

the oath of office as President, there was one charter school in the whole United States, a public school organized by parents or teachers within the school system but free of a lot of the bureaucratic limitations that are on so many schools. In 1996, there were 700. There are now about 1,000. We are well on our way to our goal of having 3,000 by the year 2000.

All these efforts and others are beginning to show up in SAT scores, which are up; math scores, which have risen in nearly all grades nationwide; even on a lot of the international tests, when we didn't do so well for years and years, our younger people are tending to do better and better.

We should be pleased and thankful, but we should not be fooled into complacency. Why? First, reading scores have hardly budged, and many of our foreign competitors are improving their schools faster than we are. Secondly, while our children do very well on these international test scores in elementary school and reasonably well in middle school, by the time they're in high school their rankings have dropped dramatically.

We know we have more to do. We know that a majority of our schools have not kept pace with the new family patterns and work patterns which dominate America. We know that more and more parents are being drawn into the work force. On any given day, as many as 15 million school children are left to fend for themselves at home, idle in front of the television or out on the streets, vulnerable to gangs, drugs, and crime. On any given day when school lets out, juvenile crime goes up and also the number of children themselves victimized by crime. On any given day when school lets out, tens of millions of working parents look nervously at the clock, hoping and praying their children will be okay.

It is no secret that I believe that the best way for our Nation to meet these challenges is to expand the number and improve the quality of our after-school programs. With quality after-school, parents and educators will be given the tools they need to succeed; students learn their lesson in the schoolhouse, not on the street; youth crime and victimization plummet. Quality after-school programs both enhance opportunity and bolster responsibility. In so doing, they strengthen our communities; they honor our values; they benefit our Nation.

That's why I've supported grants for these kinds of quality programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative, first introduced by Senator Jeffords from Vermont, championed by Senator Kennedy and Senator Boxer, Congresswoman Lowey from New York, and others.

Two years ago, this program received \$1 million from Congress. Then it grew the year before last to \$40 million, and then last year, to \$200 million, in the budget I signed, serving a quarter of a million children. Yet, the demand for quality after-school programs, the bipartisan support it has gained, and its potential to transform public education in America and the futures of our children far, far outweigh the investment we have made to date.

Therefore, today I am pleased to announce that in the new budget I will present to Congress this year, we will triple our investment in academically enriched after-school programs to give over 1 million children across America somewhere to go.

Now, you heard Lissette talking about the Chicago system. It's one I particularly favor. And last year I asked the Congress to set aside some funds that we could give to other school systems to help to adopt the comprehensive approach they have there. That is, no social promotion; more parent involvement in the schools; high standards, but don't flunk anybody because the system is failing the kids, don't say the kids are failing; give them the after-school programs, give them the summer school programs, give them the tools they need to succeed. So we are going to give priority to communities that end social promotion in the right way.

She talked about that eighth grade test. Hillary and I, when we were working together in Arkansas on education, made our State the first State in the country to have an eighth grade exit exam. But I never saw it as a way of identifying children who were failing. I thought it would identify the schools that were failing and give the children a chance to succeed. And that's what they believe in in Chicago and what we should believe in everywhere.

So I'm looking forward to working with all the Senators and House Members who care so much about this, both to improve after-school programs and to end social promotion but to do it in the right way. We have to do everything in our power—after school, smaller classes, better teachers, modernized facilities, Internet