

You are going to adapt to society's behavior.

Let me say in conclusion, this Project Exile is not an attack on the Second Amendment. I am a strong believer in that. In fact, I think it helps us support the Second Amendment. This Project Exile is not ignorance of the problems we have out there of the tragedy. In fact, I think it is going to do a lot more to avert tragedies and to get our hands on these tragedies that are taking place than any of the rhetoric going on right now in the Nation by the highest levels of our administration.

This is going to get things done. This is not talk. Talk is cheap. This is going to get things done. It has got support of the major law enforcement agencies in Colorado, from your local police department to the Attorney General, to the U.S. Attorney General's office. It has got the Governor. It has got Democrats and Republicans in the State house and the State senate supporting it.

In fact, maybe the best way to summarize, I have not found anybody who objects to it. I have not found anybody who says to ignore the laws, the laws in existence on the books now. In fact, my friends who support the Second Amendment, one of their basic points is let us see what happens when we enforce the laws we currently have on the books. Let us see what happens when we make the consequences of touching a burner immediate and painful. Their bet, my bet, everyone involved in this, the bet is you will not touch that burner again, and society will be better for it.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all colleagues, in their respective districts, in their respective States, go out there, talk to their Attorney General. If you are Republicans, talk to the Democrats. If you are Democrat, talk to the Republican leaders in your State. Form a team like we did in Colorado and put in your own Project Exile. My bet, and I think it is a safe bet, and I am a betting man and I like safe bets, my bet is that after 1 year you will find out that your Project Exile has accomplished more than all of the rhetoric combined for all of the States.

□ 2045

But the rhetoric aside, put the action in place. You pack an illegal gun; you pack your bags for prison.

CHARACTER EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS: AN INNOVATION THAT WORKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I want to talk with my colleagues about the future. As I talk

about the future, I want to talk about the children of this country, because they truly are our future.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about education, particularly an effort in education called character education. We talk about a lot of things that work and things that do not work; but as my colleagues know, before I came to the people's House to serve in this body, I was the State superintendent of schools in the State of North Carolina. As I have told many of my colleagues from time to time, there are a lot of things in education that a lot of us who work in it, if we are honest with ourselves, do not know a great deal about when we do some of the things that work and a lot of the things that do not work. I happen to know firsthand that character education can make a difference to teach our children values and make sure that our students are well rounded and prepared to become good citizens.

In 1989 when I took over as State superintendent, we did a survey of about 25,000 students across our State, and I was quite alarmed at some of the results we got back. About 37 percent of the students said that they did not respect their fellow students nor their teachers, and it was quite obvious from that data that something needed to be done.

We pulled together teachers, administrators, members of the clergy. We pulled together members from the bench and we did an extensive study for about a year and a half, almost 2 years, and came up with what we called ethics education. We put together some principles, and ultimately that evolved into character education. It was later adopted by the State board of education and then the North Carolina general assembly in 1995; and we received a grant in 1995 from the U.S. Department of Education to begin a process in three of our school districts, three of the larger ones, incidentally, Wake County, Cumberland County, and Mecklenburg County to pilot character education.

Now, across my congressional district, school leaders have developed character education initiatives that really are making a difference for stronger schools and better communities. Wake County, as I just mentioned, was one of the early leaders. Not only were they a leader by receiving the funds and initiating the project and having community meetings, because this truly is based at the school level and the community level; but they have become a leader through their innovative effort that they call *Uniting for Character*.

In that process, there are a number of principles that they focus on and that they come together on, which are respect, citizenship, justice and fairness, honesty, caring, respect and trustworthiness are the core; and each community must develop those issues that they believe in. What we recommend is that the educators, the par-

ents, the business community, all in the community come together and work together collaboratively to come up with those core issues that they want to use.

In Johnston County, another county in the district, they have come together and done theirs. The principal of Selma Elementary School, a school which I visited just a few weeks ago, attributes 59 fewer suspensions during the 1995-1996 school year to their character education program. They also attribute the fact that they have had academic growth, tremendous academic growth over the years and again this year, and I visited that school again to see what kind of progress they were making. They again are showing progress as a result of character education. It is not a program that teachers have to struggle with as another addition to their already crowded school day. It is integrated in the curriculum in the standard course of study that we use in North Carolina, and it is taught along with everything else they do, and I will talk about that more in just a few moments.

Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues and certainly others across the country may have seen the CBS News profile that was done several months ago on one of the successful character education programs in the Nash Rocky Mount school system, Baskerville Elementary School, a school that really was having a difficult time. They were having problems with truancy, they were having problems with discipline, their academics were suffering, and under the leadership of a dynamic principal named Anne Edge, she took this on, she got her staff involved, she got the community involved, and she literally indoctrinated the children in that school, and it is working well.

I visited there several weeks ago, and I can tell my colleagues as a result of that program being implemented properly and being supported by the community, supported by the central office staff and the local school board, that is one public school that has turned around and is making a difference and it has become infectious. It is working all across Nash Rocky Mount school system in North Carolina.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit Tramway Elementary School in Lee County, another school in my district where character education really fills the entire community with hope. I went into that school this morning, and I was so pleased to see the number of parents who were there. They were there participating, active in the school. They had other members of the school faculty there, but the impressive part of it was what was happening with the students. The young people in that classroom gave reports, probably half the class got up and read reports and shared with me and with the others present what character education had done, what a difference it had made, and the different character traits that

they had picked up as a result of reading such books over the last several months as Charlotte's Web and any other number of books that they had been assigned to read as special reading projects. That is what making good citizens is all about.

When we have good citizens in the classroom, we have good citizens in the school; and it flows over into the community, and it goes home with the children. They are reinforcing in Tramway Elementary and Baskerville Elementary and schools all across the second district, and certainly across North Carolina, what parents are teaching at home; and in some cases, children are taking it home and reinforcing it with parents and really helping parents understand.

I was in Combs Elementary School in Wake County, one of the first schools I visited talking about this issue of character education and the bill that I introduced on February 16 entitled character education, or Character Counts in the 21st Century. We have in that school children speaking languages from probably about 12 to 14 different countries. It was amazing how they were sharing and helping one another, talking about these issues of character that brings them together, that helps those children be better students academically and better students in terms of sharing within that school environment being good citizens.

Mr. Speaker, character education works because it teaches our children to see the world through a moral lens. Children learn that actions do have consequences, and if we deal with it at an early age with early intervention, we will see a difference not only in our classrooms, but in our communities and across this country, and many of the challenges that we are facing together we will not have to face in the future. Yes, we will continue to face the challenges in the adult community for years to come, but we need to get back to those principles that we talked about many years ago, and character education certainly works. It works when teachers work with parents and with children and with the entire community to instill a spirit of a shared responsibility.

That is why character education is so important, if we can get it on issues like this that are important to the community. Education is a shared responsibility. I try to remind my colleagues here and in every speech I give back home, education starts in the home; and if there is no education in the home, the challenge of teachers is almost insurmountable. How in the world, if we cannot teach one child or two children at home, do we expect a teacher to take the responsibility of 30? It is a shared responsibility.

When we talk about character education and we emphasize those values, as I talked about earlier, of courage, and certainly courage is important in everything we do; good judgment, as we talk to children; integrity in our

teaching every day in the various courses, whether it be math, whether it be history; kindness, in the things that children do for one another, and we reward those things. It is one thing to be punished; it is another thing to be rewarded when one does something good.

Children learn very quickly in life, if they get rewarded for doing good things, they will do good things again. And if they are not rewarded, and all they see is punishment and the dark side of life, I can tell my colleagues it will be difficult. Early intervention works. Kindness. Perseverance. We can teach it without having it laid on to something else. We can do it in the course of what we are teaching every day. How we respect one another. We respect other's property; we respect the school property, and it carries over into the community where young people work with their brothers and sisters, where they do it on the job. Self-discipline. Self-discipline is an important value. These are principles we can agree on. They are things that the community decides they want to do. It brings the PTAs together with the teachers, with the community interest. It is important.

