

**The President.** Yes, benchmark means—explain to—benchmark means they met expectations.

**Ms. Henderson.** They met every expectation for the entire year.

**The President.** And so what she's saying is she just kind of sent these little fellows and little ladies off to a glorious future because they've got the foundations for reading.

**Ms. Henderson.** And you know, because I work at a school that, where most of the children that are enrolled there are either on poverty level or below poverty level, it means so much to me because some of them are going to be the first ones in their families to even attend college.

**The President.** There you go.

**Ms. Henderson.** It is so exciting that they're so excited about reading. And I think it's all about changing a school, that changes a community, that changes a whole city, that changes a State, that changes a whole nation of readers.

**The President.** There you go. I agree. One of the things that's very important in the measurement system is to do what I call "disaggregate the data." Some districts didn't like measuring specific groups of people because you could pass the standards if you put every—lumped everybody together. But that didn't tell the whole truth about who was learning and who wasn't learning.

And so as part of the new accountability system, the No Child Left Behind Act, we break out based upon race. It's really essential we do that. It's really important. If you don't do that, you're likely to leave people behind. And that's not right. There's a learning—there's an achievement gap in America that will be closed. It must be closed, and will be closed. It won't be closed unless you're honest about the achievement gap, unless you're able to see clearly who needs help and who doesn't need help.

What you've heard here, teachers and coaches and implementers who understand that the accountability system must be used as a tool to make sure that the curriculum being used, the techniques being used, the strategy being used, works. That's what you're hearing.

If you heard—they said, "We look at the test results per child." Inside the classroom,

that's good, but schools and districts need to look at the test results per child as well and not try to gloss over the reality in certain school districts by lumping everybody together. This act is called the No Child Left Behind Act because we want to make sure no child is left behind, not it's okay that some get left behind. That's not the spirit of the law.

I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. This is a—again, we came here because the discussions we were having were based upon sound science, not guesswork. And like you, sir, I am incredibly optimistic that we're getting it right here in America. We're getting it right because smart people have help. Policymakers understand what works. We're getting it right because people are continuing to devise strategies to help children who need continued help. We're getting it right because we're providing resources to make sure teachers get retrained with curriculum that works. We're getting it right because we've got fabulous teachers in the classroom—coaches and teachers, I might want you to know—whose spirit can lift the room here at the NIH with just a few words.

And listen, we will meet the goal here. We have an obligation to meet the goal to make sure every child can read at grade level, starting by the third grade. And there's no doubt in my mind this country will do it. We're on track, and I want to appreciate those who put us on track and who keep us on track for being here today.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Phyllis C. Hunter, former manager, Reading Department, Houston Independent School District; and Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele of Maryland.

### **Statement on the Panama-United States Proliferation Security Initiative Ship-Boarding Agreement**

*May 12, 2004*

The United States welcomes Panama's signing today of a ship-boarding agreement that supports the efforts of the Proliferation

Security Initiative (PSI) to stop the trade in deadly weapons and materials.

The agreement establishes streamlined procedures for American officials to request and board ships registered to Panama if those ships are suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, or related materials. More ships sail under the Panamanian flag than that of any other nation. This agreement sends a strong signal to proliferators that the free nations of the world are determined to protect their people and preserve the peace.

This is the second bilateral ship-boarding agreement signed to support PSI. The United States and the Government of Liberia signed a similar agreement on February 11, 2004. Together, Panama and Liberia account for roughly 30 percent of the world's commercial shipping tonnage. We welcome this historic decision by the Government of Panama. And we urge other nations with large commercial shipping registries to follow the lead of Panama and Liberia to make a stand against proliferation.

**Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Budget Amendment To Establish a Contingent Emergency Reserve Fund To Support Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan**

*May 12, 2004*

*Dear Mr. Speaker:*

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendment to establish a \$25 billion contingent emergency reserve fund to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although we do not know the precise costs for operations next year, developments on the ground in Iraq indicate the need to plan for contingencies. We plan to pursue a full FY 2005 supplemental request when we can better estimate precise costs. In the meantime, this reserve fund will ensure that our men and women in uniform continue to have the resources they need when they need them.

I have pledged to our troops that they will have all the resources they need to accom-

plish this vital mission, and I urge the Congress to approve this reserve fund.

The details of this proposal are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

**Remarks in a Discussion at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg, West Virginia**

*May 13, 2004*

*The President.* Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. First, thanks for the invite. You all got the best seat in the house. At least you got the best view of me. [Laughter] I really want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank our panelists for being here, because we're about to have a discussion on how to make sure every person in America can realize their dreams. That's what we're here to talk about: Dreams and how they can be realized; how to make sure the education system works the way every mom and dad, every teacher, every principal, every concerned citizen wants it to work.

And this is the perfect place to come and have a discussion about education, because Parkersburg South is educating the kids. They're doing a fine job here. Tom, I want to thank you. I've spent a lot of time at schools, and there's always a common denominator in excellent schools, and that is you've got a good principal, see—somebody who listens to the teachers, somebody who interfaces with the parents, but somebody who sets high standards, somebody who believes in the best for every child. And I appreciate you taking on a tough job, and I appreciate you doing it well.

I want to thank Bill Niday as well. He's the superintendent here in Wood County. I know something about superintendents, and I know how important they are for education. See, I picked a superintendent of schools to run the Department of Education, the superintendent from Harris County, which is Houston, Texas. I mean, the superintendent is on the frontline of education. They're involved with all aspects of local education. So