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## **THE SEVEN PRIORITIES OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**WORKING DOCUMENT  
JULY 28, 1997**

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“To prepare America for the 21st century, we need strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline, and talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom. Every 8-year old must be able to read, every 12-year old must be able to log on to the Internet, every 18-year old must be able to go to college. . . . We must provide our people with the best education in the world.”

-- President Bill Clinton, 1997

## **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT**

On February 4, 1997, President Clinton, in his fifth State of the Union address, announced a bold, far-reaching national crusade for education. The following week, he issued a “Call-to-Action for American Education” that set forth ten broad principles to guide the nation’s education improvement agenda. Then, during the last week of February, Secretary Riley convened a retreat of the U.S. Department of Education's senior leadership. The purpose of the retreat was to identify those specific areas in the “Call-to-Action” that the U.S. Department of Education could most effectively address -- areas in which it could make a strategic difference. During the retreat, the Department identified seven national priorities that would guide its activities over the next four years.

The first three priorities focus on specific results all students should achieve at critical points in their schooling.

- (1) Read independently and well by the end of third grade;
- (2) Master challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade; and,
- (3) By eighteen years of age, be prepared for and be able to afford college.

Priorities four through seven are key strategies to enable students to achieve these results:

- (4) All states and their schools will have challenging and clear standards of achievement and accountability for all children and effective strategies for reaching these standards;
- (5) There will be a talented, dedicated and well-prepared teacher in every classroom;
- (6) Every classroom will be connected to the Internet by the year 2000, and all students will be technologically literate; and,
- (7) Every school will be strong, safe, drug-free and disciplined.

Throughout each priority, parents and families will be encouraged to be involved in their children’s education with schools and at home.

These priorities, which engage all of the U.S. Department of Education’s program offices, build on and reflect the Department's activities and legislation over the past four years. Although more focused and specific, they also fit with the eight National Goals and the Department's broader mission to promote equity and excellence in education for all children. The seven priorities are intended to

serve as leverage points for moving students and school systems towards excellence and equity for all.

This document is intended to state clearly the significance of each of these seven priorities, as well as illustrate how they grew out of previous and ongoing efforts of the U.S. Department of Education. Section II provides an overview of the seven priorities, including an historical perspective. Section III describes each priority in greater detail. It highlights the importance of each priority and the strategies and the existing Department programs that can support each one. Overall, the document is a work in progress and will evolve as the seven priorities gain greater specificity in the months ahead.

## **SECTION II: OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN PRIORITIES**

### ***An Historical Perspective***

The seven priorities are concrete and widely-understood goals. The first three priorities identify essential *performance results* at critical points in a student's schooling -- reading independently by the end of third grade (priority 1), competency in mathematics, including the foundation of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade (priority 2), and being prepared for and able to afford college when 18 years of age (priority 3). Priorities four through seven address critical *strategies* to help students reach these performance results -- high standards of achievement and accountability for all children (priority 4), high-quality teachers (priority 5), technology (priority 6), and schools that are safe and drug-free and modernized to meet present and future challenges (priority 7).

An emphasis on all students' reaching more challenging education standards builds on work done over the past eight years. The eight National Goals, the initial six of which were endorsed in 1989 by then-President Bush and then-Governor Clinton, a lead governor at the education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, marked an historic turning point in education by calling for all American students to "demonstrate competency over challenging subject matter" in the major academic areas and to be "first in the world in math and science." In 1994, Congress reinforced the National Goals by adding two additional goals and passing three major pieces of K-12 legislation --the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the School to Work Opportunities Act and the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. All three laws support the efforts of states and communities to develop challenging content standards and help all students achieve to those standards.

As a result of these various efforts, the vast majority of states now have developed or adopted content standards describing what students should know and be able to do.<sup>1</sup> Many states are in the process of developing assessments aligned with their standards, and thousands of communities in all 50 states are participating in grassroots efforts to raise educational standards, funded by Goals 2000 and state and foundation sources. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Education has forged a new, supportive partnership with states and communities to improve student academic achievement across

the nation. Significantly, the time-lag in passing this legislation and securing and distributing funding means the full fruits of the Department's new legislation may not even be realized until the last few years of this decade. Overall, particularly in elementary schools, there still seems to have been progress. On the 1997 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), American fourth graders scored near the very top in science in the world and well above average in math, confirming other achievement data showing better performance in the early grades.

Despite these successes, some evidence suggests our nation is still not expecting enough from its students. Many states are adopting standards that are not challenging enough. For example, a recent study by the Southern Regional Education Board shows that far more students scored at the 'proficient level' on state assessments than on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) national assessment. This suggests that state standards are still not high enough. Moreover, states with challenging standards are often not implementing them in classrooms in ways that reshape everyday teaching and learning. While the nation's most disadvantaged students --such as low-income inner city and rural youth --bear the brunt of lower standards, far too many students across all communities and schools are not achieving at levels that will prepare them for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

As individuals, families and the nation confront an increasingly knowledge-driven, skills-based economy, mastering challenging content and skills has never been more important. As the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future explains, "there has been no previous time in history when the success, indeed the survival, of nations and people has been tied so tightly to their ability to learn. Today's society has little room for those who cannot read, write and compute proficiently; find and use resources; frame and solve problems; and continually learn new technologies, skills and occupations. The economy of high wage jobs for low-skilled workers is fast disappearing."<sup>2</sup> The seven priorities are designed to focus the attention of the U.S. Department of Education on a coordinated strategy for helping all children to obtain these critical proficiencies and be prepared to go to college and learn for a lifetime.

### ***Focusing on Improving Results: Priorities One Through Three -- Reading, Mathematics and Access to College***

Although the seven priorities reflect continuity with the eight National Goals and other past efforts (see Appendix A), they attempt to raise academic standards further and prepare students for college, the job market, and full participation in our democratic society. For example, President Clinton and Secretary Riley believe that mastering the two core basics of reading and math can help reinvigorate the nation's drive toward higher standards and achievement. Moreover, focusing each area at one critical point in time --reading by the end of third grade, math by the end of eighth grade --can dramatically change the academic odds for millions of children who currently do not achieve at high enough levels to navigate the changing times successfully.

Research shows that fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are critical transition points in a child's educational success. For example, American schools typically stop teaching reading

around fourth grade and start expecting students to read to learn science, social studies and literature. Children who do not read by the fourth grade thus have great difficulty in other subjects, and often end up being placed in special education, being retained in a grade, or dropping out of school.<sup>3</sup> The ability to read independently by the fourth grade is absolutely critical to a student's future success.

Mastery of challenging math is equally important for long-term education and job success. Students who have been taught challenging mathematics by eighth grade typically have the opportunity to continue mathematics in the college-bound track in high school. On the other hand, those who do not receive the fundamentals in algebra and geometry by the end of eighth grade are often placed in the non-college-bound math track. This often leads to placement in the "general track" in other courses and limited options for college and careers.<sup>4</sup> For low-income children, this is especially problematic. For example, students who have completed geometry and chemistry are far more likely to go to college than those who do not take those courses. Significantly, these differences are even more pronounced for low-income students.<sup>5</sup>

In his State of the Union speech, President Clinton proposed a new, voluntary reading test for fourth-grade students and a voluntary math test for eighth graders to motivate improvements in reading and math across the country. These tests are designed to inform parents and teachers about how their children are achieving compared to rigorous standards, no matter where they live. By providing clear measures of performance relative to national standards, these tests can help the public and educators understand better challenging standards and high quality student work. The Department believes these challenging tests -- supported by the President -- will motivate the nation to expand opportunities for children to learn to read well by the end of third grade or by fourth grade and to learn challenging mathematics by the eighth grade.

