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File Type: Loose Files
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE SECRETARY

Remarks of
Richard W. Riley¹
U.S. Secretary of Education

Education Issues Before The American Public - 1994
George Washington University, Washington, DC
Thursday, October 13, 1994

Good afternoon and thank you, President Trachtenberg. I have come here today to speak to you about the choices that the American people must make in the upcoming election regarding the improvement of American education.

The election cycle is now upon us and voters who are looking for answers are beginning the arduous task of sifting through the many campaign ads to find common sense and good solutions.

This isn't very easy. So many of the ads seem to be drumming on the negative. It's a sorry way to look at the world and then we wonder why the American people get to feeling low, like they just ought to go out and kick the dog for no good reason at all.

You look at the political ads and all you see are attack ads, cell doors slamming and sirens wailing. You listen to the radio talk shows and America -- a nation with real problems but so much goodness to it -- is just about always written off as a nation near a sudden state of collapse.

Now, our country has its problems and I won't make light of them. But if the only way to get a rise out of the American people is to get caught up in this cynical, negative, political dog-eat-dog attitude -- well, in my opinion, we aren't going to get where we need to go as a country. There isn't going to be much left to our ideals.

I believe that we need to challenge the American people instead of beating them down. Let's quit drumming the negative. We Americans can lose our focus and get hoodwinked by the slick commercial, but by and large we are a thinking people with a good nose for what is important and what is not.

So I want to urge all the candidates to be a little more high minded -- to stop packaging people's fears and frustrations into 30-second sound bites. And I urge all of us who are in the business of education, public service, and politics to go out and challenge the American people with practical, positive solutions.

Let's also remember that our children and young people are not learning as Democrats or Republicans. They are learning as the Americans who are the future of the Country. Parents are desperately worried about their

¹The Secretary may depart from prepared remarks.

children's safety, about academic standards, and about how to pay for their children's college education.

So the vital issues that concern you, your parents and the faculty of this university are very close to home -- even if they seem far, far away from the campaign agenda of campaign consultants.

Now, education is not a hot issue when it comes to 30-second attack commercials. And that may be a blessing. Education is complicated, progress takes time, and there are no simple solutions.

If a candidate, Democrat or Republican, tells you that the solution to our education problems is simply more money for teachers or that the only way to get anything done is to support private school vouchers using taxpayer dollars -- I will be the first to tell you that they are both wrong.

There is no panacea when it comes to improving American education. Improving American education is hard, steady work, something that is done day by day, student by student, teacher by teacher, family by family, community by community.

There is no one silver bullet solution -- be it throwing more money at the problem or chipping away at our unique heritage of free public education ... a heritage that has done so much good for generation after generation in this Country.

Public education has always been, and remains to this day, the open door to American success and good citizenship -- the American way to achievement and freedom for all people ... and I mean all the people.

Many of you here are graduates of public schools, and while there may have been days when you thought you would never survive the experience, you all seem to be turning out all right to me. As I have said many times before -- some of our public schools are excellent, some need to get better, and some schools should not be schools at all. Private and parochial schools are also a very important part of our American fabric of education.

But public education is always on the front line. Public schools all over America are dealing with violence and drug use, family breakup, racial tension, the continuing need for AIDS awareness, and the influx of new immigrants. They are also producing hundreds of thousands of graduates who are making the grade at some of the finest colleges and universities in America, including this one.

So perhaps the first and most fundamental question that the American public should be asking this fall is whether or not each and every candidate for public office -- Republican, Democrat or Independent -- will reaffirm his or her commitment to the basic American tradition of free quality public education.

Will they roll up their sleeves and work with us to make public education better across the board? Our critics say public education is hopelessly broken. They are wrong. I believe that they have simply been swept away by the latest magic bullet of the moment.

Now, I believe American education cannot stand still. Our schools need to teach the skills for the 21st century using the best technology. They need to show flexibility and be open to good ideas like public school choice, and

support parents who believe that character education is important to their children's future.

They may also test new concepts such as charter schools and privatization of some services so long as they are focused on high standards and public accountability, and don't keep out students who may need the most help of all.

Above all, our schools need to recognize that there is a longing for the restoration of standards, a return to excellence at every level of American education. I am, for example, one of the strongest proponents of more time in the school day for the basic core academic curriculum. The national average is now just over 40 percent of the day, and that just isn't good enough. And then we wonder why sales clerks can't make change and why colleges spend millions of dollars every year teaching remedial classes.

So we need to be a lot more tough-minded about how the school day is used -- we need to think creatively about using new technology -- and we need to end the practice -- once and for all -- of permitting young people to just drift through school just to move them through the system.

At the same time, every child and young person in this country is going to have to learn skills that we didn't even anticipate 10 or 15 years ago. They must be computer-literate, understand how to use the Internet, and -- with skill and confidence -- be able to get on line to the Information Highway.

When I was appointed Secretary of Education by President Clinton, I told people that we needed to stop studying every problem to death and move from being "A Nation at Risk" to "A Nation on the Move."

