

Letters to Congress:

Coalition for Development of VNT (AFT, Council for Exceptional Children, CGCS, CCSSO, NAESP, Nat'l Assn State Dir of Special Ed, NEA, Nat'l School Boards Assn (8/27/97)
 National Association of State Boards of Education (9/3/97)
 AFT (9/30/97)
 Business Roundtable (10/7/97)
 National Alliance of Business (10/16/97)

Press Releases:

Business Roundtable: Statement by Norman A. Augustine (2/10/97)
 US Technology Leaders for High ... Standards by John Doerr and Jim Barksdale (4/2/97)
 US Chamber of Commerce: Chamber Supports Growing Bipartisan... (4/4/97)
 National Alliance of Business: Business Leaders Endorse President... (5/21/97)
 Council of the Great City Schools: 15 Major Urban School Systems (7/25/97)
 Business Roundtable: Statement by John Krol (9/4/97)
 CCSSO: Statement by Commissioner Wilmer S. Cody (9/25/97)

Editorials/Articles

Toward a National Test - Sacramento Bee and Fresno Bee (2/8/97 and 2/9/97) ✓
 • A Yardstick for American Students by Checker Finn & Diane Ravitch - Wash Post (2/25/97)
 • Stumping for Standards by Chris Cross and Scott Joftus - Ed Week (4/9/97)
 • National Education Standards Make Sense for "United" States - Orlando Sentinel (7/30/97) ✓
 • Student Achievement - Star Tribune Newspaper of the Twin Cities (8/5/97)
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 • Put Schools to the Test - Christian Science Monitor (9/3/97)
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 Why Fear Nat'l Tests? - USA Today (9/15/97) ✓
 A National Test: Clinton's Assessment Program Deserves Support - Sacramento Bee (9/17/97) ✓
 A Test for the US House - Boston Globe (9/19/97)
 A Benchmark for Improving Schools - Business Week (9/22/97) ✓
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 Getting Testy - The New Republic (9/29/97)
 Unum Chief's Ideas Can Aid... - Portland Press Herald (10/10/97)

Other:

A Bipartisan Call from U.S. Technology Leaders (List of 240) (4/2/97)

OPTIONAL FORM 99 (7-90)

FAX TRANSMITTAL

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Supportive documents
for the
voluntary national tests

HOUSE PANEL TAKES FIRST STEP TO HALT NATIONAL TESTS

Angry that President Clinton "stuck his finger in our eye," the House education committee yesterday passed a bill that would prohibit federal spending on national voluntary tests until Congress specifically authorizes it.

By a 23-16 vote, the House Education and the Workforce Committee passed H.R. 2846, which would bar federal funds from being used to field test, pilot test or administer the national tests in reading for fourth-graders and math for eighth-graders.

A bipartisan, independent board currently is developing the blueprints for the exams, but recently said it wouldn't be given until March 2001 at the earliest (ED, Jan. 23).

When Clinton first proposed national tests a year ago, he wanted them to be given in spring 1999.

Who Won? In a compromise with the White House last year, Congress prohibited field testing and pilot testing of the exams in fiscal 1998, which ends Oct. 1 (ED, Nov. 11, 1997). But it remained silent on what happens after that date—allowing both sides to claim victory.

During Tuesday night's State of the Union speech, Clinton said, "Thanks to the actions of this Congress last year, we will soon have—for the first time—a voluntary national test based on national standards" in reading and math.

GOP testing opponents bristled at the statement. "The president said exactly the opposite of what we said," argued Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House education committee and Clinton's most ardent foe on the issue. "I noticed that the president went over that one line pretty quickly and there was no applause and no hoopla."

What's The Rush? Goodling said Congress needs to act quickly. "The train has left the station and is moving rapidly," he said, referring to ongoing planning for the exams.

Democrats said voting on the bill during Congress's first week back from a long winter break was premature and politically motivated.

They said the committee should honor two key provisions of last year's compromise on testing. One is waiting for a National Academy of Sciences report—due in June—on the feasibility of comparing existing state, national and commercial tests (ED, Nov. 20, 1997).

The second is taking up the issue when the committee rewrites the legislation on the

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) this year.

"Because this is not a good faith effort to grapple with the issue of national testing, there is no prospect for this bill becoming law," said Rep. William Clay, D-Mo., the ranking Democrat on the committee. "If the Senate doesn't torpedo it, then President Clinton will certainly veto the bill."

