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## *Senate*

### **BETTER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ACT**

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, my grandparents were born around the beginning of the 20th century and lived for much of the 20th century. In the early part of the last century, my grandparents and their generation--actually my parents and their generation--were able to find jobs and become employed not so much because of the strength of their minds but because of the strength of their backs.

As we moved throughout the 20th century, the time came when more and more it was important that we knew how to read and how to write, knew how to do math and eventually to use technology, if we were going to get some of the better jobs available in our country. As we now move into the 21st century, that will be only more true.

The last century has been called by some the American century. If the 21st century is to be another American century, it is important that our young people have the kind of skills that will enable our employers to be successful in an increasingly competitive world marketplace.

I believe among the reasons we have been remarkably successful as a nation over the last century is that we have taken our core democratic values, our democratic principles, combined those with the free enterprise system, and added to that a belief in free public education now for just about everybody in our country. Blending those disparate elements together, we ended up with an economic engine, as we close one

century and walk into the next, that is, frankly, unrivaled by any other on the face of the Earth.

That was yesterday's news. The question is, How are we going to fare for the next 100 years? For the past decade or so, we have heard increasing cries of concern that too often the skills our young people are bringing out of the high schools from which they in many cases graduate are not preparing them for college, not preparing them adequately for the workforce. We have heard calls from all levels of government, particularly State and local, to do something about it.

As a Governor for the last 8 years, I know full well we have done a lot more in the States than just wring our hands and cry in anguish. We have done a great deal to try to ensure that my children and the children of the generation of kids in school with them and those to follow, when they graduate with that diploma, will really mean something. It will mean that they do know how to read and understand what they have read, that they do know how to do math--in some cases pretty complex math--they know how to use technology, they know how to think, and they are prepared to go on to be successful in college and in the world and in life.

Throughout the country over the last 7 years--maybe the last 8 years--States have been involved in adopting academic standards. What is an academic standard? It

spells out in a State such as Delaware, or any other State, what we expect students to know and to be able to do, such as standards in math, science, English, social studies, and in other subject areas as well. If you look at the 49 States that have adopted standards, most of them spell out clearly what they expect their students to be able to do in math, science, English, and social studies.

In recent years, maybe a bit more than half of our States have developed tests to measure student progress in the standards in math, science, English, and social studies that those States have adopted. They give those tests usually every year. In our State, it is annually in the spring, and it is given to students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10.

Now, almost half of the States have taken the next step toward developing accountability. What is accountability? There is a lot of confusion about what is accountability. Accountability says there ought to be consequences--some positive and some maybe not so positive--for students who fall short of the mark or for those who do well or for schools or districts that fall short or do well. There ought to be accountability for parents as well and also for politicians and for educators.

As we take up the education debate in the Senate this week, we are literally trying to figure out what is the appropriate Federal role with respect to the education of our children. My boys play soccer in a YMCA rec league in Wilmington, DE. They play on a variety of fields around the city of Wilmington. One of the fields is a field that is not level. In fact, if I can use this folder as an example, about half of the game they are running downhill on this one field. Teams like to be running downhill. At the end of the first half, they switch and they have to go in the other direction. The team running downhill for the first half ends up having to run uphill for the rest of the game.

A lot of kids in life don't have the luxury of changing sides of the field. For a lot of their lives, they play the game running uphill. The role of the Federal

Government, for kids who spend a whole lot of their lives running uphill, is to try to level that playing field a little bit. For the kids born in tough situations, maybe with parents not engaged in their lives, or who don't value education, or maybe they don't even have parents, we must make sure those kids aren't hopelessly behind when they walk into kindergarten at age 5. If they are hopelessly behind and are coming from a real difficult situation in their home lives, they may need help to catch up with their other classmates.

I don't think anybody in Washington expects the Federal Government to be the primary funder or mover and shaker in education in America. That is not our role. Our role is to try to level the playing field and to help ensure that States adopt academic standards for their students, and that not just some kids have a chance to meet the rigorous standards but that all kids have a chance to meet the standards their States have adopted.

As we debate this issue this week, and perhaps next week as well, we are trying to figure out what can we do that is helpful, that builds on the reforms being adopted and implemented in the States. It does no harm; in fact, it does a lot of good.

We have to consider that between 0 and age 5, kids will learn about half of what they know in their lives. If we waste the first 5 years, it is tough to get them back. We know that there is a lot more we can do in terms of parent training. A lot could be done in our States with respect to ensuring that healthier babies are born and raised. We can try to provide assistance with respect to quality child care and programs such as Head Start and make sure kids - and parents--are given

a bit of a boost at the age of 3 or 4 and find themselves better prepared to be successful at the age of 5.

