

# THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S EDUCATION AGENDA

By Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education  
PART I

I'm pleased that you have taken the time from your busy schedule to come to Washington for the Congressional Black Caucus Weekend. I want to spend just a few minutes telling you about the President's education agenda. It is a reform agenda and in many ways we are trying to reinvent how Americans think about education.

This isn't always easy. When it comes to education too many people are looking for the silver bullet of the moment to solve all of our education problems. Others, are always looking for scapegoats. They are quick to point a finger, to lay the blame. But when it comes time for some heavy-lifting, for getting a teenager out of bed and to school on time — well that's when they start talking about vouchers.

But I found out, as Governor of South Carolina, that if you are inclusive, if you ask more of everyone, and if you make people part of the solution, great things can happen. Some of you at this conference may be from South Carolina. You know what I am talking about.

Before we started talking about school reform in South Carolina, people used to be happy if we moved from 50th to 49th in the education standings. That was how they defined progress, in very small increments. Some people were getting

ahead, to be sure. But on a whole, most people didn't think big, they couldn't imagine a different way of thinking about who made it and who didn't.

I used to visit schools, this was back in the 1970's, and when I visited schools I never saw African American students taking Advanced Placement courses. I came to the conclusion, that people just didn't expect these children to make it. Even their parents didn't think they could make it.

It seemed to me that the problem was one of expectations. So, when we reformed our school systems we raised standards and gave schools the help they needed to make sure every child got a chance to get into the Advanced Placement courses. The result was tremendous. Now, thousands of African American students are enrolled in Advance Placement courses. They expect to do well and they generally do.

My point in all is very simple... when we talk about re-inventing government we are not just talking about fewer forms and less red tape. We are talking about expectations, better opportunities and raising standards; about giving young people come sense of their own possibilities; about challenging the status quo.

I believe that the very nature of how we educate our children has to change if we want to give them the "leg-up" in life they

need to make it in this challenging economic environment. Let me tell you why.

In the last week, we have released two important landmark reports here in Washington. Both are about the state of American education. The National Adult Literacy Report and the National Reading Report Card. Both of these reports paint a picture of a society still struggling to play catch-up.

The Adult Literacy Report tells us that 40 million American adults are really hard-pressed to function in our society. Now some of these people never were allowed to get a decent education, many are old, disabled and a great many are new immigrants. But too many Americans simply aren't learning enough to compete in our information based economy.

We found out in this report that close to 20% of adults with high school diploma's in this country performed at the lowest level in literacy. Another 50 million adults don't even know that they don't have the skills they need to earn a living in our increasingly technological society and international marketplace.

The other report is the National Reading Report Card, which involved testing 140,000 students. This report tells us that the majority of our children are able to read at a basic level, but two-thirds really can't read as well as they should, to function in the new economy. And, it is disturbing to realize that 25% of all seniors are reading below the basic level when they are about to graduate from high school.

Now, I sometimes feel like the proverbial undertaker trotting out all these dismal reports. I don't want to get you discouraged. In a sense, we have raised the bar and asked a great many students to jump over it without giving them any practice. These are tough, new tests that tell us how far we have to go to reach our national educational goals.

And, there is encouraging news in reading these reports. For example, the National Reading Report tells us, rather conclusively, that children learn to read if we place a strong emphasis on literature based reading, integrated reading and writing, and whole language instruction. If you offer children the excitement of real literature and have less TV, our children read at a higher level. It's that simple.

This is why I talk myself blue in the face when I talk about opportunities to learn combined with high standards, and why the President wants to pass our GOALS 2000 legislation which would set voluntary national standards.

The Reading Report Card, for example, gives us a clear formula for success and it does

not matter whether a child is in a public or a private school. Schools with high standards and involved parents make for good readers. If we want our children to excel, this is the winning formula.

Some folks say that setting high standards is unfair. I don't — if the students, teachers and parents work together to reach the higher standard. Children who get smart, get smart because they study and take tough courses to meet high standards.

If you go beyond the ditto sheets to helping children read novels, create stories, tackle real-life math problems and get into the excitement of science, they will learn more and score higher on tougher tests.

It doesn't really matter whether they come from high-

income or low-income backgrounds. Setting standards, then means encouraging children to take the tougher course, the tougher teacher. It means we have to be careful not to "water down" the education of our children... and we have to be careful not to let the school system do it either.

Here, I want to stress a significant point — we are beginning to see a new fault line emerging in our society. The emergence of a two-class society — between those who know and know that they need to know more... and those who don't know that their lack of knowledge is hurting their chances of getting ahead and possibly ruining the lives of their children.

This new society won't be based

(See Clinton, Page 21)

## FUNDING NOW AVAILABLE FOR MINORITY STUDY IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Colorado State University seeks minority applicants for its master of science in Technical Communication program for the Fall 1994 semester. A variety of specially-funded assistantships and co-operative education opportunities, paying full tuition and stipends, are available for qualified minority applicants.

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For more information about the graduate program in Technical Communication at Colorado State University, write the Graduate Coordinator, Dept. of Technical Journalism — RMI, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, or call Michael Slater, (303) 491-5485.

Applicants normally are not considered after April 1; earlier submissions are urged to increase the probability of financial support.

### GROUNDBREAKING PLANNED FOR BRUNER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held for Lucile S. Elementary School of Friday, December 10, at 1:30 p.m. The school of scheduled to open in August 1994.

Bruner is one of three new schools that will open next year. These schools are being built with the remainder of the money from the \$600 million bond issue approved by voters in 1988.

The groundbreaking ceremony will be held at H.P. Fitzgerald prime 6 School at 2651 N. Revere Street. Bruner Elementary will be located in North Las Vegas near Allen and San Miguel streets.

The groundbreaking ceremony is open to the public.



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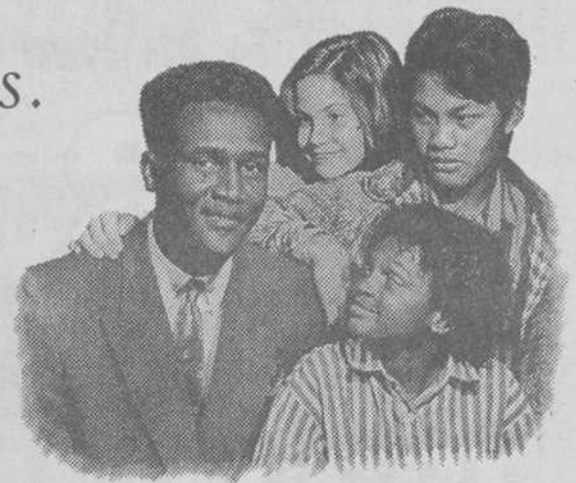
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