

Clay Morgan
P.O. Box A.T.
McCall, Idaho 83638
(208) 634-7961

PJM-
What do
you think?
-BR

February 12, 1997

Mr. Bruce Reed
Domestic Policy Advisor to the President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Reed:

President Clinton's national education initiative encourages me to write you about Barbara Morgan and the Teacher-in-Space program -- and about their value to the President's programs.

I believe that in the past, this matter has always gone from NASA to the White House via the Office of Science and Technology Policy, rather than to Domestic Policy. To me, education seems a much broader, domestic issue.

I must also tell you that I am Barbara's husband. I would appreciate it if you kept all of this confidential.

With the President's emphasis on national standards and on student access to technology, similarly strong emphasis needs to be given to the importance of good teachers. We reach and teach our students best through their teachers. They are the living, breathing guides to the 21st century.

Without inspired and committed teachers, no amount of testing and technology will make the grade. Nor will testing and technology be accepted by the nation's parents, until our own children's teachers become partners themselves with the President. The Teacher-in-Space would be a strong, first partner.

Concerning testing, the President stresses that he favors national -- not "federal" -- standards. Yet, many people and local politicians still perceive any standards as being imposed from the top, down. Someone from deep inside education -- a respected school teacher -- needs to argue the President's case. There are many fine teachers, but we need someone to whom the public would pay immediate attention. Barb is a 25-year classroom veteran, who has long worked on standards, both nationally and locally. As Teacher-in-Space, Barb could press the case for national standards, from a local, national and global perspective.

Concerning math, science and technology -- including computers and the Internet -- Barb could strongly advocate their integration in the classroom. Complementing her "high-tech" connection with NASA, Barb has worked with the NCTM on Math Standards, served on the NSF's Task Force on Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering, and handed out Duracell's national high school technology scholarships. Further, Barb has a deep background in the social sciences and humanities. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa in Human Biology from Stanford University. Her first

teaching job was teaching reading on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. Barb would be a perfect messenger to those who are wary of new technologies.

Beyond the standards and technology -- and beyond the credibility with the public -- we need to rally and energize our fine local school teachers. Teachers need to feel consulted, included, and appreciated, every step of the way. The best way to spotlight fine teaching is to conclude the Teacher-in-Space mission. Everything has been in place for this, for several years.

In 1985, 11,000 American school teachers applied to be Teacher-in-Space. After an exhaustive process, Christa McAuliffe was selected, with Barb as her back-up. They trained with the Challenger crew, until the tragic accident in January, 1986. All of this took place shortly after the "A Nation at Risk" study, at a time when American teachers felt unappreciated and misunderstood -- as many of them do again, today. Christa represented all good teachers, everywhere.

A month after the accident, NASA asked Barb to become the Teacher-in-Space Designee. Barb accepted, even before the accident's causes had been determined. Barb felt we had to show children how mature adults act, after a tragedy: we find what is wrong; we fix it; then we go on. America's history is full of brave but rocky starts, followed by successes.

Since 1986, Barb has taught third grade in McCall. She has also worked for NASA -- training, traveling and speaking for education, an average of one week a month. She has key-noted conventions of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Science Teachers Association, the International Reading Association, and the International Technology Education Association. She visits classrooms across the nation. She is the epitome of the good teacher -- dedicated to her students and to helping society.

Barb is trained and she's ready to fly. Last week, she passed another flight physical at Johnson Space Center. NASA is prepared and committed to fly her, upon hearing the President's word: If you want to talk with NASA people who know the history and status of the program, I suggest Mike Mott, Deputy Administrator; Frank Owens, Director of Education; Alan Ladwig, in Dan Goldin's office, who coordinated the original TIS mission; George Abbey, Director of Johnson Space Center; and Eugene Cernan, Apollo astronaut and last man to walk on the moon. Senator Kempthorne could help in the Senate, from the other side of the aisle. I remind you that Barb was selected during a Republican administration.

A Teacher-in-Space flight would not be expensive or difficult. It could be added to a mission already scheduled. The only thing against a Teacher-in-Space mission would be the immediate media reaction, due to memories of the Challenger accident. Soon after, America's teachers and students would rally in support. The NEA recently sent the President yet another letter, pledging its support.

It is time to heal the memory of the Challenger accident. A generation of school children has now grown up with that one devastating memory of space exploration. It is also time to change a dangerous perception of risk, itself. Astronauts are not "risk specialists," the only ones who can take a risk for something important. Courage is a basic part of being American. We need to encourage our youth to take risks for what's important to their futures -- not for escape or because of peer pressure. Many students and their teachers face great physical danger, every school day. Sadly, what the good kids often learn is to stay quiet, invisible, and out of the way.

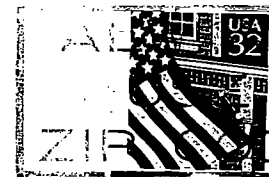
Finally, I need to tell you my personal feelings about this, as a husband and father. Barb and I were friends with the Challenger crew and we still are friends with their families. The accident was the worst thing I've ever experienced, and I lost only friends, not family. However, the accident is a big reason why Barb and I now have two children. When I saw how important the astronauts' children were to the families during their grief, I realized that we would not be complete, until we became parents.

Now that we have Adam and Ryan, I see how important children are to society. And I see that they need to learn one big lesson: that we take risks for what is important. We determine the risks. We weigh the risks. Then we go on, with happy hearts. That's how astronauts -- and school teachers -- do their jobs so well. For this reason and for education, Teacher-in-Space is worth the risk -- every bit as much as the Hubble repair mission is.

As I said, I tell you all this in confidence. I don't want to burden you or the President with an open, public appeal. Thank you for your time. I await your reply.

Sincerely,
Clay Mag

Clay Morgan
Box A.T.
McCall, Idaho
83638



Bruce Reed
Domestic Policy Advisor to The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.
20500

Personal