I said then that we needed to get beyond the status quo of accepting mediocrity for some students -- be they gifted and talented or behind in reading -- and, at the same time, we needed to avoid getting caught up with every new fad of the moment -- like new math in the 1960's and 1970's. For too many years, education has been driven by the latest quick fix and it has never done us any good. We need to recognize that making our schools better has to be done in a meaningful and consistent way. Kids need to learn how to read and write well to reach the high standards, and they need to be safe. First things first.

So I believe it is so important to lay out for the American people a clear summation of what has been achieved to date and to define what I think are the essential questions that we need to ask ourselves as we approach Election Day.

So what has been accomplished?

I can tell you that in the past 20 months, nine education-related bills were sent to the Congress by President Clinton and eight have been signed into law. And next week, President Clinton will sign number nine -- the \$12.7-billion Elementary and Secondary Education Act -- making it nine for nine.

The list is impressive, but it is much more than just a list. It is a coherent package that fits all the pieces together -- that tells the parents of a four-year-old just starting school or the non-traditional student going back to school at 38 that we have an educational system that can help people learn what they need to learn at each stage

of their life. This is what we mean when we talk about creating a way for Americans to be lifelong learners. Let me describe very quickly these nine initiatives:

- (1) New funding for and the strengthening of Head Start.
- (2) The first real funding for taking technology into schools and reshaping the classroom of the future.
- (3) A national service program for 20,000 young Americans that can help you pay for college, which is already larger than a Peace Corps at its peak.
- (4) A redirection of our research arm based on a National Academy of Sciences Report.
- (5) A new commitment to high standards and excellence with passage of the GOALS 2000 Act. This extraordinary act is centered on state academic standards of excellence, which gives all communities the support to help them reach their standards.
- (6) The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act, and new money in the crime bill to support safe after-school programs. We want the guns out of our schools. We simply aren't going to tolerate a 14-year-old out to prove his manhood by putting other students in harm's way.
- (7) The seventh bill is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which I already mentioned -- an act that places a great deal of new emphasis on giving teachers better training -- and opportunities for real professional development.
- (8) One of the most exciting things we have done is to pass a School-to-Work initiative that connects what young people are learning to the world of work. We want to jump start young people into thinking about their careers, into entering very demanding apprenticeships, into getting a focus on real life.
- (9) Finally, we recognize that the burden of paying for a good college education can be overwhelming. College tuition has been on the rise and, at the same time, people need to get their education. But how do we pay for it? We have created a new direct-lending program that will give many more of you the opportunity to pay back what you can afford when you first get out of college.

You won't get socked with a very large payment schedule the minute you take off your cap and gown. Now, being responsible to yourselves and your grandchildren means you shouldn't take 30 years to pay it off, either. But the direct-lending program is now operating in 100 colleges -- and next year will be operating in over 1,000. I will also tell you that we will continue to support raising the level of the Pell Grant program, even as we remain tough on defaulters.

Our legislative success has been unusual. The President led this effort from the start. He is a President who seems to have education in his blood. But what is unique is that in the midst of so much political gridlock, a strong, bipartisan center for progress and improvement in education has emerged in the Congress. And it has held firm.

This Congress repeatedly dealt with some of the most important but contentious social issues -- sex education, rights of privacy, student testing, and voluntary school prayer -- and in each and every case this "solid center" of Republicans and Democrats kept its focus on the essentials -- teaching and learning.

All this is to the good. And I believe it is so important to consider what is at stake in passing this broad legislative package and how it will sit with the American people. We hear a lot of talk, unfortunately negative, about the political agenda of this country. So this is a good time to talk about education in the broader public context.

For I believe that passing all this good legislation won't amount to a hill of beans unless we get people thinking differently about how we educate the young people of this Nation and how we share that responsibility. So, I want to raise three essential points.

First, the issue of basic civility and setting an example. I believe there is an enormous desire on the part of the American people to have new rules of public engagement when it comes to how we relate to each other. But we seem, at the moment, to be increasingly stuck in the old politics of fear and narrowness.

What troubles me the most about the current sour mood of American politics is that in its essence -- this dog-eat-dog attitude -- tells us that there are no rules of civic rightness -- no rules of civic discourse. The values that are increasingly defining the "public estate" are just about the direct opposite of the values we want our children to learn. We adults have lowered our own standards. Listen, in contrast, to these words from a pledge that young people take every day at school in Independence, Missouri.

I heard this pledge recited for the first time last Friday at the White House Blue Ribbon School ceremony by Pat Henley, the wonderful principal of Cler-mont Community School.

I am the one and only person who has the power to decide what I will be and do. I will accept the consequences for my decisions. I am in charge of my learning and behavior. I will respect the rights of others and will be a credit to myself, my family, my school, and my community.

I believe that the rising demand for character education in our schools -- a desire which crosses the entire political spectrum -- reflects the American people's sure awareness that we need to reaffirm some basic American values and create some new rules of public engagement. And I agree with them.

