

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 9, 1997

EDUCATION STANDARDS EVENT

DATE: June 10, 1997
LOCATION: Rose Garden
BRIEFING TIME: 10:45 am - 11:00 am
EVENT TIME: 11:00 am - 11:20 am
FROM: Bruce Reed/Mike Cohen

I. PURPOSE

To highlight the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 4th grade math and science, and to reaffirm the need for national standards to reach improved scores in the 8th grade. You will also announce that Kentucky has endorsed your national standards and testing proposal.

II. BACKGROUND

The International Release of the new 4th grade TIMSS results is being held in Boston at 10:00a.m. Each country, including the U.S., will then release its own results at 11:00 a.m. You will be announcing the U.S. results, which are very positive. U.S. fourth graders tie for second in the world in science and score above the international average in math. This is in contrast to the 8th grade results announced last fall, which show U.S. students below the international average in math and slightly above in science. This shows that our students can be internationally competitive, if we put in place the right strategies. It also reinforces your call for national standards and tests in 8th grade math in order to keep American students on the right track.

You announced the Chicago area TIMSS 8th grade results for the First in the World Consortium in suburban Chicago last January. This will be the first time you have participated in a release of national results. Within the next year the 12th grade results will be released. We expect that they show even lower U.S. performance than the eighth grade results.

At this event you will also be announcing that Kentucky will participate in your national testing program, joining leaders in California, North Carolina, Maryland, Michigan, West Virginia, Massachusetts, and the Department of Defense Schools. Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky is traveling abroad and is unable to attend this event.

Specific highlights from the 4th grade TIMSS Study:

- In science, U.S. students' average score was 565 -- 41 points above the international average science score of 524. U.S. 4th graders were outperformed only by students in Korea, and scored higher than students in 19 other countries.
- In math, U.S. students' average score was 545 -- 16 points above the international average of 529. Only seven countries -- Singapore, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Austria -- outperformed U.S. students, while U.S. students outperformed those in 12 other countries.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Briefing Participants:

Secretary Riley

Pat Forgione, Commissioner of Education Statistics

Bruce Reed

Mike Cohen

Michael Waldman

Event Participants:

Secretary Riley

Also Standing on Stage:

Pat Forgione, Commissioner of Education Statistics

Linda Vieth, Principal of Middlefork Elementary School, Northfield, Illinois

Sharon Simpson, 4th grade Math Teacher at Ponderosa Elementary School,
Aurora, Colorado

Lourdes Montegudo, Executive Director of the Teachers Academy for
Mathematics and Science, which is a non-profit corporation serving
Chicago Public Schools.

IV. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- You will be announced onto the stage accompanied by Secretary Riley, Pat Forgione, Linda Vieth, Sharon Simpson, and Lourdes Montegudo.
- Secretary Riley will make remarks and introduce you.
- You will make remarks and then depart.

VI. REMARKS

Remarks Provided by Laura Capps in Speechwriting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREFACE

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is the largest, most comprehensive, and most rigorous international comparison of education ever undertaken. During the 1995 school year, the study tested the mathematics and science knowledge of a half-million students from 41 nations at five different grade levels. This report presents findings from the tests, questionnaires, and curriculum analysis performed at the fourth grade. Twenty-six nations participated in the fourth-grade assessment.

- TIMSS' information not only compares achievement, but also provides insights into how life in U.S. schools differs from that in other nations.
- This report on fourth-grade students is the second of a series of three public-audience reports titled *Pursuing Excellence*. The first report presented findings on student achievement at eighth grade. The third report will be released in the spring of 1998, and will present findings from the twelfth grade. Additional reports will provide information on various other topics.

TIMSS is a fair and accurate comparison of mathematics and science achievement in the participating nations. It is *not* a comparison of "all of our students with other nations' best students," a charge that some critics have leveled at previous international comparisons. The students who participated in TIMSS were randomly selected to represent all students in their respective nations, with the exception of a few nations which are clearly noted in this report. The entire assessment process was scrutinized by international technical review commit-

tees to ensure its adherence to established standards. Those nations in which irregularities arose are clearly noted in this and other TIMSS reports.

