

First Lady's Contributions to Education

Q. Secretary Paige, as well as your wife, has been traveling around talking about education. I'm wondering if you could mention what you think her greatest contribution has been to your education policy?

The President. You know, Laura's a former teacher—I guess you're never a former teacher; you're always a teacher. [Laughter] She's not in the classroom—and she understands the importance of teaching, teacher training, teacher recruitment. And one of the most significant contributions she has made and will continue to make is to remind young Americans—and old Americans, for that matter—that their talents and passion are needed in our classrooms. You know, she pushed the Troops for Teacher Initiative, and she's got a way about her that's pretty convincing. And I know she's going to convince a lot of Americans about the importance of being a teacher.

Some school districts are short of teachers, and you've got to remind people—you know, one of my hopes is that as a result of the Nation taking an assessment of that which is important, that the idea of serving your community by being a teacher becomes more paramount in students' minds, and Laura certainly is going to herald that.

The other thing, of course, is reading. There's nothing more fundamental to a good education system than making sure every child learns to read and that our schools use a curriculum that works. She's pretty good about that too. She's a great leader and a great advocate for literacy.

Listen, thank you all. You're watching democracy—one of the core values of democracy is a free press. [Laughter]

Q. Yes, and don't forget it.

Q. How free are we?

The President. You're very free—for how much we have to pay on a daily basis to buy your newspapers. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:23 a.m. during a tour of Vandenberg Elementary School. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; King Abdullah II of Jordan; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Mohamed VI of Morocco; and Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize recipient who was released from house arrest on May

6. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at Vandenberg Elementary School in Southfield

May 6, 2002

Thank you all very much for that warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here. Secretary Paige said that he's moving around the country to 25 different cities and school districts to make sure that the No Child Left Behind Initiative is put in place and implemented, and I just wanted to check up on him a little bit. [Laughter] And I'm glad I'm doing so here in Michigan.

I picked Rod to be the Secretary of Education. One, I was comfortable with him as a person. We're both Texans. I saw him in action in Texas. I know how deeply he cares for the children all across our country. But I also wanted somebody that actually knew how to get things done. In Washington, we find all kinds of great theorists, people who talk about theory and philosophy. I was interested in somebody who actually had run a school district, who knows what it means to meet a budget, who knows how to deal with teachers, who insists upon high standards for every child. And Rod did that, and he's a great Secretary of Education. I'm so glad that he's here.

I want to thank Sharalene as well. You know, one of the things you find out when you pay close attention to public education and you try to figure out what works, the good schools are those who have got good principals. Good schools are—[applause]. So I want to thank Sharalene for her hospitality. I know it's not easy to welcome the President. [Laughter] He's got kind of a small entourage—[laughter]—of 25 vehicles. [Laughter] But you all and your staff have done a great job. And I want to thank all who are responsible for helping put this event on for your hospitality.

I want to thank your teachers as well. I'm real proud to be in the midst of teachers who are doing a great job.

I made a wise choice when I asked a public school teacher to marry me. [Laughter] A lot of people are wondering how wise a choice

she made when she said yes. [*Laughter*] But I'm sorry she's not here with me today. She cares deeply about the teaching profession, and one of her responsibilities that she's assumed is to help recruit young and old alike to become teachers in classrooms.

I want to thank Cecil Rice, who's the superintendent of Southfield Public Schools. You and big Rod speak the same language. Good to have you here. I want to thank Congressman Joe Knollenberg; this is his district. Thank you for being here, Congressman; appreciate your time. I want to thank my friend, the Governor of Michigan, John Engler, for being here as well. Thank you, Governor. We've got Tom Watkins, who's the superintendent of Public Instruction for Michigan. Tom, thanks for coming. We've got the mayor. Thank you, Madam Mayor, for being here; appreciate you coming.

We've got a young lady named Asya Obad here. Now, I want to tell you about Asya. Please stand up for a minute, Asya. [*Applause*] One of the things I try to do as I travel around the country is to remind people that if you live in America, you have a responsibility to your country and the community in which you live; that out of this evil that had been done to us, I believe can come some incredible good. And part of that good is neighbor caring for neighbor and people listening to the universal admonition to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And this young lady, who is a University of Michigan student, has done just that. She's a—one-time AmeriCorps volunteer?—two-time AmeriCorps volunteer. She works with a program called ACCESS, Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, to help new students, new immigrant students to learn to read and write. In other words, she's a child who is getting her own education and, at the same time, working hard to make sure our community is strong. You see, America changes one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. And while one person can't do everything, one person can make a significant difference in people's lives.

I want to thank you for being here, and I want to thank you for the example you've set for people your age and for older people too.

I want to thank the parents who are involved in their children's education. I got to tell you, I was impressed. It just reminded me how great America is when I came—went through the classrooms here. A young girl, just came from Iraq, reads—talks about core democratic values and why they're important. I mean, this is a great country, and it's a great—public schools are so important that we get it right. In order for the future of this country to be bright and hopeful, we've got to make sure every child gets educated, no matter where they're from or their background.

