

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on Increasing Access to High-Quality Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education
September 25, 2017

The President. Well, thank you all. It's a great pleasure to be here with Secretary DeVos, Secretary Acosta, and Ivanka. I also want to express my appreciation to Representatives Bradley Byrne, Susan Brooks, Lamar Smith, and Virginia Foxx. Thank you all for being here. Thank you. Thank you very much for being with us. And Mimi Walters, thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Susan.

I want to just talk about leadership. It's the most important issue. We need leadership in this country—women and girls and for every child in America, represented by all of the incredible students here today. These are great students. Are you all good students? Everybody—

Participants. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Everybody has really terrific marks. Right? [*Laughter*]

Well, you're doing fantastically. That's why you're in. I just said before the press came in, What's the name of this office?

Participants. The Oval Office.

The President. Every one of them knew that. [*Laughter*] Right?

As you know, the workplace is changing. We need to create new pathways for all our citizens to get the best jobs. When you get out of school, you want to get great jobs, right?

Participants. Yes.

The President. I've asked Ivanka to lead up the White House efforts on workforce development, and the initiative today is a critical part of that endeavor.

Have you seen Ivanka? Do you know Ivanka?

Participants. Yes.

The President. She's here someplace. [*Laughter*] Where is Ivanka? There's Ivanka. [*Laughter*]

My administration will do everything possible to provide our children, especially kids in underserved areas, with access to high-quality education in science, technology, engineering, and math. You're a good math student?

Participant. Yes.

The President. Are you? Let's see. What's your strength in school? Huh? Science?

Participant. Yes.

The President. Good science, right?

What's your strength?

Participant. Tech class

The President. There you go, man. Thank you, honey. [*Laughter*]

In particular, computer science for grades K-through-12—that's so important now, right? It's a whole new world. You've got to know how to use those computers. Currently, more than half of high schools do not offer computer programming, and nearly 40 percent do not offer physics.

Now, do you have computer programming in your schools? All of you?

Participants. Yes.

The President. How about you? Do you them in your schools?

Participants. Yes.

The President. All computers—you're all pretty good with the computers?

Participants. Yes.

The President. Well, that's important nowadays. Greater access to STEM and computer science programs will ensure that our children can develop the skills they need to compete and to win in the workforce of tomorrow.

Who likes to win?

Participants. I do.

The President. Anybody like to lose? I don't think so. [*Laughter*] Oh, so a little wise guy back there. [*Laughter*]

Participant. Better STEM education also means higher paying jobs for American workers and families. You get out of school, you get great—really great—jobs, high-paying jobs. And we're doing very well with the employment rolls today. You get really good jobs. And we want our amazing young Americans to fill these jobs, earn a great living, lift up their communities, and achieve their American dreams.

The directives I am sharing today, with Secretary DeVos at the helm, to make STEM education, including computer science, a priority for the Department of Education. Is that right, Betsy?

Secretary of Education Elisabeth P. DeVos. Indeed it is.

The President. That's going to be a big thing what—that you're doing.

Secretary DeVos. Absolutely, Mr. President.

The President. And that's working out well?

Secretary DeVos. Absolutely.

The President. You're moving on it incredibly.

The department will explore ways to add or increase computer science to existing K–12—and K-through-12 and postsecondary education programs. It also establishes a goal of devoting at least 200—listen to this number—\$200 million each year in grants toward funding this priority. So that's \$200 million a year. Does that sound like big bucks?

Participants. Yes.

The President. What do you guys think? Peanuts, it's peanuts, right? [Laughter] You're going to say, "give us more." Right? [Laughter] You've got to get more.

But no, \$200 million each year in grants, and that's toward funding this very, very important priority. So with today's action, we will help give our American children a pathway to success in the workforce of tomorrow.

Thank you, and God bless you all. And I really appreciate your being in the White House. And I know you're going to take a tour in a little while, but we start right here in the Oval Office. But it's an honor to have all of you, and someday you'll be great students, and you'll be the leaders of the world—the United States and the world. Right?

Participants. Yes.

The President. Would any of our representatives—maybe I'll start with Betsy. Would you like to say something? Betsy DeVos, everybody.

Secretary DeVos. Well, Mr. President, thank you for your support of STEM initiatives, and especially to the students who are here today, thank you for your commitment to your own futures. And with this initiative, we hope and trust that you're going to have more opportunities to pursue the things that are most interesting to you and that will afford you the greatest opportunities for your future and collectively for our future.

So thank you so much, Mr. President. And for all of the students, good luck and all the best in your studies.

Participants. Thank you.

The President. Well, thank you, Betsy. And the Secretary has been working really hard to get this done. [Laughter] This is just one of many things, but you've been working really hard.

And, Alex, would you say a few things? Secretary Alex Acosta.

Secretary of Labor R. Alexander Acosta. Thank you, Mr. President. As the father of two young girls, I know firsthand how important it is to start early. And what's so exciting about this initiative, from my perspective, is all the young kids that are going to be exposed to computer science and to coding and to STEM, because if you start early, it's transformative, especially for young girls—I see it at home—it's so important.

I'm excited to see all of you here. So, you know, it's wonderful you're here. And, Mr. President, thank you for doing this for all the kids.

The President. Well, thank you very much. Thank you, Alex. Great job.

Bradley?