ACHIEVEMENT

One of our national goals is to be "first in the world in mathematics and science achievement by the year 2000," as President Bush and 50 governors declared in 1989. In fourth-grade science achievement, we are close to this mark. Fourth graders in only one country—Korea—outperform U.S. students in this subject.

- In mathematics, U.S. fourth graders perform above the international average of the 26 TIMSS countries. U.S. students are outperformed by those in 7 countries and outperform those in 12 countries. Among our major economic partners who participated in the study, our students' scores are below those of Japan, not significantly different from those of Canada, and are significantly higher than those of England.
- In science, U.S. fourth graders also perform above the international average of the 26 TIMSS countries. U.S. students are outperformed by students in only one country—Korea. U.S. students outperform those in 19 countries. Among our major economic partners who participated in the study, our students' scores are not significantly different from those of fourth graders in Japan. Our students outperform those in England and Canada.
- In mathematics content areas, our fourth graders exceed the international average in five of the six areas

assessed. These five areas are: whole numbers; fractions and proportionality; data representation, analysis, and probability; geometry; and patterns, relations, and functions. In one content area, the U.S. average is lower than the international average—measurement, estimation, and number sense.

- In science content areas, our fourth graders' performance exceeds the international average in all four of the areas assessed. In three of these content areas—earth science; life science; and environmental issues and the nature of science—U.S. fourth grade students are significantly outperformed by only one or two other nations. In physical science, five other nations perform significantly better than the U.S.
- If an international talent search were to select the top 10 percent of all fourth-grade students in the 26 countries, in mathematics 9 percent of U.S. fourth-grade students would be included. In science, 16 percent would be included.
- The international standing of U.S. fourth graders is stronger than that of U.S. eighth graders in both mathematics and science.
- In comparison with their international counterparts, U.S. students perform better in science than in mathematics at both the fourth and eighth grades.

CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

- It is too early in the process of data analysis to provide strong evidence to suggest factors that may be related to the patterns of achievement described here. No single factor or combination of factors emerges as particularly important.
- On most background factors studied, there is no difference between the U.S. and the international average, or the differences are small. Therefore, these factors are unlikely to be strongly associated with our international standing.
- On those background factors on which there is a difference between the U.S. and the international average, the factor is not shared with most high performing countries. Therefore, these factors are also unlikely to be strongly associated with our international standing.
- In general, preliminary analyses shed little light on factors which might account for the differences between our performance in mathematics and science, and our performance at the fourth and eighth grades. Further analyses are needed to provide more definitive insights on these subjects.

CONCLUSION

This report presents initial findings from TIMSS for fourth-grade mathematics and science, and evidence from early analyses concerning the context of U.S. education achievement. Adequate understanding of our nation's education in an international perspective must await findings from the twelfth-grade data and deeper analysis of data at all grade levels.

TIMSS is not an answer book, but a tool to examine our own national educational strengths and weaknesses in an international perspective. All countries, including the U.S., have something to learn from other nations, and have something from which other countries can learn. These TIMSS findings will be an important source of information to guide our nation in the pursuit of excellence into the next century.



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
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May 7, 1997

Secretary Richard W. Riley
United States Department of Education
600 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-0100

Dear Secretary Riley:

Please include Kentucky among the states which plan to administer the new national tests of reading proficiency of 4th graders and math proficiency of 8th grade students in 1999. I understand that Deputy Secretary Marshall Smith has already received a request from Kentucky Commissioner Bill Cody that our state be included in this individual student assessment.

This initiative of President Clinton promises to be a valuable addition to Kentucky's ongoing work to assess the results of efforts to achieve very high standards. The Kentucky Education Reform Act passed in 1990 called for an assessment of student achievement that was primarily performance-based and similar to NAEP. Our state has developed such an assessment system, but the new national tests based on the NAEP content and performance standards would greatly strengthen our assessment of individual students and our ability to report to parents how their child performs relative to national standards.

We look forward to the availability of this new tool for improving the education of boys and girls in Kentucky's schools.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. Patton".

Paul E. Patton

cc: Wilmer S. Cody
Commissioner of Education

Good News for American Education at Close of School Year
June 9, 1997

U.S. 4th Grade Students Are Internationally Competitive in Science and Math. President Clinton announced today the fourth-grade results of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), which show that U.S. students score above the international average in both science and math, compared with 25 other participating countries. The President welcomed the news, calling the results a good first step toward our national goal of being first in the world in math and science, and a clear indication that our students and schools can compete with those all over the world.