So what does this mean for those of us who are part of the public dialogue about the future of American education? It seems to me essentially this: we really do need to get beyond the idea that everything in America is the politics of special interests. We need to lower our voices and make sure our schools, as I have said before, do not become an ideological or political battleground.

I know, for example, that there are many conservative-minded Americans who have legitimate questions about the Goals 2000 Act. They are concerned that Goals 2000 will federalize American education.

I may strongly disagree with their belief, but I respect the sincerity of those who hold it. To date, 40 states and territories have already submitted their applications to participate in the Goals 2000 Act. We are off to a strong

start. Next year, Goals 2000 will commit 90 percent of all of its funding directly to the local level. We don't need the federal government sending you a FedEx telling you how to manage your schools.

But I want these skeptical parents, these concerned Americans -- many of them religious-minded -- to know that I will always extend myself to hear their point of view. As I travel around the country, I am meeting with parents, religious leaders, educators, business leaders, and others trying to build bridges. I may not be able to persuade them of the rightness of my side, but I will always go more than half way to meet them. They need to be at the table.

I urge these skeptical parents, by the same token, to pull back from making public schools a political football and give the process a fair chance. And I encourage them to actively participate in the school improvement process. Only by participating in the process will they come to understand that high standards are designed to make sure that parents, teachers, and principals stay in control of the process.

Second, violence. Our society is being crippled by violence. When people ask me why I am passionate about education, I tell them that a vast majority of the people in America's prisons are high school dropouts -- minds and lives that are wasted. I believe that education has been and remains the way out of this lifestyle.

I am particularly troubled by the idea that so many young boys in fourth and fifth grades are giving up on life. The American historian, John Hope Franklin, has written extensively about this searing problem. It is "no small wonder" he writes, "that the number of black males in penal institutions is greater than the number of black males in higher education." What a sad and tragic statement. Dr. Franklin was speaking about the specific problem of young African-American males, but this is not just their problem alone.

This is why the President did not give up on the crime bill which includes support for safe after-school programs, and why this Administration is committed to high academic standards for all students. About the fastest way I know to create an unthinking, angry 19-year-old dropout who is spiritually numb and heading down the road to violence is to give that young person a watered-down curriculum from first grade on.

This is why we have just announced a major new initiative in conjunction with Howard University here in the District and Johns Hopkins University to begin a five-year, \$27.7-million effort to determine just how we can help to put an end to the cycle of student failure among at-risk youth. So for me, improving education is not just an exercise in how we raise test scores. The issue is how do we create, in our time, a positive moral climate that ends the violence, which leads me to my third point.

Young people -- and not just at-risk young people -- are searching for authentic adult connections. Just recently, a very thoughtful college president, Richard Hersh, wrote an article in the "My Turn" column of Newsweek.

He didn't mince words. He said that more and more young people -- his students and mostly middle-class students -- are growing up without direction or any sense of personal sense of responsibility. Why? Because they have "experienced few authentic connections with adults in their lifetime."

It is a rather stunning statement -- "few authentic connections with adults in their lifetime." He went on to write

that we have created a "culture of neglect" rather than a "culture of responsibility" for our young people and in doing so we have absolved our young people of "any notion of obligation or responsibility." I suspect that there is a great deal of truth to his assertion.

Too many adults are becoming disconnected from our children and we need to recognize that the responsibility of parenthood is being taken too lightly by too many people, and young people are suffering.

To my mind, it is important to say up front that our schools can't fix what parents won't do. And, our schools can't solve problems that a community ignores or allows to fester. Our schools can and often are at the center of the solution, and I have seen many of them first hand, but they cannot be left alone to handle community crisis after community crisis.

We have to stay connected to our children and give up the notion that the television is the good babysitter. Our children shouldn't be growing up in a vacuum without values. This is why I am making such a strong effort to reconnect families to the learning process and encouraging all of us to think through how we find new ways to help parents and other adults to get back into the lives of their children.

For it is my very strong belief that the family is where expectations and attitudes about learning are formed, nurtured and set. To create a "culture of responsibility," we have to start with the family, be it the traditional family, the single parent, the caring grandparent or the stepparent who willingly steps in.

And, if we are going to give the coming generation the best education possible, we need to set our sights high. We need to commit ourselves to high standards, make our schools havens of order and discipline, recognize that teachers are at the heart of our effort to reach for excellence, reconnect the family to learning, and find new, concrete ways to help all of you finance your college and other postsecondary education. That, in a nutshell, has been and remains our education agenda.

As the election comes closer, I urge Americans not to get caught up in the steady drumbeat of the negative. Recognize that easy solutions are often false solutions and don't solve anything. So if we want to get beyond the sound bites and the negatives we need to start asking political leaders the questions that are on the mind of the American people.

They just aren't talking about the real issues in education. As a parent, grandparent, and U.S. Secretary of Education, I have 10 critical questions that you should demand answers to. This is the essence of our democracy and I urge you to take your citizenship seriously.

Many of you will be the teachers that will have the responsibility of teaching the coming generation of children. I urge you to stay committed to your ideal of teaching. That's the type of service that is so necessary if we want to have a real chance to educate America.