You know, this little girl came, and she spoke—knew the alphabet, but that was it. And she was able, in front of the President of the United States and a press corps, to read about values that matter. But it's the same values that mattered to my little girls. I mean, it's the greatness of our country to share values and to be diverse and to welcome people from all backgrounds into America.

And one of the unifying things about our country is the education system. It's an education system that can be incredibly hopeful. And it's one where, as a result of schools making right decisions, people from all backgrounds do get educated.

The reason I'm here is because this is a successful school. It's a successful school because teachers care and work hard. It's a successful school because there is a mindset that says, every child can learn. It is a school that obviously welcomes people from all backgrounds, but it is also a school that doesn't kind of say, "Well, certain kids are going to be too hard to educate. Let's just kind of move them somewhere else, kind of put them on the sidecar to nowhere," which happens. This is a school that welcomes the young child from Iraq, puts her in a classroom, provides a little special nudge when it comes to an interpreter, but gets her moving.

This is a school that is not afraid to measure, a school that says, "We want to know." You see, there are a lot of people in America who reject the notion of accountability in public education. I'm not one. See, I want to know. I want to know whether a child is

learning to read and write or add and subtract, and I want to know early. It seems like, to me, that if we are concerned about every child and we have high standards that believes every child can learn, that in order to verify that, we ought to measure and not be afraid of accountability. This school is not afraid of accountability and, as a result, is excelling.

There are people who are afraid of accountability systems, and therefore, I become suspicious. Because if you don't want to measure, it kind of makes me worry that maybe you're a little—you're not confident about either your teacher quality or your curriculum. If you're afraid to be held accountable, something must be going wrong. That's how I view it.

What I don't like is a system that quits on kids, and neither should you. This school doesn't quit on kids, and that's why it's heralded for its excellence. You see, there can be a mindset in American schools that say, "Well, there are certain kids that can't learn, and therefore, let's just move them through." The easiest thing to do is to shuffle them through, and one way to make sure that happens is to have no accountability. One way to make sure that it's—you take the easy path, which is give it your best shot and hope you get it right, is not to measure.

And that's happened for too long in America. I'm going to be honest about it. When you've got so many fourth-graders who can't read at grade level, something has gone wrong. And by the way, if they can't read at grade level at fourth grade, you're not going to be reading at grade level at eighth grade, and you're not going to be reading grade level at high school. And all of a sudden, the great American hopes and dreams may not be extended in every neighborhood.

And so one of the reasons I'm so insistent upon accountability—and Sharalene is as well, and Rod is—is because we need to know whether or not children are able to read early and, if they're not, use the accountability system as a way to correct problems. Sharalene was telling me that when this school begins to get a sense that a child is beginning to fall behind, the accountability system steps up; it doesn't decrease. There is a constant attention being paid to a child

and whether or not that child is getting the right instruction.

And I think that's not only healthy; I think it's great for the children. If the goal for America is no child left behind, let's make sure we view each child as an individual; test him or her as to whether or not she can read, write, add, or subtract; and correct his or her problems early, before it's too late. And you mark my word, what's going to happen: High standards, accountability, and local control of schools will mean that the public school system is going to be the greatest it can possibly be.

We have responsibilities throughout our society. We have responsibilities. The Federal Government has responsibilities. Generally, that responsibility is to write a healthy check, and we did so in the 2002 budget: \$22 billion for secondary and elementary schools. It's an increase of 25 percent. We've increased money by 35 percent for teacher recruitment, teacher retention, teacher pay.

But in—my attitude is, if you spend something, you ought to get results for it. We ought to know. And that's why we insist—and this is what Rod is doing by traveling around the country saying, "In return for Federal help, you've got to measure." The State of Michigan, the State of Texas, the State of anywhere else has got to develop an accountability system that measures grades 3 through 8, to show not only the taxpayers but mothers and dads whether or not expectations are being met.

Local districts have a responsibility. Local districts have a responsibility to support the teachers. They have a responsibility to develop the accountability systems. They have a responsibility to reject curriculum that do not work. They have a responsibility to challenge the status quo. They have a responsibility to provide an education system that is not only good for teachers and principals but an education system in which parents are involved.

Parents have a responsibility in the public education system of America. You have a responsibility to make sure your child comes to school with the understanding that they're going to be polite when they get in the classroom, with the understanding that they'll

treat their teacher with respect, with the understanding there are certain manners that are important. If you expect your child to be well-educated, you have the responsibility of making sure your child gets educated starting at home, with some basic fundamentals.

One of the things I like to try to remind parents, that it'd be helpful if you insisted that your child read more than they watch TV. As a veteran of teenage years, that's easier said than done; I understand that. [*Laughter*]

But it's—all of us must assume responsibilities if we expect the best for every single child. The Federal Government has got responsibilities; the State Government has got responsibilities; the local districts have responsibilities; mothers and dads have responsibilities; the business community has responsibilities.

