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**THE SEVEN PRIORITIES
OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

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THIS IS A WORKING DOCUMENT

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Table of Contents

Section I:	INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT	1
Section II:	OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN PRIORITIES	2
	An Historical Perspective	2
	Focusing on Results: Reading, Mathematics and Access to Higher Education	3
	Key Strategies for Reaching those Results: Priorities Four Through Seven	4
	Ensuring Excellence and Equity for All Students	5
Section III:	THE SEVEN PRIORITIES	6
	<i>Priority One: Every Child Will be Reading Independently and Well by the End of Third Grade</i>	6
	Importance of Priority One	6
	Strategy for Supporting Priority One	7
	<i>The American Reads Challenge</i>	7
	Promoting Research, Development and Dissemination of Information	8
	New Voluntary National Test of Fourth Grade Reading in English	9
	<i>Priority Two: Every Child Will Master Challenging Mathematics, Including the Foundations of Algebra and Geometry, by the End of Eighth Grade</i>	10
	Importance of Priority Two	10
	Strategy for Supporting Priority Two	11
	Providing the Opportunity to Master More Rigorous Mathematics	11
	Support New Voluntary National Test of Eighth Grade Mathematics	12
	<i>Priority Three: Every 18-year-old Will be Prepared For, Have Access To, Be Motivated For, and Able to Afford College</i>	13
	Importance of Priority Three	13
	Strategy for Supporting Priority Three	13
	Preparation for Postsecondary Education	13
	Existing Department Programs	14
	Affordability of Postsecondary Education	14
	Changing Attitudes and Expectations About Postsecondary Education	15
	<i>Priority Four: All States and Their Schools Will Have Challenging and Clear Standards of Achievement and Accountability for All Children and Effective Strategies for Reaching These Standards</i>	15
	Importance of Priority Four	15
	Progress in Standards-Based Reform	16
	The Challenges Ahead	17
	Strategy for Supporting Priority Four	17

<i>Priority Five: There Will Be a Talented, Dedicated, and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom</i>	18
Importance of Priority Five	18
Strategy for Supporting Priority Five	19
Identifying Critical Areas Affecting Teacher Quality	19
Identifying How the Department Can Support Priority Five	19
 <i>Priority Six: Every Classroom Will Be Connected to the Internet by the Year 2000 and All Students Will be Technologically Literate</i>	20
Importance of Priority Six	20
Strategy for Supporting Priority Six	21
Four Major Pillars to Guide the Technology Literacy Agenda	21
Identifying Department Initiatives	22
Exiting Department Programs	22
 <i>Priority Seven: Every School Will Be Strong, Safe, Drug-Free and Disciplined</i>	23
Importance of Priority Seven	23
Importance of School Construction	23
Strategy for Supporting School Construction	24
Importance of Safe and Drug-Free Schools	24
Strategy for Supporting Safe and Drug-Free Schools	24
Importance of Charter Schools	24
Strategy for Supporting Charter Schools	25

"To prepare America for the 21st century, we need strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline, and talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom. Every 8-year old must be able to read, every 12-year old must be able to log on to the Internet, every 18-year old must be able to go to college. . . . We must provide our people with the best education in the world."

-- President Bill Clinton, 1997

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

On February 4, 1997, President Clinton, in his fifth State of the Union address, announced a bold, far-reaching national crusade for education. The following week, he issued a "Call-to-Action for American Education" that contained ten broad principles to guide the nation's elementary and secondary education reform agenda. Then during the last week of February, Secretary Riley convened a retreat of the Department of Education's senior leadership. The purpose of the retreat was to narrow the ten principles into fewer and more focused priorities in which the Department could make a strategic difference. The Department identified seven national priorities that could guide its activities over the next four years.

The first three priorities are performance results at critical points in students' schooling:

- (1) Every child will be reading independently and well by the end of third grade;
- (2) Every child will master challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade;
- (3) Every eighteen-year-old will be prepared for, have access to, be motivated for, and able to afford college.

Priorities four through seven are strategies to enable students to reach those results:

- (4) All states and their schools will have challenging and clear standards of achievement and accountability for all children and effective strategies for reaching these standards;
- (5) There will be a talented, dedicated and well-prepared teacher in every classroom;
- (6) Every classroom will be connected to the Internet by the year 2000 and all students will be technologically literate; and,
- (7) Every school will be strong, safe, drug-free, and disciplined.

These priorities build on and reflect the Department's activities and legislation over the past four years. Although more focused and specific, they also fit with the eight National Goals and the Department's broader mission to promote equity and excellence in education for all children. The seven priorities are intended to serve as leverage points for moving students and school systems towards excellence for all.

This document is intended to clearly state the importance of each of these seven priorities, as well as illustrate how they grew out of previous and on-going efforts of the Department of Education. Section II of this document provides an overview of the seven

priorities, including an historical perspective. Section III gives a more detailed description of each individual priority, highlighting their importance and the strategies, including existing department programs, that can support each one. This paper is a work in progress and will evolve as the seven priorities gain greater specificity in the months ahead.

SECTION II: OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN PRIORITIES

An Historical Perspective

The seven priorities focus on concrete, simple and widely understood goals. The first three priorities identify essential *performance results* at critical points in a student's schooling -- reading independently by the end of third grade (priority 1), competency in mathematics, including a foundation of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade (priority 2), and access to and participation in college for 18-years-olds (priority 3). Priorities four through seven address critical *strategies* to help students reach these performance results -- high standards of achievement and accountability for all children (priority 4), high quality teachers (priority 5), technology (priority 6), and schools with modern facilities that are safe and drug-free (priority 7).

An emphasis on all students reaching more challenging education standards builds on work done over the past decade. The eight National Goals, the initial six of which were endorsed in 1989 by then President Bush and the Governors at the education summit in Charlottesville Virginia, marked an historic turnaround in education by calling for all American students to "demonstrate competency over challenging subject matter" in the major academic subjects and to be "first in the world in math and science." In 1994, Congress reinforced the National Goals by adding two additional goals and passing three major pieces of K-12 legislation -- the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the School to Work Opportunities Act and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. All three laws supported the efforts of states and communities to develop challenging content standards and initiate reforms to help all students achieve to those standards.

As a result of these various efforts, the vast majority of states now have content standards.¹ Many states are in the process of developing assessments aligned with their standards, and thousands of communities in all 50 states are participating in Goals 2000. Moreover, the Federal government has forged a new, supportive partnership with states and communities to improve student academic achievement across the nation.

Despite these successes, some evidence suggests our nation is still not expecting enough from its students. Many states are adopting standards that are not challenging enough. For example, a recent study by the Southern Regional Education Board showed that while many states report that 70 percent of their students meet their own standards for student achievement on the state tests in mathematics and reading, only 30 percent (or even fewer) of their students are actually proficient in these subjects, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Moreover, states with challenging standards often are not implementing them in classrooms in ways that reshape everyday teaching and learning. While the nation's most disadvantaged students -- such as low-income inner city and rural youth -- bear the brunt of these lower standards, far too many students across all communities and

schools are not achieving at levels that will prepare them for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

As the nation confronts an increasingly knowledge-driven, skills-based economy, mastery of challenging content and skills has never been more important. As the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future explains, "there has been no previous time in history when the success, indeed the survival, of nations and people has been tied so tightly to their ability to learn. Today's society has little room for those who cannot read, write and compute proficiently; find and use resources; frame and solve problems; and continually learn new technologies, skills and occupations. The economy of high wage jobs for low-skilled workers is fast disappearing."² The seven priorities are designed to focus the Department of Education's activities on a coordinated strategy for helping enable all children to obtain these critical skills.

