

This is an important moment for my administration because I spent such a long amount of time campaigning on education reform. It's been the hallmark of my time as Governor of Texas. My focus will be on making sure every child is educated, as the President of the United States, as well.

Both parties have been talking about education reform for quite a while. It's time to come together to get it done so that we can truthfully say, "In America, no child will be left behind, not one single child."

We share a moment of exceptional promise, a new administration, a newly sworn-in Congress. And we have a chance to think anew and act anew. All of us are impatient with the old lines of division. All of us want a different attitude here in the Nation's Capital. All in this room, as well as across the country, know things must change.

We must confront the scandal of illiteracy in America, seen most clearly in high-poverty schools where nearly 70 percent of fourth graders are unable to read at a basic level. We must address the low standing of America test scores amongst industrialized nations in math and science, the very subjects most likely to affect our future competitiveness. We must focus the spending of Federal tax dollars on things that work. Too often, we have spent without regard for results, without judging success or failure from year to year. We must face up to the plague of school violence. With an average of 3 million crimes committed against students and teachers inside public schools every year, that's unacceptable in our country.

Change will not come by adding a few new Federal programs to the old. If we work only at the edges, our influence will be confined to the margins. We need real reform. Change will not come by disdaining or dismantling the Federal role of education. I believe strongly in local control

of schools. I trust local folks to chart the path to excellence.

But educational excellence for all is a national issue and, at this moment, is a Presidential priority. I have seen how real education reform can lift up scores and schools and effectively change lives. And real education reform reflects four basic commitments.

First, children must be tested every year in reading and math—every single year. Not just in the third grade or the eighth grade, but in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh and eighth grade.

I oppose a national test, one designed here in Washington, DC, because I know it would undermine local control of schools and undermine State curricula. But States should test each student each year. Without yearly testing, we don't know who is falling behind and who needs help. Without yearly testing, too often we don't find failure until it is too late to fix.

Consider what some parents face under the current system in some States. A child may pass the third grade reading test; he or she gets in the eighth grade and, lo and behold, fails the eighth grade test. And the parent says, "Who do I hold accountable? What happened? My child was successful in the third, and here he or she is in the eighth. What went wrong? How come? Where did the system let me down?"

Too much precious time has elapsed in this case for us to achieve what we want: every child being able to learn. Testing every child every year is the way to stop the cycle. We must care enough to ask how our children are doing. We must have the data to know how poor and minority children are doing, to see if we're closing the achievement gap in America.

Annual measurement is a special concern of mine. I understand it's crucial—it's a crucial part of a solid reform package. But the good news is, I'm not alone. Take, for example, Congressman George Miller from California. Some might think it odd that