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Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Seventh Annual State of American
Education Address

"Setting New Expectations"
Southern High School, Durham, North Carolina
February 22, 2000

Thank you for your generous introduction. Tunky and I are so grateful to have you and Carolyn as friends. To the students here at Southern – thank you for your warm welcome. I appreciate your listening and please know that we are all on your side.

Henry Pankey – I thank you for your warm welcome – you are a principal with a mission. Ann Denlinger is with us today, you're an award winning local school superintendent. I see Mike Ward – your dedicated State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Nan Keohane, the President of Duke University, is here today. Molly Broad, the President of the University of North Carolina system, and the UNC chancellors are joining us by downlink.

I am delighted to be back in the Tar Heel State to give my seventh Annual State of American Education Address. The people of this state have endured floods, hurricanes and ice storms of historic proportions. I suspect that few parents will name their baby boy's Floyd this year. I do know, however, that the citizens of North Carolina are a resilient people, who with tenacity and care are helping their neighbors put their lives together.

I thank Jim Hunt for his extraordinary efforts to improve education here in North Carolina. Aren't you proud of him? Jim Hunt and so many members of North Carolina's leadership have made this state a model for the nation. I salute all of you for it.

Today, we are joined by C-SPAN and almost 250 downlinks across the nation, including the CNN student affiliate in Mount Terrace High School in Edmonds, Washington. Those students have gathered there with Congressmen Jay Inslee.

We are also joined by hundreds of special education leaders who have gathered at the University of Alabama, as well as a distinguished group of leaders in Nebraska including Governor Mike Johanns. I welcome all of you.

I am also pleased to make this happy announcement. My wife Tunky, who is here with me today, and I are blessed with the most recent news that our son Hubert and his wife Lisa have just had

our eleventh grandchild - William Daniel Riley. Tunky and I have been married 42 years. We are so pleased that William Daniel has come into our lives at the beginning of this new century.

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The Right Time to Set New Expectations

This is a wonderful time to be alive and to be an American. We are living in a time of peace and growing prosperity and we have the good fortune to be living in the most important country in the world -- a nation dedicated to freedom, equality, democracy and a quality education for all.

American optimism and ingenuity have seized the moment. So now is "the right time" to set new expectations for American education -- to continue our efforts to create a "democracy of excellence" for all Americans.

One hundred years ago, higher education was almost exclusively for white males and very few of them. Today, 67% of all graduating high school students, men and women, go directly on to college, up from 60% at the beginning of the last decade. American education has become more open, more diverse and more inclusive. Women have used their education to become leaders in every field, and by the way, they also know how to kick a soccer ball into a net and win a world championship.

Our commitment to a quality education for everybody also extends to America's 6 million students with disabilities. This is the 25th anniversary of IDEA, a law that has had a very positive impact on the lives of millions of disabled Americans.

They know that special education is not a "place" but a set of services. Services that allow children to succeed in school and go on to lead productive lives and enter the world of work. This is something that matters to me. This is why we need to consistently increase support for IDEA every year, so that the federal government does, in fact, reach the goal of contributing 40% in funding as suggested in IDEA. We should use these increased investments to strengthen special education in all of its facets and all of us -- federal, state and local -- must reduce the paperwork burden.

I dwell on special education here to make a point. Too often in the past, and sometimes even now, we have set low expectations and used categories and labels -- she's disabled -- he's black -- she speaks Spanish -- they're difficult -- labels that have denied too many children the quality education they deserved.

Last week, I was at a middle school event and one of the speakers told a story about his life. He told the children that as an inner city African-American child he had been placed in special education. He talked about his struggle to overcome the low expectations that had been set for him. He went on to graduate from college, Phi Beta Kappa. He is now a member of the U.S. Congress. His name is Elijah Cummings and he is a powerful example of why we should never give up on a child or destroy his future with low expectations.

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Being Optimistic and Determined about the Future

As we look to the future, I believe we should be determined and optimistic about improving American education. There is much to be done. American education is not where it needs to be. But the American people have made it abundantly clear that they are prepared to do what ever it takes to make America a "nation of learners." They don't want massive tax cuts. They want to build for the future by investing in the education of our children. That's good old-fashioned American common sense.