Focusing on Results: Reading, Mathematics and Access to Higher Education

Although the seven priorities reflect remarkable continuity with the eight National Goals and other past efforts (see Appendix A), they attempt to further raise academic standards and prepare students for the job market and our democratic society in the future. For example, President Clinton and Secretary Riley believe that concentrating on the two core basics -- reading and math -- can help reinvigorate the nation's drive toward higher standards. Moreover, focusing each area at one critical point in time -- reading by the end of third grade, math by the end of eighth grade -- can dramatically change the academic odds for millions of children who currently do not achieve at high enough levels.

Research shows that fourth grade reading and eighth grade math are critical transition points in a child's educational experiences. For example, American schools typically stop teaching reading around fourth grade and start expecting students to read to learn science, social studies and literature. Children who do not read by the fourth grade thus have great difficulty in every other subject and often end up in special education, being retained in a grade, or dropping out of school.³ Reading independently by the fourth grade is absolutely critical to the future success of students.

Eighth grade math is equally important for long-term school success. Students who have been taught challenging mathematics by eighth grade typically have the opportunity to continue mathematics in the college bound track in high school. On the other hand, students who do not receive the fundamentals in algebra and geometry by the end of eighth grade are often placed in the non-college bound track in high school mathematics. In turn, this typically leads to placement in the "general track" in their other courses and limited options for college and careers.⁴

In his State of the Union speech on February 4, 1997, President Clinton proposed a new voluntary individual fourth grade reading test and an eighth grade math test to motivate changes in reading and math across the country. These tests are designed to inform parents about how their children are achieving compared to rigorous standards -- no matter where they live. By providing a clear measure of performance relative to national standards, these tests can make challenging standards and high quality student work far more understandable to

educators and the public. The Department believes the drive to meet the tests' clear and challenging performance benchmarks can stimulate a tremendous effort across the country to expand opportunities for children to learn to read well by the end of third grade and to achieve to more challenging standards in mathematics by the end of eighth grade.

Priority three reflects the increasing importance of postsecondary education to full participation in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century. The research shows that post-secondary education has become the fault line between those who will prosper in the new economy and those who will not. Therefore, both our individual and collective security will depend on expanding the number of students gaining a far higher level of skills than a high school education affords. Moreover, evidence suggests that students who believe they have the opportunity to attend college will work harder and aspire higher in both middle and high school. This, in turn, can profoundly affect the quality of K-12 schooling, as well.

Key Strategies for Reaching those Results: Priorities Four Through Seven

Priorities four through seven address what students will need to reach the results contained in priorities one through three. Priority four, which calls for high state standards of achievement and accountability in the core academic subjects for all children, has been at the heart of the Department's agenda during the past four years. All three major pieces of K-12 legislation promoted by the Department -- Goals 2000, School-to-Work and the new ESEA -- support challenging state and community standards and systemwide reforms geared to those standards. Priorities five through seven recognize, however, that the highest standards in the world will do little good if every student does not have caring, competent, and qualified teachers, school environments conducive to learning, and access to and understanding of the new technology which is already transforming the meaning of literacy in our world. Therefore, priority five emphasizes the need to recruit and retain high quality teachers and ensure they have the content knowledge and skills to teach to the new standards. Priority six promotes strategies to ensure all students have the technological literacy needed to fully participate in the economy and democracy of the next century; and priority seven supports the safe and drug-free environments and good facilities that are vital to learning.

Meeting these seven priorities requires action on all fronts. Teachers and other educators will have to raise their sights and concentrate on enhancing their skills to teach to far more challenging standards. Businesses and other employers will have to become more involved partners with the schools, through such activities as promoting strong school-to-work and apprenticeship programs, helping install technology in classrooms and instructing teachers as to how to use it, and continuing to exert pressure for higher standards across the system. Parents will have to demand more from their children's schools and be involved in all aspects of their children's education both at home and school. Parent involvement, in fact, is not one of the seven priorities because it is an overarching goal that will affect the success of each of the seven priorities. Students will have to work harder and accept greater responsibility for their success or failure. Finally, the Department of Education must reexamine all of its programs to ensure that they most effectively contribute to the reading, math and higher education priorities, as well as the four other priorities.

As part of its efforts to maximize its effectiveness and leverage the greatest changes in each of these areas, the Department of Education is exploring a range of nonlegislative strategies to complement its legislative initiatives. These strategies include using the bully pulpit to shape public opinion, brokering partnerships across all sectors and providing the public far more information and research on best practice. Over the past few years, the Department has used such strategies with increasing frequency to mobilize public opinion and achieve a better balance between regulation, flexibility, and incentives. As Section III of this document illustrates, the Department plans to continue to use such strategies to help generate and sustain major public campaigns in support of its critical priority areas. Disseminating examples of high-quality student work, working with schools of education to strengthen their teacher preparation in mathematics, calling on college students to serve as reading tutors, providing parents more information about financial options for college -- these are all examples of nonlegislative strategies being pursued by the Department to advance its reform agenda.

Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Students

This overview closes with the Department of Education's mission statement which has driven the Department's efforts since its inception: "to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation."

The Department of Education believes that equity and excellence in our educational system are inseparable. Without excellence, there will be no equity, since students will be denied the right to reach their potential and take advantage of opportunities; And without equitable access to quality education, there cannot be excellence system wide. Each of the seven priorities speaks directly to issues of equity and excellence. For example, ensuring that all children can read by the end of third grade may be one of the most important equity concerns today. And yet, if we do not set high expectations, and if we do not provide challenging curricula and excellent teaching, children will not learn all that they are capable of learning. While algebra and geometry act as gatekeepers to the entire spectrum of more challenging college preparatory courses, nationally far more than 80 percent of African-American and Latino students do not take those courses by the end of eighth grade. In addition, although technology presents great opportunities for dramatically increasing quality and equality, it too can be a force for greater inequities if it is distributed unequally or if only some teachers gain the expertise they need to help their students use it. The seven priorities are designed to harness the resources of the Department and the nation to maximize both equity and excellence so that all citizens have the opportunity to participate to their full potential in the economy and society of the 21st century.

