

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY GOVERNOR JIM FLORIO
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TEN YEARS AGO THE REPORT "A NATION AT RISK" WARNED US THAT OUR STANDARD OF LIVING WAS IN DANGER OF BEING WASHED AWAY BY A "RISING TIDE OF MEDIOCRITY" IN OUR SCHOOLS.

SINCE THEN, WE, AS A NATION, HAVE BEEN BUSY STUDYING OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS, WRITING NEW RULES AND STANDARDS, AND WORRYING ABOUT WHETHER OUR STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO COMPETE WITH THEIR PEERS IN GERMANY AND JAPAN.

THE RESULT?

THE TIDE IS STILL RISING. NOW, INSTEAD OF BEING SHIN-DEEP IN MEDIOCRITY, MANY BELIEVE WE SEEM TO BE ALMOST DROWNING IT.

ACCORDING TO A NEW REPORT BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HALF OF ALL AMERICAN ADULTS ARE NOW FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE.

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

HOW COULD WE BE RUNNING SO HARD, AND FALLING SO FAR BEHIND?

THE ANSWER, I THINK, LIES IN THE FACT THAT WE'VE LOST SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT REAL PROGRESS IN EDUCATION TAKES PLACE BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENT, WITH PARENTS INVOLVED IN REINFORCING WHAT IS LEARNED IN SCHOOL.

INSTEAD OF BUILDING ON THAT FUNDAMENTAL FACT, WE HAVE IMMERSSED OUR SCHOOLS IN PAPERWORK AND BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE IN AN EFFORT TO DICTATE THAT THINGS WILL GET BETTER.

WE HAVE DONE TO OUR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS PRECISELY WHAT WE HAVE DONE TO OUR NURSES IN HOSPITALS -- MADE THEM SPEND AS MUCH TIME WORRYING ABOUT MEETING ALL THE RULES AND REGULATIONS AS THEY DO WHETHER THEIR STUDENTS AND PATIENTS ARE GETTING THE HELP THEY REALLY NEED. WASHINGTON SETS RULES. TRENTON SETS RULES. SCHOOL DISTRICTS SET RULES.

MEANWHILE, THE WORLD AROUND US IS CHANGING EXPONENTIALLY, AND WE ARE FALLING BEHIND.

ADVANCES IN COMMUNICATION HAVE MADE THE WORLD A SMALLER PLACE.

THE CHANGES IN OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES HAVE, IN SOME CASES, ADDED PRESSURES TO OUR SCHOOLS THAT WERE NOT THERE BEFORE.

SOME PEOPLE SAY THE ANSWER TO THESE CHANGES IS ALL A MATTER OF MONEY. IF WE WOULD JUST SPEND MORE, OUR CHILDREN WILL LEARN MORE.

I CAN'T AGREE WITH THAT POINT OF VIEW. THE FACTS JUST DON'T BEAR IT OUT.

AND SOME SAY THAT OUR SCHOOLS ARE ALREADY TOO EXPENSIVE AND WE SHOULD REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF MONEY WE INVEST IN EDUCATION.

I CAN'T AGREE WITH THAT VIEW, EITHER, BECAUSE YOU CAN'T GET WHAT CHILDREN NEED FOR FREE. UP-TO-DATE BOOKS, SAFE AND CLEAN SCHOOLS, GOOD TEACHERS, COMPUTERS, SCIENCE LABS -- THEY ALL COST MONEY.

SO WHERE ARE WE?

WE, AND 35 OTHER STATES, ARE STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLS THAT ARE IN TROUBLE AND COURTS THAT ARE TRYING TO FIND THE ANSWER.

IN NEW JERSEY, WE ARE AGAIN FACING A COURT DECISION ON WHETHER WE NEED TO SPEND MORE MONEY IN OUR SCHOOLS. AFTER WE, THE TAXPAYERS OF THIS STATE, HAVE PUT AN ADDITIONAL \$1.3 BILLION IN OUR SCHOOLS. AFTER WE, THE TAXPAYERS OF THIS STATE, SPEND MORE PER PUPIL THAN VIRTUALLY ANY OTHER STATE IN THE UNION.

WE HAVE NOT, IN NEW JERSEY, PUT OUR KIDS LAST. WE HAVE PUT THEM FIRST -- AND THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE. WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF WHAT WE'VE DONE -- NO MATTER WHAT ANY COURT SAYS.