To set new expectations, we need to know where we are and where we are going. The educational paradigm of the factory age is no longer appropriate. That was a world where one-third of our young people were prepared for college, one-third got enough of an education to do simple work in a factory or on a farm, and a third of the students got no education at all. People never talked about failing schools, and unfortunately, not enough people cared about who the students were in those schools.

Well those days are over. We are in the 21st century. Today, we are attempting to do something that we have never tried before as a nation. We are seeking to give all of our young people – not just the top third – a first class education. We are trying to lift up that middle third and that forgotten bottom third even as we help the top one-third reach for the sky.

But here is the rub. We must look at the stark reality that there is a continuing achievement gap between the rich and the poor, and between whites and minority students. This gap is a gaping hole in our commitment to fulfilling the American promise, and it will only get bigger if we do not close the digital divide as well.

Despite these difficulties, American education is improving. The five-year report card we are releasing today gives you a sense of this recent progress. Reading, math and science scores are up. The gender gap in math and science courses is shrinking – that's good – and SAT and ACT scores are up as well. We have many more high school students taking the tough courses including challenging AP courses. More minority students are going on to college than ever before. And the vast majority of students at our nation's top colleges and universities are public school graduates.

Public Education is Changing for the Better

This is why I can tell you today – the state of American education is changing for the better. I see a strong commitment to accountability and high standards and a growing spirit of innovation and flexibility. Public education is beginning to become something new.

It's not easy. We have an old agrarian schedule, an outdated factory model and an antiquated wage system. But change is in the wind. We are moving in the right direction.

In the 21st century, public education will be different. Education will be more individualized yet more community based. Public education will be less about a fixed location and fixed schedule,

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and much more about learning any time and anywhere. Technology or E-Learning will penetrate every aspect of American education and change it.

There are alternative schools on college campuses, 1,700 charter schools and a growing number of public school choices for parents and students. There are public schools in shopping malls and a residential public charter school is up and running just a few blocks from my office. Positive things are happening.

While positive things are happening, loud and negative voices tell us, again and again, that public education is not up to the task of educating our children. I am deeply troubled by this relentless negativity. Unlike some in politics, I do not get a kick out of bashing teachers. To the contrary, I consider quality teachers among the real patriots of our beloved country in this Education Era.

And I am tired of the negative political voices that tell us that vouchers will solve the problem of failing schools. Well, they won't. Vouchers drain funds from public education and they divert us from the real challenge of lifting up all of our children. Vouchers are a mistake.

Yes, we have some schools that are failing and they need to be fixed immediately. But those of us who support public education are the first ones to tell you about these failings.

We look for answers and one answer that isn't going to solve our problems is to block granting federal dollars. I travel all over America visiting with teachers and parents and I have never heard one parent tell me to go back to Washington and support block grants. They have a different list of priorities - safer schools, smaller class sizes, and more after-school opportunities. They want real help for specific problems. And there is no accountability when it comes to block grants and vouchers.

One of the best answers to improving our schools is making better schools. I welcome the many efforts of America's business community to develop educational partnerships. These business leaders know that the future of American business is totally dependent on our success in education. Let me cite an example.

For several years now, the General Electric Fund has helped high school students, including students here at Southern, to get ready for college. As a result, the number of graduates going on to college at this and other schools has jumped dramatically.

This is why I am pleased to announce that the GE Fund will boost its commitment to its College Bound program to \$30 million, an increase of 50 percent. I am also pleased to announce that several foundations, including the Ford Foundation and the Irvine Foundation, are joining the GE Fund and my department to create a "Pathway to College" network.

A Critical Juncture in Raising Standards

We have worked very hard in the last decade to help state and school districts set new expectations and put new high standards into place for all of our children. This has involved committed and dedicated educators from all of our nation's public, private and parochial schools. But setting new expectations and reaching for high standards has to be done the right way.

Raising standards is making sure that every child is reading well by the end of the third grade – if not earlier – and making sure every 8th grader is taking some algebra and geometry. Raising standards is making sure every high school in America is offering Advanced Placement classes and the arts. Raising standards is increasing the number of schools that offer foreign languages so that all of our children can speak English well and have a fluency in at least one other language.