The Education Department sees the move as "a violation of last year's agreement and a diversion from the agenda the president set out" in his State of the Union speech, said ED spokeswoman Julie Green.

H.R. 2846 could go to the House floor Feb. 5. No action has been scheduled on a companion Senate bill, S. 1215. — Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

January 28, 1998

EXIT TESTS DON'T LEAD TO BETTER NAEP SCORES

Students in states with high-stakes high school graduation exams do worse—not better—on national tests than students in states without do-or-die assessments, a new analysis says.

"A common assumption of standards and tests-based school reform is that high-stakes testing ... will produce improved learning outcomes," said Monty Neill, executive director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), which criticizes standardized tests.

"If the assumption were true, students in states with high-stakes tests should perform better than other students on neutral measures of academic performance," Neill said. "But independent evidence shows just the opposite is true."

In the 17 states that had the highest percentages of eighth-graders scoring at the proficient level on the 1996 math National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), none had graduation exams, FairTest said. But 14 of the 23 poorest performing states in math did have high-stakes tests.

Similarly, 17 of the 19 states where the highest percentages of fourth-graders scored proficient or above on the 1994 NAEP reading test did not have high-stakes graduation tests.

Thirteen of the 20 lower-performing states had those kinds of tests.

"The evidence undermines the claims of high-stakes testing proponents, such as President Clinton," Neill said, referring to the administration's plan for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. "NAEP data show their arguments are based on ideology, not real-world experience."

Neill speculated that teachers gearing their instruction to state tests artificially inflate scores on those exams, but that students' abilities don't really improve much, which is reflected in their NAEP performance.

"You might get better on the test you use, but not on anything else," he said. This issue tends to complicate efforts to compare states to each other and to national tests (ED, Nov. 20, 1997).

Most of the 17 states with high school graduation tests are in the South, where schools are historically weaker, Neill said.

"Fewer tests and lower stakes is the best way to improve student learning," he concluded.

Proving The Opposite? But critics of the FairTest report said that the group's findings actually bolster the argument for better high-stakes graduation tests. States with low NAEP scores might have instituted high-stakes exams to create pressure for boosting student achievement, said Kathy Christie, a policy analyst at the Education Commission of the States.

A report last year from the American Federation of Teachers found that 20 states have or plan to have high school exit exams aligned with their standards, but only 13 of these states will require students to pass exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.

"Now the standards movement is going to drive an effort for better exit tests—and the standards movement is very much tied to NAEP," Christie added. Indeed, Clinton's voluntary national tests are supposed to be individual versions of NAEP, which currently is given only to samples of students.

Attacks On National Tests Intensify The House Education and the Workforce Committee is scheduled to take up a bill today that would prohibit the **Education Department** from spending federal funds on national testing without congressional approval.

In a Jan. 20 letter, **Education Secretary Richard Riley** urged Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House education committee, to postpone congressional action until the National Academy of Sciences completed its reports on the tests (ED, Nov. 1, 1997).

But even proponents of national testing should favor getting congressional approval,

committee spokesman Jay Diskey said, so that a program fight doesn't become an annual ritual.

The bill could get a House vote by early February, "so no one will be under the impression that national testing is a done deal," he said.

"High Stakes Tests Do Not Improve Student Learning" is free from National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139, (617)864-4810. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with 52 cents postage. — Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Week

January 28, 1998 Category: Trade

National Panel Delays Clinton's Proposed Voluntary Tests

By Millicent Lawton

Washington

The voluntary national tests that President Clinton had proposed students take beginning next year will not be given until 2001, an independent panel decided late last week.

But it is possible the testing plan could face further delays or be scrapped altogether.

The contractor that had agreed last year to take on the development of the tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math is to decide late this week whether it still wants the job now that the panel, the National Assessment Governing Board, has significantly revised the contract.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., and his House committee also are expected this week to mark up a bill introduced last November that would prevent the creation of the tests without the explicit approval of Congress. Mr. Goodling, the chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, has been one of the chief congressional opponents of the plan that Mr. Clinton first proposed in his State of the Union Address a year ago.

Opposition from both Democratic and Republican members of Congress and others prompted the Clinton administration to put the tests on hold last year, delaying their administration until 2000 or later. Congress later passed and the president signed legislation that removed authority over the tests' creation from the **Department of Education** and gave it to the governing board. ("Assessment Board Wrestles With Test Mandate," Dec. 3, 1997.)