Thank you.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

Remarks Prepared For¹
Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

National Press Club
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STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG SCHOOLS

Today I am releasing a report which I have sent to the President entitled, "Strong Families, Strong Schools." This document gives new recognition to the power, the promise and the potential of the American family in our continuing efforts to improve American education. This is a timely report that follows in the footsteps of another recent report by Child Trends on the decline of parental involvement in schools as young people enter their teens.

In the last eleven years, ever since the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its report, "A Nation at Risk," an enormous amount of effort has been made to instill a new spirit of excellence in American education. This effort has taken many forms -- increasing graduation requirements, improving teacher competency and salaries, and updating curricula.

This is all to the good. As a nation, we have taken a strong step forward in teaching math and science. The number of young people taking the recommended core academic curriculum is up 30 percent. And, we have a blueprint for excellence in education in the Goals 2000 Act which was signed by the President last March. But it is my very strong belief that more sustained attention needs to be paid to that most vital of links -- the promise and potential of parents and other family members as the most important teachers of their children.

The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built. I have seen examples all over this Nation where two-parent families, single parents, step-parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are providing strong family support for their children to learn.

¹The Secretary may depart from his prepared remarks.

The research report I am releasing today tells us, in no uncertain terms, that the essential building block for learning is how the American family uses its strength and power to support and encourage young people to meet the high expectations now being demanded of them in the classroom.

This report, then, is both a call to arms against ignorance and low expectations -- a challenge to adult America to reconnect with our children's education -- and a summary of concrete examples to inspire parents to be part of their children's education in new and important ways.

This is why I am announcing the formation of a broad-based partnership led by the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) to encourage and support American families as they seek to prepare their children for the Information Age that is now upon us. This common effort -- with each partner contributing in its own best way -- includes such organizations as the National PTA, the National Alliance of Business, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Over the last six months, I and/or members of my staff have met with 125 different parent, religious, education, community-based and business groups on this important issue. While each group has its own distinctive strength and purpose, we are all committed to going in the same direction. There is a deep desire for partnership -- to coalesce around this vital issue and support families.

America needs to put its house in order -- to lower the deficit -- to stop the violence and despair of drugs -- to make sure our children go to school safely every day -- to assure Americans who play by the rules that there are rules and moral standards that we live by as a Nation.

To my mind, there is no more important place to begin putting our house in order than by recognizing that our children's expectations about the future are rooted in the day-to-day family activities that help children learn and develop good character. America needs to give up its get-it-now, live-for-today mentality and start looking down the road to make sure that we give all of our children the America they deserve.

Thirty years of research tells us that the starting point of American education is parent expectations and parental involvement with their children's education. This consistent finding applies to every family regardless of the parents' station in life, their income or their educational background. As this report indicates, three factors over which parents exercise authority -- daily attendance in school, reading material and literature in the home, and the amount of television a young person watches -- are some of the strongest indicators we have that home life makes a difference when it comes to learning.

Other important research needs to be highlighted. A child who grows up reading for

fun is a child who is on the road to success when it comes to learning. We know, for example, that children's success in school can be linked to reading to children and listening to them read.

Many years ago, the great American patriot Frederick Douglass was struck by the powerful recognition that to "teach a slave to read" was the "pathway from slavery to freedom." Listen to Douglass' powerful testimony: "I set out with high hope and fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read."

My friends, we need that same type of zeal in the here and now to help families have the same high hope and fixed purpose. All the data we have tells us that children can learn to read to high standards if we work with families.

For America to read together, then something has to give. I, for one, want to suggest that the teenager who is perpetually glued to the tube is well on the way to having a very dull mind and a very dull -- and perhaps risky -- future. Television is part of our culture and anyone who has children knows its power to mesmerize, captivate, excite and yes, teach as well. But I am concerned when report after report tells us that reading scores decline at all grade levels tested, when young people go into the "red zone" of danger and watch more than six hours of television on a weekday.

I believe that many parents feel overwhelmed by the all of the outside influences shaping the lives of their children. They feel that our popular culture, with its current emphasis on making fame a virtue and often for the strangest of reasons, undermines the values they want their children to have. They see so many of our young people growing up wild -- without any abiding sense of citizenship or sense that they have a stake in this country's future.

We need to get our priorities straight. Without a good education, a young person can grow up to be a tragic and unhappy figure. Ten years from now, imagine the problems and the inequity, indeed the crisis, as the six million additional children now flooding into our education system find themselves without the skills and knowledge they need to get ahead.

We've got to do better. As this report notes, there are several significant obstacles that interfere with parents in their efforts to improve their children's learning: the pressure of time, the unsettling disconnection between educators and families; the uncertainty that family members feel about how they can contribute; the inflexibility of the work schedule; the sheer drag of poverty; and language barriers. Let me speak directly to several of these concerns.