SECTION III: THE SEVEN PRIORITIES

Priority One

Every Child Will be Reading Independently and Well by the End of Third Grade

Importance of Priority One

Reading is the very foundation for all other learning. Unfortunately, too many of our children are still struggling when it comes to reading, even though as a nation we are well above the international average. Forty percent of America's fourth graders cannot read at what the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) considers to be the basic level. Seventy percent fall below the proficient level.⁵

Our schools emphasize reading during the first three grades. By the fourth grade, we expect children to be good readers so they then can learn the rest of the core curriculum. Too often, the children who struggle with reading early on fall farther behind in school, are placed in special education classes or lose interest, give up, and drop out. This is why Secretary Riley and the Department of Education have been stressing the importance of reading and improved literacy for such a long time -- through the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and the *Read*Write*Now!* initiative which connects children with reading partners during the summer. The President and Secretary believe a strong and early focus on reading can reduce special education and remedial education costs, decrease truancy rates, and reduce the number of young people dropping out of school. It can also help bilingual students achieve the high standards established for all students.

As a nation, we have the opportunity to make headway in this area like never before. New scientific research, for example, shows that experiences before and after birth, particularly in the first three years of life, have a dramatic impact on brain development.⁶ As a result, nurturing, talking to, singing to and reading to our youngest children can improve their ability to learn and develop throughout their lives. Although this information presents some daunting challenges, it also expands our understanding of what every child will need to get off to a strong and healthy start. Moreover, we now know a lot about how to teach reading, and strategies that work are well proven. The phonics versus whole language debate may persist in the political arena, but in the education arena there is wide agreement about the need to balance these strategies and tailor reading interventions to the needs of individual children.

Already, states and communities across the country, such as Texas, California, Boston and New York City, have launched wide-reaching efforts to ensure the reading success of their students. The Department of Education's activities are designed to build on and support those efforts to help ensure that every child can read independently and well by the end of third grade.

Strategy for Supporting Priority One

The strategy for supporting priority one involves three critical steps.¹ The first step is the *America Reads Challenge*. It has four major components. The second step involves research, development and dissemination of information. The third step is the new voluntary national test of fourth grade reading in English.

Step 1: The America Reads Challenge

In August 1996, President Clinton responded to our national literacy problem by announcing the *America Reads Challenge*. The *America Reads Challenge* calls on all Americans -- parents, community groups, religious organizations, teachers, principals, and private sector leadership -- to pitch-in and help ensure that all children are reading independently by the end of third grade. To achieve this, the initiative strives to provide all children with the reading supports that only some children currently have. These include: (1) quality preschool opportunities; (2) extra individualized attention, where needed, from pre-school through 3rd grade; (3) actively involved parents who read with their children from infancy onward; and (4) high quality in-school instruction. To support each of these four areas, the Department of Education already is engaged in a number of different strategies.

1. *Quality pre-school opportunities.* President Clinton has already secured significant increases in the Head Start budget to enable 1 million 3- and 4-year olds to be served by 2002.
2. *Extra individualized attention from Pre-K through grade 3, where needed.* A primary focus of the Administration's efforts under the *American Reads Challenge* is expanding tutoring opportunities after school, during the summer or on weekends for young children who need additional help. The Department's proposed America Reads Challenge Act, its efforts to involve college work-study students as reading tutors, and its *Read*Write*Now!* Initiative are designed to dramatically increase the number of tutors available to provide this assistance.

a) *The America Reads Challenge Act*, which the Administration proposed to Congress in April of 1997, requests \$2.75 billion additional dollars over five years to support one million reading tutors. The bulk of these funds will help local reading partnerships hire reading specialists and tutor coordinators, including 11,000 AmeriCorps members, to mobilize and train tutors to provide individualized assistance, both after school and during the summer months, to children who need extra help to read well and independently. Significantly, the recent balanced budget agreement between the President and Congress includes a child literacy initiative consistent with the President's *America Reads Challenge* to help children learn to read independently by the end of third grade.

¹ The steps mentioned throughout this section are not meant to be rank ordered. In fact, to be most effective, whenever possible, they should be taken simultaneously.

b) *Through its college work-study effort*, the Administration is working with college presidents to give 100,000 college work-study students the opportunity to serve as reading tutors. As of March 1997, 144 colleges had committed thousands of work-study students to this effort.

c) The Department of Education is continuing to work with over 40 partners -- including Pizza Hut, the Urban League, the National PTA and Hadassah -- on its *Read*Write*Now!* Initiative. *Read*Write*Now!*, an intensive summer component to the *America Reads Challenge*, encourages children to read and write with a reading partner for 30 minutes daily to prevent a decline in literacy skills over the summer. First started in the summer 1995, the initiative reached nearly one million children last summer.

3. *Actively involved parents.* The *America Reads* legislation also includes Parents as First Teacher Grants for local programs. The grants will assist parents in helping their young children learn better reading skills. Additionally, over 2,000 family, school, community, employer and religious groups have joined with Secretary Riley to create the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. The Partnership's efforts include strengthening at-home activities that encourage reading, promoting and adopting family-friendly business practices such as providing leave time to attend parent-teacher conferences and volunteer in schools, and supporting community-based organizations and schools to work together to create neighborhood learning communities through organized before- and after-school and summer activities.
4. *High quality in-school instruction (K-3).* The Department's current programs may be its greatest lever to help strengthen students' literacy skills. Programs such as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Even Start, Bilingual Education programs, programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Adult Education programs invest substantial dollars in reading services for children predominantly during the regular school day. For example, over 70 percent of the six million children served by the Title I program alone receive reading assistance through the program. Harnessing these and other Department of Education programs to better support high quality reading instruction can significantly advance priority one.

Step 2: Promoting Research, Development and Dissemination of Information

The ultimate success of the *America Reads Challenge* will depend on raising expectations nationwide and mobilizing people to help children become successful young readers. The Department hopes to take advantage of its national voice and position to leverage this "movement." For example, through its bully-pulpit, the Department can help parents and the public understand the need for every child to read independently by the end of third grade and ways to be involved to support this goal. By disseminating to the public examples of student work that meet challenging standards, the Department also can advance the understanding about the level of performance each child must attain. Finally, through its research and development capacity, the Department of Education can promote the use of best practices in all programs supported by the *America Reads Challenge*, as well in other programs. The Department will strive to increase the understanding of educators and the

public alike on such critical issues as effective tutoring programs and professional development for teaching early reading, effective practices for Title I and early childhood education, how to use programs like Success for All or Reading Recovery if students experience trouble in reading early in their schooling, and strategies to work with higher education institutions to improve the training of future teachers.

Step 3: New Voluntary National Test of Fourth Grade Reading in English

To help stimulate this movement to ensure that all students can read independently by the end of third grade, President Clinton also has proposed a new, challenging, voluntary, national test in fourth grade reading. (His proposal for a similar test of eighth grade math will be described in the next section.) The clear goal of this test will be showing parents and teachers where individual students stand in relation to rigorous national standards and demonstrating the kind of work students must be able to produce if they are to succeed in the next century. The test will have the following characteristics:

1. It will be administered first in the Spring of 1999.
2. The test will be totally voluntary, and the decision to use it will be made by state and local authorities. President Clinton, however, is urging every state and district nationwide to participate in this effort.
3. The test will be based on the frameworks used to develop the widely accepted National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) fourth grade reading test, an assessment now used in over forty States on a sample basis.
4. The test will provide individual student scores and be available to all students in all fourth grade classes. This contrasts with the NAEP which is not designed to produce individual scores and is given by most states to their students on a sampling basis. While NAEP works well for providing a state or national average, it does not tell a parent, teacher or principal how an individual student is doing.
5. No data will be received by the U.S. Department of Education. The Department will pay a contractor to develop the test, with advice from the most successful math and reading teachers across the country, parents, governors, and education, civic and business leaders. Once the test is developed, it will be licensed to test publishers, states, and school districts that ensure proper administration.
6. The Department will make information available to help teachers, parents, and students prepare for the test. Each year, after the test has been given, the test instruments and scoring guides will be made available on the World Wide Web.

