

school is going to be left behind. Thank you all.

Today I had the honor of meeting members of the President's Commission on Special Education. I want to thank you all for your hard work. We will be reauthorizing IDEA* this year with Members of Congress. I know Senator Gregg holds this issue close to his heart. I think you'll find that the reforms suggested in the Commission's findings is going to be a great place for you to start, and hopefully finish, Mr. Senator. *[Laughter]*

I also want to thank the education officials from five States, which I will be naming a little later, officials who are on the leading edge of education reform. I'm not going to tip my hand as to why you're here yet, but thank you all for coming. *[Laughter]* I know that many in this room have devoted your entire lives to bringing a spirit of high achievement to education in America, and I want to thank you for that. You understand success. You've seen success firsthand—and unfortunately, too many instances you are aware of the persistent problems in our schools.

Perhaps the biggest problem is that we have passed children from grade to grade, year after year, and those—child hadn't learned the basics of reading and math. That says to me that somebody somewhere along the way believes certain children can't learn, so therefore, let's just shuffle them through.

Many schools in our country are places of hope and opportunity. Eight such schools are here; many schools in the five States represented are places where people can feel hopeful for the future. Unfortunately, too many schools in America have failed in that mission. The harm has been greatest in the poor and minority communities. Those kids have been hurt the worst because people have failed to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations.

Over the years, parents across America have heard a lot of excuses—that's a reality—and oftentimes have seen little change. One year ago today, the time for excuse-making has come to an end. With the No Child Left Behind Act, we have committed the Nation to higher standards for every single public school. And we've committed the resources to help the students achieve those standards. We affirm the right of parents to have better information about the schools and to make crucial decisions about their children's future. Accountability of results is no longer just a hope of parents. Accountability for results is now the law of the land.

In return for receiving Federal money, States must design accountability systems to measure whether students are learning to read and write and add and subtract. In return for a lot of money, the Federal Government, for the first time, is asking, "Are we getting the kind of return the American people want for every child?" The only way to be sure of whether or not every child is learning is to test regularly and to show everybody, especially the parents, the results of the tests. The law further requires that test scores be presented in a clear and meaningful way so that we can find the learning problems within each group of students. I'll show off a little bit—it's called disaggregation of results. *[Laughter]*

Annual report cards are required to grade the schools, themselves, so parents can judge how the schools compare to others. Excellence will be recognized. It's so important for us to measure, so that we can praise the principals and teachers who are accomplishing the objectives we all hope for. And at the same time, poor performance cannot be disguised or hidden.

Schools that perform poorly will be noticeable and given time and given incentives and given resources to improve. Schools that don't improve will begin to face consequences, such as that parents can move their child to another public school

* White House correction.