

or hire a tutor or any other academic help. We will not accept a school that does not teach and will not change.

Schools have a responsibility to improve, and they also have the freedom to improve in this law, and that's important. I can assure you, I haven't changed my attitude about Federal control of schools. When I was the Governor of Texas, I didn't like the idea of Federal control of schools. I felt we were pretty competent in the State of Texas to run our own schools. I still feel that way, now that I've been up here for 2 years. I believe in local control of schools, and this principle is inherent in this bill.

The key choices about curriculum and teaching methods will be made at the State and local level. Input will be given by parents and teachers and principals who know the local culture best. Parents and educators will not be bystanders in education reform. As a matter of fact, in our view, they are the agents of education reform. And this law upholds that principle as well.

Across America, States and school districts are working hard to implement these reforms. Today Secretary Paige is approving the first five accountability plans, hence the five folks I've invited here. [Laughter] The first five accountability plans have been approved, and they are from the States of Ohio and Massachusetts, New York, Colorado, and Indiana.

Their plans are rigorous, and their plans are innovative. They are also varied, reflecting the different strengths and challenges within each State. One size doesn't fit all when it comes to public education. What counts are results. What counts are the fact that the schools will be teaching the basics and children learn how to read and compute. These States recognize that.

I want to thank you very much for showing what is possible, for being on the leading edge. The plans show the kind of energy and commitment and good faith that education reform demands. These leaders who have prepared these plans show us

that high standards are not a burden to carry. They show us that this is an opportunity to seize. The leaders also show a faith and confidence in their students, a belief that every child can learn.

Children respond to an atmosphere of high standards. As teachers and parents can tell you, children love to learn. They just love it. And they sense when we have faith in them, and they love to justify that faith. And that's what you all have shown, faith in every child.

The main reservations we've heard in the year since we passed the reform have come from some adults, not the children, who say the testing requirement is an unfunded mandate on the States. Well, that's not true. We put up \$387 million to provide for testing, to pay for the testing in this year's budget. I intend to ask for the same amount next year. We demanded excellence. We're going to pay for the accountability systems to make sure that we do get excellence.

Some have claimed that testing somehow distracts from learning. I've heard this excuse since I was the Governor of Texas, "Oh, you're teaching the test." Well, if a child can pass the reading test, the child has learned to read, as far as I'm concerned.

Other critics worry that high standards and measurement invite poor results. In other words, "Don't measure. You might see poor results," I guess is what they're saying—that they fear that by imposing clear standards, we'll set some schools up for failure and that we'll identify too many failing schools. Well, the reasoning is backwards, as far as I'm concerned, and a lot of other good people are concerned as well. You don't cause a problem by revealing the problem. Accountability doesn't cause failure; it identifies failure. And only by acknowledging poor performance can we ever help schools to achieve. You can't solve a problem unless you first diagnose the problem.