Priority three reflects the increasing importance of postsecondary education for full participation in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century. Research demonstrates that completing two or four years of college has become the fault line between those who will prosper in the new economy and those who will not. Thus, both our individual and national security will depend on expanding the number of students gaining a far higher level of skills than a high school education affords. Moreover, evidence suggests that students who believe they have the opportunity to attend college will work harder and aspire higher in both middle and high school. Such behaviors and attitudes can profoundly affect the quality of K-12 schooling as well. The U.S. Department of Education will concentrate on giving low-income, working and middle-income families more opportunities to pay and save for college and helping make the K-12 curricula more challenging to help students prepare academically for college.

### **Key Strategies for Reaching those Results: Priorities Four Through Seven**

Priorities four through seven address the essentials that will help students reach the results defined in priorities one through three. Priority four, which calls for high standards of achievement and accountability in the core academic subjects for all children, has been at the heart of the Department's agenda during the past four years. All three major pieces of K-12 legislation promoted

by the Department --Goals 2000, School-to-Work and the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) --support challenging state and community standards and community and systemwide reforms geared to those standards. Priorities five through seven recognize, however, that the highest standards in the world will do little good if every student does not have caring, competent, and qualified teachers, school environments conducive to learning, and access to and understanding of the new technology which is already transforming the meaning of literacy in our world. Priority five emphasizes the need to recruit and retain high quality teachers and ensure they have the content knowledge and skills to teach to the new standards. Priority six promotes strategies to help all students become technologically literate so they can fully participate in the economy and democracy of the 21st century; and priority seven supports school choice and charter schools, as well as the safe and drug-free environments and good school facilities vital to learning.

Meeting these seven priorities requires action on all fronts. Teachers and other educators will have to raise their expectations and concentrate on enhancing their skills to teach to far more challenging standards. Businesses and other employers will have to become more involved partners with the schools. They can, for example, promote strong school-to-work, work-study and apprenticeship programs, help install technology in classrooms, and exert pressure for higher standards by asking job applicants for their diploma and school transcripts. Parents will have to demand more from their children's schools and become more involved in their children's education, both at home and school. Parent involvement, in fact, is not singled out as one of the seven priorities because it is an overarching goal that will affect the success of each of the seven priorities. Students will have to work harder and accept greater responsibility for their success or failure. Finally, the U.S. Department of Education must reexamine all of its programs to ensure that they most effectively contribute to the priorities.

For each priority, the Department will use a range of nonlegislative strategies to complement its legislative initiatives. These strategies include using the bully pulpit to engage the public in education improvement, brokering partnerships across all sectors and providing educators, parents and the public far more information and research on best practices. Over the past few years, the Department has used such strategies with increasing frequency to mobilize public involvement and achieve a better balance among regulation, flexibility, and incentives. As Section III of this document illustrates, the Department plans to continue to use such strategies to help generate and sustain major public involvement in support of its critical priority areas. Disseminating examples of high-quality student work, working with schools of education to strengthen their teacher preparation in mathematics, calling on college students to serve as reading tutors, providing parents more information about financial options for college --all are examples of nonlegislative strategies being pursued by the Department to advance its education improvement agenda. At the same time, the Department and Administration will continue to focus their budgetary requests to Congress, their discretionary grant priorities and their legislative initiatives on these high priority items.

### ***Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Students***



This overview closes with the U.S. Department of Education’s mission statement which has driven the Department’s efforts since its inception: “to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation.” The Department of Education believes that equity and excellence in our educational system are inseparable. Without excellence, there can be no equity, as students will be denied the right to reach their potential and take advantage of opportunities. And, without equitable access to quality education, there cannot be excellence systemwide.

Each priority can be a leverage point for addressing issues of equity and excellence. For example, ensuring that all children can read independently by the end of third grade may be one of the most important equity concerns today. This equity goal depends on raising expectations for all children, as well as the quality of the curricula and teaching they receive. While algebra and geometry act as gatekeepers to the entire spectrum of more challenging college preparatory courses, well over 80 percent of African-American and Latino students in the U.S. do not take those courses by the end of eighth grade. In addition, although technology affords great opportunities for dramatically increasing quality and equality, it too can increase inequity if it is distributed unequally or if only some teachers gain the expertise needed to help their students use it. The seven priorities are designed to harness the resources of the Department and the nation to maximize both equity and excellence so that every person has the opportunity to participate to his or her full potential in the economy and society of the 21st century.

## SECTION III: THE SEVEN PRIORITIES

### Priority One Reading Independently and Well by the End of Third Grade

#### Importance of Priority One

Reading is the foundation for all other learning. Even though as a nation we are above the international average in reading, unfortunately, too many of our children still struggle when it comes to reading. Forty percent of America's fourth graders cannot read at what the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) considers to be the basic level. Seventy percent fall below the proficient level.<sup>6</sup>

Our schools emphasize reading during the first three grades. By the fourth grade, we expect children to be good readers so they can then learn the rest of the core curriculum. Too often, the children who struggle with reading early on fall further behind in school, are placed in special education classes, or lose interest, give up, and drop out. For several years already, Secretary Riley and the Department of Education have tried to help combat this problem by stressing the importance of reading and improved literacy, launching both the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and the *Read\*Write\*Now!* initiative which connects children with reading partners during the summer. The President and Secretary believe a strong and early focus on reading, coupled with greater parental involvement, can reduce special education and remedial education costs, decrease truancy rates, and reduce the number of young people dropping out of school. It can also help bilingual students achieve the high standards established for all students.

As a nation, we now have the opportunity to make greater progress in this area. New scientific research shows that experiences before and after birth, particularly in the first three years of life, dramatically influence brain development.<sup>7</sup> Nurturing, talking to, singing to and reading to our youngest children can improve their ability to learn and develop throughout their lives. Although this information presents daunting challenges, it also expands our understanding of how to help every child get off to a strong and healthy start and begin to become a lifelong learner. Moreover, we now know a lot about how to teach reading.

Already, states and communities nationwide, such as Texas, California, Boston and New York City, have launched far-reaching efforts to improve the reading success of their students. The Department of Education's activities are designed to build on and support those efforts in order to help America's children read independently and well by the end of third grade.

## Strategy for Supporting Priority One

The strategy for supporting priority one involves three critical steps.<sup>1</sup> The first step is the *America Reads Challenge*. It has four major components. The second step involves research, development and dissemination of information. The third step is the new voluntary national test of fourth grade reading in English.

### **Step 1:           *The America Reads Challenge***

In August 1996, President Clinton responded to our national literacy problem by announcing the *America Reads Challenge*. The *America Reads Challenge* calls on all Americans --parents, community groups, religious organizations, teachers, principals, and private sector leadership --to pitch-in and help ensure that all children are reading independently by the end of third grade. To achieve this, the initiative strives to provide all children with the reading supports that only some children currently have. These include: (1) actively involved parents who read with their children from infancy onward; (2) quality preschool opportunities; (3) extra individualized attention, where needed, from pre-school through 3rd grade; and (4) high quality in-school instruction. To support each of these four areas, the Department of Education is engaging in a number of different strategies.

