

Remarks at Hyde Park Elementary School in Jacksonville September 9, 2003

Thanks for coming. Please be seated—unless you don't have a chair. *[Laughter]* Thanks for coming, and thanks for letting me come. We're thrilled to be at Hyde Park Elementary School. I'm here to talk about some recent reforms we've had in education, the Federal role in education. I want to describe to you the No Child Left Behind Act and the principles behind the No Child Left Behind Act, and why I believe the No Child Left Behind Act, in combination with the efforts of Governors like Jeb Bush and fantastic teachers who are in this room, are going to help America realize its full promise.

Before I begin—you may recall, I was a Governor as well, and I spent a lot of time on making sure the Texas schools were as good as they could possibly be. I learned some pretty interesting lessons as the Governor. And one lesson is that in order for schools to succeed, you'd better have you a good principal. Dr. Nancy Miller is a really good principal. She believes in the worth of each individual. She believes in high standards. She believes in empowering her teachers to do the right thing. She's constantly willing to challenge the status quo if the status quo is not good enough.

We're at Hyde Park Elementary School because it is one of the many successful schools in Jacksonville and across the State of Florida. And I want to thank Dr. Miller, and I want to thank the teachers of Hyde Park for not only listening to your hearts but using logic and sound thought to challenge mediocrity wherever you might find it. You know, one of the inherent principles in the No Child Left Behind Act is that we believe every child can learn, and we want to continue to raise the bar, continue to raise expectations so that every child does learn.

I appreciate so much Secretary Rod Paige for joining us. I like to remind people that he actually knows what he's talking about when it comes to public schools because he was the superintendent of public schools in Houston, Texas. It's a pretty tough assignment, I want you to know. It's not an easy school district to govern. But he did a heck of a good job. He too believes every child can learn. He believes in setting high standards. He believes in asking the question, "Are we meeting the standards?" And I'm honored that Rod has served our country so well. And I'm proud to have him on the stage with me today. Thank you, Rod.

And then there's Brother. *[Laughter]* We were educated by the same person—*[laughter]*—Mother. *[Laughter]* We both have a passion for making sure every child learns. That's how we were raised, to do the best we could do in the schoolrooms. The truth of the matter is, when you really think about it, education—true education begins at home. Every mom and dad is a teacher. We had a pretty darn good teacher, I want you to know.

I'm proud of my brother. He's willing to take risks on behalf of the children of the State of Florida. He's willing to stand up to the critics. He's willing to stand strong when it comes to insisting upon certain principles. We love him, and I'm proud that he has joined us here today as well.

I want to thank Jim Horne, the Florida commissioner of education. These commissioners of these States have got big jobs already, and then we've compounded their job. We've got a new Federal law that needs to be implemented, and we expect these commissioners to implement the law, and Jim is doing just that.

I'm honored that the mayor is here, Mayor Peyton. He's a—I know, I saw him sitting over there. *[Laughter]* He drove

from the airport to the football stadium with us. And I told him, I said he's doing a pretty good job of handling the traffic. We didn't see a lot. [Laughter]

I know we've got State legislators here. My only admonition to the State legislators is to make sure that public education is the number one priority of the State of Florida, to do the best you can do about setting priorities.

I want to thank General John Fryer, the superintendent of schools here. I thought it was pretty interesting, when I was reading the background of the schools here. I see that you got you a general—[laughter]—running the school system. That's good. [Laughter] It's also good that somebody who served this country in one capacity is willing to serve again.

And one of the things that Laura and I are trying to do is encourage people to serve the public school system, particularly Laura. She's spending a lot of time heralding Troops to Teachers programs to encourage people who have served in one capacity to go ahead and get back in the classroom or to serve your community by teaching in the school system. We need more of our fellow Americans who are looking for something to do to get involved in public education. Teaching is a noble profession. Teaching is a chance to leave behind a really important legacy, and that is a saved life.

I want to thank Kim Barnes, who is the chairman—chairwoman of the Duval County School Board. That's probably the hardest job in America, is to be on the school board. [Laughter] It's difficult because a lot of pressures and a lot of people who have got opinions. And so I want to thank the school board members who are here with us today for serving this important community, for lending your time and talents to always, hopefully, raising the bar and always insisting on the best.