I assure you – going backwards to a time when we watered down the curriculum for poor children is not an option. Our poorest children face the greatest of odds. We do these children the greatest injustice if we allow the old tyranny of low expectations to prevail, once again.

A quality education for every child is a “new civil right” for the 21st Century. The great promise of higher standards is that they will allow us to move the children in the back row to the front row. And I mean all of our children – children with disabilities or the most recent immigrant child from Central America who is struggling to learn English.

This is why there can be no slow down nor moratorium when it comes to putting high standards in place. At the same time, we must not make the mistake of reducing our effort to raise standards to a blame and shame game: blaming schools for not doing enough; and shaming students, teachers and parents for a lack of progress.

We are at a critical juncture in raising standards. As standards move from the statehouse to the schoolhouse, the debate is growing louder. While some of the debate reflects opposition to higher standards and stronger accountability, much of it is occurring because there is gap between what we know we should be doing and what we are doing.

This is the first time all 50 states have ever tried something so ambitious, so it is important that we have a “mid-course” review and analysis to make sure everybody understands what the standards movement is all about. So let me suggest some guiding principles.

Guiding Principles for Implementing Standards

The first principle: have a healthy and on-going dialogue with parents and teachers. The fact that people are talking about how to implement challenging standards is a good sign. But in some cases this seems to be one-way conversation and that's a mistake.

The ultimate success of this effort depends on our teachers and principals and it requires us to go the extra mile to make sure that parents understand and support their efforts. State leaders and educators need to listen hard to legitimate concerns. Involve the entire community and avoid “here's the test” top-down approach of putting assessments in place.

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The second principle: states must make sure that their standards are challenging – and realistic. I've been promoting the idea of challenging standards every day for the last seven years. No one believes in the power of higher expectations more than I do. But setting high expectations does not mean setting them so high that they are unreachable except for only a few.

If we do that, we will frustrate teachers and parents and break the spirit of children who are working hard to improve but get no credit for their effort. That's the wrong way to lift our students up. It's far better to ratchet up standards a step at a time than to try to make one huge leap all at once. A strong emphasis on improvement rather than on failure will allow us to fly the flag of excellence over many more of our schools.

The third principle: you can't improve something you can't measure – we have to create quality assessments that have a direct connection to the standards. If all of our efforts to raise standards gets reduced to one test, we've gotten it wrong. If we force our best teachers to teach only to the test, we will lose their creativity and even lose some of them from the classroom. If we are so consumed with making sure students pass a multiple-choice test that we throw out the arts and civics then we will be going backwards instead of forward.

Students must be tested on the most challenging aspects of state standards in addition to the basic skills. All states should incorporate multiple ways of measuring learning – essays and extended responses, portfolios and performance assessments, as well as multiple choice tests. Every test should have as its ultimate purpose, helping the child who takes the test. The child should feel challenged ...not traumatized.

The fourth principle: invest wisely to improve teaching and learning. Talk alone won't get the job done. As states continue to implement standards, they must also invest in their teachers and students. Invest in sustained professional development. Expand summer school and after-school.

I support high stakes tests including high school exit exams. At the same time, you have to help students and teachers prepare for these tests – they need the preparation time and the resources to succeed and the test must be on matters that they have been taught.

In this time of economic prosperity, with state coffers expanding, there can be no excuse for shortchanging our students and their teachers. We are all in this together and that is why President Clinton and Vice-President Gore have proposed the largest increase ever in the federal education budget. We are placing a strong focus on teacher quality, modernizing our schools, expanding Head Start, reducing class size and doubling the funding for after-school programs.

Here I have some positive news. The Mott Foundation, that has generously given over \$80 million dollars to expand this nation's after-school programs, is today making a new contribution of \$30 million dollars. The Mott Foundation and J.C. Penny will also launch a new After-School Ambassadors effort to help start-up after-school programs of high quality.

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The fifth principle: insist on real accountability for results. We must not be deterred from insisting that our schools be accountable for results – for making progress each year to reach challenging standards. We can't wait for the perfect tests before we hold schools accountable. We must act now and give schools the help they need. And if a school is truly struggling we should not be afraid to reconstitute it or close it down and start over.