1. *Actively involved parents.* The *America Reads Challenge Act*, which the Administration proposed to Congress in April 1997, requests \$300 million for Parents as First Teacher Grants for local programs. The grants would assist parents, such as those who may be hard to reach or whose first language may not be English, in helping their young children learn better reading skills. Additionally, the Department's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, which now includes over 2,000 family, school, community, employer and religious groups, continues to sign up partners to help with reading, promote family-friendly business, and support community-based organizations and schools as they create neighborhood learning communities outside of school hours.
2. *Quality pre-school opportunities.* A number of U.S. Department of Education programs currently support preschool opportunities. For example, Even Start supports over 500 local family literacy programs which combine early childhood education, adult education, and parenting instruction; Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act funds preschool programs for 140,000 children; and the Preschool Grants program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) helps provide special education services for preschool children. President Clinton and the bipartisan leadership of Congress also have secured significant increases in the Head Start budget to enable 1 million 3-and 4-year olds to be served by 2002.

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<sup>1</sup> The steps mentioned throughout this section are not meant to be rank ordered. In fact, to be most effective, whenever possible, they should be taken simultaneously.

3. *Extra individualized attention from Pre-K through grade 3, where needed.* A major emphasis of the President's *America Reads Challenge* is expanding tutoring opportunities after school, during the summer or on weekends for young children who need additional help. The Department's efforts to increase dramatically the number of tutors available to provide this assistance include:
  - a) The President's proposed *America Reads Challenge Act* requests \$2.75 billion over five years to support one million reading tutors. The bulk of these funds would help local reading partnerships hire reading specialists and tutor coordinators, including 14,000 AmeriCorps members, to mobilize and train tutors. The tutors would provide individualized assistance, both after school and during the summer months, to children who need extra help to read well and independently. Significantly, the recent balanced budget agreement between the President and Congress includes a child literacy initiative consistent with the President's *America Reads Challenge* to help children learn to read independently by the end of third grade.
  - b) *Through its college work-study effort*, the Administration is working with college presidents to give 100,000 college work-study students the opportunity to serve as reading tutors. As of July 15, 1997, over 500 colleges had committed thousands of work-study students to this effort and to other student and family volunteer initiatives.
  - c) *Fighting the summer drop-off in reading.* The Department of Education is continuing to work with over 40 partners --including Pizza Hut, the Urban League, the National PTA and Hadassah --on its *Read\*Write\*Now!* Initiative. *Read\*Write\*Now!*, an intensive summer component to the *America Reads Challenge*, encourages children to read and write 30 minutes daily, including with a reading tutor at least once or twice a week, to prevent a decline in literacy skills over the summer. First started in the summer of 1995, the initiative reached nearly one million children last year.
4. *High quality in-school instruction (K-3).* The Department's current programs are important levers to help strengthen students' literacy skills. Programs funded by Title I of the ESEA, Even Start, Bilingual Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act spend substantial dollars in reading services for children, primarily during the regular school day. For example, over 70 percent of the six million children served by Title I receive reading assistance. Even Start and Adult Education programs make reading assistance available to adults. The Department of Education intends to harness these and other programs to support high-quality reading instruction more effectively.

**Step 2:           *Research, Development and Dissemination of Information***

The success of the *America Reads Challenge* will depend on raising expectations nationwide, giving better information to educators about effective practices, and mobilizing people to help children become successful readers. The Department hopes to take advantage of its national voice and position to help parents and the public understand the need for every child to read independently by the end of third grade and ways to be involved to support this goal. Moreover, by disseminating to the public examples of student work that meet challenging standards, both the Department and other organizations can advance the public's understanding of the level of performance each child must attain. Through research and development, they also can promote the use of best practices in all programs supported by its funds. Educators and the public will need more high-quality information on such issues as effective tutoring programs and professional development strategies for teaching early reading, exemplary practices for Title I and early childhood education, ways to use programs like Success for All or Reading Recovery if students experience trouble in reading early in their schooling, and strategies to work with institutions of higher education to improve the training of future teachers.

**Step 3:           *New Voluntary National Test of Fourth Grade Reading in English***

To stimulate further a movement to help students read independently by the end of third grade, President Clinton has also proposed a new, challenging and voluntary national test in fourth grade reading (his proposal for a similar test of eighth grade math is described in the next section). The test will not just be another test. It is intended to capture the public's attention and stimulate change. By showing parents and teachers where individual students stand in relation to rigorous national standards and by demonstrating the kind of work that will be essential for success in the next century, students, teachers, parents, and their communities can work together to improve their schools. The test will have the following characteristics:

1. It will be administered first in the Spring of 1999.
2. The test will be voluntary: the decision to use it will be made by state and local authorities. President Clinton is urging every state and district to participate in the effort.
3. The test will be based on the frameworks used to develop the widely-accepted National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) fourth grade reading test, which is now used in over forty States on a sample basis. The test will be equated to the NAEP and, like the NAEP, be criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced.
4. The test will provide individual student scores and will be available to all students in all fourth grade classes of participating states or districts. This contrasts with the NAEP, which does not produce individual scores and is given to only a sample of students in most states. While NAEP works well for providing a state or national average, it does not tell a parent, teacher or principal how an individual student is doing.

5. No individual student data will be received by the U.S. Department of Education. The Department will pay a contractor to develop the test, with advice from the most successful math and reading teachers across the country, parents, governors, and education, civic and business leaders. Once the test is developed, it will be licensed to test publishers, states, and school districts, who will ensure proper administration.
6. The Department will make information available to help teachers, parents and students prepare for the test. Each year, after the test has been given, the test instruments and scoring guides will be made available on the World Wide Web. Every effort will be made to report data clearly and informatively.

The Department believes that a challenging reading test based on high standards that produces individual scores will raise expectations systemwide and promote greater equity. For it is in higher poverty areas, where expectations often are lowest, where “C” level work often receives an “A.”<sup>8</sup> Educators will have clear benchmarks towards which they can work. Parents in poor-achieving schools, whose children bring home strong report cards but have low scores on these tests, will have additional information to examine their child’s progress and hold their children’s schools more accountable. And the public will be better able to make sure all young people are mastering the basics because they will have a clear standard against which to judge success.

**Priority Two**  
**Mastering Challenging Mathematics, Including the Foundations of Algebra and Geometry, by the End of Eighth Grade**

**Importance of Priority Two**

If reading well by fourth grade is the first crucial academic checkpoint, doing well in math by the eighth grade is the second. The vast majority of experts view mastery of basic math, including the foundation of algebra and some geometry, as a core foundation by the eighth grade for preparing to take rigorous college-prep courses in high school. Students who do not have a foundation in algebra and geometry by the end of the eighth grade often are channeled into general math classes in high school. They are not exposed to meaningful math and science courses, lack the prerequisites to take Advanced Placement, and, in turn, face limited options for college and careers.