AND THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT WE'VE SEEN IMPROVEMENTS FROM THESE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS. BUT IN TERMS OF OUTCOMES -- STUDENT PERFORMANCE -- WE STILL HAVE LOTS OF WORK AHEAD OF US.

BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT STEPS IN AGAIN AND SAYS "SPEND MORE MONEY," AND BEFORE ANYONE TALKS ABOUT MORE TAX DOLLARS -- OR TAKING MONEY AWAY FROM MIDDLE-CLASS DISTRICTS, I THINK WE ALL NEED TO PAUSE AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

WE OWE IT TO OUR CHILDREN TO ASK TWO FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:

ONE, ARE WE SURE THAT OUR CURRENT DOLLARS ARE BEING SPENT AS WELL AS THEY COULD BE FOR THE BENEFIT OF CHILDREN? IF NOT, WHAT CAN AND SHOULD WE BE DOING TO IMPROVE THAT BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT DEVOTING ADDITIONAL DOLLARS?

TWO, ARE THERE OTHER THINGS THAT WE CAN AND SHOULD BE DOING TO HELP OUR SCHOOLS EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN BETTER? IF SO, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

I BELIEVE WE SHOULD NOT, AT THIS TIME, BE TALKING ABOUT SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL DOLLARS FOR EDUCATION UNTIL WE ADDRESS SOME OF THE OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING OUR SCHOOLS, HERE IN NEW JERSEY AND ACROSS THE NATION.

WHAT WE NEED TO FOCUS ON IS HOW TO BUILD A NEW SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES.

AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT ABANDONING OUR SCHOOLS, THE WAY ADVOCATES OF VOUCHERS WANT.

I'M TALKING ABOUT REINVENTING OUR SCHOOLS, FROM THE BOTTOM UP.

THE FACT IS, OUR SCHOOLS -- LIKE OUR INDUSTRIES -- MUST CHANGE DRAMATICALLY IF NEW JERSEY IS GOING TO BE A TRUE COMPETITOR IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE OF THE FUTURE.

WE NEED TO LET GO OF THE OBSOLETE TRADITIONS AND WORN-OUT ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PAST AND CREATE NEW SCHOOLS THAT SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE.

WE HEAR A LOT OF TALK TODAY ABOUT THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, THE WELFARE SYSTEM, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

THAT'S NO ACCIDENT. IT REFLECTS OUR GROWING UNDERSTANDING THAT PIECEMEAL CHANGES AREN'T ENOUGH. WHAT HAPPENS IN ONE HOSPITAL -- OR ONE SCHOOL -- IS SHAPED BY THE POLICIES AND RULES, THE INCENTIVES AND DISINCENTIVES OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM.

SO WE NEED TO CHANGE THE RULES FOR SCHOOLS IN NEW JERSEY. AND WE ARE.

WE'RE TAKING A PAGE FROM BUSINESSES. WE'RE DECENTRALIZING, CUTTING RED TAPE AND TRYING NEW IDEAS.

OUR EFFORTS ARE BASED ON FOUR BASIC RULES:

ONE: WE NEED TO FOCUS OUR REFORM EFFORTS ON SCHOOLS, NOT SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

TWO: WE NEED TO SET HIGH STANDARDS AND COMMUNICATE THEM CLEARLY.

THREE: WE NEED TO GIVE EDUCATORS THE FLEXIBILITY TO MEET THOSE STANDARDS.

LAST -- BUT DEFINITELY NOT LEAST -- WE NEED TO HOLD SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS.

THERE IS NO SINGLE "RIGHT WAY" TO RUN A SCHOOL, JUST LIKE THERE'S NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO RUN A BUSINESS. CHILDREN'S LEARNING STYLES ARE TOO DIVERSE FOR A "COOKIE CUTTER" APPROACH TO EDUCATION.

WHAT WORKS IN ONE SCHOOL MAY NOT WORK IN ANOTHER SCHOOL ACROSS THE STATE -- OR EVEN ACROSS TOWN. AND WHAT WORKS IN SOME BUREAUCRAT'S OFFICE IN TRENTON MAY NOT WORK ANYWHERE ELSE.

SO WE'RE AIMING OUR EFFORTS AT SCHOOLS. AND, WE'RE GIVING THE PEOPLE IN OUR SCHOOLS A GREATER SAY IN HOW WE RUN OUR SCHOOLS.