We've got some interesting—we had an interesting forum. I'm going to describe what we discussed a little earlier, but we've

got Wandra Sanders here, who's a teacher at Hyde Park, a representative of—we had a chance to visit with Teresa Nelson, who's a parent, and a mom or a dad.

By the way, schools really do well when mothers and dads take an interest in the school. And for you parents who are here, I want to thank you very much for not only, obviously, loving your child but also working hard to make sure the school in your community, in your neighborhood, has not only the resources necessary to succeed but your time and talents to help these good, hard-working teachers and this good principal to achieve their objectives.

We've got some folks from around the country who are here, and I'm going to talk about why they're here a little bit. But I do want to recognize Eli Broad. He is the president of the Broad Foundation. He is from Los Angeles, California. He is an incredibly successful business person. He and his wife put together a little nest egg. And they asked a question, "What can we do to help the country?" And they have decided that they would lend their resources and talents to the improvement of public education all across America. And Eli, thank you so very much for your generosity.

Tom Luce is with us. He's from the great State of Texas. [Laughter] I've known Tom a long time. He runs what's called Just for the Kids. Just for the Kids is a program that said, how can we make the accountability systems all around America become an effective tool to make sure no child is left behind. Tom has been an agitator for change in our State of Texas ever since I've known him, and I'm proud he's here. Thank you for coming, Tom.

Bill Cox is with us today. Bill Cox is the managing director of School Evaluation Services for Standard & Poor's. Standard & Poor's is a part of this new initiative that I'm going to describe here in a little bit. And I want to thank Bill and people from Standard & Poor's who have joined

us as well. I find it interesting that Standard & Poor's, which is mainly associated with stocks and bonds, is associated with the true wealth of our country, and that is the children of our country. And thank you for coming as well. I'm honored you're here.

Today when I landed at the Naval Air Station, I met a guy named Daniel Trifiletti. You don't know Daniel. I didn't know him until I got the chance to read his background. He's a high school student who is a mentor for kids in middle school. He's an amazing guy, when you think about it, that he is willing to take time to help somebody else.

I bring this up because there's a lot made about the might of the United States of America, and we're plenty mighty. We're strong militarily. And by the way, I intend to keep it that way, in order to make the world more peaceful. But that's not the true strength of the country. The true strength of the country is the heart and soul of our citizens. Really think about what makes America unique. It's the fact that we've got millions of people who are willing to dedicate their time to help somebody else. And I think it's a remarkable part of our country and the fabric of our country.

I also find it to be great that we have a high school student who is willing to be a soldier in the army of compassion, and that's Daniel. And so, Daniel, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for setting the example. I want to thank you for serving meals at the local soup kitchen. I want to thank you for your participation in Habitat for Humanity. I want to thank you for lending your talents to help some kid achieve his or her dreams. Welcome, and thank you for being a leader.

I like to tell people that the No Child Left Behind Act was the most dramatic reforms in public education in a generation. And here's why I think it is: First, inherent in the law is the belief that every child can learn. That sounds simple, doesn't it?

Sometimes, if you think back to past practices in public schools, that necessarily wasn't the attitude. When you had a system that was just shuffling kids through, it said to me that some perhaps thought certain kids couldn't learn, and therefore, the best thing to do was just move them on.

If you believe every child can learn, if you're willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, then you want to know, is it true that each child is learning? That's what you want to find out. A system which measures progress for each child is a system in which the inherent philosophy is, I believe every child can learn.

If you don't want to know, then you probably don't believe they can learn. If you do want to know, then you have this sense of high expectations for each child. And so for the first time, the Federal Government said, "In return for money from the Federal Government, we are now going to ask the questions, can a child read and write? Can a child add and subtract?" For the first time, the Federal Government got involved in education in a different way. We expect results. If you believe every child can learn, then you shouldn't fear that question, or those questions. You shouldn't fear results.

People who believe that children can learn say, "I want to be measured to show you that I'm teaching every child. That's what I want to show you. I'm a teacher because I love children. I'm a teacher because I care about the future. I want to show you. I want to show you, the community and the taxpayers and the moms and dads, that I can teach and our children are learning."