The Department believes that a challenging reading test based on national standards of excellence that produces individual scores will not only raise the bar systemwide, but also promote greater equity. For it is in higher need areas where expectations often are lowest, where "C" level work often receives an "A." Parents in poor-achieving schools whose children bring home strong report cards but have low scores on these tests will have the information

they need to begin asking some hard questions. This, in turn, can enable them to hold their children's schools more accountable. And it can motivate the public to make sure all young people are mastering the basics once and for all by providing a clear standard to judge success.

Priority Two
**Every Child Will Master Challenging Mathematics, Including the Foundations
of Algebra and Geometry, by the End of Eighth Grade**

Importance of Priority Two

If reading well by fourth grade is the first crucial academic checkpoint, then doing well in math by the eighth grade is the second. The vast majority of experts view knowledge of basic algebra and geometry as a core foundation for preparing to take rigorous college-prep courses in high school. Students, for example, who have not taken some algebra and geometry by the end of the eighth grade often are channeled into general math classes where they are not exposed to meaningful math and science courses in high school and thus face limits in their options for college and careers.

Nearly 40 percent of our eighth graders are not achieving at the 'basic' math level as measured by NAEP and 76 percent are not achieving at the proficient level.⁷ Moreover, according to the recently released Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), fully 55 percent of U.S. students score below the international average in eighth grade math. In addition to highlighting the ranking of America's students, TIMSS suggested reasons why the U.S. scored below the international average in math. First, the U.S. expects far less knowledge and understanding from our students than other nations do from theirs. TIMSS found that topics taught in U.S. eighth grade math classes are at only a seventh grade level by average international standards. As a result, only 20 percent of our young people are taking algebra by the end of the eighth grade. Yet, in much of the rest of the industrialized world, including countries like Japan, 100 percent of all eighth graders have taken or are taking algebra. Second, our method of instruction differs from the teaching methods in high performing nations. We generally demand that our students learn how to do mathematical operations rather than understand and be able to discuss mathematical concepts.⁸

At least one important group -- U.S. employers -- clearly feel that competency in mathematics, including qualitative and problem-solving skills, is a pre-requisite for participation in the current job market. The National Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing, for example, included 25 specific math and measurement standards in its definition for what a good competent worker should know and be able to do. And a number of top corporations, such as MCI, are spending millions annually to retrain workers who lack basic math and reading skills.

There is strong evidence, moreover, that students all over the United States can achieve to far higher levels in math in eighth grade if they have the opportunity to do so. The Equity 2000 program is one example. This program works to enroll far more ninth graders in algebra and tenth graders in geometry and in higher math courses in a number of school districts across the country. The result has been dramatic increases not only in enrollment in these critical high

school mathematics courses, but also in the numbers of students passing them. Another example of the power of high standards is the University of Chicago School Mathematics Projects (UCSMP) which focuses on challenging expectations and upgrading the mathematics experience of the average student. For example, the UCSMP's Everyday Mathematics curriculum for elementary students encourages teachers and students to systematically investigate the basics of data gathering and analysis, probability, geometry, and algebra, and to use estimation and other problem-solving skills. Evaluations show that elementary school students using these materials do as well on computation as other students, but are more adept at applying skills to solve problems. Expanding the opportunities for all children to master challenging math is at the heart of priority two.

Strategy For Supporting Priority Two

As in reading, President Clinton plans to engage the country in a powerful campaign to boost the math ability of American students. The strategy for supporting priority two involves taking two critical steps. The first step is providing all children with the opportunity to master more rigorous mathematics by the end of eighth grade. This step has five key components. The second step is the new voluntary national test in eighth grade mathematics.

Step 1: Providing the Opportunity to Master More Rigorous Mathematics

1. *Build public understanding and support for the importance of challenging mathematics.* To accomplish this, we will need to: provide examples of what rigorous eighth grade mathematics looks like; help parents and their children understand that if students choose not to pursue rigorous mathematics in middle school, they are closing doorways to college and careers; show a clear link between mathematics achievement and the world of the future; and, show that American students can be expected to perform much better in mathematics by pointing to the success of students in other nations and to successful efforts to boost the mathematics proficiency of low-income and minority students in this country.
2. *Support the efforts of parents, educators, business groups, and mathematics groups to help students achieve in mathematics.* Already groups like the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics and the nation's engineers are mobilizing their members to support needed changes in math curriculum and instruction. For example, they are: engaging students to solve multi-step problems similar to those faced by workers of industry; training students to work independently and in teams, as adults do; and, helping students discover multiple solutions to solving problems.
3. *Support teachers' efforts to improve instruction.* A high percentage of new K-8 mathematics teachers enter the workforce with only six to nine credit hours of college mathematics preparation, and those courses they have taken often do not teach the content they will be asked to teach in the elementary or middle school classroom.⁹ The Department is working with colleges, universities and states to help ensure that future math teachers have the content knowledge and the pedagogical skills needed to teach challenging mathematics more effectively. Specific strategies to accomplish this may include offering video courses for future fifth through eighth grade math teachers that

focus on the content they will be teaching in the classroom and that model good pedagogy and classroom practice; creating incentives for respected college math departments to devote more energy and resources to preparing future elementary and middle school math teachers; and developing networks around math to help current K-8 teachers deepen their content knowledge. The Eisenhower Professional Development program, Title I, the Eisenhower Regional Consortia, and the reauthorization of Title V of the Higher Education Act will all be important in this effort.

4. *Work with the National Science Foundation and other agencies on an interagency task force.* This task force will review all relevant federal programs that can contribute to the mathematics success of every child. During the summer, the task force will present specific recommendations in such areas as, professional development, use of technology, curriculum, and the engagement of students and the general public in learning to higher standards in mathematics.
5. *Upgrade curriculum in schools.* A new generation of curriculum materials aligned with the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is just becoming available. The challenge is to provide schools with good information about existing materials and how to select among them, and to identify selected areas where more materials are needed. To support schools in their efforts, the Department is developing a TIMSS Toolkit that it will disseminate to states, districts and schools in July. The National Science Foundation is also developing a guide on how to choose K-8 instructional materials.