WE'RE ASKING SUPERINTENDENTS AND SCHOOL BOARDS TO PUT MORE POWER FOR MAKING CERTAIN DECISIONS INTO THE HANDS OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS AND PARENTS.

INSTEAD OF TELLING EDUCATORS EXACTLY WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT, WE'RE TELLING EDUCATORS WHAT WE EXPECT. WE'RE CUTTING RED TAPE. THEN WE'RE GETTING OUT OF THEIR WAY. THAT'S WHAT OUR NEW MONITORING STANDARDS, WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT THIS YEAR, ARE ABOUT. SAME WITH OUR "CORE COURSE PROFICIENCIES." WE'RE TELLING EDUCATORS WHAT TO TEACH, NOT HOW TO TEACH.

BY STREAMLINING REGULATIONS AND GRANTING WAIVERS WHERE PEOPLE HAVE BETTER IDEAS, WE'LL ENCOURAGE INNOVATION -- AND SAVE MONEY.

LAST WEEK OUR COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD ASKED EDUCATORS TO TELL HER HOW TRENTON COULD GET OUT OF THEIR WAY. THE STORIES WERE ASTOUNDING.

ONE SUPERINTENDENT TALKED ABOUT A LIBRARY HIS DISTRICT BUILT. IT COST TENS OF THOUSANDS MORE THAN IT SHOULD HAVE BECAUSE SOME BUREAUCRAT, SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME DECIDED YOU NEED TWICE AS MANY SQUARE FEET PER STUDENT FOR A LIBRARY THAN YOU DO FOR A GYM. THAT'S TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INVEST IN PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLASSES, IN SCIENCE LABS AND NEW TEXTBOOKS. AND THAT'S WRONG.

WE'RE ALSO ASKING SCHOOLS TO SHARE SOME OF THEIR POWER WITH PARENTS.

WHEN WE ADOPTED THE SIX NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS, WE ADDED A SEVENTH: INCREASING PARENT INVOLVEMENT. NO OTHER STATE HAS DONE THAT. WHY DID WE? BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT PARENTS' SUPPORT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION WE CAN HAVE.

SO THIS YEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE'RE REQUIRING EVERY SCHOOL TO APPOINT A "PLANNING TEAM" THAT INCLUDES PARENTS.

AND WE NEED TO DO EVEN MORE.

MORE MAGNET SCHOOLS TO GIVE PARENTS A REAL CHOICE WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES ABOUT THE KINDS OF SCHOOLS THEIR CHILDREN ATTEND.

WE NEED TO MOVE FORWARD ON CHARTER SCHOOLS. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS-AS-USUAL IS LIKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD GM ASSEMBLY LINE AND THE NEW SATURN TEAM ASSEMBLY PLANTS.

BY BROADENING THE RANGE OF CHOICES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, WE'LL BREAK THE DULL LOCKSTEP OF BUREAUCRACY AND INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM TO CHANGE.

IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS NEW AUTONOMY, SCHOOLS MUST ACCEPT NEW RESPONSIBILITIES. AND WE MUST DEVELOP NEW MEASUREMENTS TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE MEETING THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES.

SO WE'RE STRENGTHENING OUR TESTING PROGRAM. THIS YEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME, STUDENTS MUST SHOW THAT THEY HAVE MASTERED 11TH GRADE SKILLS TO GRADUATE, NOT NINTH-GRADE SKILLS.

THIS THURSDAY, WE'LL BE RELEASING OUR THIRD ANNUAL REPORT ON NEW JERSEY'S PROGRESS TOWARDS MEETING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS.

AND NEXT WEEK, SCHOOLS WILL BE ISSUING REPORT CARDS THAT TELL PARENTS HOW THEIR SCHOOLS MEASURE UP IN ABOUT A DOZEN CRITICAL AREAS, FROM TEST SCORES TO TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS TO THE PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES WHO GO ON TO COLLEGE.

THE ULTIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY TOOL, OF COURSE, IS INTERVENTION. IF A SCHOOL DISTRICT CAN'T OR WON'T MAKE THE GRADE, WE'LL STEP IN AND RUN IT. WE'RE DOING IT IN JERSEY CITY AND PATERSON. AND WHILE THE PRELIMINARY WORK IS BEING DONE TO DETERMINE WHETHER A TAKEOVER IS NEEDED IN NEWARK, I WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT IF DR. FITZGERALD AND THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS CONCLUDE THAT IT IS THE RIGHT COURSE, THEN IT SHOULD HAPPEN WITHOUT DELAY. OUR KIDS WILL NOT BE HELD HOSTAGE TO POLITICS.