The 26-member bipartisan panel is made up of governors, state legislators, scholars, state schools chiefs, a principal, teachers, and parents. The panel sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only ongoing, nationally representative measure of what students know and can do in core academic subjects.

The proposed national tests are to be modeled as closely as possible on the existing national assessment, according to the legislation directing the board to oversee the tests. But, unlike that assessment, the new tests are to provide scores to individual students—expressed in terms of NAEP's "basic," "proficient," and "advanced" levels of achievement.

Same Month, Grades

In a special meeting here last week, the governing board, known as nagb, gave final approval to the statement of work that is to guide the contractor in the writing of the tests. That puts the board on track to meet the Feb. 11 deadline imposed by Congress for the board to decide if the contract should be kept, revised, or junked. The American Institutes for Research, based in Washington, heads the seven-member contractor consortium.

As part of its revisions, the board adopted a testing calendar that calls for pilot- and field-testing to occur in March 1999 and 2000, respectively, pushing the first full administration of the national tests to March of the following year.

That schedule would help the board make sure the tests were as accurate and reliable as possible, board members said. Those features are critical because the tests need to be consistent from year to year and because a student's performance on the national tests is supposed to be comparable to how he or she would have done on NAEP.

The full board endorsed the recommendation of a board committee to give the pilot and field tests, which are essentially rehearsals for the real thing, at the same time of year and to the same grade levels as they would be in 2001.

"If it takes an extra year to do it, it's worth it to do it right the first time out," Mary R. Blanton, the vice chairwoman of the board and a lawyer in Salisbury, N.C., told her colleagues.

With its decision, the board was "placing quality issues above all else," Mark D. Musick, the chairman of the governing board, said after the vote on the contract. Mr. Musick is also the president of the Southern Regional Education Board, a 15-state reform consortium based in Atlanta.

But **Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley** said in a statement issued after the board vote: "We do not agree with NAGB that it's necessary to delay the initial administration of the tests for one year."

However, he added, "we are pleased that we are on track to having the first-ever national tests in the basic skills and to giving parents and communities the tools they need to make sure children master the basics."

'Sense of Urgency'

Mr. Riley was not the only disappointed one.

During the meeting and before the vote on the contract, Mr. Musick said two members who were unable to attend the meeting, Democratic Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado and Norma Paulus, a Republican who is Oregon's superintendent of education, had called to say they did not want to see the tests put off. Mr. Romer asked in his message that the board delay its vote until its next meeting in March.

In an interview, Mr. Musick said he thought the two elected officials were worried about losing momentum for the plan. But, as Mr. Musick put it, "without assurance of quality, momentum won't be worth much."

Ms. Paulus, reached in Oregon after the governing-board vote, said that while she had not heard board members' reasons for endorsing the delay, "it seemed to me that we ought to be able to do it sooner than that. I'm frankly fearful that in the time allowed that it might be derailed."

Oregon has new academic standards and a rigorous state assessment, and just last week, Ms. Paulus said, a state legislator asked her "exactly how we're fitting in with the national scene."

"So I feel a kind of sense of urgency," she said about the crafting of national measures of individual student performance.

Jay Diskey, a spokesman for Mr. Goodling, took the opposite view last week. "We're pleased that the national test is clearly delayed another year," he said. "We have felt for some time the national test is simply a bad idea."

Mr. Musick acknowledged that NAGB finds itself in an awkward position on a politically charged issue. "The board is not presuming that Congress is going to approve [national testing], yet we are charged with taking some action until Congress does act."

Maintaining Enthusiasm

That uncertainty does not aid the decisions that the organizations in the contractor group must make now about whether to agree to the revised contract or walk away from what is potentially a five-year, \$65 million job, said Archie LaPointe, the director of the center for assessment at the American Institutes for Research.

"It's more problematic than if this were a sure thing," he said.

Not all of the consortium members may be enthusiastic about sticking with the group, Mr. LaPointe said. "Some of them had to be talked into this partnership" when it was formed last year, he said. As publishers of other standardized tests, those members saw the national tests as a potential threat to their bottom lines. Indeed, Mr. LaPointe said, publishing associations lobbied against the testing plan last year.

At a public hearing the day before the Jan. 22 nagb meeting, a committee of the governing board heard a handful of educators and policymakers raise familiar concerns about the content of the proposed national exams and whether students with limited English proficiency would be allowed to take the reading test in their native languages.