The Michigan business community has got responsibilities to be involved with the public education system in Michigan. I mean, after all, we're educating potential heads of businesses and employees. And business Michigan must support education, must support the accountability systems, must support the infrastructure necessary to make sure that the school systems in Michigan work.

Tomorrow I'm meeting with executives from around the country. I'm going to remind them that they have a responsibility, as good corporate citizens, not only to make sure that we understand all their assets and liabilities on their balance sheets; that when it comes time to treating their shareholders and employees with integrity, they must do so; that we expect there to be honesty in reporting; but business communities have the responsibility as well to support public education in America.

So I believe firmly we're on the right track. First of all, we herald the importance of public education in America. Being on the right track means you understand the importance of public schools in our country. Anybody who doubts the importance of public education need to come to this school and go see the classrooms that I saw, its diversity. I believe one of the strengths of America is our diversity. I know one of the strengths is the common values that we all share. And

I saw that living example in the classrooms I visited.

Secondly, we have the right mindset in America, and that says, every child can learn. You've got to start thinking that. If you don't believe every child can learn, then the ones you don't believe will learn, won't learn. Every child can learn. Notice I didn't say every group can learn. I said, every single child can learn. It's a belief that we've got to focus our attentions on each child.

It says that we trust the local people. Listen, we don't want Washington, DC, managing public education. Trust me, one size isn't going to fit all. It's just not. I know that some will say that's a trite slogan. It's true. It's true. You've got different issues here in Michigan than we have in Texas, and there's different issues here than they have in California. And that's why we want to have flexibility at the local level. We've got to trust teachers and principals to design what works. There needs to be flexibility.

But we must be wise enough to measure. See, we must incorporate accountability and then be quick enough to change when we find failure. And mark my words, what's going to happen: We're going to start seeing great progress.

This school is living example of great progress: Kind of at the bottom of the measurement standards, if I'm not mistaken, 5 years ago, and now you're soaring off the chart. It shows what's possible. We want every school soaring off the chart. We don't want schools languishing in mediocrity and excuse-making. We want the best for every child. That's what America's future is all about. It's about making sure that every single child gets educated.

I love to ask the question when I go into a classroom, "Are you going to college?" It makes me feel so great to see every hand pop up—every hand. And that starts with making sure that every child gets a good education. And you're doing so at this school, and I'm proud you've invited me to come. And on behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for doing your job and doing it with excellence.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. in the school's multipurpose room. In his remarks, he referred to Sharalene Charns, principal, Vandenberg Elementary School; and Mayor Brenda L. Lawrence of Southfield.

Statement on Burma's Release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

May 6, 2002

The United States welcomes the release from house arrest of Burma's Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party won an overwhelming victory in elections in 1990 but was never allowed to assume power. We hope her release will be "a new dawn" for Burma, as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her supporters earlier today, and lead to national reconciliation and a restoration of democracy. All parties should seize this opportunity to press ahead with the urgent work of restoring the rule of law and basic political and civil rights for all Burmese. Only a return to democracy and reintegration with the international community can bring the freedom and prosperity which the people of Burma both long for and deserve.

The United States will closely monitor the situation within Burma as this process unfolds. We will also consult with ASEAN, Japan, the European Union, and other partners on how the international community can most effectively encourage further progress toward restoration of democracy. I compliment U.N. Special Envoy Razali Ismail for his tireless efforts to promote reconciliation within Burma and for helping to facilitate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release.

Proclamation 7556—National Tourism Week, 2002

May 6, 2002

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For hundreds of years, people across our Nation and around the world have enjoyed traveling across America to visit our magnificent cities, parks, museums, and countless other natural, historic, and cultural sites. Our

land provides endless opportunities to learn as well as to enjoy our Nation's immense variety of attractions.

The travel and tourism industry represents a vital part of the American economy. The Department of Commerce estimates that in 2001 the travel and tourism industry generated more than \$90 billion in export revenue and provided a \$7.7 billion balance of trade surplus. Preliminary numbers show that last year, the industry created approximately \$545 billion in total travel expenditures and provided \$94 billion in tax revenue to local, State, and Federal governments. As one of our Nation's largest employers, travel and tourism supports more than 7 million jobs.

During National Tourism Week 2002, we recognize the significance of this important industry to our economy and for the lives of all Americans. In the aftermath of the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, the travel and tourism industry contributed to our country's efforts to persevere through this challenging time. As we have encouraged people to resume the regular course of their lives, Americans and visitors from around the world have responded by traveling to and enjoying the beauty of our Nation.

During this observance, I urge all Americans and people around the globe to travel to and within our country to experience the hospitality and quality of our Nation's great destinations.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 5–11, 2002, as National Tourism Week. In recognition of the significance of the travel and tourism industry in the lives of citizens of our Nation and to visitors from abroad, I call upon all Americans to mark this observance with activities that highlight this important industry.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-sixth.

George W. Bush