

Defining Education in America: Beyond the Bridge into the 21st Century
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"We don't have as much time as people think" to reform the schools. Without fundamental reform, there will be a constantly widening gulf between the highly educated, well paid segment of the work force and those who have not received an adequate education. Arkansas Governor William J. Clinton, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 1987.

The role that education in the United States was to play during the Clinton Presidency had been identified in advance of The White House years and would serve as a major hallmark of the Presidency.

The National Education Goals established in 1990 defined the position of education in America by the year 2000. William Clinton was one of the designers of the program as Chair of the National Governors Conference. It was during his administration as President that most of the work to achieve those goals had to be completed.

Education in the United States is a function of each state as defined by the U.S. Constitution. The involvement in education by the Federal government has been a recent activity and one that has stirred much debate. The failure of many schools and the lack of academic achievement of students caused education to become a national concern.

The paper primarily centers on the role that William Clinton played in keeping the focus of educational reform in the hands of local policymakers while addressing national needs for clusters of student, teachers and parents across the nation.

The work of the Clinton Administration started in developing programs that would support research based education initiatives. New approaches were used in breaking the gridlock in Congress in writing legislation that could deliver on the promise of school improvement while respecting local authority. The Administration created and opened new doors by developing programs that would expand participation of more parents and corporations in the support of the educational advancement of all generations in the United States.

By 1995 the National Education Goals Panel reported progress on the year 2000 objectives, but made recommendations that would support new efforts to educate new teachers coming into the schools and new involvement of parents in the school community setting. New legislation addressed the teacher education question and set up as wide range of Federal programs that supported the development of student achieving schools.

The paper defined the Clinton Era in light of the Schools being held accountable for achievement and the teachers being educated to work with diverse students coming from different communities. The paper presents national data that reflects on the delivery of programs and the success or failure of those programs by the end of the Presidency.