As a father of two public school teachers, my heart aches for the victims of recent school violence. I can assure my colleagues that not only do the parents hurt, but so do all of those folks who work with children, whether it was in their school or not, because it affects them. The scars are there.

So rather than engaging in those divisive debates and partisan posturing, I call on my colleagues in this Congress on both sides of the aisle to pass progressive innovations that work, things like character education. It is not one-upmanship, even though I introduced it on February 16. It is going to take both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, working together to make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to my colleague from New York who has really been a leader not only on this issue of character education but in school construction and in the areas of education.

□ 2100

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), for all his good works and especially in introducing this piece of legislation. I think this is, I say to the gentleman, in all honesty, long overdue. We have to go back to teaching civics. We have to go back to teaching responsibility. We have to go back to teaching on self-worth.

How can a child have respect for others when the child does not even respect himself or herself? That is what this legislation, I believe, is attempting to do and will do teaching respect, citizenship, I will just list them, justice and fairness, honesty, caring, responsibility, trustworthiness. That al-

most sounds like the Boy Scout oath that I recollect as a child, but things that I think have been lost unfortunately, and not only reflective in schools, but just in general.

We see it on television. We see it in the movies, and that is what the children are exposed to today. They are not getting enough, I do not believe, of that attention on these issues in the classroom.

I do not understand what we are afraid of. I do not know what it is we are afraid of by instilling these into children, that is what is going to make them better individuals when they get older.

Going back again, as I said before, we cannot expect these children to have respect for others when they do not respect themselves. We see what is happening in our schools today. We see the violence that is coming out of our schools today and what is happening in schools, a 6-year-old child being shot to death by another 6-year-old child. It is incredible, incredible, but it is existing. It is happening.

Mr. Speaker, we have to do something about it. I am a strong proponent of gun control. I think we need to do something about that, but I think we have to do more than simply gun control. Instilling values, again, into children is really where we have to go.

And I say to the gentleman, you know how much I have been working with you on the issue of school modernization. This is a part of school modernization, school modernization and construction. We have to do more than build new schools and modernize those schools.

We have to build the character of the children that we are educating in those schools. We do have a responsibility. We do have to provide a seat for those children.

In my district, as the gentleman knows, School Districts 24 and 30 in New York City are in the top three most overcrowded school districts in the City in New York, the most overcrowded school district in the country.

We have over a million students in that school district. The average age of a school building in New York City is 55 years of age, and one out of every five is over 75 years of age.

We are teaching children in classrooms and schools that were built at the beginning of the last century. And as the gentleman was pointing out on the poster there, the issue of caring, what message are we sending back to our children when we do not give them the proper tools that they need to learn, to take it a step further, to prepare them for their life, to have a proper job, a pensionable job, to have the ability to invest.

Unless we instill in them the virtues that the gentleman is suggesting we do today, we are in deep, deep trouble. We have to go back to the way we used to do things I think, to new, modernized classrooms and to new schools, but to go back to the basics. I think that is where we have been lost.

I want to thank the gentleman for all of his hard work and leadership on this issue.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Reclaiming my time just one moment please. The gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) was talking about these things of school modernization; that is so critically important. I was in a school this morning that I was talking about and that is in Lee County in my district. It is a relatively new school within the last 2 years.

You can tell all the difference in the world when you go into the new school. It was a new building. They had moved from an old building into a new building. There was a corridor in the middle of the building that was open, one of the parents as a memorial to his mother, I believe it was, had planted flowers and kept them on a regular basis in planters, just a gorgeous area where children could go during the day, a little respite to get away for a child that goes to that school who may come from a home where there are no flowers, from a home where there is no caring for flowers.

Schools need to be safe havens for all children. It is important to teach all of these character traits, but for us as adults, as the gentleman has pointed out, it is very important that we live up to those. Children are a lot smarter than we give them credit.

I was listening to those children this morning when they went through talking about the character traits they had learned from each book they had read. They were seated on the floor in a carpeted classroom that was new and fresh. And it was nice.