- In science, U.S. students' average score was 565 -- 41 points above the international average science score of 524. U.S. fourth graders were outperformed only by students in Korea, and, in turn, scored higher than students in 19 other countries.
- In math, U.S. students' average score was 545 -- 16 points above the international average of 529. Only seven countries -- Singapore, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Austria -- outperformed U.S. students, while U.S. students outperform those in 12 other countries.

President Clinton added that these results show that U.S. schools are improving. The mathematics results in particular show gains from a previous international assessment, which had indicated that U.S. students performed below the international average.

National Standards and Tests for 8th Grade Math Needed for Continued Progress. While U.S. 4th grade math and science achievement is strong, achievement in 8th grade is relatively weak, especially in math, based on TIMSS results released in November. However, we know that American 8th graders can attain the same high results, or better, if states and school districts make the changes that are necessary: raising expectations, adopting challenging curricula, improving teaching, and holding students and schools accountable for their performance.

The President's proposal for national standards and a national test in math is an essential tool in raising achievement. The test will help parents, teachers and school districts set high expectations and measure progress. It will help identify which schools need help. And it will help determine what works and what doesn't.

The voluntary national test in 8th grade math will be based on the existing, widely accepted National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test, and will also be linked to TIMSS, allowing students, parents and teachers to see how schools and students did compared with international benchmarks. The new test will help place a sharper focus on the critical late elementary, middle school and junior high school years--precisely the years when U.S. achievement appears to falter. It will also help schools and districts make sure that students have mastered the basics of math, including the essentials of algebra and geometry, by the end of grade 8, to give students the foundation to take tough math and science courses in high school to prepare for college and high-skills jobs.

Kentucky to Participate in The Voluntary National Tests in 4th Grade Reading And 8th Grade Math. The President also announced that Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky has asked that Kentucky be included in the voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math when the tests are first given in the Spring of 1999. Governor Patton joins a growing list of educational leaders in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia in endorsing the tests.

Questions and Answers on TIMSS 4th Grade Results

Are these results showing strong 4th grade performance in math and science a surprise?

We pleased but not totally surprised. Prior international studies of science achievement showed that U.S. fourth graders were above average but not top ranked. TIMSS indicates that our 4th graders are top ranked in science -- second only to Korea. We felt our efforts to raise standards, increase parent involvement, and stress accountability would pay off.

In mathematics, the only prior international comparison of 4th graders (IEAP, 1991) showed that our fourth graders were slightly below the international average. TIMSS shows that we are above the international average. While our students did not perform at the very top in math, it is still encouraging that we have moved from below average to above average. Our own 4th grade results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show similar progress since 1990.

Why is this study so important?

TIMSS is the largest, most rigorous, and most comprehensive international comparison of education ever undertaken. It tested a half million students. 41 nations participated in the 8th grade assessment and 26 in the 4th grade. It provides not only information about relative student performance in math and science, but also valuable information about curriculum, instruction and achievement.

Why do we do so much better at 4th grade than at 8th grade?

Those who have studied this issue carefully, based on TIMSS and other data, point to what our schools teach and how we teach it.

The first issue is curriculum. Our schools -- like schools around the world -- spend the early grades teaching the basics of math and science. We do this well-- which one reason our students do relatively well at 4th grade on TIMSS. But, between 4th and 8th grade, U.S. schools tend to repeat the basics over and over while schools in other nations move on to more demanding material. For example, our students tend to learn the basics of arithmetic by 4th grade and then keep doing arithmetic until they get to study algebra

in 8th or 9th grade. High achieving nations, however, introduce several new topics -- such as elements of algebra and geometry -- in each of these years. As a result, our curriculum is less demanding than and out of sync with curriculum in other nations.

A second issue is how we teach. In many states, middle school and elementary school teachers have essentially the same preparation in mathematics -- a couple of courses in college. That might be enough to teach arithmetic really well. But it probably is not sufficient to ensure that a teacher understands the foundations of algebra and geometry well enough to teach it really well.

