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PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS FOR
"IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS" REGIONAL CONFERENCES
SEPTEMBER 12, 1997

I am very happy to join you at your "Improving America's Schools" conference. I thank each of you for the critical work you do everyday to shape young minds, to inspire young hearts and build the future of our country.

America's most important mission must be to give our young people the world's best education. We have already seen important progress in recent years. ^(Performance is up at every level.) Students are taking more advanced courses. And our fourth graders are performing above world levels in math and science. But we have much more to do, especially in the higher grades, to give our children the education they deserve.

The balanced budget I signed into law this year is the most significant investment in education in a generation. It will help ^{standards raise schools} put computers in every classroom, create new charter schools, make schools safer and more drug free, and open the doors of college wider than ever before.

Now we must build on this achievement. I hope you will work with me to bring the "America Reads Challenge" to every elementary school in our country, to help make sure every child can read ^{on} ~~by~~ his or her own by the end of third grade.

And most important, America must have voluntary national standards, and the tests to measure them, so that all our children can master the basics. Through voluntary standards, everyone -- students, teachers, principals, schools and school boards -- can be held accountable for making the grade. National standards will help us upgrade curricula, improve teaching and target students and schools who need assistance. And they will give parents the information to make sure their children's schools are doing their jobs.

Our children will grow according to the expectations we have of them. So let us all work together to raise expectations, to strengthen and improve our schools, and to help our children reap the promise of the 21st century. I thank you for your dedication, your commitment and your faith in our children and our common future.

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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
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"IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS" REGIONAL CONFERENCES
SEPTEMBER 12, 1997**

Hello. I am very happy to join you at your regional "Improving America's Schools" conference. I thank each of you for your leadership and the critical work you do everyday to shape young minds, to inspire young hearts and build the future of our country. And I thank Secretary Dick Riley and his team at the U.S. Department of Education for working with all of you to provide our children the best education in the world.

I believe that preparing our children to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century is the single most important task facing our country. As you know, it is my top priority as President. That is why I am very proud that the historic balanced budget I signed last summer is also the best education budget in a generation. It includes the largest increase in funding for elementary and secondary education in more than 30 years -- and the largest increase in higher education since the G.I. Bill. Our new balanced budget will help raise academic standards and improve teaching; make schools safer and more drug-free; put computers into classrooms and help teachers make use of this new technology; and help create new charter public schools.] check

We have already seen important progress over the past few years: Fourth grade results from The Third International Math and Science Study, for instance, showed that America's students and teachers have the knowledge and ability to perform way above the world average. SAT scores are rising, and more high schoolers are challenging themselves with advanced and college level courses. taking

But we must build on these achievements. There is still much more all of us can and must do, especially when it comes to making sure that our children get a firm foundation in the basics and that their education meets world class standards. I hope you will work with me to bring the "America Reads Challenge" to every elementary school in our country. Through America Reads, we will organize one million reading tutors to help teachers make sure every child can read on his or her own by the end of third grade. work hand in hand with

And most of all, I hope you will help bring high, national standards of academic achievement to your schools and school districts. In my State of the Union address, I challenged every state to adopt national standards of academic excellence and by 1999 to test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure that they have mastered these basics. Through standards, everyone -- students, teachers, principals, schools and school boards -- will be accountable for making the grade. National standards will help us upgrade curricula, improve teaching and target students and schools who need assistance. And they will give parents the information to make sure their children's schools are doing their jobs. work

Our children will grow according to the expectations we have of them. I firmly believe that every child in this country from Maryland to Montana to Missouri -- has the God-given ability to meet our highest expectations, to meet high standards of academic achievement. challenging

So let us all work together to raise expectations, to strengthen and improve our schools, and to help our children reap the promise of the 21st century. I thank you for your dedication, your commitment and your faith in our children and our common future.

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