Mr. Speaker, I could not help but think as I walked away what a difference it would make in this country if every child, every child in every community had a nice, spacious classroom, well lighted, well supplied with the resources that the teachers needed. And there was just an outstanding teacher there. It is a lot easier to recruit quality people in a quality facility and that goes to the point the gentleman was making. I would yield.

Mr. CROWLEY. It is a great point. I think maybe all too often we forget about those who are entrusted with an incredibly difficult job, but a so important job, and that is teaching our young.

We forget sometimes about the lack of resources that they have. We forget that they are also in those overcrowded classrooms; that they are called upon to perform duties without the proper resources, and in those same Archæan schools, they have their hands full.

Some may say what are we doing now, we are asking them to not only teach them math and science and history and reading, we have to transform them into mothers and fathers as well.

We are not really asking them to, mothers and fathers have a responsibility, but it is enhanced and reinforced by teachers. It is an incredible responsibility they have, but one we

ought to cherish more as a society. I do not quite frankly think we do enough.

I have, as the gentleman knows, a 6-month-old son at home. Every day I just take pride and joy in looking at him develop. He is 6 months now. In 6 more months he will be a year. It is not too far from now that he is going to be going to kindergarten and first grade. I am concerned about what environment he is going to be in and other children like him are going to be in.

It has changed my life incredibly, but it has also opened my eyes up in many respects to what we have to do, this Congress, individual States and local governments, but especially this Congress, to make sure that my son and other children like him have all that they can have to make the best of their lives.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman. When we think about it, I went into two schools today and last week I was in two others talking with children, school administrators, looking, listening, seeing what was going on.

Sometimes I am not real sure I am hearing what I hear, but I hear people say, it is not the Federal government's role, it is somebody else's role. We do not need to be doing this or doing that.

The gentleman was talking about his child who is 6 months now. I remember when we had one in elementary PTA and one in middle school PTA and one in high school PTA. It has changed our lives.

The point I want to make in talking about this whole role of education and who has responsibility, all of us do. There is a Federal, State, and local role. There is a parent's role and there is a community role.

I have never, in all the years I have been going into schools, 8 as a State superintendent and years before that as a county commissioner, a State legislator, and now a Congressman, I have never had a child nor an administrator nor a teacher ask me whether the money came from the Federal, State, or local. They just knew they did not have enough.

Even in some of the nicer schools we go into, and it is true in my State and I assume it is across the country, as the gentleman talked about earlier, these people are there because they care. They work hard. They take our most precious possessions, our children, and they work hard at educating them. But they have never asked me who provided the money. They do not really care. They just do not have enough.

I do not know of any PTA that is not selling something today or maybe having a fund-raising project to buy some resources for the school, because they in many cases are short something, copying paper or whatever it may be. The reason they do it is because they care. They care. And I care, as the gentleman cares. I hope more of our colleagues will care on both sides of the aisle, and make sure that we do not get

into partisan rhetoric of whether or not character education is in or whether or not we put money into school buildings or whether we put counselor money in or special education funds. We will never have enough resources to meet all the needs. We recognize that.

But as the gentleman pointed out, the commitment of caring and putting the resources we can will send a powerful signal that we will support those people who every day go in, and a lot of folks say at 8 and get off at 3, but it is not so any more. That is not so. Many of them show up at 6 and 7 for bus duty and a lot of other duty. At the end of the day when the children leave, they are still there tutoring or having a lot of activities in the evenings, or PTAs.

They are long hours for not the kind of pay that we ought to be giving them for the most precious thing we have in this country, and that is our children.

Mr. CROWLEY. I think the gentleman is absolutely right. I would also add that teaching these subjects in any which way that the curriculum will be developed, and I understand through the gentleman's legislation it would vary from school district to school district, and it could be done with the cooperation of businesses and local entities that would be able to come in and work on it as well, but I think in many respects, in many ways, by addressing these issues in a classroom, we can start to see through to some of the troubled students, and realize a little earlier some of the children who may not be coming around, who may still be outside the pale here, and get them the professional help they may need to bring them back in, as well.