Nearly 40 percent of U.S. eighth graders are not achieving at the “basic” math level as measured by NAEP, and 76 percent are not achieving at the “proficient” level.<sup>9</sup> According to the recently released Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), 55 percent of U.S. 8th graders score below the international average in math. TIMSS also suggests why, showing how the U.S. expects far less knowledge and understanding from its students than other nations do from theirs. TIMSS found that topics taught in U.S. eighth grade math classes are at a seventh-grade level, by average international standards. As a result, only 20 percent of our young people are taking algebra by the end of the eighth grade. Yet, in much of the rest of the industrialized world, including

Japan, 100 percent of all eighth graders have taken or are taking algebra. Second, our method of instruction differs from the teaching methods in high-performing nations. We generally demand that our students learn how to do mathematical operations mechanically rather than understand and be able to discuss mathematical concepts.<sup>10</sup> We know, however, these shortcomings can be addressed because our students, on average, start the middle grades above average in both math and science achievement compared with their international counterparts.<sup>11</sup>

U.S. employers have been clear that competency in mathematics, including qualitative and problem-solving skills, is a prerequisite for participation in the current job market. The National Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing, for example, included 25 specific math and measurement standards in its definition for what a competent worker should know and be able to do. A number of top corporations, such as MCI, are spending millions annually to retrain workers who lack basic math and reading skills.

There is strong evidence, moreover, that students throughout the United States can achieve far higher levels in math in the eighth grade if they have the opportunity to do so. The Equity 2000 program provides an example. This program, implemented in a number of school districts across the country, enrolls far more eighth and ninth graders in algebra and tenth graders in geometry and in higher math courses than have been enrolled in the past. Both the enrollment in these critical high school mathematics courses, as well as the numbers of students passing them, have dramatically increased. Another example of the power of high standards is the University of Chicago School Mathematics Projects (UCSMP) which focuses on raising expectations and upgrading the mathematics experience of the average student. For example, the UCSMP's Everyday Mathematics curriculum for elementary students encourages teachers and students systematically to investigate the basics of data gathering and analysis, probability, geometry, and algebra, and to use estimation and other problem-solving skills. Evaluations show that elementary school students using these materials do as well at computation as other students, but are more adept at applying skills to solve problems. Expanding the opportunities for all children to master challenging math is at the center of priority two.

### **Strategy for Supporting Priority Two**

As in reading, President Clinton plans to engage the country in an outreach campaign to boost the mathematical abilities of American students. The strategy for supporting priority two involves taking two critical steps. The first step is providing all children with the opportunity to master more rigorous mathematics by the end of eighth grade. This step has five key components. The second step is the new voluntary national test in eighth grade mathematics.

#### ***Step 1: Providing the Opportunity to Master More Rigorous Mathematics***

1. *Build public understanding of and support for challenging mathematics.* To accomplish this, the Department will need to: provide examples of what rigorous eighth grade mathematics looks like; help parents and their children understand that students who do not pursue

rigorous mathematics in middle school will be closing doorways to college and careers; show a clear link between mathematics achievement and the world of the future; and demonstrate that American students can be expected to perform better in mathematics by pointing to the mastery of students in other nations and to effective efforts to boost the mathematics proficiency of low-income and minority students in this country. The above-average performance of America's fourth graders in math and science internationally provides both a solid base to achieve more in the middle grades and an example of how our large, diverse country can make further progress if we maintain our focus on high standards and better teaching and learning for all children.

2. *Reinforce the efforts of parents, educators, business groups, and mathematics groups to help students achieve in mathematics.* Groups like the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics (NCTM) and the nation's engineers are already mobilizing their members to help increase student achievement. For example, they are engaging students to solve multi-step problems similar to those faced by workers of industry, training students to work independently and cooperatively, as adults do, and helping students discover multiple solutions to solving problems.
3. *Support teachers' efforts to improve instruction.* A high percentage of new K-8 mathematics teachers enter teaching with only six to nine credit hours of college mathematics preparation, and those courses they have taken often do not teach the content they will be asked to teach in elementary or middle school classrooms.<sup>12</sup> The Department is working with colleges, universities, states and organizations, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics, to help equip future math teachers with the content knowledge and the pedagogy needed to teach challenging mathematics more effectively. Specific strategies may include various forms of professional development for future fifth- through eighth-grade math teachers which focus on the content they will be teaching and good pedagogy; incentives for respected college math departments to devote more energy and resources to preparing future elementary and middle school math teachers; and networks around mathematics to help current K-8 teachers augment their content knowledge. Programs funded under Eisenhower Professional Development, Title I, the Eisenhower Regional Consortia, and the Higher Education Act (Title V) can aid this effort.
4. *Work with the National Science Foundation and other agencies on an interagency task force.* This task force will review all relevant federal programs that can contribute to the mathematical success of every child. During the summer of 1997, the task force will present specific recommendations in such areas as professional development, use of technology, curriculum, and the engagement of students and the general public in learning to higher standards in mathematics.
5. *Upgrade curriculum in schools.* A generation of curriculum materials aligned with the tougher standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is just becoming available. Schools need good information about existing materials and how to



select among them, and to identify areas where more materials are needed. To support schools in their efforts, the Department is developing a TIMSS Resource Kit that it will disseminate to states, districts and schools in July. The National Science Foundation is developing a guide on how to choose K-8 instructional materials in mathematics. Moreover, the Department will develop a guide to exemplary and promising mathematics curricula and programs, based on the specific recommendations of an expert panel convened by the Office of Education Research and Improvement.

**Step 2: *New Voluntary National Test of Eighth Grade Mathematics***

As part of ensuring that all students are competent in challenging mathematics by the end of eighth grade, President Clinton has proposed a new voluntary national test in eighth grade math. The purpose of the test will be to raise awareness of this critical point in a student's academic career and motivate nationwide changes to enable students to achieve more challenging standards in mathematics by the end of eighth grade. The test will be based on the NAEP eighth-grade content framework and its scores will be equated to the NAEP and to the TIMSS. Like the fourth grade reading test, the eighth grade math test will be funded by the Department of Education for use by individual students beginning in the Spring of 1999. It will be developed and administered in similar ways to the fourth grade reading test described above. It will also provide parents, teachers, and students critical information on how students are doing in comparison to rigorous national and international standards in mathematics. (Priority one, step 3 provides additional details on this test.) The national tests in reading and math, while a tool for strengthening students skills in reading and math, can also be a focal point of the much broader agenda of the Department's seven priorities because they provide challenging benchmarks for individual student progress.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority Three</b> <b>By 18 Years of Age, Being Prepared For and Able to Afford College</b></p>
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**Importance of Priority Three**

A college education has never been more important than it is today and will be in the years to come. Between 1992 and 2000, 89 percent of the new jobs created in this economy will require post-high school levels of literacy and mathematics. In fact, most high school graduates of the next century will need a solid foundation of skill even to be able to benefit from college and specific technical training across a lifespan. Moreover, whereas fifteen years ago the typical worker with a college degree made 38 percent more than a worker with a high school diploma, today, he or she makes 73 percent more. People who finish two years of college earn 20 percent more each year and a quarter of a million dollars more than their high school counterparts over a lifetime.<sup>13</sup>

Only half the people entering the work force are even nominally equipped for the 21st century world of work. And, although higher education is more important than ever, it has become harder for American families to afford it. Between 1979 and 1993, many middle class families' income

decreased while college costs increased by 165 percent.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in 1994, only 45 percent of high school graduates from low-income families and 58 percent from middle-income families went directly from high school to college, compared to 77 percent from high-income families.<sup>15</sup> This difference is important since those who immediately enter college upon high school graduation finish college at far higher rates than those who delay entry. There is also a gap in college attendance rates and graduation rates between minorities and whites, as well as between higher and low-income persons.<sup>16</sup> Priority three calls for making two years of college --the 13th and 14th years of education --as universally available for young Americans as the first 12 are today. It also recognizes the importance of financial aid and incentives in encouraging families and their children to learn for a lifetime and thus to keep this nation moving forward in an age of information and technology.

