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Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Nevada Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### OTTUMWA COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Ottumwa Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Ottumwa Community School District received several Harkin grants totaling \$3,129,313 which it used to help modernize and make safety improvements throughout the district. Harkin construction grants totaling \$2 million have helped with renovations at several schools in the district including Ottumwa High School, Evans Middle School and Douma and James Elementary Schools. These projects have included new classrooms, new roofs, and new HVAC systems. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions

and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of schools that every child in America deserves.

The district also received eight fire safety grants totaling \$1,129,313 to make improvements at buildings throughout the district including Ottumwa High School, the alternative high school, Evans Middle School, Wildwood, Wilson, Agassiz, Horace Mann, James and Pickwick Elementary Schools. The improvements included emergency and exit lighting, new sprinkler systems, upgraded fire alarm systems, electrical work and other safety repairs. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Ottumwa Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Pat Curran, Cindy Kurtz-Hopkins, Carol Mitchell, Payson Moreland, Ron Oswald, Doug Mathias and Jeff Strunk and former board members Cathy Angle, Ken Crosser, Bob Ketcham, Don Krieger, Andrea McDowell, Michael Neary, Steve Menke, Jerri Stroda, Bob Warren and Mark Zeller. I would also like to recognize superintendent Jon Sheldahl; former superintendents Joe Scalzo and Tom Rubel; business managers Dick Springsteen and John Donner; directors of operations Lowell Smith, Steve Propp, Darrell Reams and Danny Renfrew; and community programs director Kim Hellige.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Ottumwa Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

#### WESTERN DUBUQUE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Western Dubuque Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Western Dubuque Community School District received two Harkin grants totaling \$1.5 million which it used to help with several projects in the district. A 2001 construction grant for \$500,000 was used to help build a new school in Epworth, an addition to the Cascade school to provide classrooms for preschool and kindergarten programs and for additions for career education to the district's two high schools. The district received a \$1 million grant in 2002 to help build pre-kindergarten classrooms in Farley and Peosta. These schools are the modern, state-of-the-art facilities that befit the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, they are the kind of school facilities that every child in America deserves.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Western Dubuque Community School District. In particular, I'd like to recognize the leadership of the current board of education—Robert McCabe, Jeanne Coppola, Barb Weber, Mark Knuth, Gary McAndrew and former board members June Brandenburg, Tom Gassman, Dr. Tom Miner, John Howard, Nancy Ludwig and John Perrenoud. I would also like to recognize superintendent Jeff Corkery, former superintendents Harold