

Proclamation 4471

October 25, 1976

American Education Week, 1976*By the President of the United States of America***A Proclamation**

One of our Nation's greatest gifts to its children is the right to free public education through the high school years. No country on earth offers at public expense so extended an education to so many young people without regard to their social or economic background and regardless of their race, creed, color and sex.

The quality of our education system is still improving steadily. As just one indication of this, the National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that children in the elementary grades are reading significantly better than they did five years ago. Federal aid programs are helping disadvantaged, bilingual, and handicapped children gain equal access to education's mainstream, thus offering all students the benefits of education's progress.

Beyond high school, our many fine colleges, universities, and occupational schools give young people the opportunity to prepare for virtually any career and to fulfill almost any desire for self-enrichment. Federal grants and loans, along with State and private aid, ease the financial burden of education after high school to an extent never before enjoyed by our Nation's youth.

People of all ages are taking advantage of their many higher education options. A decade ago the average American had a high school education. Today the average American has some postsecondary experience.

We may be justifiably proud of our achievements in education while still recognizing that our schools and colleges face problems. Some school districts and colleges are experiencing financial difficulties. Some are plagued by vandalism and violence that disrupt the learning environment and cost taxpayers more than a half-billion dollars a year. Some are re-evaluating their mission in response to the demand for greater emphasis on basic learning skills and career training.

Our education system is resilient and responds positively to challenge. I am confident that it will continue to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Americans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week beginning November 14, 1976, as American Education Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and first.

GERALD R. FORD