



November 9, 1993

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Hillary:

Congratulations for all that you have done and continue to do to keep the issues effecting America's children in the forefront of national debate and government action. I have spent all of my adult life working with and for young people. It is absolutely exhilarating finally to have national leadership that understands, that gets it, that cares!

I am writing to ask you to speak at the Ellington graduation this coming June. Aside from becoming a mother, the founding of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts is my greatest achievement. After two decades of constant struggle I can say with confidence that we have found a way to empower young people through the arts and education.

Ellington serves nearly 500 students in grades nine through twelve. Our students have to meet more academic requirements than at any other school in the system, as well as a demanding arts curriculum. Their school day is two hours longer than the normal school day. Ellington has the fourth highest SAT scores in the DC public

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school system and the highest college acceptance rate of all DC public schools.

Between 92 and 95 percent of our students are accepted by a very impressive list of colleges.

Each entering student selects a major in theatre, technical theatre, dance, instrumental music, vocal music, visual arts, literary arts, media or museum studies. Ellington is the only high school in the country with a museum studies department, which is a collaborative effort with the Smithsonian.

Ellington has been selected by Redbook Magazine as one of the best schools in the country, by Nabisco as one of its 17 Next Century Schools and most recently, by the U. S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School. I am told that in this very competitive process we received the highest marks across the board.

While we are a fine high school of the arts, we believe that our mission extends far beyond artistic excellence. We heavily recruit in the most blighted and damned neighborhoods of Washington. More than sixty percent of our students come from dysfunctional to barely functional families who live in drug-ridden, crime-torn areas. Over thirty percent of our entering ninth grade students read only between the third and seventh grade level. We even have students who have been classified as "special education" cases.

1994 will mark our twentieth anniversary. As Ellington approaches this milestone we are poised to become a National Laboratory for the Arts in Education. We believe we have cracked the code to the educational safe and that students from all over the country can

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benefit from our struggles and successes, our curriculum and programs.

To celebrate our twentieth anniversary we would like you to speak at our graduation and to receive the first Ellington Medal which will be awarded every five years to a person who has made an untiring commitment to saving American children. We also give an annual Ellington Award which in past years has been received by Johnetta Cole, James Vanderzee, and Roger Stevens, among others. I can think of no better way to celebrate our twentieth anniversary, to honor the legacy of our school and to begin its future than to have graduation day 1994, be Hillary Rodham Clinton Day at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Graduation is scheduled for June 13, 1994, from seven to nine-thirty p.m. However, if this date is incompatible with your schedule we will change it as necessary.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Fondly,



Peggy Cooper Cafritz