And so we changed the attitude of the Federal Government toward just handing out money. You know, I've heard all the debates about accountability systems. I mean, you hear it's discriminatory to measure. It is discriminatory not to measure. It is pure discrimination—it is discrimination not to measure, because guess who gets shuffled through the system? Guess

who just gets shoved through? It's generally children whose parents don't have money. It's generally minority kids. We're just going to move them through and hope they come out okay in the end. Well, they don't come out okay in the end. We must focus early to make sure every child can read and write and add and subtract. The measurement system is the way you save lives in America.

And so the Federal Government said not only in return for money, you'll measure, we said we're going to disaggregate results. That's a fancy word that says we want to know whether or not Hispanic students are learning, whether or not the African American students are learning. We want to know if every child is learning; that's what we want to know. We want to take a look at every single possible group of citizens to determine whether or not we are meeting the high standards that we believe so strongly in our hearts.

So we've got a new system. And we're putting money behind what we said we would do. The '04 request by the administration—that's me—[laughter]—is \$53.1 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Act, which, as you know, is where the majority of Federal money comes from. That's a significant increase since I became the President of the United States. The Title I portion of that title in the appropriations bill is \$12.3 billion. That's up 41 percent since I became President of the United States. We're putting money into the system.

We've got a brand new reading initiative where we will have spent, since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, \$1.2 billion for reading instruction. By the way, we're trying to promote curriculum which actually works. We want to make sure, if we spend money on reading, that children learn to read. We want to make sure as we spend money on reading, teachers know how to teach that which works. Part of that money went to teacher training. Eight thousand Florida teachers have now been

retrained since the law came into being. They're retrained on curriculum which work. So the whole purpose is to take Federal money and focus it on Title I kids and on teachers and on reading curriculum. It's to make sure we meet the objective, make sure we meet the high standards that we believe are necessary.

The money also, by the way, goes to help children who could conceivably be left behind. I was in Nashville, Tennessee, yesterday at Kirkpatrick Elementary School. A part of the monies I just described to you are used for after-school tutoring programs. Those go to a low-performing—low-performing schools, low-income people. You don't get that money here at Hyde Park because you're not a low-performing school. But they still have after-school tutoring here. It's one of the reasons why I think the children are doing well and no child is being left behind here.

At Kirkpatrick School, a parent is notified because the school district's aggressive. They reach out to parents. They say, "These options are available for your parents. Here's a list of providers, a specialist in reading and math that are now available for your child so that your child, at no cost, can get after-school tutoring." In other words, the No Child Left Behind Act does hold people to account, but it says that there are—we want to help people out of mediocrity when we find it. And there's resources available providing incredibly important tutoring.

You know, one of the things I called for yesterday was to make sure Governors and superintendents make it very clear to parents that, where applicable, that there is money available for low-income tutoring, money available for special focus, money available to make sure that every child has an opportunity to succeed. As well, the system says that after a period of time, if schools don't improve, then a parent can send their child to another public school or a charter school. In other words, there's different options available to moms and

dads. And that's positive, and that's helpful, and that's healthy.

In order for parents to be involved—and for that matter, citizens to be involved—they have to be able to make informed decisions. As Luce reminded me, he said, “Without data, without facts, without information, the discussions about public education mean that a person is just another opinion.” In other words, what we're interested in doing is laying out the facts for people to see so people can make informed decisions.

And so therefore, I'm going to describe to you a really innovative plan that is being produced by Tom and Eli and Standard & Poor's in conjunction with the Department of Education. It's a \$50-million plan, plus \$5 million from the Federal Government, to create a data bank for every citizen in the country to access to determine how the schools are doing all around the country.

It's an interesting opportunity, when you think about it, certainly necessary for parents in order for them to make an informed opinion about their child. It will help principals determine whether or not the curriculum their particular school is using works. It should help teachers decide—know whether or not what they're doing is working or not working. It will make sure that best practices is—becomes an integral part of the dialog all throughout the school system.

