
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 7218 of August 27, 1999

The President

America Goes Back to School, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education has always been at the heart of opportunity in America. It opens doors for our young people, gives them the tools they need to succeed, and instills in them a sense of responsibility as they strive to make the most of their lives. However, while the importance of education is unchanging, the challenges facing America's schools and students are not. There are now more children, from more diverse backgrounds, in our public schools than at any time in our country's history. We must ensure that their education gives them the knowledge and skills they need to help our Nation thrive in the new century.

America's current prosperity offers us an unprecedented opportunity to invest in our children's education. I am proud that we have begun that task by opening the doors of college to all our young people with tax credits and more affordable student loans, more Pell grants and work-study jobs, education IRAs, and the new HOPE Scholarship tax cut that more than 5 million Americans will have received by the end of this year. I have also announced \$43 million in grants to help States and communities to recruit talented people into teaching jobs and improve the quality of teaching nationwide.

These are important accomplishments, but we must build on them. The goal of the America Goes Back to School initiative is to support family and community involvement in childhood learning and to build strong community support for our schools, teachers, and students.

This year's theme—"Challenge Our Students and They Will Soar"—reflects our faith in America's youth and our commitment to providing them with the tools they need to succeed in our rapidly changing world. We must turn around failing schools, hold States and school districts accountable for helping all children reach high academic standards, support charter schools and other forms of public school choice, expand after-school and summer programs, develop pathways to college and careers, and provide safe, drug-free schools for all our children. We must ensure that all our students have access to computers and that every classroom and library is connected to the Internet. If we want our children to compete at a world-class level, they must have modern, world-class schools. I am therefore challenging the Congress to enact my proposals to build and modernize 6,000 public schools; and I am also asking the Congress to continue funding to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades, the years that we know—intuitively and through research—are critical to the development of children's learning and thinking skills.

My Administration is working hard to improve our Nation's education system, but no government effort can replace the vision, encouragement, and dedication of our families and communities. As America's students go back to school this year, let us pledge to provide every child with a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and grow, and let us ensure that every segment of our society is involved in the effort. Let us also resolve that our young people will return to schools that are genuine places

of learning, where they receive the care, attention, and education they need to reach their full potential.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 29 through September 11, 1999, as a time when America Goes Back to School. I encourage parents, schools, community and State leaders, businesses, civic and religious organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this period with appropriate ceremonies and activities expressing support for high academic standards and promoting family and community involvement in providing a quality education for every child.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.



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