### **Strategy for Supporting Priority Three**

The Department of Education's strategy for supporting priority three involves two critical steps. First, students must be able to afford the cost of attending at least two years of college. Second, the ethic and public expectations about higher education must change; middle and high school students' must think about college early, understand the importance of going to college, and recognize the role of hard work in getting there.

#### ***Step 1: Helping Students and Families Pay for College***

The Department of Education, primarily through the Office of Postsecondary Education, supplies 70 percent of the financial aid to U.S. college students through Pell Grants, work-study aid, and college loans. President Clinton already has achieved substantial success in making college more accessible and affordable to Americans than at any time in their lives, while also reducing fraud and abuse and reducing costs to taxpayers. Over the next five years, President Clinton's budget will more than double the federal aid available for postsecondary education from the time he entered office -- going from \$24 billion a year in 1993 to \$58 billion in 2002.

#### ***Existing Department Programs***

This Administration's commitment to expanding access to college already has taken many forms. The Direct Lending Program, which the President signed into law in 1993, gives student loans directly to people who need them, with new flexible repayment plans. The program now provides \$10 billion in loans at over 1,500 schools, making loans to students and their families more affordable and debt more manageable, while saving taxpayers billions of dollars. Between 1993 and 1997, the President also secured bipartisan support for a \$12 billion (or 48 percent increase) in Pell Grants, the foundation of student aid for lower-income students and their families. FY97 saw the largest Pell Grant increase in recent history, a \$230 increase (9 percent) in the maximum grant to \$2,700. This represents a full \$400 increase, more than 17 percent, in the maximum grant since 1993. In fiscal year 1997, with strong bipartisan support from the Congress, the College Work-Study program also received an unprecedented one-year increase of 35 percent, with a new emphasis on community service, especially tutoring elementary school children to read. The President has proposed increasing

funding for College Work-Study 50 percent by the year 2000, so that one million students would be able to attain part-time employment.

### ***Expanding Financial Aid for College***

The historic balanced budget agreement between the President and Congress preserves President Clinton's proposals to help middle class families pay for college and working people trying to upgrade their skills over the course of their lives. In fact, promoting educational opportunity -- the centerpiece of the President's budget and his middle class tax cut proposal from the beginning -- is the centerpiece of the final tax cut bill. The major provisions include:

1. *The biggest increase in Pell Grants in 20 years.* The budget agreement accepts the President's proposal to increase the current maximum grant by \$300, from \$2,700 to an all-time high of \$3,000 per student per year. It also expands eligibility for Pell grants to more poor independent students. This single largest Pell Grant increase in two decades would benefit approximately four million students.
2. *\$1,500 HOPE Scholarship to make the first two years of college universally available.* The final agreement includes the President's program to advance the goal of making the 13th and 14th grades as universally available as a high school diploma is today. Students will receive a scholarship of 100% on the first \$1,000 of tuition and fees and 50% on the second \$1,000. The credit, available for college enrollment after January 1, 1998, is phased out for joint filers between \$80,000 and \$100,000 of income, and for single filers between \$40,000 and \$50,000.
3. *20% Tuition tax credit for college juniors, seniors, graduate students and for working Americans pursuing lifelong learning to upgrade their skills.* The 20% tax credit will be applied to the first \$5,000 of tuition and fees through 2002, and to the first 10,000 thereafter. The credit is available for college enrollment after July 1, 1998. The credit is phased out at the same income levels as the HOPE Scholarship.
4. *Using Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) for Educational Savings.* The budget agreement also allows penalty-free IRA withdrawals for undergraduate, post-secondary vocational, and graduate education expenses. Taxpayers also are given the opportunity to deposit \$500 into an education IRA. Earnings would accumulate tax-free and no taxes will be due upon withdrawal for an approved purpose.

### ***Step 2: Changing the Ethic about Postsecondary Education: Think College Early***

While expanding financial aid is critical to opening the doors to college, making two years of college as universal as a high school diploma is today will also require changing the attitudes and expectations of students, parents and families, teachers, counselors, and other school personnel. Students may not take advantage of the increasing higher education opportunities unless the ethic regarding college attainment evolves. Students and parents need to embrace the importance of going

to college, to give priority to the preparation for college, and to learn what it takes to reach the goal of attending and graduating from college. They must be aware of the typical costs of college and their options for paying them. And they must take rigorous courses starting in middle and junior high school all the way through high school so they are prepared academically to enroll and succeed in college. Already programs such as Eugene Lang's "I-Have-A-Dream" are taking on the college ethic directly by providing students with mentors and other assistance as early as the fifth grade, as well as by sending the clear message that college is important. Governor Zell Miller's Hope Scholarship in Georgia and former-Governor Bayh's "Twenty-first Century Scholars Program" in Indiana are other examples of programs boosting college participation.

As part of its higher education efforts, the Department will launch an initiative, in the Winter of 1998, aimed at encouraging early preparation for college. The Department's first step in promoting this initiative is to get students and their parents to Think College Early. This involves making students, parents and middle schools aware of the importance of going to college and of the steps that every student should be taking to get prepared for college. Because the school has a critical role in shaping the attitudes and expectations of students and their parents, the Department has been working with a number of educational associations and organizations, including the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Level Reform, the College Board, the National Middle School Association, American School Counselor Association, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Our goal is to gain the support of school counselors, teachers, principals, and their associations to think college early and to collaborate on similar themes by the time the initiative is announced publicly next March.

### ***Existing Department Programs***

In addition, a number of the Department's existing programs can be used to increase students' readiness for and participation in college. For example, Title I of the ESEA, as reauthorized in 1994, places new responsibilities on school districts to provide Title I funding to high-poverty middle and high schools, allowing secondary schools to invest in activities that support college and career awareness and preparation. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is already expanding educational, career and economic opportunities for more than 500,000 young people in 1,800 high schools by providing school and work-based learning opportunities. Federal vocational education programs will be reshaped in the coming year to bolster these school-to-work activities. The Department's TRIO programs, funded at \$500 million in 1997, support postsecondary education outreach and student support services to encourage individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter and complete college. The Department's FY98 budget also requests \$6 million to supplement states' efforts to pay for the Advanced Placement fees for low-income students and \$5 million to expand tech-prep programs.

**Priority Four**  
**All States and Their Schools Will Have Challenging and Clear Standards of**  
**Achievement and Accountability for All Children**  
**and Effective Strategies for Reaching Those Standards**

**Importance of Priority Four**

In a recent article, Hugh B. Price, President of the National Urban League, captured the power of high standards when he wrote:

“Setting high standards pulls young people to full membership in the larger society by enabling them to create for themselves the proper aspirations, and to shape and channel those ambitions by working to develop the skills and the self-discipline to achieve them. High standards set by adults ratify what is the natural inclination of children -- to strive to do their best in doing what they think adults want them to do well....[O]ne of the most important lessons of meeting high standards is that it proves it’s possible to do.”

