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Year of Excellence in Education

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We live in times that are unforgiving of mediocrity, poor citizenship and lack of interest in the world about us. Mankind has rarely faced a period in which preservation of world peace and economic vitality depend more upon the able citizenship of individuals. Our world is becoming smaller each day. Lack of understanding about technological developments or events in even the most remote corners of the globe may affect all our lives.

All Americans are aware of this tremendous responsibility, and we are proud to focus on the need for excellence in education. Every child is a precious resource whose potential should be realized to the fullest. Only informed citizens can preserve our priceless legacy of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

Our modern technological society is imposing new demands on schools. The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education and a number of other studies urgently advocate a national effort to revitalize teaching and learning in the 15,800 local school districts and thousands of private schools in our land. Quality education for teachers, recognition of the best in their profession through merit pay, and the restoration of their authority and that of other school officials to maintain respect and discipline in the classroom are essential to guarantee quality education for our Nation's future leaders. We also need to follow a back to basics approach emphasizing fundamental scholastic achievement. Parental and community involvement must be enlarged, and there must be greater participation by business, industries, and individuals. One way to facilitate the involvement of the private sector is to widen the Adopt-a-School and partnership programs that seek to link a company or companies to an individual school.

This same report stated that the declining educational achievement of our schools had left America "a nation at risk." It went on to emphasize that our determination to address this challenge successfully would determine whether America's place in the world will be secured or forfeited.

As a free and democratic people, we depend on the sound judgment of our fellow citizens. Quality education contributes in a major way to that judgment. There are few more important issues before us, for, as Thomas Jefferson once wrote: "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion."

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 210, has designated the period commencing April 1, 1984, and ending March 31, 1985, as the "Year of Excellence in Education," and has authorized and requested the President to issue an appropriate proclamation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the period commencing April 1, 1984, and ending March 31, 1985, as the Year of Excellence in Education. In recognition of the vital role education plays in our Nation, I encourage parents, teachers, administrators, government officials, and the people of the United States to observe the year with activities aimed at restoring the American educational system to its place of preeminence among nations of the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighth.

Ronald Reagan