

Memorandum on Expanding Access to Internet-based Educational Resources for Children, Teachers, and Parents

April 18, 1997

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Expanding Access to Internet-based Educational Resources for Children, Teachers, and Parents

My number one priority for the next 4 years is to make sure that all Americans have the best education in the world.

One of the goals of my Call to Action for American Education is to bring the power of the Information Age into all of our schools. This will require connecting every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000; making sure that every child has access to modern, multimedia computers; giving teachers the training they need to be as comfortable with the computer as they are with the chalkboard; and increasing the availability of high-quality educational content. When America meets the challenge of making every child technologically literate, children in rural towns, the suburbs, and inner city schools will have the same access to the same universe of knowledge.

I believe that Federal agencies can make a significant contribution to expanding this universe of knowledge. Some agencies have already launched a number of exciting projects in this area. The White House has a special "White House for Kids" home page with information on the history of the White House. NASA's K-12 initiative allows students to interact with astronauts and to share in the excitement of scientific pursuits such as the exploration of Mars and Jupiter and with experiments conducted on the Space Shuttle. The AskERIC service (Education Resources Information Center), supported by the Department of Education, has a virtual library of more than 900 lesson plans for K-12 teachers, and provides answers to questions from educators within 48 hours—using a nationwide network of experts and databases of the latest research. Students participating in the Vice President's GLOBE project (Global Learning and Observation for a Better Environment) collect actual atmospheric, aquatic, and biological data and use the Internet to share, analyze, and discuss the data with scientists and

students all over the world. With support from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Defense's CAETI program (Computer-Aided Education and Training Initiative), the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory has developed a program that allows high school students to request and download their own observations of the universe from professional telescopes.

We can and should do more, however. Over the next 3 months, you should determine what resources you can make available that would enrich the Internet as a tool for teaching and learning, and produce and make available a new or expanded version of your service within 6 months.

You should use the following guidelines to support this initiative:

- Consider a broad range of educational resources, including multimedia publications, archives of primary documents, networked scientific instruments such as telescopes and supercomputers, and employees willing to serve as tele-mentors or answer student and teacher questions.
- Expand access not only to the information and other resources generated internally, but by the broader community of people and institutions that your agency works with and supports. For example, science agencies should pursue partnerships with professional societies, universities, and researchers to expand K-12 access to scientific resources.
- Update and improve your services in response to comments from teachers and students, and encourage educators to submit curricula and lesson plans that they have developed using agency material.
- Focus on the identification and development of high-quality educational resources that promote high standards of teaching and learning in core subjects. Of particular importance are resources that will help students read well and independently by 4th grade, and master challenging mathematics, including algebra and geometry, by 8th grade.

- Make sure the material you develop is accessible to people with disabilities. Earlier this month, I announced my support for the Web Accessibility Initiative, a public-private partnership that will make it easier for people with disabilities to use the World Wide Web.

I am also directing the Department of Education to develop a "Parents Guide to the Internet," that will explain the educational benefits of this exciting resource, as well as steps that parents can take to minimize the risks associated

with the Internet, such as access to material that is inappropriate for children.

The Department of Education will also be responsible for chairing an interagency working group to coordinate this initiative to ensure that the agency-created material is of high quality, is easily accessible, and promotes awareness of Internet-based educational resources among teachers, parents, and students.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 19.

The President's Radio Address

April 19, 1997

The President. Good morning. Vice President Gore and I are here in the Oval Office on the second national NetDay, when citizens and communities all across America come together to help us meet the goal of connecting every classroom and library in the United States to the Internet by the year 2000. With us today are three AmeriCorps members, two local high school students, and two Communication Workers of America volunteers, all of whom are contributing to this effort.

NetDay is a great example of how America works best when we all work together. It's like an old-fashioned barnraising, neighbor joins with neighbor to do something for the good of the entire community; students, teachers, parents, community groups, government, business, unions, all pulling together to pull cable, hook up our schools, and put the future at the fingertips of all our young people.

Once we reach our goal of linking our schools to the Internet, for the first time in history, children in the most isolated rural schools, the most comfortable suburbs, the poorest inner-city schools, all of them will have the same access to the same universe of knowledge. That means a boy in Lake Charles, Louisiana, can visit a museum halfway around the world, a girl in Juneau, Alaska, can visit the Library of Congress on-line.

Since the first NetDay just over a year ago, nearly a quarter million volunteers have wired 50,000 classrooms around our country. Today

NetDay activities are occurring in more than 40 States. In a few minutes, Vice President Gore and I will have a chance to use a new video and computer technology set up for the first time right in the Oval Office to meet with volunteers in south central Los Angeles and children in Hartford, Connecticut. I want to thank them and all the NetDay volunteers for their service to our country.

We have to do everything we can to make technology literacy a reality for every child in America. That's why I asked the Federal Communications Commission to give our schools and libraries a discount, a special "E-rate," or education rate, to help them connect classrooms to the Internet and to stay on-line. On May 6th, the FCC will vote on a plan to provide more than \$2 billion in yearly E-rate discounts for schools and libraries. This can make all the difference for communities struggling to make sure their students are ready for the 21st century. So today, again, I call on the FCC to approve this plan and give our children access to this new world of knowledge.

Now, more than ever, we can't afford for our children to be priced out of cyberspace. But connecting young people to the Internet is not enough. We have to make sure that when they log on they have access to the information that will prepare them for the world of the future. And Government has a vital role to play in all this. For instance, NASA lets students talk to astronauts on the Internet. And Vice President