I also firmly believe in standards for promotion and graduation. I am, however, deeply concerned about places where ending social promotion is a hurried response to political pressure, rather than a well-conceived plan for achieving success. Setting standards in January and testing in June is not realistic or fair. Promotion standards must be phased in sensibly, not rushed. This is a step by step process.

Students must have multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence, and educators should rely on more than one measure to make a final decision. And don't give up on students who still don't meet the promotion standards. We should be creating alternatives that provide them with intensive help.

I take these five principles very seriously and they are already part of our Title I requirements. I urge leaders at every level to take stock of where they are and where they are going when it comes to implementing standards. Bring together teachers, parents, business and community leaders to hold your own midcourse review; if necessary, consider holding your own statewide "standards summit."

Now, let me turn to some other specific areas where we can set new expectations.

The Importance of Early Childhood

We now know that an infant's brain develops in astonishing ways. Helping parents, especially working mothers, to spend more time with their infants by expanding paid maternity leave would in my opinion, be a wise national policy in this new century. That means expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act.

I urge school officials to help make sure that every child who can be covered is covered under Medicaid or the CHIP health insurance program. Also please make this year's national Census a success. Our children are a blessing so let's make sure that we count all of our blessings. Millions of dollars in federal and other aid depends on an accurate count.

What else can be done in the early years? These early years may provide us with the richest opportunity we may have to close the achievement gap. The stronger the start the better the finish. This is why I support the idea of universally available pre-kindergarten, and why we must set new expectations for our nation's growing pre-K effort.

Last week, my department released our first national survey on kindergarten students. The report was very positive. I was struck, however, by the fact that less than half of all parents are reading to their toddlers every day, though a large percentage read with them some.

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My message to parents is to read, read, read. If all parents will read with their children 30 minutes a day it makes a powerful difference. Please read and talk to your children. The nursery rhymes they clearly hear will surely help them in their later years. Every conversation you have with them can spark their brain connections to grow some more.

This is also why a great deal more attention needs to be given to improving the skills of pre-school teachers. We are proposing \$30 million in new funding to improve the quality of early childhood teachers.

Improving Teacher Quality

Improving teacher quality is at the heart of our national effort to achieve excellence in the classroom. This comes at a time when the very structure of education is going through a profound change. With knowledge all around us, available anytime and anywhere, the role of the teacher is going to be fundamentally transformed in the 21st century.

In the future, schools will be more fluid, teachers more adaptable and flexible, and students will be more accountable as the task of learning becomes theirs. The challenge of the modern classroom is its increasing diversity and the skills that this diversity requires of teachers. This is why we need to do some new thinking when it comes to the teaching profession.

We need a dramatic overhaul of how we recruit, prepare, induct and retain good teachers. The status quo is not good enough. And we must revamp professional development, as we know it. New distance learning models can be a powerful new tool to give teachers more opportunities to be better teachers.

Our efforts to improve education will rise or fall on the quality of our teaching force and higher education has the defining role in preparing the next generation of teachers. I ask leaders in higher education to please make this their national mission.

We need over two million teachers in the next ten years. We have a growing shortage of teachers in several critical fields including math and science, and John Glenn – in another mission for America – is leading an outstanding Commission to address this problem. They will report back to the nation this fall.

I believe many young people are open to becoming first time teachers if we make much more of an effort to actively recruit them. My home state of South Carolina has a wonderful Teacher Cadet Program. And North Carolina has a most successful model in its Teaching Fellows program. I encourage every state to see these two initiatives as national models.

To support state efforts to get the very best teachers into our nation's classrooms, we have sent the Congress a \$1 billion package of proposals. Raising teacher quality is at the very core of our proposed Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We seek to increase their recruitment efforts, reduce "out-of-field" teaching, and get more certified teachers into our poorest schools.

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I again ask state and local leaders to end the practice of setting standards for teachers and then ignoring those standards to simply get another warm body into the classroom. The recent Quality Counts 2000 report noted, "states play an elaborate shell game...millions of students sit down every day before instructors who do not meet the minimum requirements their states say they should have to teach in a public school."

This is not the fault of the teachers – the system isn't working. We need to change the system.

Elevating Teaching as Year Round Profession

This is one of the reasons why I now make this new proposal. I believe that now is the time to begin a national discussion to make teaching a year round and better-paid profession. We can no longer get teachers on the cheap anymore.

