



FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

www.fpa.org

**FPA Town Hall
Joel Klein Speech
Thursday, May 31, 2012, 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.
The Pierre Hotel, 2 East 61st Street at Fifth Avenue, New York, NY**

Featuring:

Joel Klein

MR. JOEL KLEIN: And I thank all of you for this honor tonight, it's really quite humbling from such a distinguished organization. And Noel, the entire board and I also want to recognize my co-honorees, some really distinguished leaders in education, business and the arts.

So it might, people might wonder why is education and foreign policy somehow connected and why can we make this a discussion that's so important to the immediate concerns and challenges of the people who are members of The Foreign Policy Association? And I've thought a lot about this. In the last year I've been privileged to work with Secretary Condoleezza Rice on just this issue and I am convinced that the most important national security foreign policy issue this country faces is education and I just want to take a second to explain why I say that.

In the most immediate sense, if you think about it, just, this is a statistic that will shock everyone in this room. Three quarters if the kids today are ineligible to serve in our military. How sustaining is that going to be for a volunteer military? And of those three quarters, half cannot meet the minimal academic requirements to serve in the military. But you see, I don't think that is the great foreign policy/national security challenge.

What I think is the great challenge is the fact that this country's, the glue in this country that held us together for over two hundred years is starting to unravel. And the reason it's going to unravel is because we're not educating people to the level that we need for them to succeed. And you see, an America that's not cohesive will

never be an America that's exceptional, will never be able to play the role on the global stage that we've played for the last, at least hundred years. And if that doesn't happen, think about the consequences to global unity and to foreign policy.

And I submit to you tonight that if, in fact, we continue to massively under educate so many of our kids than the glue, the cohesion, the thing called the American Dream, will begin to evaporate as we see a world that becomes increasingly of have's and have nots, with a hollowed out middle class. That is a world that is being created because we're failing to educate kids with the skills required in the 21st Century.

If you look at today's New York Times, front page story, there are jobs out there but we haven't educated our kids with the skills necessary to do those jobs. And so I submit to you, if you care about foreign policy, if you care about American exceptionalism, indeed, if you care about the future of this globe, you damn well better care about the future of American education, even though it might not affect you or your children directly, it will affect this nation.

And the question I would like to leave you with on this evening, and thank you again for this honor, is whether the American Dream becomes the American memory on our watch? 'Cause that will determine America's global role and the kind of country we have. Thank you for your attention this evening.