Step 2: *Support New Voluntary National Test of Eighth Grade Mathematics*

As part of ensuring that all students are competent in challenging mathematics by the end of eighth grade, President Clinton has proposed the development of a new challenging, voluntary national test in eighth grade mathematics. The purpose of the test will be to motivate changes and opportunities for children all over the country to achieve to more challenging standards in mathematics by the end of eighth grade. The test will be based on the NAEP eighth grade content framework and its scores will be equated to the NAEP and to the TIMSS. Like the fourth grade reading test, this eighth grade math test will be funded by the Department of Education for use by individual students beginning in the Spring of 1999. It will be developed and administered in similar ways as the fourth grade reading test described above. And, it will provide parents and students critical information about how students are doing in comparison to rigorous national and international standards in mathematics. (See priority one, step 3 for additional details on this test.)

Priority Three Every 18-year-old Will be Prepared For, Have Access To, Be Motivated For, and Able to Afford College
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Importance of Priority Three

College has never been more important than it is today and will be in the years to come. Between 1992 and 2000, 89 percent of the new jobs created in this economy will require post-high school levels of literacy and math skills. A high percentage of those jobs will pay what is now an above-average wage. Moreover, whereas fifteen years ago, the typical worker with a college degree made 38 percent more than a worker with a high school diploma, today, that figure is 73 percent. People who finish two years of college earn 20 percent more each year and a quarter of a million dollars more than their high school counterparts over a lifetime.¹⁰

But only half the people entering the work force are even nominally prepared for these jobs. Our education system is still turning out millions of young people who simply are not equipped for the 21st century world of work. In addition, although higher education is more important than ever, it has become harder and harder for America's families to afford it. Between 1979 and 1993, many middle class families lost ground economically while college costs increased by 165 percent.¹¹ Moreover, in 1994, only 45 percent of high school graduates from low-income families and 58 percent from middle-income families went directly from high school to college, compared to 77 percent from high-income families.¹² Priority three calls for making two years of college -- the 13th and 14th years of education -- as universal for young Americans as the first 12 are today.

Strategy for Supporting Priority Three

The strategy for supporting priority three involves three critical steps. First, all students must be prepared to enroll in some postsecondary education institution after graduating from high school. Second, all students must be able to afford the cost of attending at least two years of college. Third, public perceptions and expectations about higher education must change, including students' aspiration to attend college and their understanding of the role of hard work in getting there.

Step 1: Preparation for Postsecondary Education

Students must be prepared academically to enroll and succeed in college. This means having taken the appropriate courses in high school and mastered the required curricular materials necessary to benefit from college. Among the ways schools can contribute to this goal are: first, replacing the general track in high schools with rigorous academic classes and advanced placement courses; second, offering tech-prep courses and school-to-work that connect and prepare high school students for colleges and careers; and, third, preparing students to master math including algebra and some geometry by the end of eighth grade.

Existing Department Programs

A number of the Department's programs support the efforts of schools to better prepare students for postsecondary education. Schools can use Goals 2000 funds to redirect their teaching and learning to support far higher standards. Title I of the ESEA places new responsibilities on school districts to provide Title I funding to high poverty middle and high schools; it allows secondary schools to invest in activities that support college and career awareness and preparation. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is already expanding educational, career and economic opportunities for more than 500,000 young people in 1,800 high school by providing school and work-based learning opportunities. Federal vocational education programs will be reshaped in the coming year to better support these school-to-work activities. Moreover, as part of its efforts to ensure students are prepared for college, the Department has requested \$6 million in its FY1998 budget to supplement states' efforts to pay for the Advanced Placement fees for low-income students and \$5 million to expand tech-prep programs.

Step 2: Affordability of Postsecondary Education

The Department of Education, primarily through the Office of Postsecondary Education, supplies 70 percent of the financial aid to U.S. college students through Pell Grants, work-study aid, and college loans. This Administration's commitment to expanding access to college already has taken many forms -- the creation of the direct lending program, dramatic increases in Pell Grants, and a growing college work study program with a new emphasis on community service. President Clinton's budget proposal includes four major proposals to expand financial aid to help families pay for college. These include: (1) Pell Grant increases, (2) Hope Scholarships, (3) tax deductions, and (4) IRAs.

1. *The biggest increase in Pell Grants in 20 years.* Between 1993 and 1997, the Pell Grant program, which is the foundation of student aid for lower-income students and their families, increased aid available to students by \$12 billion -- an increase of 48 percent. Additionally, the President's FY98 proposed budget raises the current maximum award from \$2700 to an all-time high of \$3000 per student per year.
2. *\$1,500 Hope Scholarship.* Under the President's budget, students who stay off drugs and have at least a B minus average in the first year will receive a \$1,500 Hope Scholarship as a tax credit for the first two years of college. This will help 4.2 million students pay the equivalent of the full cost of tuition at a typical community college in 1998.
3. *\$10,000 tax deduction.* The President's plan gives a \$10,000 tax deduction per family per year for education and training over the course of a lifetime.
4. *Using Individual Retirement Accounts for Educational Savings.* The President proposes that all funds saved in IRA accounts are able to be used for postsecondary education expenses, free from early withdrawal tax penalties. It also makes twenty million more families eligible for tax deductible IRA contributions.

Significantly, consistent with the President's Hope Scholarship and tuition tax deduction proposals, the recent budget agreement between President Clinton and the Congress provides for \$35 billion of tax cuts targeted to higher education to make college more affordable for American families. It also accepts the President's proposal to provide the single largest single Pell Grant increase in two decades -- four million students could receive up to \$3,000, an increase of \$300 in the maximum grant.

Step 3: Changing Attitudes and Expectations About Postsecondary Education

In addition to improving student preparation for college and increasing affordability, making two years of college as universal as a high school diploma is today will require nothing short of a transformation of public expectations and student behavior regarding postsecondary education. For students will not take advantage of the increasing higher education opportunities until the ethic regarding college attainment evolves. As early as middle school, students and their families must understand the importance of a college education and the options available for paying for college. Public perceptions and expectations about how much education is necessary for the 21st century also must change. Programs, such as Eugene Lang's "I-Have-A-Dream," are taking on this ethic head-on by providing students with mentors and other supports as early as fifth grade, as well as sending the clear message that college matters.

As part of its higher education efforts, the Department will launch an initiative -- Preparing your Child for College -- in the Winter of 1997. This initiative will provide students and their parents greater guidance regarding the importance of postsecondary education. It will encourage students to take the courses they need in order to enter college, inform parents of the sequence of courses their child needs to take, and provide parents with necessary financial planning information.

Priority Four All States and Their Schools Will Have Challenging and Clear Standards of Achievement and Accountability for All Children and Effective Strategies for Reaching These Standards
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Importance of Priority Four

In a recent article, Hugh B. Price, President of the Urban League, captured the power of high standards when he wrote, "Setting high standards pulls young people to full membership in the larger society by enabling them to create for themselves the proper aspirations, and to shape and channel those ambitions by working to develop the skills and the self-discipline to achieve them. High standards set by adults ratify what is the natural inclination of children -- to strive to do their best in doing what they think adults want them to do well....[O]ne of the most important lessons of meeting high standards is that it proves it's possible to do." But currently, for too many children, we have created a tyranny of low expectations and provided a watered-down curriculum that ill-prepares them for the global society and information age. The lack of challenging standards hits inner-city and rural children the hardest, exacerbating great disparities in opportunities and achievement between them and their more affluent peers.