For the last one hundred years, American education has been defined by certain assumptions. One assumption was that the job of a teacher lasted nine months. The second assumption was that we would always have a ready supply of dedicated teachers, mostly women, who for relatively low wages, would teach our children their lessons.

I believe both of these basic assumptions are outdated. We must define new assumptions that fit our times. The income gap between experienced teachers holding a masters degree and their counterparts in other fields with the same level of education is enormous – over \$32,000 a year.

This growing income disparity has become a fundamental roadblock to advancing American education. We are unable to compete against other professions in luring and keeping idealistic college graduates in the teaching profession because of low wages. I have come to the conclusion that we will never really improve American education until we elevate the teaching profession and come to grips with the issue of teacher compensation.

A Texas school principal may have said it best when she told me her dream. "I would like" she said, "to have my pupils in school for nine months, but have my teachers working together for much longer to plan the curriculum and improve their teaching skills." She went on to say that having her teachers working together for 11 months would be ideal. I think she has it about right.

If we are asking teachers to teach to new high standards we are asking them to do much more. I believe that making teaching a year round profession is the future of American education. This extra time can and should be used for intensive professional development, and it certainly should be used to give more students the extra help they need in the summer months. More than a few school districts already have their teachers working ten months.

Consider this – the state of Connecticut pays its teachers the highest salaries in the country but also sets the most demanding criteria to become a teacher. The result, Connecticut leads the nation in reading, writing and math scores. Is there a connection here that other states should be investigating?

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If we demand more of our teachers we need to compensate them for their effort, and treat them like the professionals that they are. I believe school districts should begin moving to make teaching a year round profession over the course of the next five years and pay teachers accordingly for these additional months.

Here I make an important point. I am not proposing year round schooling for all children. Decisions about school schedules are best left up to each individual school district.

We also need some new thinking about how we get more qualified teachers into shortage fields where we consistently are coming up short. I urge local and state education leaders as well as business leaders to find some new innovative approaches.

I also support the growing effort of states and school districts to create new incentives that encourage more of America's teachers to take the challenge and become nationally board certified. In California, a national board certified teacher can now earn an extra \$10,000 a year, and Governor Gray Davis is now proposing an even bigger stipend.

I am well aware that school boards, state legislatures and Governors must balance their budgets and meet the demands of all of their constituents. But if I were the chairman of a school board or a sitting Governor today, I would be making a forceful case that now is the right time to make teaching a year round and better-paid profession.

A New Generation of Principals

All the work that we do to improve teacher quality will fall by the wayside if we don't make an equal commitment to preparing the next generation of principals. Just as we have a growing shortage of teachers in specific fields, we have a growing shortage of principals who know how to move standards into every classroom – principals who can motivate families and communities to be engaged in their children's school.

A good principal is first and foremost an educational leader. A good principal sets a tone, eliminates the petty rules that sap morale and creates a set of working conditions that clearly tell teachers that they are respected as first class professionals.

We are fortunate that there are many good principals in our schools but we need many more of them. This is why we will be holding a Principals Leadership Summit this summer, and why we have proposed a new \$40 million program to assist states in helping prepare the next generation of principals.

Keeping Our Children and Giving them a Moral Compass

Helping our children to learn more always begins with a commitment to keeping our children safe in school. Columbine still shocks us. Staying connected with our teenagers is something we simply have to do. This is why I am such a strong advocate of having smaller high schools,

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Young people need to have a sense of connection. I urge parents to slow down their lives. Listen hard to what your children are saying. Even in their silences, teenagers are telling us a story about their lives. Our schools need to give our children a well-rounded education. But the most important thing we can give young people is a deep, abiding sense of hope.

And our schools have a role to play in helping young people develop a moral compass. Character education is a growing field that deserves our attention. Congressman Bob Etheridge, who is here with us today, has taken a strong leadership role in promoting character education and I am pleased to support his new legislation.

Religion also has a proper place in our public schools. Our children do not give up their religious freedom when they go in the school house door. Young people can voluntarily say grace, meet at the flagpole, or join a Bible Club. The rule of thumb is very simple. Public schools can teach about religion but they can not preach about religion.