But currently, for too many children, this country has created a tyranny of low expectations and provided a watered-down curriculum that does not prepare them well for the global society and information age. The lack of challenging standards hits certain groups of children the hardest -- minority children, children living in poverty, and children with limited English proficiency or with disabilities --exacerbating great disparities in opportunities and achievement between them and their more affluent peers.

For the past four years, the Department of Education’s efforts have shared a common direction: supporting challenging state content and performance standards and system-wide reforms to lift the achievement of all students to those standards. Challenging standards are necessary for at least six reasons:

1. Content standards provide clear guideposts for what children should know and be able to do. Performance standards address “how good is good enough,” often by providing examples of student work which demonstrate key levels of quality in relation to a body of content standards.
2. Standards provide parents with answers to the frequently asked questions, “What should my child know?” and “Is my child learning?” They help parents hold schools accountable for results.
3. Standards lead students to take more challenging courses, which is a strong predictor of high achievement, and to assume more responsibility for their progress.

4. Standards serve as a guide to teachers, principles, schools and school districts around which all other aspects of the system --professional development, assessment, curriculum, accountability --can be aligned.
5. Standards support higher student achievement, destroying the myth that some groups of children cannot achieve to as high a level as others.
6. Standards support the efforts of teachers and principals to improve curriculum and instruction based on what children should be learning.

### ***Progress in Raising Standards Across America***

In the mid-1980's a number of states initiated education improvement efforts geared towards more challenging standards. In the 1990's, the Department's legislative initiatives, along with groups such as the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Science Foundation, and the Business Round Table, have reinforced those state efforts and stimulated new ones. In fact, a major focus of all of the Department's legislative initiatives during the past four years has been challenging standards for all children. An important purpose of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act is to support the creation of high standards. Communities in all 50 states are now using Goals 2000 resources to improve teaching and learning based on their own high standards in core academic subjects. Our approach to school-to-work links vocational training in the workplace to rigorous academic learning in the classroom. In addition, we have been working to eliminate the less-challenging instruction and dual curriculum that often plague Title I and other ESEA programs and insisting on high standards for all students. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in 1994, for example, revamped the Title I program to focus on rigorous standards, professional development and schoolwide reforms. The recently passed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is designed to better enable students with disabilities to participate in the same curriculum and achieve to the high standards expected of all students.

Because of these and other efforts, the nation has made important progress in raising standards since the 1989 Education Summit in Charlottesville. Forty-eight of the fifty states have content standards of some kind. And the importance of raising expectations for all children is widely accepted. Yet much work needs to be done to get higher standards into schools and classrooms.

### ***The Challenges Ahead***

The success of getting rigorous standards into all schools is still not a foregone conclusion and will depend on how well schools, communities and states address the following emerging challenges:

1. *Ensuring standards are challenging.* The standards many states are setting are below the national consensus on "what is good enough." A study done by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) compared the percentage of students on a nationwide basis who

reached the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test to the percentage who reached the proficient level on the assessments given by various states who make up the SREB. Many states reported that while 70 percent of their students scored at the “proficient” level on their own assessments, only 30 percent (or even fewer) of their students are actually proficient in these subjects, as measured by the NAEP. This suggests that the states’ performance standards are less challenging than nationally-set standards.

2. *Building public understanding for challenging standards and aligned tests.* One of the biggest barriers to raising standards is public reaction (i.e., of legislators, parents) when students who get As or Bs in school receive low test scores. It will be important to reach out to the public on these issues through publications, Public Service Announcements, and forums and disseminate examples of student work that reflect the more challenging level of performance expected of all children. As part of this effort, the Department is planning to work with the Educational Excellence Partnership to launch an ad campaign with a handbook for parents on how to help raise standards.
3. *Aligning assessment and professional development to challenging standards.* Many states still need to develop assessments aligned with their standards that can measure the success of students in meeting the standards. To improve teaching and learning, they must align their pre-service training for future teachers, professional development for existing staff, and curriculum for all students with the standards. Many states and communities will need support in ensuring that all aspects of their education system are effective in helping all children achieve to challenging standards.
4. *Getting rigorous standards into the classroom.* Once a state has developed standards, it must determine how to implement them so that they affect classroom practice and what and how teachers teach every day. Right now, this is not happening enough. For example, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found at the eighth grade that American teachers know about the more rigorous math standards but are not given the time, training or support to learn to teach to them. Only when standards are made real for parents, teachers and students will they influence teaching and learning.
5. *Promoting stronger school accountability for high student performance.* Stronger school accountability depends on the existence of clear and challenging standards that are understood by all members of a school system. But higher standards will not ensure stronger accountability unless parents, teachers, and school districts are willing to take steps to deal with ongoing low performance of schools or teachers.

#### **Strategy For Supporting Priority Four**

The Department will continue supporting states’, districts’ and schools’ efforts to address these challenges and strengthen their reforms geared to challenging standards. Its activities will include:

1. *Promoting concrete national standards of excellence in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math.* These standards are reading at the basic level on the National Assessment of Education Progress by the end of third grade or by the fourth grade and mastery of challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of eighth grade. The Department will fund the development of a rigorous voluntary national test of fourth grade reading and eighth grade math that will demonstrate the extent of student progress in reaching these standards.
2. *Helping states meet Title I's requirement that they have challenging content and performance standards in at least math and English/language arts by the fall of 1997 and high-quality aligned assessments by 2000-2001.* Title I requires that these standards and assessments be the same as those the state uses for all other children. The Department will encourage nonfederal agencies and organizations to review state standards to determine their rigor.
3. *Promoting its pending reauthorization proposals for Voc-ed, Adult-ed, and Voc-rehab.* Each of these proposals is designed to promote challenging standards and lifelong learning.
4. *Proposing funding increases in FY98 for Department programs supporting challenging standards.* The President is asking Congress for a \$129 million increase in Goals 2000 to enable an estimated 16,000 schools to participate. His FY98 budget also proposes increases for a number of other programs including the Title I program, Eisenhower Professional Development and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Programs.
5. *Emphasizing to the public the importance of fixing failing schools.* In his 1997 State of Education speech, Secretary Riley emphasized the need for society to stop "tolerat[ing] failing schools" and "fall[ing] in the trap of thinking that children who are stuck in failing schools are the problem." Riley called on the public to fix failing schools by reconstituting them or closing them down, finding new leaders, removing incompetent teachers if repeated efforts to improve them do not work or starting charter schools. By developing a comprehensive research strategy on failing schools, the Department can advance this goal.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Priority Five</b> <b>A Talented, Dedicated and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom</b></p>
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**Importance of Priority Five**

Without high-quality teachers in every classroom, the nation will not be able to meet any of the first four priorities. And yet, far too many teachers lack the training and time to acquire new skills to teach to challenging standards. A number of other alarming trends compound this problem. For example, roughly one-fourth of newly hired teachers lack the qualifications for their jobs, with 75 percent of urban districts hiring teachers without proper qualifications. Large numbers of teachers



are teaching out of their fields of certification. In addition, 30 percent of all new teachers leave the profession in the first three years. As standards are raised, so will the cognitive demands on teachers. Priority five is particularly important because the nation will have to hire 2 million teachers in the next decade to accommodate the second baby boom and a retiring teacher force.<sup>17</sup>

### **Strategy for Supporting Priority Five**

#### ***Step 1: Identifying Critical Areas Affecting Teacher Quality***

The Department has identified six areas that affect the quality of teachers across the nation. These are:

1. *Teacher Recruitment* -- recruiting talented teachers of all ages, particularly people of diverse backgrounds.
2. *Preservice Training for Future Teachers* -- improving preservice preparation so that future teachers can teach to world-class standards and meet high certification and licensing standards.
3. *Licensing* -- supporting more rigorous teacher licensing and certification requirements.
4. *Retaining Beginning Teachers* -- increasing special efforts to retain beginning teachers in their first few years of teaching, because we now lose 30% due to a lack of support.
5. *In-service Professional Development for Existing Staff* -- strengthening the in-service professional development of teachers by states, schools, colleges, partnerships and teacher networks.
6. *Teacher Incentives and Accountability* -- recognizing and rewarding good teachers and improving or removing incompetent ones.