But the nationally publicized hearing drew just eight people to address the panel —four each on reading and on math—with about another 30 observers in the audience.■

1. Education Daily

January 23, 1998

NAGB VOTES TO DELAY NATIONAL TESTING PLAN

As expected, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) yesterday voted to delay implementation of President Clinton's voluntary national tests for at least an additional year.

By voice vote, the board approved the plan of a six-member subcommittee to push back the tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math until March 2001.

Riley: 'On Track' The Clinton administration was unhappy with the delay but hopeful the tests eventually will be given.

"We do not agree with NAGB that it's necessary to delay the initial administration of the tests for one year," said **Education Secretary Richard Riley**, "but we are pleased that we are on track."

Previously, Clinton wanted the tests debuted in spring 1999, but that plan was criticized as too hasty (ED, Feb. 27, 1997). Last fall, the Clinton administration and Congress agreed on a roll-out no earlier than spring 2000.

In other matters, NAGB members quibbled over semantics in a resolution on the contract to develop the tests.

When NAGB Chairman Mark Musick admitted there was a "small" chance the tests wouldn't be an accurate gauge of student performance, it drew an outcry from board member Mary Blanton, a North Carolina attorney.

"Perhaps we should forget the whole thing and save the government \$65 million," she said.

But other members agreed the tests had merit even if measurements of student performance were elusive. The board also agreed to develop policies on reporting individual student scores. —Jonathan Fox■

1. Education Daily

January 22, 1998

SUPERINTENDENTS SEEK REFORM-LINKED BLOCK GRANT

In a self-described "break with its traditional approach," the group representing school superintendents wants to consolidate several federal programs and instead send the money directly to low-income school districts.

The plan from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) would consolidate federal funds for Goals 2000, technology, charter schools, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, school-to-work, and several other programs.

AASA's proposal bears some resemblance to a revamped Senate GOP plan to roll together many of the same programs and send the resulting \$2.5 billion as block grants to states (ED, Jan. 21). However, there are important differences.

First, AASA wants Congress to come up with more money. It wants Congress to add new money to the consolidated funds for a total of \$5 billion next year for high-poverty school districts.

AASA would make the funds part of required spending, separate from the discretionary budget achievement levels International Math and Science Study are all 'first ever' undertakings that will involve many technical challenges," they wrote.

In addition, the subcommittee wants to make sure the trial runs for test items and the test itself take place in March, at the same time of the school year that the actual tests would.

This way, "the conditions for the pilot, field and operational testing are as similar as possible" and "there is ample time for test development, analysis and planning," the memo said.

Under the proposed schedule, the pilot test would be given in March 1999, the field test in March 2000 and the actual test in March 2001.

Clinton originally wanted pilot testing to begin this fall.

Testing Foe Is Pleased

A spokesman for Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and Congress's most dogged testing foe, said he was gratified by the panel's recommendation.

"Clearly, this will slow everything down," said Jay Diskey, Goodling's spokesman, cautioning that NAGB has not voted yet.

Still, Diskey said NAGB shouldn't assume there will be a national test at all because Congress hasn't authorized the program.

"They are jumping the gun," he said. "We don't believe there will be a national test."

Education Department officials wouldn't comment yesterday, but may issue a response after NAGB votes today.

As part of last fall's compromise, Congress and the White House agreed to transfer authority over the testing program from the ED to NAGB.

In addition, the National Academy of Sciences is studying whether existing state, national or commercial tests could achieve the same ends as Clinton's plan (ED, Nov. 20, 1997).

Congress plans to debate the voluntary national tests when it reauthorizes NAEP and NAGB this year (ED, Jan. 14).

Goodling himself was in California yesterday conducting a field hearing on the testing plan (ED, Jan. 9).

The House education committee on Wednesday is scheduled to take up H.R. 2846, which would halt development, planning and implementation of the national tests until Congress explicitly authorizes the program.

NAGB has until Feb. 11 to decide whether to keep, modify or scratch the contract that ED negotiated with a consortium of test publishers (ED, Nov. 25, 1997). —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Associated Press

01-23 8:32a

Panel votes to delay national tests

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - National reading and math tests sought by President Clinton will be delayed until 2001, after he leaves office, a national board overseeing the proposed tests has decided.

The tests are a top item on the president's education agenda. But the National Assessment Governing Board determined Thursday it would be technically impossible to have a well-crafted test in place before 2001.

Clinton had proposed in his State of the Union speech a year ago that the voluntary tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math be given in 1999. Compromise legislation in the fall pushed the earliest possible date back to 2000. Congress still can decide whether the tests should go forward at all.