I urge all Americans to be faithful to the deep expression of religious freedom and freedom of conscience embodied in the First Amendment. We have issued guidelines based on Supreme Court decisions to every public school principal in this nation. In this election year, I urge all political candidates to retreat from the temptation to make religion in our public schools a political issue.

There are many things we can do to help our children but sometimes everything we do is not enough. When a student brings a gun to school we must remove that child from the school immediately. There is no other option. But we do have an option to keep guns out of the hands of children and keep our children out of harms way. Sensible gun control policies can save the lives of many children and still protect the rights of law-abiding sportsmen.

Fortunately, the vast number of America's schools are free of serious violence. The issue that really dominates a principal's time is discipline. Just as students have to be responsible for their actions, school officials need to have sensible, sound and equitable discipline policies in place.

A sound discipline policy is one that ensures school safety, promotes student responsibility, and furthers the education of every student. And when you suspend a student, don't tempt that idle teenager to get into more trouble by putting him on the street. Do just the opposite - bury him in books and counseling to help him turn his life around before it is too late. No student should be punished by being denied an education. An equitable discipline policy treats all students fairly regardless of their race or gender. School districts need to carefully review their discipline policies to make sure that they are clear, firm, and just.

Overcoming the Achievement Gap & the Digital Divide

Equity is also at the very heart of our challenge to overcome the minority achievement gap. This gap is real, deep and persistent. I also worry that our efforts to close the achievement gap will be negated or even stymied by the growing digital divide. This is why we have worked so hard to wire our schools. The E-rate has been an enormous success. Yet, despite this success the digital

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divide is quickly resetting the 'haves' and the 'have nots' for the 21st century along racial, ethnic and income lines.

The African-American historian, Henry Louis Gates recently wrote that unless there is a "revolution in our people's attitude toward education," African-Americans will face a "devastating" form of "cyber-segregation in the coming century." This is very strong and honest language. And surely it applies just as much to Hispanic-Americans, who are so determined to lower the dropout rate for their children. So what is to be done?

Here I make a modest suggestion. We live in a time of great prosperity and many entrepreneurs have amassed great wealth in the emerging dot.com world. They are young men and women in there 20's and 30's, who have great talent and are full of energy. I intend to meet with many of them this year to ask for their direct help - to help turn this digital divide into a digital opportunity.

Higher Education in the 21st Century

America is fortunate to have the finest system of higher education in the world, a model of quality, diversity and opportunity. From our great research universities to the smallest community college, we have attempted to give all Americans the opportunity to get a college education.

This will be more than a challenge in the years ahead - it will be a "crush" and I use that word precisely. Today, more Americans are attending college than ever before - 14.9 million - and millions of young people are now coming of age and preparing to go on to college. And millions of older Americans, who know that they have got to keep on learning, are filling up our community colleges, which are one of the great-untold success stories of American education.

This crush of new students comes at a time when many of our nation's colleges and universities are already full and becoming more selective in their admissions process. This will mean increasing pressure for high school seniors to get into the college of their choice.

This is why I continue to encourage America's higher education community to enter into a sustained dialogue with education reformers at the middle and secondary level. The old paradigm of two distinct systems of education going their own way does not fit our modern times.

It is clear that high school courses linked to high standards are the foundation for college going and success and especially for minority students. This is why I encourage higher education accreditation agencies to make collaboration with our middle and secondary schools a factor in the accreditation process.

I also encourage higher education leaders to thoroughly examine the current structure of their admissions standards and send a clear signal to those who are putting standards into place.

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And reach out to parents and students as well. Dennis Smith, the President of the University of Nebraska, recently set a wonderful example. President Smith sent a letter to the parents of every 8th grader in Nebraska outlining what courses their children need to take to get ready for college

The Transition to College: A Critical Time

One of the most immediate and promising areas of mutuality should be a close examination of the senior year of high school. This is an important time of transition for young people. Surely we can offer our young people some exciting and meaningful challenges between midterms and the Senior Prom.

This is why I am announcing a new initiative we call the "Senior Year Transition" project. We intend to work with the Woodrow Wilson and Mott foundations to bring together university leaders, educators, parents and yes - students too - to take a new and close look at the senior year of high school.