Quite often really for children their first exposure to the general public and to other children outside the family is really in school; social development, where they really begin to do that is in school, and their first exposure. I think teachers more often than parents are in a position to see that these children interact with those who they may not be familiar with.

They are not experts, they are not psychiatrists or psychologists, and maybe sometimes we expect them to be everything. I do not mean to be saying that. But they are really in the front line, and they can see these children and they watch them develop, whether it be the principal or the guidance counselor or their home room teacher.

There are many ways in which they can teach these things. It can be taught in history classes. Certain aspects can be taught in science classes, language arts classes, on and on. There are different ways these can be taught and graded, as well. There has to be that grading. There has to be that responsibility. There has to be reporting back so someone is accountable. I think this is really what is sorely missing in our schools today.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman touched on the accountability piece, because that is part of the accountability piece, responsibility.

The point the gentleman made about children in schools and how much they can be impressed by their teachers, that is true. I am sure the gentleman can think of a teacher that made a difference in his life. I certainly can, my fifth grade teacher, who is still living. I visit with her from time to time and call on her, Ms. Barbara. She is a delightful lady.

I think of my own children. The gentleman will do this as he goes through with his child, as he goes to school. The first thing is, the child has a good-looking teacher, the teacher becomes their first girlfriend, in some cases.

Mr. CROWLEY. I had a couple of those myself. I hope my wife is not listening.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. My older son liked one of the teachers. We had her home for dinner because he just idolized her. All of a sudden, that is why this is so important to be taught and integrated in the curriculum, because teachers do have a significant impact. They can change lives, there is no question. They are changing lives every single day in classrooms across this country, because those young minds are like little sponges, they really are. They can be changed and molded for good.

I certainly know teachers made a difference in my life, and in telling me that I could be whatever I wanted to be. I never had the idea of being in the United States Congress, but they at least told me I could go to college. For a lot of children, that is what they need.

I think the gentleman is absolutely correct in what he said. Teachers have a great opportunity. I think we have a great challenge of honoring what they do every day.

Mr. CROWLEY. I think in many respects teachers are doing these things already, too, in an informal way, inspiring young people, but they are not getting everyone. It is almost impossible to get everyone.

I daresay if this bill became law, we are still never going to get everyone, but I think we would get a lot more than we are getting right now. There would be more accountability on these issues.

□ 2115

I certainly remember teachers that influenced my life in so many, many different ways. But one of the things I see that is missing today in my district is a lack of a sense of involvement by young people in the community. I do not see the volunteerism. I do not see the dedication towards voting, being inspired to want to get out. That is not universal, but I do not see enough of it where we see young people wanting to get out and vote, wanting to learn who their elected officials are, what the process is about.

I am almost amazed sometimes when I go to a school and teach, like many of us do, a little government class. They have some ideas and some concept. They are obviously learning. But they

have not put the whole thing together yet. That is because they do not think they are living it. They are learning about it, but they are not living it. They are not really going out to the community and putting what they are learning in schools together.

I think going back to the gentleman's bill again, learning about respect, citizenship, justice and fairness, caring, those are words that say to me, one cannot just do it in school, one has to do it elsewhere, in the home, and, as the gentleman says, in the broader community. I think what we are making is better citizens.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, what the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) is really talking about is civic responsibility. It has to start at a young age, and we reinforce it every step along the way with teachers in the classroom, with parents, in the community, where students come in contact with one another. I have seen that over the last several weeks in visiting schools.

I would even encourage my colleagues here to go in and talk with students as much as they can. I think they appreciate it. I think the schools appreciate it. The teachers do. Because it makes all the difference in the world.

I remember growing up, I never remember seeing an elected official in my school that I remember. I really do not. A Member of the United States Congress I know I did not see. But I think it makes a difference.

I agree with the gentleman from New York, teachers are doing it in a number of ways. But I think if we can formalize it in a way, and with this, it would allow the Secretary of Education to provide grants to those communities on a one-time basis to pool these groups together, because one does need some resources to facilitate the community coming together, to at least define these issues or other issues that they think are as important to that community.

