP-ED FOR NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE
"ISSUES 2000"**

Exactly one hundred years ago, in the twilight hours of the 19th century, another American magazine – the *Saturday Evening Post* – looked toward the “distant millennium.” Some contributors envisioned cities aglow in electric lights, and skies filled with “soaring machines.” One imagined a day when the schoolroom doors would be open to all American children, and our public schools would “receive double the notice now paid them.”

Today, a century later, education in America is a right enjoyed by all. And there is certainly no shortage of attention being paid to our public schools. Regrettably, however, not all that attention is positive. While America’s colleges and universities are the envy of the world, too many of our primary and secondary schools are not. So my vision is simple: we need to make our public K-12 system as much a bellwether for global excellence as our higher education system already is.

As President Kennedy said: “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.” In the 21st century, in an economy driven by intellect and powered by ideas, that will certainly be the case. In the year 2000 – and indeed, in the years and decades to follow – I hope we will dedicate ourselves as a nation to giving our children the world-class education they need. There is no challenge more important as America enters the new century.

People like to say that the schools aren’t what they used to be. The truth is, they’re much too much like they used to be. At the beginning of the 21st century, we can’t expect to prepare our children for the challenges of the global information economy in schools designed to meet the demands of the industrial economy.

At the same time, we’re not flying blindly into the future . . . the answers we need to transform America’s schools into the schools our children deserve are being applied already in school districts across the country. So we know what works, and we know what to do. It all comes down to accountability and resources . . . but it has to be both, not one or the other. We must insist that students, teachers, and principals meet the highest standards for excellence, but we must provide students, teachers, and principals with the tools they need to achieve excellence.

You can call this approach “accountability-plus” . . . or you can call it “investment with strings”. Either way, it is an approach that focuses not on left or right but on what works.

This approach, investing in our schools and holding them accountable to the highest standards, is already producing a learning revolution in schools from Chicago to Miami to Houston. Now we need to apply this synthesis nationwide.

Ten years ago, at the First National Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia we set out to create challenging academic standards in all 50 states. Those standards create a benchmark for public school reform; now we need to transform our schools into institutions that meet them. Standards are important . . . but they won’t be met simply because they’ve been

declared. Without consequences for failure, standards are all bark and no bite. Without resources for success, standards are all hope with no prayer. We must make standards meaningful by holding students, teachers, principals and everyone else accountable to meet those standards.

At the same time, we must make standards achievable by giving failing schools the tools they need to meet high standards in the 21st century. The Information Age demands that our schools are equipped with the very best technology and teachers who know how to make the most of it. The supervision gap created by the end of the traditional work week and the advent of two-income and single-parent families demands more after-school and summer school programs. Smaller classes led by more and better teachers to meet the increasing demand of rapidly expanding student population.

Finally, we must provide all parents with greater choices in where and how their children are educated; that means high quality publicly accountable options for all students. There was one charter school when I was elected in 1992; now there are more than 1700. These schools are publicly accountable, innovative, and diverse. They create competition for students in the market for public education . . . and that competition is an important element of accountability. We should encourage more educators, parents, and community groups to start innovative schools that are open to all students and held accountable to the public. That will strengthen, not weaken, the ideal of the common school.

Now, knowing what we need to do doesn't mean doing it will be easy. It will be difficult. Some schools will struggle, and some students will struggle. Some communities will discover that their schools are not as good as they had thought. Some students will be held back. We must have the courage and compassion to look them in the eye and say, *We're doing this for you. We'll be hurting you worse if we tell you that you're learning something when you're not -- we'll be participating in a fraud that will ultimately cost you more personally, psychically and financially than any pain that comes right now.* But then we must push forward together in the hard work of improvement. If we set our sights high, if we are honest about our progress, and if we push forward every day, America will make our public schools the envy of the world – as our colleges and universities already are.