For the past four years, all of the Department of Education's efforts have shared a common direction -- supporting high state standards and system-wide reforms to lift the achievement of all students to those standards. Challenging standards are necessary for at least six reasons:

1. Content standards provide clear guideposts for what children should know and be able to do. Performance standards address "how good is good enough," often by providing examples of student work demonstrating key levels of quality in relation to a body of content standards.
2. Standards provide parents with answers to the frequently asked questions, "What is it that my child should know?" And, "Is my child learning?" This helps parents hold schools accountable for results.
3. Standards lead students to take more challenging courses -- a strong predictor of high achievement -- and to assume more responsibility for their progress.
4. Standards serve as a guide around which all other aspects of the system -- professional development, assessment, accountability -- can be aligned.
5. Standards support higher student achievement, exploding the myth that some groups of children cannot achieve to as high of a level as others.
6. Standards support the efforts of teachers and principals to improve curriculum and instruction based on what children should be learning.

Progress in Standards-Based Reform

A major focus of all of the Department's legislative initiatives during the past four years has been higher standards for all children. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act is all about high standards. Communities in all 50 states are now using Goals 2000 resources to improve teaching and learning based on their own high standards in core academic subjects. Our approach to school-to-work links vocational training in the workplace to rigorous academic learning in the classroom. In addition, we have been working to eliminate the watered-down instruction and dual curriculum that often plague Title I and other ESEA programs and insisting on high standards for all students. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in 1994, for example, revamped the Title I program to focus on high standards, professional development and schoolwide reforms. The recently passed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is designed to better enable students with disabilities to participate in the same curriculum and achieve to the high standards for all students.

Because of these and other efforts, the standards movement has made significant progress since the 1989 Education Summit in Charlottesville. Approximately forty-eight of the fifty states have content standards of some kind. And the importance of raising the bar for all children is widely accepted.

The Challenges Ahead

The success of standards-based reform, however, is still not a foregone conclusion and will depend on how well schools, communities and states address the following emerging challenges:

1. *Ensuring standards are challenging.* The standards many states are setting are below the national consensus on how good is good enough. A study done by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) compared the percentage of students on a nationwide basis who reached the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test to the percentage who reached the proficient level on the assessments given by various states who make up the SREB. In many cases, far more students scored at the 'proficient level' on the state assessment than on NAEP national assessment.
2. *Building public understanding for challenging standards and rigorous tests.* One of the biggest barriers to raising standards is public reaction (i.e., of legislators, parents) when students who get As or Bs in school receive bad test scores. Reaching out to the public on these issues -- through publications, PSAs, and forums -- will be imperative. Greater clarity also can result from developing and disseminating examples of student work that reflect the more challenging level of performance expected of all children.
3. *Aligning assessment and professional development to standards.* Many states still need to put together assessments aligned with their standards that can measure the success of students in meeting the standards. And to actually improve teaching and learning, they must align their professional development, pre-service training and curriculum with the standards. Many states will need significant support to ensure that all aspects of their education system are pulling in the same direction to help all children achieve to challenging standards.
4. *Getting standards into the classroom.* Once a state has developed standards, they must figure out how to get them into the classroom and make them real for parents, teachers and students. Only then will standards influence teaching and learning.
5. *Promoting stronger school accountability.* Stronger school accountability depends on the existence of clear and challenging standards, understood by all members of a school system. But higher standards will not ensure stronger accountability unless parents, teachers, and school districts are willing to take the necessary steps to deal with ongoing low performance of schools or teachers.

Strategy For Supporting Priority Four

The Department will continue supporting states' efforts to address these challenges and strengthen their reforms geared to challenging standards. Its activities will include:

1. *Promoting two concrete national standards of excellence* -- reading at the basic level on the National Assessment of Education Progress by the end of third grade and

mastery of challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade. The Department will fund the development of a rigorous voluntary national test of fourth grade reading and eighth grade math that will show clear evidence of the extent of student progress in reaching these standards.

2. *Helping states meet Title I's requirement that they have challenging content and performance standards in at least math and English/language arts by the fall of 1997.* Title I requires that these standards be the same as those the state uses for all other children. The Department will encourage the development of networks that can provide a non-Federal review of state standards to determine their rigor.
3. *Promoting its pending reauthorization proposals for Voc-ed, Adult-ed, and Voc-rehab* -- each of which is guided by a commitment to high standards for all children.
4. *Proposing funding increases in FY98 for critical Department programs.* The President is asking Congress for a \$129 million increase in Goals 2000 to enable an estimated 16,000 schools to participate. His FY98 budget also proposes increases for a number of other programs including the Title I program, Eisenhower Professional Development and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Programs.
5. *Emphasizing to the public the importance of fixing failing schools.* Secretary Riley, in his recent State of Education speech, emphasized the need for society to stop "tolerat[ing] failing schools" and "fall[ing] in the trap of thinking that children who are stuck in failing schools are the problem." Riley called on the public to make fixing failing schools one of its first orders of business -- by reconstituting them or closing them down, finding new leaders, removing incompetent teachers if repeated efforts to improve them do not work or starting charter schools.

Priority Five

There Will Be a Talented, Dedicated, and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom

Importance of Priority Five

Without high-quality teachers in every classroom, the nation will not be able to meet any of the first four priorities. And yet, far too many teachers lack the training and time to acquire new skills to teach to high standards of excellence. A number of other alarming trends compound this problem. For example, roughly one-fourth of newly hired teachers lack the qualifications for their jobs, with 75 percent of urban districts admittedly hiring teachers without proper qualifications. Large numbers of teachers are teaching out of their fields. And, 30 percent of all new teachers leave the profession in the first three years. As standards increase, so will the cognitive demands on teachers. To exacerbate these trends, the country will need a record two million new teachers over the next ten years as a result of increased enrollment and teacher retirements.¹³

Strategy for Supporting Priority Five

The strategy for supporting priority five involves focusing on two critical steps. The first step is identifying the critical areas affecting teacher quality. The second step is identifying how the Department can support this initiative.

Step 1: Identifying Critical Areas Affecting Teacher Quality

The Department has identified six areas that affect the quality of teachers across the nation. These are: (1) teacher recruitment; (2) licensing; (3) preservice; (4) retaining teachers; (5) in-service; and (6) teacher incentives and accountability.

1. *Recruitment.* America's schools must step up their efforts to recruit talented teachers of all ages, particularly people of diverse backgrounds.
2. *Licensing.* We must support more rigorous teacher licensing and certification requirements.
3. *Preservice.* Preservice preparation must be improved so that future teachers can teach to world-class standards and meet high certification and licensing standards.
4. *Retaining Teachers.* Schools and states must increase special efforts to retain new teachers in their initial years of teaching.
5. *In-service.* We must strengthen the in-service professional development of teachers by states, schools, colleges, partnerships and teacher networks.
6. *Teacher Incentives and Accountability.* We must recognize and reward good teachers and improve or remove incompetent ones.