Ultimately, we start to see the point the gentleman from New York made earlier, the involvement of the community in that public school, because it is about the public, bringing them to that school, getting their involvement. Because children can feel when their parents are concerned about the school. They will ask the questions. Then we start seeing it turns into academics.

I know in our State, North Carolina, we have seen, over the last 7 or 8 years, academic scores go up in every category, one of two States in the Nation where it is happening, and our discipline problems have gone down.

Now, I think it is part of that is, number one, we have good people in the classroom. That is the beginning point. But, secondly, we do have a lot of character education in a lot of our schools. Thirdly, we have started to put more resources, we need to do more of that.

A lot of things that we need to do, I do not know that there is any one thing, but there is one thing about it,

if we start with the good core principles of developing strong character, we can build a lot of things around that foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, the one thing I think I would like to say is that it is heartening to know, I guess to a degree, that a Yankee from New York and a southern gentleman from North Carolina share similar concerns and have similar problems as well in terms of overcrowding and old school buildings, but also on these issues that the gentleman from North Carolina is talking about.

This is universal. This is not a New York issue. This is not a California issue. It is not a North Carolina issue. It is not a Democratic from the party sense, it is not a Democrat or Republican issue, it is really an American issue. It is an issue we all have to grapple with and we should all be working on, not trying to, as the gentleman said before, to create one-up-one-upmanship. This is something we should all be working on together.

If one asks the average Member here, I think everyone would be in agreement, I think they agree 100 percent, these are the things that we believe are lacking right now. I do not see politics coming into play here. It is common sense to me. This is all pure common sense.

It is my hope doing these special orders and talking about the legislation of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) and other bills as well, like the Rangel-Etheridge School Construction and Modernization bill, again, to me, it is not about politics.

Children do not know Democrat or Republican, they are just learning about it. In the first grade, they have an idea who George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were, but they do not know what party they belong to. Really, this is about children. Black, white, it makes no difference, they are all the same. They all deserve to have equal treatment. A part of that equal treatment is being exposed to these very issues the gentleman is talking about.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I could not help but thinking as the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) was going through it, we talk about children. If one goes in certainly the early classrooms, early years, kindergarten, prekindergarten, first, second grade, their eyes are so bright, they have such visions and opportunity, and they are so trusting. If we can capture that, we can help them there, we can make a difference.

One of the leading newspapers in our States said a number of years ago, and they are absolutely correct, and I have used it a number of times since then, they said that children do not know what they need, they only know what they get. It is our responsibility as adults, as policy makers at every level to make sure they get what they need to be good citizens, to be well educated,

and make sure the 21st Century is productive for them so that those of us who are now adults are a lot better off.

It is like one of my friends said when we had a study commission, and I appointed one to get some things done, he was a corporate head of a large corporation. He came to North Carolina from New York, an outstanding citizen, never finished high school. Never went to college. He made a substantial sum of money. He said, I am a lucky fellow. He said, I may never see anyone else like me. He said, but I am going to make sure every child that comes through these public schools has the best opportunity they can have, because I do not care what they look like or where they come from, I want them to get a good education and make a lot of money because I want to draw my Social Security when I retire. So I have always remembered that.

But getting back to this issue of character and really formalizing that in our public schools, I agree with the gentleman from New York. I do think that it is important that every child be exposed to these types of principles, hopefully in every classroom, that is agreed to by the school community and the broader community. I know it will have an impact. It has in North Carolina on discipline, on academics. When children feel good about themselves, they have their own self-respect, their own inner strength, they do so much better. They do so much better.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. I hate to keep harkening back to my own problems back in New York. It is sometimes difficult for me to imagine, though, how children who are being taught in hallways, are being taught in closets, or school rooms that were once bathrooms, those are really some of the problems that our teachers are faced with and our administrators in New York City.

I guess if I lived in other parts of the country, I would have a hard time believing as well that that is how we can treat our children. I think I said it to the gentleman from North Carolina once I heard that Reverend Jackson had taken a number of children from inner-city schools in Chicago and brought them out to the suburbs and showed them what it was like in those suburban schools. What I thought was more important, he took those children from the suburbs and brought them back to the city to show those children what the city schools are like and what they were not afforded in those schools.