First of all -- time. I am known for telling parents and educators that the most important single change we need for American education is to find new ways to help

parents slow down their lives. Many parents and other family members are stretched to the limit -- juggling jobs, putting food on the table, getting their children to safe after-school programs -- doing all they can to keep body and soul together.

But I believe that we are missing something far deeper in all this rushing around. We are letting our children grow up, at times, almost alone -- and disconnected. The education of American children -- their moral development, their sense of citizenship, and academic growth -- is done in fits and starts. This is not how families want to raise their children.

The effort that so many parents make to guide their children's lives repeatedly comes up against the rush of modern living. The mismatch in how major American institutions -- from schools to businesses -- carve out time in the day-to-day life of the American family is -- to my mind -- a serious impediment to how our young people are growing up. We ask families to twist and turn -- to go through every possible contortion to fit into the structure and time needs of schools or businesses or other institutions -- instead of the other way around. It is my very strong belief that we really must rethink what we are doing and how we use our time.

The best business leaders recognize that the early investment families make on behalf of their children leads to the promise of a skilled and educated workforce in the future. This is why the business leadership of America has been in the forefront of improving education for many years now. Some of these businesses are already developing new ways that America's "time" can be used to help families and the learning process.

We must see the value in job-sharing, flextime, and release time for families -- to give attention to the children. Schools at the plant site, day care in the office, parents working at home without stigma or financial loss -- whatever it takes -- we need to use all of our ingenuity to find new ways to connect families to their children in these hectic times.

I also urge educators to give special attention to the recent report of the National Commission on Time and Learning called "Prisoners of Time," which speaks directly to how "time" is being taken away from academics during the American school day. I will be the first to tell you that we will not be able to be first in anything -- math or science or any other subject for that matter -- if only 41 percent of the school day is given over to the core academic subjects.

Finally, I want to encourage every American family to stop and take stock, to take a "time inventory" of how the family is using its time -- if they haven't already done so -- as we begin the new school year. This may be one way every family can find that extra time for learning. I want to suggest seven good practices that may be helpful to parents and family members.

First, take a time inventory, as I said, to find the extra time you need so the family can learn together. Commit yourself to learning something with your children. I think you will be rewarded and find happiness and joy in the shared effort.

Second, commit yourself to high standards and set high expectations for your children - challenge them in every possible way to reach for their full potential.

Third, limit television viewing on a school night to a maximum of two hours even if that means that the remote control may have to disappear on occasion.

Fourth, read together. It is the starting point of all learning.

Fifth, make sure your children take the tough courses at school and schedule daily time to check homework.

Sixth, make sure your child goes to school every day and support community efforts to keep children safe and off the street late at night.

And seventh, set a good example and talk directly to your children, especially your teenagers, about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the values you want your children to have. Such personal talks, however uncomfortable they make you feel, may save their lives.

This is homework in the true sense of the word. It is also preparation for life.

I want families all across America to know that we are all with you in this effort. The whole country is on your side. The President, Vice President and I will do all we can to promote these seven basic steps. You are not alone in your efforts to raise your children to follow the Golden Rule, to be good citizens and to learn the importance of what it means to be a proud American.

Now, I want to turn my attention to the unsettling reality that there is a disconnection between educators and parents that needs our attention. As I said in my "State of American Education" speech last February, too often parents and educators talk past one another. Many parents feel that their right to be involved in school policy -- to be full participants in the learning process -- is ignored, frustrated and sometimes even denied. They do not feel valued, and too often they find education jargon to be a putdown.

Kathryn Whitfill, the President of the National PTA, told a group of educators who were meeting at my office several weeks ago about how put off she felt walking into a school recently to be greeted by a sign that read, "Notice: Visitors Report to the Front Office." It was, to her mind, a cold, sterile greeting to any parent visiting the school.

with all the warmth of an unexpected legal notice.

This sign, as she related to a room full of nodding heads, was one small but vivid symbol that parents were less than welcome. There was nothing inviting ... nothing that suggested that parents were, in fact, the true owners of the school.

But I also know that there are countless schools and educators who have reached out to families and have been rewarded with higher test scores, active PTA's, volunteers, tutors, mentors, strong parent/community/school partnerships and "Security Dads" walking the halls.

James Comer, who has done so much to set the agenda for good parental involvement - Dorothy Rich of Megaskills -- Ernie Cortez, a MacArthur Fellow, who is making parent power work in Texas -- and Henry Levin, the leader of the Accelerated Schools initiative -- are just a few of the many educators who have seen the potential and promise of family involvement in education. All across this country, teachers are hungry for parents to connect up with them when it comes to educating their children.

This is why I urge educators everywhere to change those signs on the school door that give parents the cold shoulder. Listen with an open ear. Reach out to parents as partners. Be creative in using the new technology -- from voice mail, to homework hotlines, to CD-ROM programs that are educational and now on the market -- and even the old telephone -- to get parents more involved in the learning process.

Parents -- including those who have strong religious values -- must be at the table when it comes to public education. But they must also be willing to build bridges and not see public education as the enemy. I assure you that nothing will be gained by tearing down public education and making the public school classroom the Bosnia of America's competing factions. When a community is divided, the children always suffer. Good common sense should tell us that now is the time for quiet voices to be heard in the search for common ground.