Step 2: Identifying How the Department Can Support Priority Five

In addition to using its "bully-pulpit" to promote excellence and accountability in teaching, the Department is supporting the following kinds of activities to help leverage improvements in teacher quality nationwide:

1. *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.* The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has national standards of excellence for master teachers who demonstrate exceptional performance. The President's FY98 budget contains a proposal to support the efforts of 100,000 more teachers over the next decade to seek board certification as master teachers -- averaging at least one per school.
2. *Report Card.* Starting in 1998, the Department will issue a biennial report card on progress made by the nation in improving teacher quality.

3. *National Forum on Teacher Preparation.* On April 17, the Secretary hosted a National Forum on teacher preparation which included the 1997 state teachers of the year, members of the higher education community, and public education leaders. This forum addressed how to improve teacher education.
4. *Title V Task Force.* Reauthorization of Title V of the Higher Education Act provides an opportunity for advancing a different vision of teacher preparation. The Department's Title V task force, with representatives from across the Department, will propose focusing Title V on recruitment, pre-service and support for beginning teachers. It is also exploring incentives to encourage people, particularly, minorities, to become teachers, and to work in high-need areas.
5. *Existing Department Programs.* The Department will continue to improve existing professional development programs, such as the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program, and align them to student content and teaching standards. It will work to redirect more resources from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Bilingual Education, to support high-quality professional development. Moreover, it is examining ways to strengthen or redirect other programs and grants to address its top concern within priority five -- recruitment, preparation, and support for beginning teachers.
6. *Research, Dissemination, Bully-Pulpit:* The Department too will continue supporting research, development, assistance and dissemination to promote effective practices. This includes: its National Awards Program for Model Professional Development that recognizes and widely disseminates the work of the award-winning schools and districts; a new research and development center which will focus on policies to improve teaching; and a newly-funded consortium of organizations to provide the field direct assistance in developing new strategies for preparing, inducting and providing career-long professional development for K-12 teachers.

Priority Six

**Every Classroom Will Be Connected to the Internet by the Year 2000
and All Students Will Be Technologically Literate**

Importance of Priority Six

As the nation moves toward the next century, a student's ability to learn to higher standards will be inseparable from his or her ability to access and understand technology. The livelihood of all Americans will depend on the ability to harness and use knowledge to adapt to the available jobs, which, in turn, will depend in large part on one's technological literacy. As early as the year 2000, approximately six out of every ten jobs in America will require computer skills currently possessed by only 22 percent of the labor force.¹⁴ And yet today, although 65 percent of schools are wired to the Internet, only fourteen percent of classrooms are connected and only one of every five teachers now use it.¹⁵ Additionally, the availability of quality software to help teach to rigorous standards is limited.

Technology has evolved to the point where enormous amounts of information can be archived, sorted, searched, and transmitted in a second or less. The potential effects on education are inestimable. Districts will have access to a variety of content providers around the world. Producers will save an enormous amount in manufacturing and distribution costs, while at the same time provide a higher quality, more effective product. Many teachers may evolve from subject matter experts to facilitators of learning. And students will be able to carry an entire library worth of knowledge in their backpack, or shirt pocket, free to roam the vast store of human experience, in their own way and in their own time, no longer stifled by the cookie-cutter methods of the traditional classroom.

If we succeed in meeting our technology goals, all students for the first time -- in the poorest schools, in the most isolated rural schools and in the wealthiest schools -- will have access to the same universe of knowledge, in the same way, at the same time. This will not only give the promise of revolutionizing education, but could have profound implications for our democracy and nation as a whole. But just as technology can be a great democratizing force, it can also exacerbate inequities in our society. If it is distributed unequally based on income or geography, if only some teachers gain the expertise they need to help their students use technology effectively, if some homes have access to computers but others do not, the gap in educational opportunities and educational outcomes only will widen. The Administration's current technology efforts are designed to both fulfill the promise of technology and to avoid its negative consequences in the future.

Strategy for Supporting Priority Six

The strategy for supporting priority six involved first identifying four pillars that would guide the goal of technological literacy. The second step is the Department's initiatives to support priority six.

Step 1: Four Major Pillars to Guide the Technology Literacy Agenda

At the beginning of 1995, President Clinton identified four major pillars to guide the nation's technology literacy agenda:

1. Connect every school and classroom in America to the information highway;
2. Provide access to modern computers for all teachers and students;
3. Develop effective and engaging software and on-line learning resources as an integral part of school curriculum; and,
4. Provide all teachers the training and support they need to help students learn through computers and the information superhighway.

The Secretary's 1995 national plan, *Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century, Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge* elaborates on each of these pillars and how the Administration will work with states to advance each one.

Step 2: Identifying Department Initiatives

States and the private sector provide the vast majority of resources currently being invested in technology. This has led the Department to focus its resources on areas it believes it can leverage the greatest changes -- infrastructure and equity. The Department has been investing a considerable part of its resources on expanding the nation's technology infrastructure. In addition, it has concentrated most of its initiatives on bringing technology to the hardest-to-reach and neediest populations -- both in the inner city and rural areas -- so they can reap technology's potential benefits. Toward these ends, the Department has been engaged in four major strategies. These are (1) NetDays; (2) the E-Rate; (3) the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund; and (4) the Technology Innovation Challenge Grants.

1. *NetDays.* Last year more than forty states held NetDays, bringing together Americans to connect local schools to the Information Superhighway. In the fall of 1996 alone, more than 250,000 volunteers participated in wiring over 25,000 schools. NetDays were held in all fifty states on April 19 to continue connecting schools and classrooms to the Internet.
2. *The E-Rate.* On May 7, 1997, the Administration's two-year long effort to ensure that every school and library has access to the Information Superhighway paid off. Under the "E-rate" plan, the Federal Communications Commissions agreed to grant sharp discounts totaling \$2.25 billion annually in telecommunications services to the nation's neediest schools and libraries for discounts on technology installations, connection charges and monthly service costs. The Federal Communications Commission ruling will provide at least a 50-percent discount to nearly 70 percent of all schools, with discounts of up to 90 percent to schools with the largest numbers of poor children.
3. *The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund.* This Fund is designed to catalyze state, local, and private sector partnerships in each state to achieve the four pillars and spur additional investment in educational technology. Congress appropriated \$200 million for the Fund last year and has met the President's request to fully fund the program at \$425 million in FY98. The President has asked Congress to fund this program at \$2 billion over five years.
4. *Technology Innovation Challenge Grants.* These grants, appropriated for \$57 million, are also available to partnerships of school systems, colleges, universities, and private businesses to develop creative ways to use technology for learning. These grants focus on integrating innovative learning technologies to improve teaching and learning, with each federal dollar matched by more than 3 to 1 by local and private funds.

