



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

APR 15 2004

W.H. ID - WH144524

The Fifth Graders in Room 405
Richard E. Byrd Community Academy
363 W. Hill Street
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Fifth Graders:

Thank you for your letter to Vice President Richard B. Cheney regarding the need for a new school facility to house the Richard E. Byrd Community Academy. We appreciate hearing your concerns. The White House has referred your letter to the Department of Education for review, and I am pleased to respond.

I read your very detailed description of the many problems and limitations of your existing school building, and I certainly understand your desire for a new school. I also appreciate the efforts of your class to learn about our government and help bring about change through Project Citizen.

One fact you may have learned about our system is that the three major levels of government traditionally have had different areas of responsibility. For example, the federal government is largely responsible for national defense, while local governments generally maintain police forces to help ensure safety and order in our local communities.

Under our system of education, state and local governments have primary responsibility for financing and administering elementary and secondary education. The limited role of the federal government has been targeted to helping States and school districts meet the instructional needs of special populations, such as economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, and not on basic functions such as maintaining, renovating, or building schools.

You already may have learned that the Chicago Public Schools began an extensive capital improvement program several years ago that aims to renovate or replace decaying school facilities. Under this program, almost \$700 million is budgeted during the current year to reduce overcrowding, improve the physical condition of existing schools, and help bring technology into the classroom. Based on your description of the conditions at the Byrd Academy, I would hope and expect that your school is scheduled for renovation or replacement in the very near future.

Thank you again for your letter, and I hope each of you continues to take an active role as citizens and future voters in our democratic government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas P. Skelly".

Thomas P. Skelly
Director, Budget Service