It is my hope that families, religious and civic groups and schools can come together to create a moral climate that sustains a culture of learning. A culture of learning rooted in the great common tradition of basic American values of democracy, honesty, self-reliance, hard work, and respect for the civic responsibilities of all Americans to participate in our democracy.

We must save this generation of children -- we must not lose them. So I shall spend much of my efforts in the coming year working with everyone to promote this family involvement partnership for learning. I ask all Americans to please tune in -- to recognize that anything we do to connect with our children -- to give them a sense that their lives and their learning matter to us -- is good for our children and good for our

country.

Together, we can start a fire of changing attitudes -- from "getting by" to "getting on with it" -- to once again giving first attention to the future of our children. It is our duty as parents, relatives, guardians and caring adults to get involved in our children's education. It is our patriotic duty as Americans who believe in this nation's future to make sure our children are shown a preference in our decisions.

This is the right way to go for America.

Thank you.

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****NEWS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 13, 1994

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THE CLINTON EDUCATION AGENDA

With little fanfare, President Clinton over the past twenty-one months has signed into law six groundbreaking education initiatives -- a cohesive set of programs that span from kindergarten through college -- all of which passed the Congress with bipartisan support. Not since the 1960s has so much significant education legislation been enacted.

The Clinton education package promotes safer schools, better discipline, higher academic standards, improved teaching, greater family involvement, improved access to college, and community-based solutions to educational improvement.

The Washington Post recently described the "Clinton-backed education initiatives passed by Congress over the last two years" as "a major area of accomplishment that has often been ignored. . ." [Helen Dewar, Oct. 6, 1994].

The legislation, which includes the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, the Student Loan Reform Act, the Safe Schools Act, the National Service Trust Act, and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, promises to alter the landscape of American education in important and lasting ways.

The latest bill, the Improving America's Schools Act, which President Clinton will sign next week, is a perfect example of how the administration is committed to finding the most effective ways to spend federal education dollars. The bill represents a nearly \$11

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billion effort -- the federal government's largest investment in K-12 education -- to better target special help to poor and special needs students in the nation's schools.

"While public attention has been focused on other things, we've been hard at work getting our legislation through the 103rd Congress," said U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, "but the work we've done over the past year and a half will significantly raise the quality of education for millions of students of all ages.

"Just about everybody agrees that the federal government must be a supportive partner with the states and communities to improve schools," Riley said. "Our first order of business in this new partnership is to bring high academic standards to all students in every classroom in the country."

The foundation of the Clinton education agenda is the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, signed into law March 31. The bill supports meaningful state and community school improvement efforts based on high academic and occupational standards, improving teaching, expanding the use of technology, and cutting red tape. Forty states and territories have already applied for first-year planning funds.

Goals 2000 also includes assistance to help schools reduce violence, and a section that strengthens federal education research to bring the latest and most reliable information about good teaching and effective learning to the nation's teachers, parents, administrators and policymakers.

A companion bill, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, is providing assistance to

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states and communities to give more young people who do not plan to go on immediately to a four-year college access to high-wage, high-skill jobs by focusing on high quality academic and work experiences in the critical years before and after high school graduation.

In the area of higher education, the Student Loan Reform Act created the direct loan program, now available at more than 100 schools and increasing to more than 1,000 next year. Borrowers can secure a student loan on campus and, through more flexible repayment options, tailor their monthly payments to match their ability to repay. The new program reduces paperwork and is expected to save taxpayers billions of dollars in fewer loan defaults.

In addition, thousands of volunteers are now earning their way to college or paying back loans through public service under the new National Service Trust Act.

While legislation has been a key component of the Clinton education agenda, the administration also has focused on getting parents and families more involved in the education process by launching a national initiative, *Strong Families; Strong Schools*, to attract greater public attention on the critical role adults can play in improving student achievement. The Education Department has joined a national coalition of more than 70 organizations to promote family involvement.

"There's one bill I can't pass," Riley said. "The federal government can't require every family in this country to get involved in their children's education -- to turn off the TV, to read and discuss homework with them. But I know that family involvement is a key to the successful implementation of every one of our initiatives. For that reason, I can't talk about it enough."

THE CLINTON LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE FOR EDUCATION:
Bills enacted by the 103rd Congress

THE GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT is based on the premise that all students must be held to higher academic standards. The Goals 2000 Act assists communities and states with funds to develop and implement their own school improvements based on local, "bottom-up" initiatives. Improvement plans will include ways to strengthen academic achievement, improve discipline, increase parent involvement, better utilize technology, and ensure that teachers have access to better professional development. The Act also provides schools, school districts, and states a way to cut through red tape by allowing for extensive waivers. The new law formally commits the nation to pursuing eight national education goals and establishes a National Education Goals Panel to report progress. Forty states and territories have already applied for first-year planning funds.

