

EDUCATION



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Following is a transcript of remarks by Hil lary Clinton and Education Secretary Richard Riley in a roundtable discussion on education. (Part 1 of 7):

The Map Room

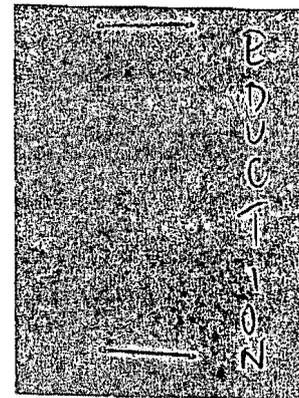
4:25 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you all very much. Some of you -- I guess none of you, maybe -- were at the last of these briefings that we did on microcredit about, I guess a little over a month ago. And I found it very helpful, and the reporters who were part of it also told me then and later that they found it helpful, too. So it's something that we want to continue doing on issues that are of importance, and ones in which I'm involved in some way or another.

And today we're going to talk about education, which those of you who cover the President regularly know is one of his primary concerns for this second term. But it's really a concern that goes back to his time as governor. And I know Ron -- I don't think anybody else ever covered the President when he was governor -- knows it's been something that I've been involved in and worked on even back then, with Dick Riley, when he was a governor in South Carolina.

And what I'd hoped we'd do is to have a chance to talk with you. We've got Mike Smith, from the Department; Mike Cohen from the White House staff -- because sometimes those of you who cover the White House generally don't get a chance to really talk with the people who are helping to not only make the policy, but answer the questions about it. Because this is going to be a major effort and it's a very challenging one to try to follow up on the President's call for action for American education. And there are a number of issues, and we can talk about any of those. And as I'm sure Maxine told you, we can talk about other things as well. But I hope that we will be able to talk to a great extent about any questions or concerns you've got about the President's proposing, how people are responding to it, what it means, will it work, what the point of it all is.

And I wanted to start by saying that we see the education agenda as a continuum of actions and concerns that the President's policy is attempting to address. It really starts with the very beginning of a child's life, which is



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why you've heard the President -- and those of you might have covered me -- talking a lot in the last several months about the first three years of life and the importance of preparing a child to be able to compete academically.

And we're going to be having a conference on early childhood development and learning to look at what the new research on the brain tells us about our youngest children in about a month or so from now -- the date will be announced, I hope, on Wednesday, so we can get it locked down. But it's going to be a look at what the latest neuroscientific research has really opened up to us as a better understanding of what happens to a brain in those first days, weeks, months of life -- and then what does that mean for parents.

You know, some people are already concerned that they haven't done enough to raise their children's serotonin level or to create a lot of synapses in the brain. And this is not supposed to be a discussion about research that makes parents feel inadequate but, instead, to make it clear that good parenting without knowing about serotonin levels has always done what works. If you read to your child, if you talk with your child, if you -- now we know -- play music for your child, you are doing what is necessary to feed that child's brain.

It used to be, perhaps, a little softer. And for those of us who have talked about early childhood for more than 25 years, I sometimes felt that I didn't get maybe a lot of people's awareness raised as high as I would like, because the people who worry about these issues are very often the ones that don't need to worry about them. And for many other people whom we would like to help with their parenting, this information never gets to them. So talking about the brain, we think, gives us a tremendous opportunity to reach people who have not been reached before and to, perhaps, put into scientific terms what most of us have tried to do just because we thought it would be a nice thing to do and might help our children.

Then we're going to talk about what all sectors of society can do to enhance early development and support families. It won't be any surprise to you that I think it takes a village. And I think that when we talk about what we should do to help parents -- particularly young parents, single parents, parents in stressful situations -- to get the support, the example that they may need to find the time to read 20 minutes to their child, that there's a role for a lot of people to play in putting into effect this new research which is very exciting.

But that's how we really think of where we begin with the call for action, because if we do a better job in helping parents talk with, relate to, stimulate their children positively, then everything else that we're going to be doing will have a much better chance of succeeding. We're going to be focusing on the pre-school years. We're going to be trying to determine how we can do a better job of reaching child care providers, Head Start programs, others who care for children with this information, as well; and to try to help them, too, understand what their opportunities are when they do care for children.

And then we see all the way through this call to action what happens once a child enters school, how to keep the partnership with the family going, and then what does a school have to do and how do we begin to define what it is that we expect from our education system.

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If you have followed education -- I know there are some in here today who are very involved in reporting on education -- you know that there has been a movement for a number of years to try to set rigorous national standards, which is what the President has called for. And you'll hear in a minute that that has been proceeding, that practically all the states are in the process of setting standards. And that is exactly what the President foresees.