For many years there has been a debate in this country about how to create the kind of schools our children deserve. The time for debate is over. The evidence is on the table: When we set high standards and couple real accountability to real investment, we create world-class schools.

Our cities are aglow in electric lights; the sky is filled with “soaring machines.” Let us resolve today that we end the 20th century determined to transform American public education for the 21st century.

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As President Kennedy said: “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.” In the 21st century, in an economy driven by intellect and powered by ideas, that will certainly be the case. In the year 2000 – and indeed, in the years and decades to follow – I hope we will dedicate ourselves as a nation to giving our children the world-class education they need. There is no challenge more important as America enters the new century.

People like to say that the schools aren’t what they used to be. The truth is, they’re much too much like they used to be. At the beginning of the 21st century, we can’t expect to prepare our children for the challenges of the global information economy in schools designed to meet the demands of the industrial economy.

At the same time, we’re not flying blindly into the future . . . the answers we need to transform America’s schools into the schools our children deserve are being applied already in school districts across the country. So we know what works, and we know what to do. ~~And it’s pretty simple.~~ It all comes down to accountability and resources . . . but it has to be both, not one or the other. We must insist that students, teachers, and principals meet the highest standards for excellence, but we must provide students, teachers, and principals with the tools they need to achieve excellence.

You can call this approach “accountability-plus” . . . or you can call it “investment with strings”. ~~It doesn’t matter. The important thing is for people to understand that neither demanding without assisting nor providing without insisting will work.~~ Either way, it is an approach that focuses not on left or right but on what works.

This ~~twin~~ approach, investing in our schools and holding them accountable to the highest standards, is already producing a learning revolution in schools from Chicago to Miami to Houston. Now we need to apply this ~~approach~~ synthesis nationwide.

Ten years ago, at the First National Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia we set out to create challenging academic standards in all 50 states. Those standards create a benchmark for public school reform; now we need to transform our schools into institutions that meet them. Standards are important . . . but they won't be met simply because they've been declared. Without consequences for failure, standards are all bark and no bite. Without resources for success, standards are all hope with no prayer. We must make standards meaningful by holding students, teachers, principals, and everyone else accountable to meet those standards

~~We must make standards meaningful by holding students, teachers, principals, and everyone else accountable to meet those standards. Congress should pass my education accountability act. It will requires that all states and school districts that receive federal funds do five things: Turn around failing schools, increase teacher quality, end social promotion, institute sound discipline policies, and issue school report cards to increase public accountability and allow parents to make informed choices between public schools.~~

At the same time, we must make standards achievable by giving failing schools the tools they need to meet high standards in the 21st century. The Information Age demands that our schools are equipped with the very best technology and teachers who know how to make the most of it. The supervision gap created by the end of the traditional work week and the advent of two-income and single-parent families demands more after-school and summer school programs. Smaller classes led by more and better teachers to meet the increasing demand of rapidly expanding student population. ~~Congress must meet their commitment to hire 100,000 teachers, invest in after school and summer school programs, and provide the resources America needs to fix failing schools — starting with the \$200 million I proposed in my budget.~~

Finally, we must provide all parents with greater choices in where and how their children are educated; that means high quality publicly accountable options for all students. There was one charter school when I was elected in 1992; now there are more than 1700. These schools are publicly accountable, innovative, and diverse. They create competition for students in the market for public education . . . and that competition is an important element of accountability. We should encourage more educators, parents, and community groups to start innovative schools that are open to all students and held accountable to the public. That will strengthen, not weaken, the ideal of the common school.

Now, knowing what we need to do doesn't mean doing it will be easy. It will be difficult. Some schools will struggle, and some students will struggle. Some communities will discover that their schools are not as good as they had thought. Some students will be held back. We must have the courage and compassion to look them in the eye and say, *We're doing this for you. We'll be hurting you worse if we tell you that you're learning something when you're not -- we'll be participating in a fraud that will ultimately cost you more personally, psychically and financially than any pain that comes right now.* But then we must ~~all~~ push forward together in the hard work of improvement. If we set our sights high, if we are honest about our progress, and if we push forward every day, America will make our public schools the envy of the world — as our colleges and universities already are.

