AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO



schools and to remind people of the implementation plan that the Secretary of Education is selling, promoting around the country. We've got to get public schools right. We've got to make sure every child is educated. A lot of schools are making really good progress; some aren't. Those schools that aren't making good progress need to change.

Yes, Martha [Martha Brant, Newsweek], last question.

*First Lady's Contributions to Education*

*Q.* Secretary Paige, as well as your wife, has been traveling around talking about education. I'm wondering if you could mention what you think her greatest contribution has been to your education policy?

*The President.* You know, Laura's a former teacher—I guess you're never a former teacher; you're always a teacher. [*Laughter*] She's not in the classroom—and she understands the importance of teaching, teacher training, teacher recruitment. And one of the most significant contributions she has made and will continue to make is to remind young Americans—and old Americans, for that matter—that their talents and passion are needed in our classrooms. You know, she pushed the Troops for Teacher Initiative, and she's got a way about her that's pretty convincing. And I know she's going to convince a lot of Americans about the importance of being a teacher.

Some school districts are short of teachers, and you've got to remind people—you know, one of my hopes is that as a result of the Nation taking an assessment of that which is important, that the idea of serving your community by being a teacher becomes more paramount in students' minds, and Laura certainly is going to herald that.

The other thing, of course, is reading. There's nothing more fundamental to a good education system than making sure every child learns to read and that our schools use a curriculum that works. She's pretty good about that too. She's a great leader and a great advocate for literacy.

Listen, thank you all. You're watching democracy—one of the core values of democracy is a free press. [*Laughter*]

*Q.* Yes, and don't forget it.

*Q.* How free are we?

*The President.* You're very free—for how much we have to pay on a daily basis to buy your newspapers. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:23 a.m. during a tour of Vandenberg Elementary School. In his remarks, the President referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; King Abdullah II of Jordan; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Mohamed VI of Morocco; and Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize recipient who was released from house arrest on May 6. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Statement on Burma's Release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
*May 6, 2002*

The United States welcomes the release from house arrest of Burma's Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party won an overwhelming victory in elections in 1990 but was never allowed to assume power. We hope her release will be "a new dawn" for Burma, as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her supporters earlier today, and lead to national reconciliation and a restoration of democracy. All parties should seize this opportunity to press ahead with the urgent work of restoring the rule of law and basic political and civil rights for all Burmese. Only a return to democracy and

reintegration with the international community can bring the freedom and prosperity which the people of Burma both long for and deserve.

The United States will closely monitor the situation within Burma as this process unfolds. We will also consult with ASEAN, Japan, the European Union, and other partners on how the international community can most effectively encourage further progress toward restoration of democracy. I compliment U.N. Special Envoy Razali Ismail for his tireless efforts to promote reconciliation within Burma and for helping to facilitate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release.

## Remarks at Vandenberg Elementary School in Southfield
*May 6, 2002*

Thank you all very much for that warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here. Secretary Paige said that he's moving around the country to 25 different cities and school districts to make sure that the No Child Left Behind Initiative is put in place and implemented, and I just wanted to check up on him a little bit. [*Laughter*] And I'm glad I'm doing so here in Michigan.

I picked Rod to be the Secretary of Education. One, I was comfortable with him as a person. We're both Texans. I saw him in action in Texas. I know how deeply he cares for the children all across our country. But I also wanted somebody that actually knew how to get things done. In Washington, we find all kinds of great theorists, people who talk about theory and philosophy. I was interested in somebody who actually had run a school district, who knows what it means to meet a budget, who knows how to deal with teachers, who insists upon high standards for every child. And Rod did that, and he's a great Secretary of Education. I'm so glad that he's here.

I want to thank Sharalene as well. You know, one of the things you find out when you pay close attention to public education and you try to figure out what works, the good schools are those who have got good principals. Good schools are—[*applause*]. So I want to thank Sharalene for her hospitality. I know it's not easy to welcome the President. [*Laughter*] He's got kind of a small entourage—[*laughter*]—of 25 vehicles. [*Laughter*] But you all and your staff have done a great job. And I want to thank all who are responsible for helping put this event on for your hospitality.

I want to thank your teachers as well. I'm real proud to be in the midst of teachers who are doing a great job.

I made a wise choice when I asked a public school teacher to marry me. [*Laughter*] A lot of people are wondering how wise a choice she made when she said yes. [*Laughter*] But I'm sorry she's not here with me today. She cares deeply about the teaching profession, and one of her responsibilities that she's assumed is to help recruit young and old alike to become teachers in classrooms.

I want to thank Cecil Rice, who's the superintendent of Southfield Public Schools. You and big Rod speak the same language. Good to have you here. I want to thank Congressman Joe Knollenberg; this is his district. Thank you for being here, Congressman; appreciate your time. I want to thank my friend, the Governor of Michigan, John Engler, for being here as well. Thank you, Governor. We've got Tom Watkins, who's the superintendent of Public Instruction for Michigan. Tom, thanks for coming. We've got the mayor. Thank you, Madam Mayor, for being here; appreciate you coming.