#### ***Step 2: Identifying How the Department Can Support Priority Five***

In addition to using its bully-pulpit to promote excellence and accountability in teaching, the Department is supporting the following kinds of activities to help leverage improvements in teacher quality nationwide:

1. *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.* The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has developed national standards of excellence for master teachers who demonstrate exceptional performance. President Clinton's FY98 budget contains a proposal to support the efforts of 100,000 more teachers over the next decade to seek board certification as master teachers --so that, on average, every public school would have at least one such teacher on its staff.

2. *Report Card.* Starting in 1998, the Department will issue a biennial report card on progress made by the nation in improving teacher quality.
3. *Title V Task Force.* In its proposal to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the Department will focus Title V of that legislation on recruitment, pre-service and support for beginning teachers. It is also exploring incentives to encourage people, particularly minorities, to become teachers and work in underserved areas.
4. *Existing Department Programs.* The Department will continue to improve existing professional development programs, such as the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program, and align them to student content and teaching standards. It will encourage states and communities to redirect more resources from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Bilingual Education, to support high-quality professional development. Moreover, it is examining ways to strengthen or redirect other programs and grants to address its top concern within priority five --recruitment, preparation, and support for beginning teachers.
5. *Research, Dissemination, Bully-Pulpit:* The Department will continue supporting research, development, assistance and dissemination to promote effective practices. This includes: its National Awards Program for Model Professional Development that recognizes and widely disseminates the work of the award-winning schools and districts; a new research and development center which will focus on policies to improve teaching; and a newly-funded consortium of organizations to provide the field direct assistance in devising strategies for preparing, inducting and providing career-long professional development for K-12 teachers.

**Priority Six**  
**Every Classroom will be Connected to the Internet by the Year 2000, and All Students**  
**will be Technologically Literate**

**Importance of Priority Six**

As the nation moves toward the next century, a student's ability to learn to higher standards will be inseparable from his or her ability to access and understand technology. The livelihood of all Americans will depend on their ability to harness and use knowledge to adapt to the available jobs, which, in turn, will depend in large part on one's technological literacy. As early as the year 2000, approximately six out of every ten jobs in America will require computer skills currently possessed by only 22 percent of the labor force.<sup>18</sup> And yet today, although 65 percent of schools are wired to the Internet, only fourteen percent of classrooms are connected and only one of every five teachers now use it.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the availability of quality software to help teach to rigorous standards is limited.

Technology has evolved to the point where enormous amounts of information can be archived, sorted, searched, and transmitted in a second or less. The potential effects on education are inestimable. Districts will have access to a variety of content providers around the world. Many teachers may evolve from subject matter experts to facilitators of learning. And students will be able to carry an entire library worth of knowledge in their backpack, free to explore the vast store of human experience and information, in their own way and in their own time.

If the Department succeeds in meeting its technology goals, all students for the first time --in the poorest schools, in the most isolated rural schools and in the wealthiest schools --will have access to the same universe of knowledge, in the same way, at the same time. This not only will give the promise of transforming education, but could have important implications for the nation. Just as technology can be a great democratizing force, it can also exacerbate inequities in our society. If it is distributed unequally based on income or geography, if only some teachers gain the expertise they need to help their students use technology effectively, if some homes have access to computers but others do not, then the gap in educational opportunities and educational outcomes only will widen. The Administration's current technology efforts are designed both to fulfill the promise of technology and to avoid its negative consequences in the future.

### **Strategy for Supporting Priority Six**

The strategy for supporting priority six focused first on identifying four pillars to guide the goal of technological literacy and then pursuing initiatives to support them.

#### ***Step 1: Four Major Pillars to Guide the Technology Literacy Agenda***

At the beginning of 1995, President Clinton identified four major pillars to guide the nation's technology literacy agenda:

1. Connect every school and classroom in America to the information highway;
2. Provide access to modern computers for all teachers and students;
3. Develop effective and engaging software and on-line learning resources as an integral part of school curriculum; and
4. Provide all teachers the training and support they need to help students learn through computers and the information superhighway.

Secretary Riley's 1995 national plan, *Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century, Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge*, elaborates on these pillars and how the Administration will work with states to advance each one.

## ***Step 2: Identifying Department Initiatives***

States and the private sector provide the vast majority of resources currently being invested in technology. This has led the Department to focus its resources on two areas in which it believes it can leverage the greatest changes: infrastructure and equity. The Department has concentrated on bringing technology to the hardest-to-reach and neediest populations, both in the inner city and rural areas through four major strategies:

1. *NetDays.* Last year more than 40 states held NetDays, bringing together Americans to connect local schools to the Information Superhighway. In the fall of 1996 alone, more than 250,000 volunteers participated in wiring over 25,000 schools. Another NetDay was held in April 1997 to continue connecting schools and classrooms to the Internet, and the next one will take place on October 25, 1997.
2. *The E-Rate.* On May 7, 1997, President Clinton's and Secretary Riley's two-year-long effort to ensure that every school and library has access to the Information Superhighway paid off. Under the "E-rate" plan, the Federal Communications Commissions agreed to grant sharp discounts totaling \$2.25 billion annually in telecommunications services to the nation's neediest schools and libraries for discounts on technology installations, connection charges and monthly service costs. The Federal Communications Commission ruling will provide at least a 50 percent discount to nearly 70 percent of all schools, with discounts of up to 90 percent for schools with the largest concentrations of poor children. This new "E-Rate" opens up incredible opportunities for all schools to access technology.
3. *The Technology Literacy Challenge Fund.* This Fund is designed to advance state, local, and private sector partnerships in each state to achieve the four technology pillars and spur additional investment in educational technology. Congress appropriated \$200 million for the Fund last year, and the President has requested \$425 million for FY98. The President also has asked Congress to fund this program at \$2 billion over five years.
4. *Technology Innovation Challenge Grants.* These discretionary grants, appropriated for \$57 million in FY97, are available to partnerships of school systems, colleges, universities, and private businesses to develop creative ways to use technology for learning. This program focuses on integrating innovative learning technologies to improve teaching and learning, with each Federal dollar matched more than 3 to 1 by local and private funds.