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Anna Richter
11/02/99 10:20:07 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc:
Subject: JB Comments: Newsweek op-ed: DPC comments

----- Forwarded by Anna Richter/OPD/EOP on 11/02/99 10:19 AM -----

John B. Buxton

11/01/99 06:08:35 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Andy Rotherham/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc: Jason H. Schechter/WHO/EOP@EOP, Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP, Jonathan M. Prince/WHO/EOP@EOP
bcc:
Subject: Re: Newsweek op-ed: DPC comments 

Some suggestions for the President's Issues 2000/Newsweek piece:

I want to pitch a different structure for the piece that fits easily into the current format. On a macro-level, I think it is hard to grasp the message from the piece beyond that we need to make our K-12 schools better. The message which is only briefly explored--about making our K-12 schools as good as our schools of higher ed--ought to be the backbone for this. I think that's the power of the message: we are going to use the lessons that built a great system of higher education to build a great system of public schools in America.

I think what follows keeps the same message about how to improve our schools (accountability, investments/tools, and choices), but presents it through the lens of what makes our higher ed system great. Rather than just explaining the three solutions to improving schools I would articulate three reasons for why our higher education system is seen as a global leader and then respond with how the very factors that make higher ed a leader should be pursued to make K-12 a global leader. To that end, I would use the following as subheads beginning after the 4th graph:

Prepare students well for the world of work. Institutions of higher education are widely seen as preparing their graduates well for their careers. Colleges teach their students how to think and gives them either the skills needed to adapt to different environments and keep learning or an area of focus to build on.

For K-12 schools, we must work harder to ensure that they prepare people well for the world work. Our schools must do better to ensure that the high school diploma means something and that students are leaving high school with the ability to think, to work with others and to continually learn. It must be seen as the first phase of a life of learning. But it also must prepare people well to enter the world of work and to adapt to a new economy. That means schools that are able to better offer the technical and academic opportunities to high school students.

Investing to Ensure Excellence and Accountability. Part of the reason our IHEs are global leaders is because the country has invested them and provided them with the tools they needed to succeed. In their case, it meant funding for basic research, facilities, etc.

In our K-12 schools, we also must commit to invest in the tools of success and holding them to high standards of accountability....You can go right into graphs 5-9 from here.

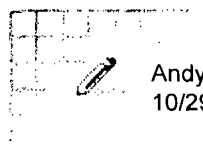
Competition and Choice. IHEs have benefitted and thrived in an atmosphere of competition that has driven improvement and caused institutions to focus on areas of competence and excellence to serve students. There are institutions with liberal arts focuses, schools known for their efforts in engineering, preparing teachers, agriculture, etc.

At the K-12 level, we need to provide parents with greater choices in where and how their children are educated.....and go straight into graph 10. You would need to add a line about how the President believes that competition should be under the public umbrella--where it is accountable and where we are serving the 90% of kids in our schools.

You can then continue on with graphs 11-12, add one paragraph about how higher ed will continue to be great, but that what will be different about the next century is that it will be coupled with a great K-12 system based on the lessons it provided for excellence. And then you can go into the final graph 13.

I think this format presents a message that focuses on our know-how to put together a great system and our commitment to do it at the K-12 level.

Andy Rotherham

 Andy Rotherham
10/29/99 06:52:23 PM

Record Type: Record

To: John B. Buxton/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: Newsweek op-ed: DPC comments

fyi, we're going with safe instead of bold.

----- Forwarded by Andy Rotherham/OPD/EOP on 10/29/99 06:52 PM -----



Anna Richter

10/29/99 06:45:05 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Jason H. Schechter/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Andy Rotherham/OPD/EOP@EOP

Subject: Newsweek op-ed: DPC comments



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