

University; and James J. Blanchard, Ambassador to Canada and former Governor of Michigan.

Statement by the President on the Death of President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana

March 6, 1997

It was with deep regret that I learned of the death early today of President Cheddi Jagan of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. President Jagan was a respected statesman in our hemisphere of democracies. He was one of the founders of the People's Progressive Party and for over 45 years played an active role in his country's political life. I remember warmly our meeting at the Miami Summit of the Americas in December 1994. President Jagan was a champion of the poor who devoted himself to alleviating poverty in his country and throughout the Caribbean.

On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to the Jagan family and the people of Guyana.

Memorandum on Educational Excellence in Math and Science

March 6, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of Education, the Director of the National Science Foundation

Subject: Preparing Students to Meet National Standards of Excellence in Eighth Grade Math and Improving Math and Science Education

Since the early 1980s, U.S. elementary and secondary school students have begun taking tougher courses, and we are starting to see the results. National Assessment of Educational Progress scores have improved in math and science, with gains in mathematics equal to at least one grade level. On the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), average math scores are at their highest in 25 years, even as the number and diversity of test-takers have increased. However, the eighth-grade results of the 41-Nation Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), released last fall, show that the United States

is below average in math and just above average in science. That isn't acceptable; in this technology-rich information era, our students need to perform much better in both subjects, but especially in math, if they are to excel at higher-level math and science courses that are critical to college admission and success and to citizenship, productive employment, and lifelong learning.

The first step in raising achievement is lifting expectations and setting high standards for what students should know and be able to do. Our National Assessment of Educational Progress, TIMSS, and the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics give us a solid framework to build on. Last month, to help parents and teachers learn who needs help, what changes in teaching to make, and which schools need to improve, I asked the Secretary of Education to develop a voluntary national test for individual eighth-grade students based on widely accepted, challenging national standards in mathematics. The national test will be available to States and local school districts to give to their students in the spring of 1999, and will measure whether students have reached a high level of mathematics proficiency.

The primary responsibility for achieving high standards rests with students, teachers, parents, and schools in local communities across America. However, it is imperative that we work to ensure that Federal resources support student success as well. We must ensure that Federal programs, research, and human resources are used as effectively as possible to help improve teaching and learning.

Therefore, I direct the Secretary of Education and the Director of the National Science Foundation to form an interagency working group and to develop an action strategy for using Federal resources to assist States and local school systems to prepare students to meet challenging math standards in eighth grade, and for involving the mathematics, scientific, and technical communities in support of these efforts.

The action strategy should include recommendations for the use of Federal resources to help States, local school districts, and schools to improve teaching, upgrade