The 26-member, bipartisan board changed the deadline by voting unanimously to modify the \$13 million contract for test development the **Education Department** awarded in August. Congress gave the board authority over test development as part of the compromise.

Education Secretary Richard W. Riley said he thought the delay was unnecessary.

"But we are pleased that we are on track to having the first-ever national tests in basic skills and to giving parents and communities the tools they need to make sure children master the basics," he said.

The decision pleased House Republicans, who had led the battle against the tests, largely on grounds they would lead to a national curriculum.

"We're happy to see any development that further delays any national testing, because we've always seen this national test proposal as a bad idea," said Jay Diskey, spokesman for the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Versions of this Associated Press story appeared in various papers, including the New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer and Washington Post. ■

1. Los Angeles Times

* 01/22/98; Edition: Valley Edition; Section: Metro; Zones Desk; Page B-1

National Testing Proposal Panned at Local Hearing

By DUKE HELFAND
TIMES STAFF WRITER

GRANADA HILLS — The president of the state Board of Education on Wednesday sharply criticized President Clinton's proposal for national standardized tests, telling a congressional committee that states and school districts are best suited to assess academic achievement.

Echoing the concerns raised by an array of critics, Yvonne Larsen called the testing proposal a federal intrusion into a local issue. She and others who addressed the Committee on Education and the Workforce also said they feared such a measure, even if implemented on a voluntary basis as proposed, would lead to mandatory testing and a national curriculum.

"For the record, I want to make it clear that the state of California has not endorsed President Clinton's plan for national testing," Larsen told the committee at Frost Middle School here, a reference to state Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin's support for the idea.

"I do not believe the federal government can effectively differentiate the needs and priorities of the people of California versus the people of Pennsylvania, Georgia or North Dakota."

Clinton's proposal, unveiled a year ago during his State of the Union address, would create uniform testing of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math across the country. It has drawn opposition from an unlikely coalition of conservative and liberal

lawmakers. Congressional leaders managed to thwart the plan last year, and a compromise with the White House has placed the program on hold until later this year at the earliest.

Gov. Pete Wilson also has said he opposes a test that is imposed by federal officials. Wilson gained approval for a statewide standardized test last year, and students in grades two through 11 will take the same exam this spring for the first time.

U.S. Department of Education officials defend Clinton's proposal, saying it is intended to provide a nationwide comparison for student achievement, not infringe on local authority. The officials say they have broad support from several of the largest school systems—including those serving Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Detroit and Atlanta—that comprise 20% of the nation's 8 million fourth- and eighth-graders. Eastin came out in support of the plan last year, shortly after Clinton released his proposal.

"These tests would remain voluntary, as the president and **Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley** have called for," said Julie Green, a spokeswoman for Riley.

Wednesday's hearing was run by the chief congressional critic of the Clinton plan, Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), who chairs the House Education Committee. Also on the committee is Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-Santa Clarita), whose district was chosen as the site of the first of several hearings nationwide this year. Thus, Wednesday's gathering took place at Frost, where about 50 members of the public attended.

"We should put money into the classroom, not into another test," Goodling said. "We should focus upon what can make a difference—reading readiness, high-quality teacher training, helping children master the basics."

Goodling's committee selected in advance each of the hearing's five speakers, including two parents and a Latino rights activist. Each criticized Clinton's plan.

Rebecca Bocchino, a San Clemente mother of three public school children, said she believes that national testing will strip parents of involvement in their children's education.

"National tests have become a vehicle for those who have an agenda," Bocchino told the committee. "Big government and corporate America are now equal partners in . . . a hostile takeover of the education of our youth. [Parents] will have no voice in a national test. If we are brought in at all, it will be in a nominal capacity."

One speaker questioned whether a national test would be "dumbed down" for a broad student audience. Holding aloft a recently published math textbook, he contended that new approaches to teaching math have ruined schoolchildren's mastery of that discipline and warned that sweeping changes in uniform testing would have the same effect.

"To put it bluntly, we feel that the planned test would be worse than no test at all," said Paul Clopton, co-founder of Mathematically Correct, a San Diego-based parents group that advocates a back-to-basics approach to math.

Theresa Fay-Bustillos, vice president of legal programs for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, raised concerns of equity in a national exam. The proposed exam would test fourth-graders in English, a fact that Fay-Bustillos said would exclude students with limited English skills and "reinforce both low expectations and low self-esteem."