We know that the transition between high school and college is a very critical time and can determine whether a student's college experience will be successful. This is why I am so encouraged by the many efforts to create and expand new pathways to college through mentoring programs like TRIO and GEAR-UP.

Many colleges and universities are making a committed effort in this regard, and I thank them for their effort. Early intervention strategies can go a long way to reducing the cost of remedial education, which now stands at a half-billion dollars a year.

Yet, for all of our success in creating new pathways to college we are not, in my opinion, doing the best job possible in retaining students. This is particularly so for our minority students. Nearly half of all low-income students will drop out of our nation's four-year colleges by the end of their sophomore year. This is a great waste of talent. A strong emphasis on quality requires us to make a much more concerted effort to give these young people the support they need as they make the critical transition to college.

Paying for college is always a paramount issue to students and parents and we all have to be concerned with rising student debt burden. This is why we have worked so hard to double Federal student aid to over \$50 billion a year. I am particularly pleased by our effort to increase Pell Grants for our neediest students. We are working hard to increase Pell Grants to \$3,500 a year and to support other important student financial assistance programs.

States will have to increase their effort as well and take a fresh look at their policies. For most of the last decade, the state share of support for higher education has declined even as tuition and fees at public four-year institutions has increased by over 50%. Yet, even with these increases, the return on investment is enormous for the successful college graduate.

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I now bring to your attention a very important proposal that can help millions of families pay for college. President Clinton has proposed a new \$30 billion dollar College Opportunity Tax Cut spread over the next ten years. Listen hard now. This targeted tax cut would provide up to \$1,400 in 2001 and up to \$2,800 in 2003, in tax relief for many, many working and middle income families.

That, my friends, is real help for students and their parents who are worried about rising student debt. This proposal is a wise, targeted tax cut that deserves the full attention of parents and students in every working and middle class family in America. This tax cut is designed for striving Americans. Congress should do the right thing and pass it this year.

A strong focus on access to college, success in staying in college and paying for college will always be important issues for American higher education in the coming decade. But we must also recognize that higher education is breaking out of old boundaries.

E-learning is rapidly taking hold on our nation's college campuses. On-line course taking has nearly tripled and 60% of all colleges are now offering such courses. Clearly, we must address the issue of quality and how financial aid can be provided to on-line students more effectively.

The reshaping of education through E-learning leads me to observe that international course taking is on the horizon. Imagine students at UCLA taking courses at Oxford and students in Tokyo learning physics from a professor at Duke. We should welcome this emerging opportunity just as we welcome a half-million foreign students to our college campuses each year.

I believe that America always benefits when we learn more about different cultures and different people. This is why I will shortly be sending a recommendation to the President that he issue a directive to encourage a new focus on international education opportunities.

Conclusion

Seven years ago, when I began the tradition of giving this speech, I reflected to my audience at Georgetown University that our love of learning – and our capacity to use knowledge wisely – would be the defining force that would shape the 21st century.

Well, now we are here and in this new, dynamic education era. I believe we can meet the many challenges of our times if we set new expectations for our children, our schools and our nation. We can do this together and surely we must.

I hope that 50 years from now, Americans will look back and say that yes, in our time, we transformed education in America – that we did the hard work, stuck with it and lifted up all of our children. This is our great task. With optimism and determination let us go forward together to create a "democracy of excellence" in this new century.

Thank you and God Bless you.

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State of American Education -- 2000

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A 5-Year Report Card On American Education

February 2000



Report Card Data Charts

Where possible, data are reported for 1995-99. In other cases, data are reported for the most recent and available 5-year period, with no data being earlier than 1992.

A 5-Year Report Card On American Education: Summary			
Better	Stayed the Same	Worse	Priorities
↑			<u>Reading, Math, & Science</u>
	—		<u>Teachers & Teaching</u>
↑			<u>Technology in the Classroom</u>
	—		<u>Alcohol, Drugs, & Violence</u>
↑			<u>Public School Choice & Charter Schools</u>
	—		<u>Pre-School & After School</u>
	—		<u>Family Involvement in Education</u>
	—		<u>High School Completion</u>
↑			<u>Opportunities for Students with Disabilities</u>
↑			<u>College Participation & Student Aid</u>