Finally, as a nation we have put a lot of effort in to improving the early years of school. Many state and local reform efforts are starting with kindergarten and working their way up. The TIMSS results suggest that these reforms may be paying off. The challenge is to expand them into the later grades.

What is the relation between TIMSS and the President's proposed National Tests?

The TIMSS results confirm the importance of a national voluntary test in mathematics at 8th grade. They show that U.S. students can measure up to world class standards, and that we must set higher standards for 8th grade students, as we already have for our 4th graders.

The national test in 8th grade math proposed by the President will be based on widely accepted national standards, and will also be linked to the TIMSS international test. That means that students who take the test, and their parents, would find out how well the student measures up compared to international benchmarks.

If we perform so well at 4th grade, why do we keep hearing about students who cannot do basic math and science?

Despite our relatively strong performance, the range of achievement between our highest and lowest performing students is still distressingly wide. While we were second only to Korea in science, 39% of our students scored below the international average. And, while we were above the international average in math, 47% of our students scored below the international average. This shows that we must continue to work to give every child a real chance to master challenging material.

What about 12th grade?

TIMSS 12th grade results will be released next February. The data have not yet been analyzed.

How reliable are these findings given that fewer nations participated in the 4th grade study?

Of the 41 nations that participated in the 8th grade study, 26 also participated in the 4th grade study. In determining the U.S. performance relative to other nations and U.S. 4th grade performance relative to 8th grade, the TIMSS analysis took into account the fact that fewer nations participated in 4th grade. Moreover, the results were confirmed by the comparisons of total U.S. performance among the 26 nations that participated in both the 4th and 8th grades.

What is the Administration doing to improve math and science education?

In addition to our testing initiative, the Administration has taken a number of steps to help improve math and science. For example, Goals 2000 funds help every state set higher standards in academic subjects including math and science. The Eisenhower Professional Development Program provides training to upgrade teachers skills, especially in math and science. The President's Technology Literacy Challenge provides funds to states and school districts to purchase computers and software and to train teachers to improve instruction.

In addition, last March the President issued a directive to the Education Department, the National Science Foundation, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy, to develop an interagency strategy for helping states and communities prepare students for reaching the 8th grade math standards. That plan will be completed shortly.

What is the response to the President's directive on improving math and science education?

In March the President issued a directive to the Secretary of Education and the Director of the National Science Foundation asking them to develop an Action Strategy for improving math and science education by June 6. They formed an interagency working group that is now completing that strategy. The effort is taking into account the findings released today as it finishes work on the plan.

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June 10, 1997

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These results show that U.S. schools are improving. The mathematics results in particular show gains from a previous international assessment, which had indicated that U.S. students performed below the international average.

President Calls for National Standards and Tests for 8th Grade Math to Keep American Students on Track. While U.S. 4th grade math and science achievement is strong, 8th grade achievement is relatively weak, especially in math, based on TIMSS results released in November. To keep American students achieving at a high level, the President again challenged all states to adopt national standards and tests in 8th grade math. The voluntary national test in 8th grade math will be based on the existing widely accepted National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 8th grade math test, and will also be linked to TIMSS, allowing students, parents and teachers to see how schools and students did compared with international benchmarks. The new test will focus on the years when U.S. achievement begins to falter and will help ensure that students have mastered the basics of math, including the essentials of algebra and geometry.

Kentucky to Participate in The Voluntary National Tests in 4th Grade Reading And 8th Grade Math. The President also announced that Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky has asked that Kentucky be included in the voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math when the tests are first given in the Spring of 1999. Governor Patton joins a growing list of educational leaders in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia in endorsing the tests.

1991 - math & science 4th grade

Pit. Engin 219-1828

~~at 10/12/2000~~

math below avg

IAEP

Expt. Over
NCEB

sci above avg,

407
219-1746

not same test

1960s - 1st science - above avg FISS

1980s - 2nd science - avg SISS

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 10, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON EDUCATION STANDARDS

The Rose Garden

11:24 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Let me say, first of all, I'm glad to be here with Pat Forgione, the Commissioner for the National Center for Educational Statistics. I thank him for the fine work that he has done. I thank the educators who are here: Linda Vieth, Lourdes Monegudo and Sharon Simpson. I thank Secretary Riley for his excellent work. And I want to thank all of those out in the audience who have done so much to make this day come to pass -- those who were introduced, the leaders of the NEA and the AFT and the other education groups who are here. All of you, thank you very much for being here.

