

Memorandum on National Testing in Defense Department Schools *March 13, 1997*

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Participation of Department of Defense Dependents Schools and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools in National Testing

The Department of Defense Dependents Schools overseas and the Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools here at home play an important role in enhancing the quality of life and overall readiness of the Armed Forces of the United States. They provide military families deployed overseas and within the United States with outstanding educational opportunities, and they play a vital role in preparing the children of military and civilian personnel in the Armed Forces for the future.

Students in these schools deserve the best we can offer, starting with the highest expectations and most challenging academic standards available. Drawn from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, located in 15 countries throughout the world and in seven States and Puerto Rico here at home, all highly mobile, no group of students better underscores the need for common national standards and a uniform way of measuring progress.

That is why I am pleased the Department of Defense Dependents Schools and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools have accepted the challenge of benchmarking the performance of their students against widely accepted national standards in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math, using voluntary national tests aligned with these standards. This step will ensure that students, parents, and teachers in the Department of Defense Edu-

cation Activity (DoDEA) schools will have honest, accurate information about whether students are mastering the basic skills. Along with the States of Maryland, Michigan, and North Carolina, the DoDEA schools are among the first in the Nation to commit to participate in this testing program, beginning in 1999.

Accepting this challenge of meeting national standards means much more than administering new tests. It means beginning immediately to prepare students to meet these standards. This will require steps such as providing parents with the information and assistance they need to be their child's first teacher, upgrading the curriculum, implementing proven instructional practices and programs, making accessible new technologies to enhance teaching and learning, supporting and rewarding good teaching, and providing students who need it with extra help and tutoring.

The DoDEA schools have already begun this task, but much more needs to be done. And the lessons the DoDEA schools learn from these efforts can be valuable for other schools throughout our Nation.

Therefore I direct you to ensure that the DoDEA schools take these and other steps as appropriate, and use all available resources to prepare every one of their students to meet these standards, in 1999 and each year thereafter, and to report annually on the progress being made toward this objective, and on the effectiveness of the strategies and approaches the DoDEA school system uses to achieve it.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Statement Announcing the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning

March 13, 1997

Today Hillary and I are pleased to announce that on April 17, 1997, we will host the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on

the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children. The conference, which will take place at the White House, will spotlight exciting new findings about how our children develop, and