Better	Stayed the Same	Worse	Priorities
↑			<u>Reading, Math, & Science</u>
↑			1. NAEP 4th grade reading scores in high-poverty schools improved, while overall reading scores held steady (94-98, 92-96).
↑			2. NAEP 8th grade overall math scores and math scores of high poverty students improved (92-96).
↑			3. The percent of high school graduates with 4 years of English and 3 of science, math, and social studies increased by 5 percentage points (94-98).
↑			4. The number of AP tests with scores meeting college requirements increased overall and for minority students (94-98).
↑			5. The number of states with challenging content standards went from 42 to 50 and the number of states with challenging performance standards increased from 8 to 25 (97-99).
	—		<u>Teachers & Teaching</u>
	—		6. The percent of teachers who "Feel Very Well Prepared" to implement higher standards" did not change significantly (96-98).

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↑			7. The percent of 7-12th grade teachers with a major/minor in their main field of teaching increased 1 to 8 percentage points (94-98).
↑			8. The number of nationally board-certified teachers increased five-fold, from under 1,000 to nearly 5,000 (97-99).
	—		9. New elementary school teachers' performance in math on the Praxis I did not change significantly (96-99).
↑			Technology in the Classroom
↑			10. The percent of instructional rooms with Internet access increased 60 percentage points from 3% to 63%, and the number of students per instructional/ multimedia computer decreased (94-99, 94-98).
		↓	11. Between high- and low- poverty schools, the gap in the percent of classrooms with Internet access widened to 35 percentage points (95-99).
↑			12. The percent of higher education institutions offering distance education increased to 44% (95-98), and the number of course offerings doubled to over 50,000 (94-98).
	—		Alcohol, Drugs, & Violence
	—		13. The percent of 8th, 10th and 12th graders reporting that they used alcohol over the past 30 days did not change significantly (93-99).
		↓	14. The percent of 8th, 10th and 12th graders reporting that they used drugs over the past 30 days increased from 18 to 26% for 12th graders (93-99).
↑			15. The number of serious violent crimes occurring in school or while going to school against students ages 12-18 declined from 12 to 8 per 1,000 students (93-97).
↑			Public School Choice & Charter Schools
↑			16. The number of charter schools in operation increased from 100 to 1700 (95-00).
↑			17. The number of students in schools chosen by students or their parents increased from 11% to 15% (93-99).
	—		Pre-School
	—		18. Preschool participation has increased slightly, while the gap in participation between high- and low-income children has remained steady (94-98).
↑			19. The percent of children in K-3 who attend a center-based program after-school increased by nearly one-third (96-98).
	—		Family Involvement in Education
↑			20. The percent of 3-5 year olds whose parents report reading to them regularly increased slightly to over 80% of parents (93-96).
	—		21. The percent of family members who reported attending parent-teacher conferences/meeting with child's teacher remained at about 70% of parents (96-99).
	—		High School Completion
	—		22. The percentage of high schools completers or GED remained near 90% (93-98).
	—		23. The percentage of recent school dropouts remained at about 5% (93-98).
↑			Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

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↑			24. The percentage of <u>students with disabilities being educated in regular classrooms</u> increased by nearly 13 percentage points (91-96).
↑			College Participation & Student Aid
↑			25. The percentage of <u>high school completers ages 25 to 29 with a bachelor's degree or higher</u> increased for Whites (28%-35%), Blacks (13%-18%) and Hispanics remained steady from 1994-98.
↑			26. The percent of <u>high school graduates immediately enrolling in college</u> increased for Blacks (52%-59%) and Whites (64%-68%), but held constant for Hispanics at 55% (1994-98).
↑			27. <u>SAT scores</u> went up by 13 points (93-98), and ACT scores slightly increased. (94-99).
↑			28. <u>The loan default rate</u> declined by 3 percentage points (93-97).
		↓	29. The <u>median debt burden of students to the federal government</u> increased one percentage point to 8.4% of income, showing that students are taking on more debt.

For additional copies or charts, please contact:
 Planning and Evaluation Service
 U.S. Dept. of Education: 202-401-3132

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For further information, please contact:
 Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Education: 202-401-1576

The indicators and data in this *Report Card* are based on the U.S. Department of Education's Strategic Plan. Charts presenting data for each indicator are available from the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES) office or on the web at <http://www.ed.gov/soae>.

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