"If these students are to be the beneficiaries of high standards and their parents to be able to demand accountability, they must be equal partners," Fay-Bustillos told the committee. "It is bad public policy to exclude [such] students by failing to develop and provide a fourth-grade reading test in Spanish." ■

Panel wants national testing delayed

By Carol Innerest

T h e W a s h i n g t o n T i m e s

A special committee of the bipartisan board reviewing plans for a voluntary national test in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics wants to delay the test's development for at least a year.

The committee also is recommending that the \$13 million testing contract issued by the **U.S. Department of Education** be stripped of a number of accommodations sought by the Clinton administration, including a Spanish language version of the math test.

The full National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) will vote on the committee's recommendations this afternoon.

"This is a very high-stakes test," said Sharif Shakrani, deputy executive director of NAGB. "It's going to be scrutinized very carefully by teachers, organizations and states, so we have to make sure the development of the test is done very, very carefully from a psychometric and statistical point of view."

The test specifications developed in a rush under the Department of Education were rejected by NAGB's review committee as technically flawed in a number of areas, Mr. Shakrani said. Delayed the test until the year 2001 also would allow increased time for consensus-building on this controversial issue, he said.

The special committee was headed by William T. Randall, former commissioner of education in Colorado, and included new NAGB board member Diane Ravich, who endorses national standards and a national test but was one of the most vocal critics of the partisan way in which the Clinton administration rushed to develop the test.

Archie LaPointe, director of the Center for Assessment at the American Institutes for Research, who put together the 17-member group that sought and got the Department of Education's contract to develop the new tests, said yesterday that "changes in the contract and delays might make some members of the group rethink" their participation in the effort.

Regardless of how the NAGB vote goes today, Rep. Bill Goodling, chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, has another monkey wrench ready to throw into plans for a national test. The Pennsylvania Republican is prepared to mark up Jan. 28 a bill he introduced Nov. 6 that prohibits any new testing without congressional

authorization.

Mr. Goodling led last fall's fight that barred use of fiscal 1998 funds for the test and forced the Department of Education to cede authority over the test to NAGB, which oversees the congressionally-mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to which the new voluntary national test is to be statistically linked.

NAGB, which can accept, modify or cancel the Department of Education's testing contract, yesterday listened to testimony on the content of the test from individuals who helped draft the specifications now under review and from critics of the whole process.■

War of Words on Testing Moves to Next Stage

By David J. Hoff

Washington

The debate over national testing may be the perfect example of Washington spin. No matter what happens, both sides find a way to declare victory.

The public relations war will enter its next phase this week when a House committee meets in Granada Hills, Calif., to start a series of hearings on the issue.

Aides to the Education and the Workforce Committee say the Jan. 21

event will explore the questions at the center of last year's extended debate over President Clinton's proposal for voluntary new national tests of 4th graders' reading skills and 8th graders' math abilities. State school officials and parents will testify about their desire—or lack thereof—for tests that would produce individual student scores based on national standards and their fears—or lack thereof—of adding another assessment to classrooms already heavily

tested.

Civil rights activists will tell the panel why they believe the tests will be unfair to minorities.

The California event will be the first of many hearings and events that will define this year's debate, according to Vic Klatt, the education policy coordinator for the committee.

Whose Victory?

From July till November of last year, Congress and the Clinton administration

fought over how to proceed on the president's testing initiative. The House voted to stop work, while the Senate agreed to let the tests proceed but to give policymaking control to the National Assessment Governing Board.

An eventual compromise prohibited any field- or pilot-testing until at least Sept. 30 of this year and gave the governing board, known as NAGB, authority over the contract the administration had negotiated to develop the tests. The resolution also required the National Academy of Sciences to examine existing assessments and determine whether they could yield data that compare student scores with a national standard.

The administration declared the deal a victory because it allows work to continue, albeit at a slower pace than the president would like. "We fought awfully hard and finally succeeded in getting the Congress to agree that we ought to go forward with national standards and testing to see whether our children are meeting those standards," Mr. Clinton told reporters last week.

Testing foes, on the other hand, say they won because the pilot-testing—a vital step in test development—has been stopped. If they are unhappy with

NAGB's work, they will seek to extend the prohibition for another 12 months starting Oct. 1. ("White House, GOP Craft Agreement On Testing," Nov. 12, 1997.)