Existing Department Programs

Resources from a number of Department programs can be used to help all students achieve technological literacy. For example, through the Star Schools Program, multistate providers of telecommunications services provide instruction in academic subjects, various types of supplemental programming and professional development for teachers. Title I of the

ESEA already provides \$500 million each year to technology. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act places a major emphasis on assistive technology. Other Department programs that can prepare the next generation of new teachers to use technology in powerful ways in their classrooms include Goals 2000, Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Tech Prep, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Priority Seven Every School Will Be Strong, Safe, Drug-Free, and Disciplined

Importance of Priority Seven

Children cannot learn to high standards in schools that are overwhelmed by violence or drug use or that are literally falling down. Priority seven aims to ensure strong and healthy school environments where children can learn best. School environment encompasses the culture of the school, the physical surroundings of the school, and the school's health and safety. One essential element of strong school environments is respecting individual student differences and recognizing their varying strengths, interests and learning styles. Three essential pillars of strong and healthy learning environments are: (1) schools that are safe, orderly, and free from drugs; (2) schools that are structurally sound and conducive to learning; and, (3) public school choice which allows parents to choose the best school for their children based on their individual differences. Without strong and healthy school environments, children cannot achieve to their potential in all subject areas. Priority seven incorporates three major areas -- school construction, safe and drug-free schools, and charter schools.

Importance of School Construction

As America moves into the 21st century, our schools should too. If our schools are ill-prepared for the future, our students will be, too. Today, however, our nation's schools, many built 50 years ago, are increasingly run-down, overcrowded and technologically ill-equipped. Too many school buildings and classrooms are literally in shambles. According to a report of the General Accounting Office (GAO), one-third of our schools need major repair or outright replacement; 60 percent need work on major building features—a sagging roof, or a cracked foundation; and 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems, and modern communications technology. These problems are all over America, in cities and suburbs and one-stoplight towns, and the GAO estimates they will cost \$112 billion to fix. Record increases in student enrollments over the next ten years will only exacerbate these problems by necessitating 6000 new schools.

A growing body of research shows the connection between student achievement and behavior and physical building conditions and overcrowding. A study of the District of Columbia school system, for example, found that, after controlling for other variables such as socioeconomic status, students' standardized achievement scores were lower in schools with poor building conditions than they were in strong and safe schools.¹⁶ Studies of high schools in Virginia and North Dakota show similar relationships.¹⁷ Additionally, physical conditions appear to affect teacher morale and feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.¹⁸

Strategy for Supporting School Construction

For these reasons, the Department introduced new school construction legislation that would have been a one-time infusion of \$5 billion to stimulate over \$20 billion in school construction and renovation over the next four years. These funds would have paid for up to one-half the interest costs on school construction bonds or similar financing mechanisms. Although the recent budget agreement failed to include funds for this proposal, the Administration is exploring alternative ways to spur school repairs and construction in sites across the nation. This includes a new schools' facilities clearinghouse, to be awarded in August 1997, which will compile information on best practices on school design and school facility finances, convene conferences on school construction, and provide referral service.

Importance of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Modern and well-equipped facilities, however, are not sufficient to create strong and supportive learning environments. Schools must be safe and drug-free. While most schools are safe and drug-free, a number of schools in all parts of the country are experiencing problems with violence and alcohol and drug use. We know, for example, that for the fifth straight year, eighth-grade drug use has increased, with children first using marijuana at younger ages.¹⁹ Nearly three million thefts and violent crimes take place on or near school campuses each year. From 1994-1996, 85 homicides and 20 other violent deaths occurred at school.²⁰ According to the National Crime Prevention Council, this climate of violent neighborhoods profoundly affects student learning.

Strategy for Supporting Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Reflecting its importance, the President has requested a \$59 million increase in the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program in FY98, (FY1997 funding was nearly \$531 million). The President, however, has emphasized the need for these programs to reflect effective practices and be regularly evaluated and improved if they are not working. To provide students additional safe havens after school where learning can continue to occur, the President also has requested \$50 million to help communities keep their schools open longer as After-School Learning Centers.

Importance of Charter Schools

Charter schools have been identified by the President as an important tool to improve the environment for learning. Charter schools, typically founded by parents, teachers and communities, are exempted from most rules and regulations in exchange for greater accountability for improving student achievement. Five years ago, only one charter school existed in America. Today, there are more than 400, with half of the states having charter school laws.

A long-time supporter of public school choice, the President believes that no parent should have to send their children to a school that does not provide a high-quality education. Therefore, parents and teachers who do not believe their public school is meeting high standards -- or their own expectations for how children ought to be taught -- should have the

right to send their child to another public school and even apply for a charter, and public funds, to custom-make a new school. Charter schools can also provide more choices for families and more opportunities for innovation and public-spirited entrepreneurialism in education. While charter schools may either be new or converted from an existing public school, most tend to be small, led by strong leaders and responsive to the needs of and involvement by students and families.

Strategy for Supporting Charter Schools

The Clinton Administration is committed to increasing the number of charter schools from four hundred to three thousand by the year 2000 by: (1) expanding start-up funds; (2) promoting excellence; and (3) ensuring equity.

1. *Expanding Start-up Funds.* The President's 1998 budget seeks to nearly double funding for the Charter Schools program to \$100 million to support planning and start-up costs for up to 1,100 schools. The Administration is also working to expand the number of states with laws supporting the formation of charter schools.
2. *Promoting excellence.* Increasing the numbers of charter schools cannot be the only goal. These new schools must promote high quality teaching and learning. The Department will support regional meetings, helpful guidebooks, summer institutes, and a World Wide Web Site to help local teams of parents, teachers, and others develop successful charter schools.
3. *Ensuring equity.* The Administration requires charter schools that receive federal funding to demonstrate adherence to key principles of equity. Among these principles are: the schools must be public and non sectarian; not charge tuition; open to all students; admit students on a lottery basis; be in compliance with civil rights laws; and meet all applicable Federal, state and local health and safety requirements.

The Department needs to continue ensuring that its programs, for example Title I and Special Education, support charter schools nationwide. The Department also is committed to providing parents and teachers expanded options for tailoring educational opportunities for children, including public school choice, magnet schools, schools-within-schools, and redesigning and improving individual public schools.

¹ American Federation of Teachers, 1996; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996.

² National Commission on Teacher & America's Future: What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, Sept. 1996.

³ Madden et. al., Success for All: Longitudinal Effects of a Restructuring Program for Inner-City Elementary Schools, American Education Research Journal, 1993.

⁴ Pelavin, S.H., and Kane. Changing the odds: Factors increasing access to college. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1990.

⁵ NAEP 1994 Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States.

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- ⁶ White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning, April 1996.
- ⁷ NAEP 1994 Mathematics Report Card for the Nation and the States.
- ⁸ Third International Mathematics and Science Study, 1996.
- ⁹ National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- ¹⁰ Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, 1996.
- ¹¹ Digest of Education Statistics.
- ¹² National Center for Education Statistics, Beginning Postsecondary Students, 1990-94, 2nd follow up.
- ¹³ National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- ¹⁴ Department of Labor, SCANS, 1993.
- ¹⁵ NCES Survey on Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1996.
- ¹⁶ Edwards, 1991.
- ¹⁷ Cash, 1993, Hines, 1996, and Earthman 1995.
- ¹⁸ Corcoran et al. 1988.
- ¹⁹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, Monitoring the Future Study, 1996.
- ²⁰ National Crime Prevention Council, Teens, Crime and Community, 1996.

Appendix A