I think the same can be done in my district. We are lacking so much in terms of proper environments to, as the gentleman said before, caring, instilling that in children.

Getting back into buildings, we really have to address that issue. I do not want to wait to address that issue before we start addressing this issue as well. But sometimes it can be difficult to imagine how can we do this, how can we teach all these issues, respect and

caring and honesty and justice and fairness and citizenship, when children are being taught in makeshift classrooms and hallways. There is no gym anymore because it has been put into cubicles so children can have a seat in a classroom.

What we are facing in my district is that, by the year 2007, if we do not do more, we are going to be between 20,000 and 60,000 seats shy in Queens County alone. Queens County is going to be between 20,000 and 60,000 seats shy. It is a major, major crisis. So it is sometimes hard for me to imagine how we can do it.

We have great teachers in New York City. We really do, fantastic and dedicated people. But it is hard to imagine how can they do it. They have to.

We need to do this, and we cannot wait for the other to get done first. We have got to address both. But it is an awesome task and awesome responsibility. But I do hope, despite our problems in New York, that this bill does become more.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I think it comes back to the issue that the gentleman from New York raised earlier. We have to do it whether it is done at the Federal, State, local, however, jointly get the job done.

In my district, well in North Carolina as a State, over the next 10 years, we are projected to be the fifth fastest growing State in the Nation in school population. We cannot build schools fast enough. Yet, I went by a school, visited a school earlier this morning where my children used to go. It is a fairly new school by school standards. They had trailers all over the place. All the inside interior of the building, like the gentleman from New York was saying, the lounge was now a classroom. It was never built for a classroom. It was a small area where one was tutoring students. That is not acceptable. That is not acceptable. They are doing it, but it is not acceptable.

One can talk about these principles, and one can teach them, and teachers can reinforce them. But children also understand that somewhere along the line somebody is not being quite honest with them when they say they do not have the resources when they see other nice new buildings going up or they think they are not really caring whether other things are happening when they could provide those resources. Children do not know what they need. They only know what they get.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, just going back to the list of the gentleman from North Carolina again, it is a lack of responsibility, a lack of caring, a lack of being honest, a lack of justice and fairness, a lack of respect.

A word that is not up there but I think is encompassed in all of that I think is dignity. There is no dignity here if we are not teaching these points we are talking about here. But more importantly, if we are not demonstrating it on a daily basis in school construction and modernization, giving

them the tools and making sure the teachers are prepared are really all a part of that. But right now, if we do not provide these, we are guilty of not showing the true dignity of the student and the individual and the human being.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for sharing with me his time this afternoon and sharing with my colleagues and the people the critical needs of, not only character education, but this whole issue of education that he cares so much about and has worked so hard on here, and I thank him for it.

As we work together with our colleagues to make sure that, not only is character education integrated and a part of our curriculum in the future, but all of these issues of education continue to be at the top of our agenda. Because if we are going to have the kind of future we want to have in the 21st century, and America continues to be strong and a Nation that leads the world, we will do it through one thing. We will do it through education and providing those opportunities to our children and all the children of this country, no matter where they may live, no matter what their economic background might happen to be.

□ 2130

HMO LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to clarify points about HMO legislation before Congress for my colleagues, particularly members of the conference committee, and to specifically address two memoranda that have been recently released by the Heritage Foundation and one by the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Heritage Foundation Background N1350, The Patients' Bill of Rights, Prescription for Massive Federal Health Regulation, by John Hoff; to Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum 658, Why the Texas HMO Liability Law is Not a Proven Model for Congress; and to a letter by Mary Nell Leonard, Senior Vice President of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, with accompanying memo, A Regulatory Quagmire, Questions and Answers about the Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999.

Mr. Speaker, these memos are primarily a rehash of previous arguments that have been made frequently on the floor. We had several days of full debate on the Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act, and we debated all of these issues. However, these repackaged arguments deserve comment, I think, precisely because they are so specious.