"Whether this country shall have any new 4th and 8th grade national tests, shall be determined in the future, and will be subject to the reports and recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences ... and the will of Congress," Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the testing plan's most vocal opponent, wrote in a Dec. 12 letter to NAGB.

To support their arguments, Mr. Goodling, who chairs the Education and the Workforce Committee, and his allies plan to explore testing in monthly hearings throughout 1998. Most of the events will be in Washington, but others will be held in committee members' home districts to hear from local educators. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., who is a senior member of the education panel, represents the suburban Los Angeles community where the first session will be held.

The Senate has not scheduled any testing hearings, according to Joe Karpinski, the spokesman for the Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Goodling's Legislation

In addition to hearings, Mr. Goodling intends to push a bill early this year that would prohibit work on the tests beyond the current fiscal year without "explicit and specific legislation" passed by Congress. He won't wait for the NAS studies to do so, Mr. Klatt said.

Mr. Goodling's committee also is expected to consider national testing's fate when it writes a bill to reauthorize NAGB and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the state-by-state sampling of student achievement that the governing board already oversees.

If Congress fails to pass both of those bills under its busy election-year schedule, Mr. Klatt said, Mr. Goodling intends to fight to extend the field-testing and pilot-testing prohibition for fiscal 1999, which begins Oct. 1.

Opponents of the president's plan believe they will prevail because last year they assembled a coalition in the House that included almost half of the chamber's Democrats to halt development.

But the administration is confident that public support shown in opinion polls will buoy its arguments. For example, a 1997 poll found that 77 percent of Americans would endorse national academic standards. ■

31. Education Week

January 21, 1998

States Set To Examine How To Make Testing Nationally Comparable

By Millicent Lawton

One of the snags in comparing academic performance nationwide is that states each have their own ways of measuring what students know and are able to do.

More and more, though, state leaders are eager to have some company when it comes to the difficult and politically risky work of ratcheting up expectations for students. So, next week in Washington, representatives from more than a dozen states plan to meet to see if they can figure out ways to compare the now-distinctive results of their statewide assessments of student learning.

The meeting is the first event organized by Achieve, the Cambridge, Mass.-based independent resource center for governors and business leaders on academic standards and assessments. Achieve was created after the 1996 national education summit of governors and corporate executives in Palisades, N.Y.

Some states have taken heat recently for state test results that show their students doing significantly better than do the results from the federally run National Assessment of Educational Progress—leading some to charge their academic bars are set too low. NAEP is the only long-term national assessment of student achievement in core subjects.

But if states can compare their test results directly with those of other states, "it will help cut into this problem of having unrealistically low expectations," said Robert B. Schwartz, the president of Achieve.

Mr. Schwartz pointed out that Achieve wants to help states compare the scores of individual students. States that

take part in NAEP now are able to compare achievement only on a state-by-state basis.

No Waiting

The Clinton administration has its own widely debated plan, now on hold, for creating two new measures of individual student performance that would be comparable across the states: voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math.

The meeting scheduled for next week should not be interpreted as commentary by the governors on President Clinton's proposal, Mr. Schwartz said. The state chief executives are simply saying, "Let's not wait around for this issue to get resolved in Washington," he said.

"None of this," Mr. Schwartz said, "should preclude the states from deciding to participate in a national test if and when that becomes available."

Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, a Democrat who sits on Achieve's board of directors, agreed. "This is a depoliticized approach to the same end," he said.

It was Mr. Romer's idea to push for a state meeting on assessment comparability. Colorado has just released disheartening results from a rigorous new state assessment and would like not to be left clinging alone to the limb of high expectations. ("Colo. Officials Couldn't Be Happier With Low Scores," Nov. 26, 1997.)

"We need to have additional clarification that we're accurate so that our own citizens know our assessments are geared to the right standards," Mr. Romer said in a telephone interview last week.

Teams from at least 13 states are expected to attend the Washington

meeting—Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Three Approaches

Mr. Schwartz said he envisions three ways that states could work toward common assessment results. One is for them to use existing standards-based assessments that express results in terms of set criteria rather than how students did compared with others nationwide. Examples include the College Board's Pacesetter exams for high school students and the New Standards Reference Exams for grades 4, 8, and 12, he said.

Alternatively, states might dip into a common pool of items that could be embedded in their existing assessments or create common state assessments from scratch.

Mr. Schwartz said Achieve's effort does not duplicate a standards and assessment consortium run by the Council of Chief State School Officers. That program, the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, does not focus on comparable test results but is designed to improve the quality of student assessments and reduce the time and cost required to implement them.