You know, people say to me, “Well, we can't have a measuring system because it's going to be punitive.” Quite the contrary. A measuring system is a useful tool. A measuring system will allow people to know where they stand relative to where they need to go. You cannot solve a problem until you first diagnose the problem. And that's exactly what the accountability system that States design, not the Federal Government, is intended to do.

You might hear us talk about, “Well, the Federal Government told us to design a accountability system, but we have to pay

for it”—not true. The Federal Government said—in this case, we said, “You need to design a system to show us whether or not you're achieving objectives with all this money we're sending you. And, oh, by the way, here's a little extra money for you to design the systems so we can measure.”

So this month, we're beginning a new public/private effort that will post information about test results and student achievement on the Internet so all parents, all teachers, can monitor progress of their local schools, their schools relative to other schools in the neighborhood, the schools relative to schools from county to county. The program will help States analyze the data, the test results, the financial data, and other school information required by the Federal act to be posted.

In other words, we're not only going to measure, but an effective measurement system is one that says, “Oh, by the way, here are the results for everybody to see, not just a few people, not just a planner here or maybe a measurement expert there.” We want full disclosure. We have nothing to hide in America when it comes to results. As a matter of fact, since the measurement systems is a tool to achieve that which we believe, which is every child can learn, there needs to be full disclosure. It's an essential part of developing trust in the public school system. It's an essential part of making sure that the best practices are shared widely across any particular school district or any State. It is essential that parents have data at their disposal.

I can assure you that a parent who understands what's going on is going to be a less frustrated parent. The parent will be more comfortable when there's full disclosure about the results and the progress toward the standard of excellence that's being made.

I mention the fact that there's \$50 million from the private sector being put up. That's where Eli came in. That's an incredibly generous contribution to make, when you think about it. I'll tell you why it's

so generous, is because the access to the Internet will be at no cost. I mean, this is a man who said, "How can I help public schools?" He said, "I want to be an integral part of the accountability system nationwide." And initially, there will be 10 States up by the end of this January. By the end of '04, every State will be—have their results posted, school by school, district by district, county by county, all across the State.

If you're fixing to move from point X to Florida—of course, that seems like what's happening, at least according to the Governor, people are moving here and not moving out—you'll be able to get on the Internet, and you can determine whether the school in your particular neighborhood, how it's faring relative to other schools. If you're a teacher and you've got a cousin who is a teacher, and they're saying, "Well, our school system in Tampa is a little better than it is here in Jacksonville," you can get on the Internet to determine whether that's the case. [*Laughter*]

If you're a principal and you hear a school is using a reading curriculum that seems to make sense and you want to determine whether or not it's working, you can get on. And not only can you get on the system to determine how that school is doing, you can get on the system to determine whether or not the reading curriculum is working for Hispanic kids, African American kids, Anglo kids.

In other words, this is full disclosure of information, because we believe every child can learn. We know that by using information correctly, every child's problems can be addressed. And we know how essential it is that every child does learn in America. The truth of the matter is, we're talking about the future of this country right now.

I mean, I spent a lot of time on the security of our Nation, and I can assure you I will continue spending time on the

security of our Nation. One aspect of that security is to deal with people who hate America. It's to go get them before they get us, and that's what we'll continue to do. But when you really think about it, when you put your mind to it, a second aspect of the security of America is to make sure every child is educated. Our country—I'm talking about every aspect of security, economic security, security of our families. A hopeful America is what I believe in and I know you believe in. A hopeful America is an America in which each child can read and write and add and subtract. A hopeful America is where children say, "You know, I'm going to get an education early, and I'm going to go to college." A hopeful America is where people can dream and realize their dreams because the education system is fulfilling its promise.

America's past has been defined by a public school system that has met the needs of a complex society. This No Child Left Behind Act and the good work of our principals and teachers and good cooperation and hard work of Governors like Jeb Bush will mean that the public school system in the future will meet the needs of a complex society. Working together, we'll make sure that we fulfill our promise to the future, and that is, no child will be left behind in America.

May God bless you all, and may God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Mayor John Peyton of Jacksonville, FL; Nancy Miller, principal, Hyde Park Elementary School; John C. Fryer, superintendent, Duval County Public Schools; and Kris Barnes, chairman, Duval County School Board. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.