Today is a good day for American education. Today, we announce the new results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study for 4th Graders, showing that America's 4th graders are performing above the national average in math and science. In fact, in science they are doing very well, indeed. According to this report, just issued today, our 4th graders rank second in the world in the Third International Math and Science Tests, just behind Korea. We are making great strides. We've built a solid foundation in our national effort to establish standards of excellence in education.

In 1989 and '90, when I was a governor, I worked with the other governors in the White House and the Department of Education to establish national education goals. I remember the night we spent staying up all night at the University of Virginia, asking ourselves whether we should have a goal in math and science and, if so, what should it be. You remember, don't you? We were up all night long and people said to me, there's no way in the world we can have a goal that we should be first in the world of math and science because we have a more diverse population, we have more poor children, we don't have uniformity of -- so I remember looking at the person who made the argument -- it was a perfectly sane and rational argument -- I said, well, what do you want me to say, we're going to be third in the world in math and science? That's our goal? We'll be fourth, we'll be eighth? So we decided we would embrace the goal that we would be first.

These 4th grade examinations proved that if our educators, our parents, our schools, the rest of us in a supporting role, if we all do the right thing, that our children can achieve if we give them the chance to do it, and if we have high expectations for them. So, again, I want to say, I thank the educators that are here. And I think that if you look at where we were -- just in 1991, there as a test similar to the TIMSS test in which our 4th graders were below average in math, above average in science, but nowhere near where they are today. So this shows you what can happen in a few short years if people are working together for the right things for our children and the future of this country.

So I just want to say again to all those who were serving with me -- the Republicans and Democrats alike who were

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governors back then -- I still think we did the right thing, and now we have to do what it takes to make sure we meet the goal. We have to have the conviction that every child in America can learn. And we have to know that this report proves that we don't have to settle for second class expectations or second class goals.

Now, we also have to remember that we've got a long way to go. Last November, when Secretary Riley and Commissioner Forgiore released the first results from the 8th grade test, we found that we were above the international average in science, but still below the international average in mathematics. That is why I have asked us to begin not just participating in the TIMSS test with a few thousand of our students, but to voluntarily embrace national standards beginning with reading and mathematics; and begin with examinations that would embrace every child in America with 4th grade reading and 8th grade math by 1999.

Since I issued that call, six states -- education leaders or governors -- in Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, California, West Virginia and Massachusetts, along with the Department of Defense Schools, have adopted this plan of embracing national standards and agreeing to participate in the testing program. I'm pleased to announce today that the state of Kentucky is joining the national standards movement, becoming the sixth state to agree to participate in the examinations. And I want to especially thank Governor Paul Patton, who has been a national leader in education, for joining in this endeavor.

The results today give us a road map to higher performance. In no other country in the world did performance in math drop from above average in 4th grade to below average in 8th grade. That didn't happen anywhere else -- which means that we are doing a very good job in the early grades, but we've got a lot more work to do in the later ones. We know parents have to remain involved in their children's education as they move through schools, not withdraw when their children reach adolescence. We know our curriculum will have to be more focused and more demanding. We know we'll have to hold all of our students to higher standards as they grow older and measure the schools and the students against the standards.

As the school year comes to a close, I want to thank the many thousands of parents and teachers, principals who have done the hard work necessary to achieve these positive results. They have told us over and over and over again that if we can redouble our efforts, especially now in middle school and high schools, we can meet our goals of national excellence. Bipartisan progress on education shows what we can accomplish here in Washington, too, when we reach across party lines -- to balance the budget, but to invest more in the education of our young people, as well as our adults who need more access to education.

So let me just say before I go on to make one or two more points, there are a lot of people who never believed the United States children would score in the top two in the world on any of these international tests. And now, they know that they were wrong and they underestimated our children, underestimated our teachers, underestimated our schools, underestimated our parents. But let's not kid ourselves: we are still nowhere near where we need to be in these other areas, and all this 4th grade test does is to show us that we can be the best in the world if we simply believe it and then organize ourselves to achieve it.