Also included in Goals 2000:

THE SAFE SCHOOLS ACT recognizes that learning is almost impossible if classrooms and playgrounds are under siege. The act provides funds to schools plagued with serious crime to develop violence prevention initiatives. Schools receiving funds will be expected to teach students ways to resolve conflicts peacefully, and they also may use some funds for increasing security personnel and acquiring metal detectors. The act also authorizes the Secretary of Education to conduct various national activities, including research and evaluation, data collection, and training and technical assistance in support of safe and drug-free schools.

THE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, DISSEMINATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT strengthens the federal effort to support research and to collect and disseminate information about successful teaching and learning practices. The new law establishes priorities for research: basic and applied research on student achievement; education of at-risk students; policy making and management; early childhood development and education; and postsecondary education, libraries, and lifelong learning. A new Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination will provide teachers, parents, administrators and policymakers with information on promising and exemplary programs.

THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT is built on the knowledge that tomorrow's high-wage jobs will require high academic and workplace skills developed in secondary and postsecondary school. Under the act, states and communities form partnerships with schools, postsecondary institutions and employers to design systems in which students learn both in the classroom and at the worksite. School-to-work is jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Labor. Initial state and community grants have already been awarded.

THE IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, targets funds to areas of greatest poverty and provides schools with greater flexibility to use federal aid to ensure that students with special needs, especially economically disadvantaged, migrant, and limited English proficient students, are taught to high standards. The nearly \$11 billion bill also expands professional development opportunities for teachers; promotes safe and drug-free schools and supports desegregation efforts through magnet schools. New provisions provide resources for improved use of technology for teaching and learning and federal seed money for local charter schools initiatives.

THE NATIONAL SERVICE TRUST ACT creates opportunities to earn or pay back college tuition through some kind of public service. Under Americorps grants to various agencies and organizations, thousands of volunteers are already at work in neighborhoods and schools across the country.

THE STUDENT LOAN REFORM ACT broadens access to higher education by making it easier for borrowers to obtain and repay loans for higher education. A new direct loan program permits students to receive a loan from a campus student aid office, eliminating various "middlemen" from the transaction. In addition to the ease in borrowing, the new loan system will permit student borrowers to tailor their monthly payments to their income level. Taxpayers are expected to save billions of dollars in coming years through lower loan default rates. The loans are now available at more than 100 schools. More than 1,000 schools will offer direct loans next year.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE SECRETARY

**Critical Questions for the American People
to Ask Their Future Leaders**

1. What can we do to stop the violence in our schools and bring discipline back into our classrooms?
2. What can we do to provide all children with a quality education that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment?
3. What can we do to help parents and teachers become true partners in children's learning -- not adversaries -- and make family involvement in education a basic community value?
4. What can we do to end the tyranny of low expectations? We know that high standards, tough courses, and hard work lead to real achievement and better discipline for almost all students.
5. What can we do to prepare and keep good teachers, good principals and quality higher education faculty when there will be six million more students to educate in the next decade?
6. What can we do to bring people together -- parents, business people, educators and every citizen -- to build the quality public education system that will keep America great?
7. What can we do to ensure that every student--rich and poor--enjoys the educational benefits that computers and other new technologies offer?
8. What can we do to prepare the 75 percent of all students who won't get a four-year college degree for high-skill, high-wage careers?
9. What can we do to deal honestly with the issue of race and income and their relationship to education? After progress was made in the 1970s and 1980s in closing the gap, we now have a sharp decline in the number of African-Americans attending college.
10. What can we do to avoid educational fads and quick fix solutions and keep focused on what we need to do to achieve serious and sustained improvement in our schools?

10/13/94



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND INTERAGENCY AFFAIRS

FAX SHEET

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5

MESSAGE:

Talking Points for Carol Rasco
The Future of Health Care Reform and Collaboration in the
104th Congress"
National Health Education Coalition
January 10, 1994

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST HEALTH CARE REFORM EFFORT:

- o Though the Health Security Act was not passed in the last Congress, it is fair and accurate to say there are great success to report. Several important outcomes should be highlighted:
 1. The national debate was a catalyst for individual states to move forward with state-wide health care reforms.
 2. Health care reform forged a solid and permanent relationship between the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The Departments became very real partners in identifying the health and education needs of children.
 3. School health was identified as a major issue in health care reform efforts. The recognition of school-linked and school-based health services in providing access and care to children is an important victory.

Collaborative projects began as a result of the Health care debate including: exploring Medicaid's role in the financing and delivery of school health services for eligible children. Discussions include identifying barriers that exist between state and federal governments as well as schools and providers

UPCOMING HEALTH CARE REFORM EFFORTS

- o Future health care debate should include the role of School-linked and school-based health services, which include:
 - 1) clinical health services (ranging from screening and immunizations provided by school nurses to primary health care provided by school-based health centers);
 - 2) rehabilitative health care services for students with disabilities (many of which are required by law to be delivered in school sites); and
 - 3) public health services (including outreach where needed and health education).