## ***Existing Department Programs***

Resources from a number of Department of Education programs can be used to help all students achieve technological literacy. For example, through the Star Schools Program, multistate providers of telecommunications services provide instruction in academic subjects, various types of supplemental programming and professional development for teachers. Title I of the ESEA already provides \$500 million each year for technology. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

emphasizes assistive technology, and priority six will address how schools can use new technology to better meet the needs of students with disabilities. Other Department programs whose funds can help the next generation of teachers use technology in powerful ways in their classrooms include Goals 2000, Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Tech Prep, and School-to-Work programs.

**Priority Seven**  
**Every School Will Be Strong, Safe, Drug-Free and Disciplined**

**Importance of Priority Seven**

Children cannot learn to high standards in schools that are overwhelmed by violence, drug use or facilities in disrepair. Priority seven aims to ensure strong and healthy school environments where children can learn best and achieve to their potential. School environment encompasses the culture of the school, the physical surroundings of the school, and the school's health and safety. Essential pillars of strong and healthy learning environments are: (1) schools that are structurally sound and conducive to learning; (2) schools that are safe, orderly, and free from drugs; and, (3) public school choice which allows parents to choose the best school for their children based on their individual differences. Respecting individual student differences and recognizing their varying strengths, interests and learning styles, in fact, is a central element of a positive environment. Priority seven incorporates three major areas --school construction, safe and drug-free schools, and charter schools.

***Importance of School Construction***

As America moves into the 21st century, our schools should too. If schools are ill-prepared for the future, our students will be too. Today, however, too many of our nation's schools, many built 50 or more years ago, are increasingly run-down, overcrowded and technologically ill-equipped. According to a report of the General Accounting Office (GAO), one-third of our schools need major repair or outright replacement; 60 percent need work on major building features such as a sagging roof, or a cracked foundation; and 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems and modern communications technology. These problems occur all over America, in cities, suburbs and one-stoplight towns, and GAO estimates they will cost \$112 billion to fix.<sup>20</sup> Record increases in student enrollments over the next ten years will only exacerbate these problems by necessitating 6,000 new schools.<sup>21</sup>

A growing body of research shows the connection between student achievement and behavior and physical building conditions and overcrowding. For example, a study of the District of Columbia school system found that, after controlling for other variables such as socioeconomic status, students' standardized achievement scores were lower in schools with poor building conditions than they were in strong and safe schools.<sup>22</sup> Studies of high schools in Virginia and North Dakota show similar

relationships.<sup>23</sup> Physical conditions also appear to affect teacher morale and feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Strategy for Supporting School Construction***

For these reasons, in March 1994, the Administration introduced new school construction legislation that would have been a one-time infusion of \$5 billion to stimulate over \$20 billion in school construction and renovation over the next four years. These funds would have paid for up to one-half the interest costs on school construction bonds or similar financing mechanisms. Although the recent budget agreement failed to include funds for this proposal, the Administration is exploring alternative ways to spur school repairs and construction in sites across the nation. This includes a new schools' facilities clearinghouse, to be awarded in August 1997, which will compile information on best practices on school design and school facility finances, convene conferences on school construction and provide referral service.

### ***Importance of Safe and Drug-Free Schools***

Modern and well-equipped facilities, however, are not sufficient to create strong and supportive learning environments. Schools must be safe and drug-free. While most schools are, a number in all parts of the country are experiencing problems with violence, alcohol and drug use. We know, for example, that for the fifth straight year, eighth-grade drug use has increased, with children first using marijuana at younger ages.<sup>25</sup> Nearly three million thefts and violent crimes take place on or near school campuses each year. And from 1994 to 1996, 85 homicides and 20 other violent deaths occurred at school.<sup>26</sup> According to the National Crime Prevention Council, this climate of violence profoundly affects student learning.

### ***Strategy for Supporting Safe and Drug-Free Schools***

Reflecting the importance of priority seven, the President has requested a \$59 million increase in the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program in FY98 (FY1997 funding was nearly \$531 million). The President, however, has emphasized that programs should reflect effective practices and be regularly evaluated and improved if they are not working. This will require expanding the research base on the most effective strategies to reduce drug use and violence among school-age children and the best ways to implement those strategies. To provide students additional safe havens after school where learning can continue to occur, the President has also requested \$50 million to help communities keep their schools open longer as After-School Learning Centers.

### ***Importance of Choice and Charter Schools***

A long-time supporter of public school choice, the President believes that parents should not have to send their children to schools that do not provide high-quality education. Therefore, parents and teachers who do not believe their public schools are meeting high standards --or their own expectations for how children ought to be taught --should have the right to send their child to another public school and even apply for a charter and public funds to create a new school.

Charter schools have been identified by the President as an important tool for improving the learning environment. Charter schools, typically founded by parents, teachers and communities, are exempted from most rules and regulations in exchange for greater accountability for improving student achievement. Five years ago, only one charter school existed in America. Today, there are more than 400, with half of the states having charter school laws. Charter schools can provide more choices for families and more opportunities for innovation and public-spirited entrepreneurialism in education. While charter schools may either be new or converted from an existing public school, most tend to be small, led by strong leaders and responsive to the needs and involvement of students and families.

### ***Strategy for Supporting Charter Schools***

The Clinton Administration is committed to increasing the number of charter schools from 400 to 3,000 by the year 2000 by: (1) expanding start-up funds; (2) promoting excellence; and (3) ensuring equity.

1. *Expanding Start-up Funds.* The 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act contained a new program to fund the creation of charter schools. The President's 1998 budget seeks \$100 million in funding for the Charter Schools program to support planning and start-up costs for up to 1,100 schools. The Administration is also working to expand the number of states with laws supporting the formation of charter schools.
2. *Promoting excellence.* Increasing the number of charter schools cannot be the only goal. New charter schools must promote high-quality teaching and learning. The Department will support regional meetings, guidebooks, summer institutes, and a World Wide Web Site to help local teams of parents, teachers, and others develop successful charter schools.
3. *Ensuring equity.* The Administration requires charter schools that receive federal funding to demonstrate adherence to key principles of equity. The schools must: be public and non sectarian; be free of charge; be open to all students; admit students on a lottery basis; comply with civil rights laws; and meet all applicable Federal, state and local health and safety requirements.

The Department will ensure that federal programs such as Title I of the ESEA and programs funded by the IDEA support charter schools nationwide. The Department also is committed to providing parents and teachers expanded options for tailoring educational opportunities for children, including public school choice, magnet schools, schools-within-schools, and redesigning and improving individual public schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although they are more focused, the seven priorities reflect the core elements of the eight National Goals and President Clinton's "Call-to-Action." They also build on the work of the U.S. Department of Education over the past four years, as well as important new initiatives. The success of each of the seven priorities depends on the success of the others. For example, reading by fourth grade is critical to learning other subjects after that point. If students learn math early, they will be ready to take the sequence of courses in high school that prepare them for college and careers. Learning math to a high level will be facilitated by computers and nearly impossible without high quality, well-trained and motivated teachers. Only schools with high standards will accept the challenge of helping all their students meet their expectations and prepare for college.

Large parts of the public already accept these priorities as essential goals for our nation's students and schools. The challenge facing the U.S. Department of Education is to embed these goals deep into its own organizational activities and programs, and support the nation in making real progress toward reaching these goals. Every program office can contribute to almost every one of the seven priorities, both individually and in effective partnerships with other parts of the Department. The Department also will need to support the efforts of its external partners to participate actively in their schools and to achieve concrete results for all children.



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