

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

27/97 Education Awards
Ceremony

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REMARKS BY MRS. CLINTON
AT THE EDUCATION AWARDS CEREMONY

The State Department
Washington, D.C.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you, Terry, and thank all of you from the Department of Education who are here for your hard work and vision, not only in this area, but in so many of the others on which we have made progress in the last four years. I want to thank the sponsors of these awards. Terry's already mentioned Nortel and Glaxo-Wellcome and Keenan and the regional education laboratories. This is one of the most important statements that we could make about how we will achieve the high educational goals that the President outlined in his call for action last evening.

I had the opportunity as all, I hope, of you did as well to listen to that speech -- (laughter) -- and to hear the emphasis that the President placed on education as a national security issue, as one that we should turn our attention to with the same commitment and nonpartisan zeal that we in the last 50 years gave to our foreign policy in our efforts to win the Cold War. (Applause.)

There are some who still will question why is the President of the United States, on the eve of a new century, spending about half of his State of the Union talking about education. To those who might ask that question, I would reply, as the President did last evening, that it is through education and a national commitment to education that we have the best opportunity to lift up all of our people to be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that will be available to them in the future.

You saw last evening that there were two students and a teacher who had participated in a rather remarkable consortium in the area north of Chicago to put together best practices so that 20 school districts could pool that information and they could prepare their students to compete in the Third International Math and Science Study Test. For a number of years, starting back in 1983 when my husband asked me to chair the education standards committee in Arkansas, I have followed with great interest the international measurements that have been utilized to determine where our students stacked up against their peers around the world.

Now, I know, and those of you who are educators know that our kids are as bright as and hard-working as children anywhere in the world. It is not a question of who our kids are. We also know that our teachers are as dedicated and hard-working and committed as teachers anywhere in the world. And yet, somehow, when we were being measured on international tests, our students were not scoring as high as I think they could. And yet, it became clear as we look at programs like the one that the President highlighted last night from the Chicago suburbs that with the proper focus and teacher training and understanding of what the standards are, our children can be competitive with anyone. And, in fact, those youngsters who took those tests, as the President said were first in the world in science and second only, I believe, to Singapore in mathematics.

So we know that, properly organized with the right tools at hand, our children can be competitive and be prepared for whatever the 21st century has to offer.

Now, in order to improve student achievement, we have to have good teachers and good teaching. And yet, too often teachers are left out of the equation when it comes to discussing reform, and as Terry said, too often the tools for advancing teacher professional development are considered extraneous or marginal, that they are not part of what it takes to create world-class schools. And, yet, every one of us in this room who are here to celebrate these awards knows how important it is to provide for the kind of continuing development that is provided in other professions.

We expect other professionals to have ongoing professional development. They are tested periodically in order to advance in their profession. They are required to attend certain kinds of programs. They may be evaluated on a regular basis. And now, all of us who care about education and particularly educators know that that is exactly the model that we need to follow here in our country when it comes to preparing and maintaining the best teachers in the world.

That is why the President's budget, which will be released tomorrow, invests in teacher training. It provides funding so that 100,000 teachers nationwide can seek national certification as master teachers and contains a 25 percent increase in the amount of funding devoted to Goals 2000. It's also why he has called on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future for a new effort to help communities and states promote excellence and accountability in teaching.

We need to value our teachers more, we need to help them set and meet higher standards not only for their students but for themselves. Today, in Georgia, along with Secretary Riley, the President will be releasing this call to action for American education in the 21st century, which takes the 10 points that he spoke about last evening and expands on them in some detail, giving examples about what works and also providing more information about what he is going to be requesting in the budget.

I am so pleased that the successes that are being highlighted here will be spread throughout the country so that other districts will learn from what you have already achieved. One of our challenges in education, whether it comes to standards or professional development, is to take what works in one district and translate it and transplant it into another, to learn from one another, to offer technical assistance so that we can see how, with some modification, perhaps, what worked in one of the award winners here can work in its neighbors.

I know we're going to have the presentation of the awards in a minute, but I would like to just call out the names and have everyone associated with these various districts just raise your hands so that I can have an idea of who is here and congratulate you a little bit ahead of time.

From the Samuel Mason School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, who is here? Good. (Applause.) From the San Francisco Unified School District, who is here for that? Good. (Applause.) From the Wilton School District in Connecticut, who came? (Applause.) From the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Manhattan, Kansas. (Applause.) And from the Lawrence Public Schools in Kansas. (Applause.)

I know that you will be awarded a cash prize, funded by the private interests that are the sponsors here, to be able to support professional development activities and to help share the strategies and lessons that you have learned. And I would only ask one thing from those of you who are winners and all of you who have supported this process. We have to do a better job getting the word out. When Terry referred to the "sit and get" strategy of professional development, unfortunately she was describing what is still too often the norm in many districts and schools around our country.

But if we have enough people, like those of you gathered here, to spread the word about professional development and to demonstrate how it works, I believe we can see a grass-roots movement around the country, embracing professional development and using best practices.

I hope that these awards, which will be annually awarded, will send a very strong signal to educators and to those who we hope to enlist in becoming educators, that the role teachers play in our children's lives is second only to parents, and it is the most important job anyone can do for pay. To go into a school and to work with young people, and particularly since we know so many of our children face challenges that were not part of our growing up, to be there, to know how to handle the intellectual and emotional and social needs that our children present to us is the most difficult, but certainly based on my friends and my own observation, one of the most rewarding ways anyone can contribute to society.

And I hope, also, that we will put to rest the idea that the work of teaching belongs to any one group or any one level of government, or any one sector of our society. The President was right in calling for a national effort. You are demonstrating that that national effort must be implemented on the local level, but that we need to support one another in meeting the challenges our children face.

I have said before that I remember clearly many, many years ago when I was in elementary school and Sputnik went up, that the entire nation became mobilized around how we would teach math and science more effectively to people like me in the fifth or sixth grade. And I can remember clearly my teachers saying to me, you should learn this, because your President needs you to learn this. (Laughter.) Well, that was a little daunting when you're 10 or 11, but I took it seriously. And I felt as though, and my classmates did and my teachers did, that we were engaged in a great national effort.

Now, nobody from Washington told Miss Metzger or Mrs. Krause or Mrs. King how they were supposed to teach me. But the fact that they had the big stick of the President that they could use to intimidate us into learning all of this stuff that we didn't understand really worked. I would make the same argument today. It is a little more difficult, perhaps, for some to see that in the absence of an obvious challenge, like the Soviet Union and international communism, that we should have the same emphasis on our national need to inspire better teaching and better learning.

But I think we are at just the same moment of challenge as we were those many years ago, because we know that it may not be with weapons that we will be facing across an ocean that will endanger our security, but it will be with competitiveness and perhaps across a negotiating table, or in front of a computer, that we will determine not only our own individual futures, but the future of our country. And in order to be prepared, we must have the best teachers we possibly can have. We must have students who understand what it means to go into this new global economy, and we must have parents and citizens and political leaders who support all of you in the work that you do.

So, congratulations and thank you for this commitment. (Applause.)

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