Those are appropriate roles for the Federal Government. When kids walk into kindergarten at 5, what is an appropriate role? The Congress and the President have said it is to provide hope in smaller class sizes.

We have also said it is important to provide extra learning time for kids who need extra time. We are joined in the Chamber by Senator SPECTER of Pennsylvania and Senator GRAHAM from Florida. Senator SPECTER may be able to learn a little faster than the Senator from Delaware, but the Senator from Delaware can learn, too. I might just need some extra learning time.

One of the things we have done in Delaware and in other States, through programs such as title 1, is we provide extra learning time for kids who need it to reach the academic standards that have been set.

We also know that one of the best things that could happen to ensure that a kid is successful in school is to have a terrific teacher such as Mrs. Anderson, my first grade teacher, and Mrs. Swane, my fifth grade teacher--teachers who really make an impact. Mrs. Anderson helped me read at the age of 5 and 6 in my first grade class. We need teachers who love kids, who can teach and who know their stuff. One of the things that we can do at the Federal level, working with State and local school districts, is to help recruit the best and brightest to be teachers, to make sure they have the tools that will at least help them have a shot at being successful in the classroom and to ensure that their professional development continues.

Another area where the Federal Government has been involved is in technology--trying to infuse technology into public school classrooms. Delaware was the

first State to wire a public school classroom for access to the Internet. I think we have the best ratio of computers to kids in the country. We spend a lot of money to train teachers to use the technology effectively in the class, to integrate technology into their curriculum, to bring the outside world into the classroom and make the learning come alive.

I am pleased that the legislation coming before us focuses, in part, on technology. One of the best things it does is to say we encourage teams in schools across America to figure out how to work at their schools, how they can incorporate technology into their curriculum. That is a perfectly appropriate role for us.

Among the other things we can do is provide some help when students are disruptive. An amendment will be offered later this week by JOHN KERRY and myself that will say if a school district wants to use some of the moneys in this legislation for establishing alternative schools for chronically disruptive students, they would have the ability to do so.

Lastly, our legislation, in providing for accountability and consequences for schools that do well and those that don't do well, says we want to put schools on sort of a 10-year glidepath to making sure that all the students are able to come closer to meeting the standards set by their States, and each year that a school district fails to meet the State's own progress chart--imagine a stair step, if you will, of 10 steps. The first year that happens, the school gets some extra money for assistance. The second year, if they fall short, we provide more technical assistance. By the time the fourth year comes, we require that school district to institute public school choice to provide, for that child who is in a failing school, their parents an opportunity to send them to another public school that is not failing or to take advantage of extra learning time

provided, in some cases, by a private vendor after school.

We say if a school is failing after 4 years, that school has to be reconstituted as a charter school or turned over to a private sector vendor to run that school or simply the school is reconstituted with a new administration and new faculty. But while we call for some serious steps in our accountability plan in this legislation to require public school choice when schools are failing children in some cases, and to require as one of three options the establishment of charter schools, transforming existing schools into charter schools, those are options that cost money.

One of the amendments that will be proposed by Senator GREGG, myself, and others is legislation saying if we are going to mandate public school choice, we need to provide assistance. If we are going to require, as one of the three options, turning a failing school into a charter school, we need to provide resources there as well.

Let me close with this point as I approach the end of my 15 minutes. I honestly believe there is more before the legislation that we will be debating this week to unite us than divide us.

Most Members, including Democrats and Republicans, and I believe this President, understands the need to invest more money in programs that work to raise student achievement, targeted to kids who need the help the most. I will not quarrel whether 10 percent, 15 percent, or 20 percent increases, or more, are enough, but we all understand we need to invest more resources targeted to

the kids who need it, in programs that work to raise student achievement.

The second area where we are in agreement, generally, is that the money we provide from the Federal Government should be provided flexibly. We should not try to micromanage what is going on in the schools. We should say, here is the money to use; target it for kids who need it most. You figure how to best use it in your school and school district to help your kids.

As we provide more money and we provide the money more flexibly, it is critically important we demand results, that we call for and require accountability. There have to be consequences. They do not have to be negative. There have to be consequences to make sure we are not throwing good money after bad money.

We will debate a lot of issues in this Senate Chamber this year. For my money, I think for our taxpayers' money, this is maybe one of the most important issues we will consider. It will go probably as far in determining whether we will continue to be the superpower in the world we have today 100 years from now. All the rest that we do, we can debate and decide.

I look forward to joining my colleagues in this debate, doing what is best for kids. The approach we take, I hope, is what I call the "tough love" approach, demonstrated when we took up welfare reform 5 years ago. A certain toughness in the approach was adopted and there is a lot of love and compassion, as well. There will be a similar approach. We will be successful and our children will be successful not just in this debate but in what follows.