But in order to help bring some focus to the setting of national standards, the President has called for national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, to make sure our children are able to master the basics. And this is what he has been talking about in legislatures, like Maryland and Michigan, and it really fits in with America Reads, it fits in with the technology initiative, it fits in with teacher training -- all of which are part of this overall call for action.

I'd like to ask the Secretary to speak because, as I said, I guess I first worked with then-Governor Riley, I don't remember, 15 years ago, a long time ago, when we were all working on education reform in our states, the southern states particularly where the need was so demonstrably great. And nobody has been at this longer, worked harder at or has actually more to show than this Secretary in terms of what has been done for the last four years.

SECRETARY RILEY: Thank you very much. And I appreciate the chance to be with you and Dr. Marshall Smith; my acting deputy, Mike Smith, is here also.

When I think back to 1983, when The Nation At Risk first came out, I was in the middle of school reform in South Carolina. The Education Improvement Act we called it, which was very controversial and it was said by the Rand Corporation to be the most comprehensive of any of the states --

it was in here, it was big. It involved a lot of controversial things like taxes or whatever. Our state was a very low support system for education. And we were in the middle of this important fight and I was going all out with it. The people were for it; the legislature wasn't. And the people and I were trying to get the legislature to support this major education reform.

And about that time The Nation At Risk came out. Ted Bell was here, as you recall. And I can't tell you how much it helped in South Carolina to have a national thrust of something that was important to the nation. It just caught on with our state reform. It gave us a tremendous impetus forward and it was right exciting to see that happen.

Then as we followed a lot of reform then in the '80s, a lot of governors were very much involved in a lot of ways -- a lot of them started out of the south. And then in, of course, '89, when we had all the governors come together -- Bill Clinton was one of the leaders with George Bush -- and came out for the goals and the standards discussions, which were serious. So we come on in to where we are then with Goals 2000 in 1994 and School-to-Work and a lot of the things that have happened.

When I first came here and the Department of Education was considered to be on the "hit list" -- somebody said the other day now we've gotten on the "hot list." So we've gone from the

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"hit list" to the "hot list." But when we were looking at things in 1994, we were so excited to see the framework being made for national support of the states in terms of developing a national standards movement that was really meaningful. And now we see 48 states now that have content standards -- some are stronger than others, but see that kind of energy occurring. Getting standards down into the classroom is very difficult, and that's the process that is taking place now.

And then the testing that the President has proposed really puts a focus on it that we think is going to be extremely important. I've been all over the country, talked to parents and educators and whatever -- leaders -- and it is to me seen as a very important focus for us to -- in those two basic skills, 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, with algebra and some geometry.

I was just up in New York this morning, and to show you how that's moving, this was a look at Central Park East Secondary School, a little small high school that has a well-known reputation. But we're looking at the school-to-work kind of approach, preparing young people for careers and college -- all young people, to have them thinking college. This school, a very disadvantaged generally student body, and 97.5 percent of the students finish high school and they would be entitled to a HOPE Scholarship under the President's proposal. Ninety

percent go to college. Not too many years ago it was under 50 percent in that area.

So what we're doing is taking that school and four others in four other urban areas and showing what works and how it works well. And we've gotten some of the top educators in the country involved in that process -- we announced it this morning in New York -- really getting standards out there where they're meaningful to all students and all families and all parents. And it's not just something that we talk about in educational circles, to get the engaging work down in the classrooms where young people are learning in depth and what matters.

Now, if you look at what we then need in this country to do the job in education that the American people are absolutely into -- and I think all of you that have polls in your papers or networks or whatever know that -- is leadership. That's what we need. We need to reach parents. We need to reach students and teachers and others -- leaders, community leaders in this movement for high standards. And the things are in place. The states are getting the standards in there on down to the classroom. So leadership I think is what we need, and I am very honored to be a part of this team.

I would close my little remark by saying Richard Elmore -- who many of you perhaps know as a education

research person at Harvard, very well respected and written a number of books -- and he said the other day of a goals panel meeting that he traveled all around the country, been in a lot of major urban areas and in every urban area -- in every major urban area in this country, he said, you can find three of the very best schools in the world, and you can find three of the very worst. Now, that says to me that there is a best way of doing it, like Central Park East, and you can

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develop that kind of motivation, that kind of a spirit of the belief in education. That can be done and we're going to show it. And it's really from here on out, I think, it's very important just to stimulate parents and grandparents and others to believe in their children and believe in education and that's a big part of what we're doing.

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