Representative Bradley R. Byrne. Mr. President, I'm from Alabama. We started the Alabama Math, Science, Technology Initiative almost 20 years ago, and we thought it was the thing of the future. Well, it's the thing of the present, and your signing this today means a lot to young people and educators all over America. Thank you for this.

The President. Well, thank you. And Alabama is a great State. We love Alabama.

Susan Brooks.

Representative Susan W. Brooks. Thank you, Mr. President. Hello, kids. I'm from Indiana. I was at fourth grade class last week in Carmel, Indiana—Mrs. McKay's class in Towne

Meadow Elementary—and they're using computers all day long doing virtual field trips, learning instantly, and the teacher knows where their problems are right away.

And just so you know, the jobs of the future, we don't know even know what they all are. And so because of technology, because of this funding computer science in class, you're going to be ready. So thank you.

The President. Thank you very much, Susan. And these are all very powerful people that are speaking, just so you know. [*Laughter*] Okay?

Lamar Smith.

Representative Lamar S. Smith. Mr. President, thank you. I'm chairman of the Science Committee in the House, and I just want to thank the President for giving a priority to STEM education and to computer science in particular.

In the last Congress, I introduced a bill that became law to expand the definition of STEM to include computer science, and so I'm especially grateful to the President for emphasizing that. And, Mr. President, good to be here.

The President. Excellent. Appreciate it.

Virginia.

Representative Virginia A. Foxx. Well, as chairwoman of the Education and Workforce Committee, Mr. Speaker—Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'll take Speaker too. [*Laughter*] Get things done.

Rep. Foxx. The—we are so proud of you for doing this. We know we have 5.6 million jobs available right now to our workforce, and many of them are unfilled because our employees do not have the skills they need.

So it's wonderful to see us encouraging these young people to begin early to be involved in these subject matters. And we need to spread this idea throughout our culture for people of all ages, but we particularly, as others have said, want to get the young people engaged, involved, and excited about all of these subjects.

The President. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Rep. Foxx. Thank you.

The President. Mimi, where is—where are you?

Representative Marian K. "Mimi" Walters. I'm right here, Mr. President. I'm Mimi Walters from California. I want to thank you very much for signing this legislation today.

I'm a mom of four kids, and STEM is very exciting. When I was in high school, computers were just getting into school. So we've come a long way, and it's very exciting to see so many young kids here that are interested in STEM. So thank you very much for signing this today.

The President. Thank you very much, and you've done a great job, and we appreciate it. You've all done a great job, and it's something very special.

My daughter is here. Should we hear from Ivanka? [*Laughter*] What do you think? Yes? I think so, right?

Ivanka, come on, honey.

Assistant to the President Ivanka M. Trump. First of all, thank you all for being here. You are the future of innovators and entrepreneurs and engineers and programmers in this country. So it's so exciting to see your enthusiasm.

But today represents a giant leap forward as we think about aligning the skills that are taught in the classroom with the skills that are in demand in the modern economy. So we're very excited about today's announcement and towards really focusing on the goal of putting Americans to work and making sure that all Americans get great-paying jobs.

So thank you all for being here, and I look forward to watching you all go on to accomplish many amazing and extraordinary things.

Participants. Thank you.

The President. So education—thanks, Ivanka.

Ms. Trump. Thank you.

The President. And education is just so important at every level, whether it's this or whatever you study. And always remember this: Do what you love. Study what you love. You parents may want you to do something—and you should always listen to your parents—but try to focus on the things that you love, whether it's in studies or when you get out of school. Do what you love, and you're going to be successful. Work hard, all of those things—but you have to follow your heart to a certain extent and maybe even to a large extent.

So when you get out there, make sure that you're—you know, it's very interesting. I say this a lot—do what you love—but then it's not work. Because if you love it, it's not working. It's, like, a pleasure. So always follow your hearts, and you're going to be tremendously successful people.

And you're going to remember this day because it's a special place. You're in a special place, and very few get to come and see this, but I wanted you to see it today. It is a very, very special area of the world. It all happens here. And you're here today, and it's my honor to have you.

So go out there, work really hard, and do really well. Okay? And I'll see you soon. We'll see you soon.

Participants. Thank you.

The President. Great job. So we're going to sign. The question is, who gets the pen? Who's going to get this pen? Huh?

Assistant to the President for Intragovernmental and Technology Initiatives Reed Cordish. Virginia Foxx maybe?

The President. Who?

Mr. Cordish. Virginia Foxx.

The President. I have a feeling right. I have a feeling, right? We'll get you another one, okay? [Laughter] You know, get me some additional pens, and what we're going to do this, we're going to give them out to the students. Because you'll be the ones signing this in the future, you know, future generations. All right, so if you could get me some additional pens.

White House staffer. We'll send them to the schools, sir.

Mr. Cordish. Thank you.

The President. Okay, we'll send them the good ones. [*Laughter*] Not the bad ones, the good ones, like this.

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

The President. So we're going to give this to a very special woman who has worked so hard on this, and I think that's—are you ready for it?

Rep. Foxx. Yes, sir.

The President. Okay, thank you.

Rep. Foxx. God bless you.

The President. Maybe we'll put her in charge of health care. I think we're going to put you in charge. [*Laughter*] It'll get done, right? If you do the health care, it will get done.

Okay, everybody. This is very important. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, Secretary Acosta referred to his daughters Delia and Rosie. Rep. Walters referred to her children Katherine, Caroline, Tristan, and David Jr.

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