SO THOSE ARE THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR OUR SCHOOLS:

FOCUS ON SCHOOLS.

SET HIGH STANDARDS AND COMMUNICATE THEM CLEARLY.

GIVE SCHOOLS THE FLEXIBILITY TO MEET THOSE STANDARDS.

AND JUDGE THEM ON THE RESULTS.

I BELIEVE IN ACCOUNTABILITY. I BELIEVE IN SETTING HIGH STANDARDS, AND CHALLENGING OUR SCHOOLS, OUR TEACHERS AND OUR PRINCIPALS TO MEET THEM. BUT IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY FROM TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS -- BUT NOT FROM POLITICIANS.

AS GOVERNOR, YOU KNOW THAT I HAVE BEEN FULLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR EVERY HARD CHOICE, EVERY TOUGH DECISION, EVERY CLOSE CALL I'VE HAD TO MAKE. THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE.

EVERYONE WHO SEEKS THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE. I DO NOT BELIEVE MY OPPONENT HAS MET EVEN THE MINIMUM THRESHHOLD OF ACCOUTABILITY.

THINK ABOUT IT THIS WAY: IF YOU WERE GOVERNOR, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A SCHOOL DISTRICT CAME TO YOU AND SAID, "GOVERNOR, WE'LL FIX ALL OUR EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS IF YOU'LL GIVE US ANOTHER \$50 MILLION. NOW, WE WON'T TELL YOU WHAT WE'LL DO WITH THE MONEY OR WHY WE NEED IT. JUST CUT THE CHECK AND WE'LL FILL IN THE DETAILS LATER." YOU WOULD TOSS THEM OUT THE DOOR SO FAST THEIR HEADS WOULD SPIN.

BUT THAT'S WHAT MRS. WHITMAN IS DOING TO THE VOTERS OF NEW JERSEY. SHE CLAIMS THAT SHE CAN CUT TAXES 30 PERCENT, WITH THE EFFECT THAT THE REVENUES WILL BE CUT BY \$1.5 BILLION DOLLARS. AND THAT IS HER PLAN... BOTH PAGES OF IT. SHE MAKES A BILLION-AND-A-HALF-DOLLAR PROMISE, AND OFFERS NO SPECIFICS ON WHERE THE MONEY IS COMING FROM. SHE TALKS VAGUELY ABOUT DEEP CUTS IN STATE

GOVERNMENT SPENDING. BUT THEN SHE TELLS A LABOR UNION THAT REPRESENTS THOUSANDS OF STATE WORKERS -- SOME OF WHOM ARE ANGRY WITH ME BECAUSE I'VE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF STATE EMPLOYEES -- "WE'RE NOT CUTTING STATE GOVERNMENT. WE'RE JUST CUTTING ITS RATE OF GROWTH."

NOT CUTTING STATE GOVERNMENT? IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN CUT \$1.5 BILLION DOLLARS AND NOT CUT STATE GOVERNMENT -- ONLY REDUCE THE RATE OF GROWTH -- THEN I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU THE FIRST BID ON A LOVELY BRIDGE THAT'S JUST COME ON THE MARKET OVER IN BROOKLYN.

LET ME MAKE THIS CLEAR: I DO NOT BELIEVE CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN HAS A GOOD PLAN TO CUT TAXES AND SPENDING. I DO NOT BELIEVE SHE HAS A BAD PLAN TO CUT TAXES AND SPENDING. I DO NOT BELIEVE SHE HAS A SECRET PLAN TO CUT TAXES AND SPENDING. I BELIEVE SHE HAS NO PLAN AT ALL.

MRS. WHITMAN HAS GOT HER EYE ON ONE GOAL: NOVEMBER 2.

BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE GOVERNOR, YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO LOOK BEYOND THE NEXT ELECTION, TO THE NEXT GENERATION.

YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A VISION AND A PLAN -- TO CREATE GOOD SCHOOLS AND GOOD JOBS AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS IT TAKES TO KEEP NEW JERSEY A PLACE OF OPPORTUNITY. AND YOU'VE GOT TO WORK TO MAKE THAT PLAN A REALITY.

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING FOR THESE LAST THREE AND A HALF YEARS. AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KEEP ON DOING. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.