Where they exist, school-linked and school-based health services often demonstrate a value added to the health care system in their community. They both increase young people's access to services and enhance effectiveness of services. Students who do not ordinarily seek needed health care obtain services from school health providers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 0 Health affects learning. Education contributes to improving the health of a child, and a child's health status is a major determinant of educational achievement.
- o Nearly 48 million children attend elementary and high schools each day in the United States. Schools are on the front line and have a major influence on the child's development and intellectual and social growth. Schools in many communities have had to expand their role and assume a variety of health and social service functions: providing health care and referral, mental health counseling, nutrition, health education, referrals to the juvenile justice system, coordination with child abuse and welfare agencies, family literacy and the like.
- o Schools cannot address children's issues alone. No one institution -- federal, state or local -- can hope to accomplish a comprehensive approach to serving children and families without the cooperation and commitment on all levels. All the institutions that serve children -- including schools -- must collaborate. Coordination of services is critical to addressing the needs of families, whether it is within health care reform, welfare reform or education reform.
- o The health needs of children have become increasingly complex. Of the health threats to children today, the vast majority -- including substance abuse, sexual activity leading to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, suicide, violence, accidents, heart disease, and cancer caused by smoking or poor nutrition -- are preventable.

Research has shown that the initiation of high risk behaviors by children and youth can be delayed, reduced or prevented through school-based health education programs.

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL HEALTH AND NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL HEALTH

- o The Interagency Committee on School Health (ICSH) is a strong example of the President's effort to reinvent

government through federal coordination. It also has served as the foundation for continuing discussions that began as a direct result of Health Care Reform efforts.

The Departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Agriculture share a close working relationship on issues related to children's health through the ICSH. The Committee is jointly chaired by Assistant Secretaries within the three Departments.

The mission of the Interagency Committee on School Health is to increase the overall effectiveness of Federal efforts to improve the education and health of school-aged children and youth through school health programs. Through the ICSH, these federal agencies work together to improve collaboration at the federal, state and local levels and to address policies and practices that may be acting as barriers to school health programs. One of the most visible issues is reviewing Medicaid financing of services delivered in school-linked or school-based centers.

- o Another important interagency activity is the National Coordinating Committee on School Health. This committee includes representatives from federal agencies and national organizations. The purpose of this committee is to improve the health and educational achievement of children through school-linked and school-based programs. The committee serves to facilitate communication and collaboration among the various organizations and agencies.

JOINT STATEMENT ON SCHOOL HEALTH

- o Last year (spring 1994) Secretary of Education, Richard Riley and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala released the Joint Statement on School Health, which they co-signed. It embraces the fundamental relationship between education and health and acknowledges the important role of school health programs in helping students develop the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors necessary to perform well in school. Nutrition is cited as an important component in preparing children to learn. I have enclosed several copies for you to share with your membership.

GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT

- o The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, sweeping national education reform legislation, was passed and signed President Clinton this spring. Health and physical education are recognized within several of the National Education Goals.

- Goal 1: School Readiness by the year 2000, states as an objective: "(iii) children will receive the nutrition, physical activity experiences, and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and to maintain the mental alertness necessary to be prepared to learn and the number of low-birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.
- Goal 2: Student Achievement and Citizenship, states as objectives: "(iii) all student will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, good health, community service, and personal responsibility; and "(iv) all students will have access to physical education and health education to ensure they are healthy and fit."
- Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined, and Alcohol-and Drug-free schools, states as an objective: "(v) drug and alcohol curriculum should be taught as an integral part of sequential, comprehensive health education."

IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT (Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act - ESEA)

- o A main principle within ESEA is linking schools, parents and communities. There must be a partnership to ensure that all students reach high standards, particularly in high-poverty communities. Under the proposal, parents would be enlisted to help their children do well at school. And schools and communities would coordinate services in ways that make a difference in the learning and lives of children and families.

Title XI of ESEA is designed to address problems that children face outside the classroom that affect their performance in school. The legislation specifies poor nutrition, unsafe living conditions, physical and sexual abuse, family and gang violence, inadequate health care, and substance abuse as some of the factors that may impede a child's academic success. This title allows local education agencies, schools, and consortia of schools to use up to five percent of the funds they receive under the ESEA to develop, implement or expand a coordinated service project.

STRONG FAMILIES/STRONG SCHOOLS INITIATIVE:

- o Parents are a Child's first teacher. They learn what they see and hear. This initiative to encourage and support efforts by families to take a more active role in their children's learning.

- o Children who spend a lot of time with their parents, and talk with them often, are less likely to smoke or drink than youngsters without such close parental contacts, reported by researchers at the Louisiana State Univ. Medical Ctr and the Univ. of Southern California. Released in the September issue of PEDIATRICS.

The report suggested providing parents with more help with child-rearing issues and making them targets of future substance-abuse prevention programs -- before their children reach adolescence.



U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

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STRONG **FAMILIES**, STRONG **SCHOOLS**



BUILDING
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS
FOR
LEARNING

A research base for family involvement in learning from the US Department of Education