This ought to be a clear challenge to every single state that has not yet come forward to agree to participate in the national standards movement and the test in 1999 that they ought to do it. We don't have to hide anymore, we don't have to be afraid of the results anymore. We're not trying to punish anybody; we're trying to lift

the children of this country up, and the TIMSS test proves that they will lift themselves up if we who are adults and in charge of their future do what we ought to do to give them a chance to do it. And I hope all of you will take that message out across the country now.

Let me finally say that whether we in the national government continue to do our part for education depends upon our good faith in implementing the budget agreement that overwhelming majorities of both parties have voted for, and specifically what we do with the tax portion of the agreement -- which overwhelming majorities agree would be used to help working families to pay for education, to buy and sell a home, to raise their children. That is fair to all Americans.

Yesterday, the Republican Majority on the House Ways and Means Committee released their plan to fill in the details of the tax cut agreed to by the Congress and by me. I have reviewed this plan and I believe that in its present form, it does not meet the tests that I would hold myself to: one, being faithful to the Budget Agreement; second, having a tax cut that will grow the economy; third, having a tax cut that is fair to middle-class families; and, fourth, having a tax cut that genuinely helps to increase the quality and volume of education in America today for people of all ages. I do not believe it meets those tests for the following reasons.

Number one, it falls \$13 billion short in the amount of higher education tax cuts specifically agreed to in the balanced budget agreement. We agreed to roughly \$35 billion. You might say that \$34 billion is roughly \$35 billion, but \$22 billion is not -- not even roughly \$35 billion -- (laughter) -- and if that were a question in the 4th grade TIMMS test, I'm quite sure what the answer would be. (Laughter and applause.)

Second, it short-changes those in the work force who want to gain new skills and those who want to go on to community colleges. Those who go to less expensive schools, like community colleges, would have the HOPE Scholarship I proposed specifically agreed to in the Budget Agreement, cut in half by the House plan.

Third, the plan falls short for working families in other ways. I favor a \$500 per child tax credit. We have people favoring the \$500 per child tax credit all the way from the most liberal coalitions in the Democratic caucus to the Christian Coalition. But I want to make it even more fair. I think it ought to be refundable, so it's fair to working parents with lower incomes. Instead, the Republican plan would deny the full child tax credit to millions of the hardest pressed working families simply because it is not refundable. And they would deduct the availability of the child's tax credit from the earned income tax credit that lower income working families already earn.

Moreover, and unbelievably to me, they would reduce tax benefits to working families where both the father and the mother are working and paying for child care and getting some credit for that -- they want to deduct the child tax credit from the credit people already get to pay for child care, apparently, designed to make it more difficult for people who are parents to work outside the home. I think most working families will tell you, it's hard enough already; what we'd like is a little help raising our children. I do not believe we should discriminate against parents who are working and raising their children in the availability of the children's tax credit.

In short, the tax plan cuts in half the tax cuts for those who go to community college. It short changes 6 million families who are already in the work force and having to pay for their child care. That does not meet the standards of fairness to families and promotion of education. Nor do I believe it is

consistent with the budget agreement. So I hope that the House Democrats and Republicans and the Senate Democrats and Republicans will work with us to meet those tests.

Finally, let me just say one other thing. The people of the Dakotas and Minnesota earned the great compassion and concern of all Americans because of what they went through this year. We've worked hard to help them stave off the worst, to get their communities back together, to rebuild. It has been 80 days since I forwarded to Congress my request for disaster relief to allow the process of recovery to begin.

Instead of giving me a disaster relief bill, the Congressional Majority insisted on weighing it down with a political wish list. In the name of the people who have had to face the floods, in the name of the families who suffered and need their help now, I ask the Majority to put aside the political games to set aside the political wish list -- we can negotiate on all this later -- and, instead, just send me a straightforward disaster relief bill. Again, I believe if this were a question on an elementary school exam, 90 percent of the 4th graders in America would say: do the right thing and have your political arguments later.

So as we celebrate today, let's do the right thing and resolve that we're not going to stop until we get those TIMSS tests and we're first in the world at the 4th grade level, at the 8th grade level, at the 12th grade level. Our 4th graders have proved that we can do it. We dare not let them and the other children of this country down.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

11:37 A.M. EDT

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