In a separate development, Achieve has announced it will work, beginning this month, with the Washington-based Council for Basic Education and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh to pilot-test a new service to help states benchmark their standards and assessments against national and international models. Michigan and North Carolina are to be the first users. ■

Republicans Present Schools Bill Calling For Teacher Testing

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

WASHINGTON - Congressional Republicans, most of them die-hard opponents of national tests for students, Tuesday called for regular testing of teachers. But they said even those exams, while needed to reassure parents, should not be mandatory.

The proposal is part of a broad education bill announced Tuesday that repackages a number of last year's proposals and signals that Republicans are hoping once again to chip away at the federal government's role in education and to strengthen the hand of states and

local school districts.

The plan on testing would allow states to use money they now get from the federal government to assess the performance of elementary and secondary school teachers. The money could also be used to reward good teachers with merit pay.

Last year, President Clinton proposed instituting national math tests for fourth-graders and reading tests for eighth-graders to gauge how students were doing in those subjects. But the proposal triggered a furor among Republicans in Congress, who called the

tests duplicative and an attempt by Democrats to establish a national curriculum.

"Schools must be allowed to test teachers periodically after they enter the classroom to identify those who need encouragement to do better," said Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla. "Parents should have confidence that a teacher is qualified to provide their children with the best education possible."

With Clinton once again set to seize on education as a signature issue in his State of the Union Message on Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and

other senior Republicans gathered on Capitol Hill Tuesday to announce their own ideas for improving schools.

"The fate of the empires depends on the education of their youth," said Lott, using Aristotle's words to underscore the importance of primary and secondary school education as the 21st century
n e a r s .

The Republican plan's core is a proposal by Sen. Paul Coverdell of Georgia to establish tax-free savings accounts, which parents could use to pay for private and parochial schools and other education expenses. The Clinton administration vehemently opposes the plan, saying it would not benefit the poor and would siphon money away from public schools.

Last year, Coverdell and other

Republicans pushed hard to pass the legislation, which Republicans see as crucial to overhauling education, but filibuster threats stymied them.

Lott said Republicans will fight that battle again this year and are not likely to compromise.

"We're not looking for an opportunity to butt heads," Lott said, referring to the Republican legislation and, in particular, Coverdell's plan, "nor are we saying we have to compromise on all of those."

Other proposals seek to funnel more money into the classroom and away from programs and overhead costs that Republicans have long viewed as wasteful.

The bill would require that at least 95 percent of the \$7 billion earmarked in Title I money for disabled children go

directly to the classroom, leaving less money for indirect costs and overhead. Another \$3 billion would be redirected from a number of existing programs and funneled to local school districts as block grants to be used any way they wish.

Republicans are also calling for \$210 million to help teachers teach reading, a measure they hope will counter Clinton's proposal to recruit after-school reading tutors.

Hoping to revive a plan for school tuition vouchers, a version of which was voted down in the House last year, the bill would establish a \$75 million pilot program. The program would provide vouchers to low-income parents whose children attend schools with high rates of crime, drug use or disciplinary problems.

■

1. Education Daily

January 14, 1998

'98 CONGRESS HAS LITTLE TIME AND A WHOLE LOT OF ISSUES

When Congress reconvenes Jan. 27, it will have to finish rewriting the laws on vocational education and higher education.

Laws governing the Goals 2000 school reform program, Head Start, testing and school meals also expire. Congress likely will vote on whether to expand programs for charter schools, children's literacy and private school vouchers, and probably will consider creating block grants.

And congressional members have got to do it all in 95 legislative days so that they can get home in time for the fall elections and tell voters about the great things they did for

schools.

It's a bruising schedule that has education advocates worried.

"It's like seeing a train wreck coming," says Jack Jennings, executive director of the Center on Education Policy and a veteran of Capitol Hill. "It could be very chaotic, and you don't have good policy established like that."

Rewrites Overdue

The House Education and the Workforce Committee plans to take up the Higher Education Act soon after Congress returns, but might hold one more hearing on it. "It's likely to be the first thing out of the box," says Vic Klatt, the committee's education policy coordinator. In addition, Congress still is waiting on a report from a commission studying the rise in college costs, due out next week.

While the Senate hasn't set a schedule yet to take up the bill, "discussions on the general topic have been fairly consensus driven," says a top Senate education staffer.

Adding to the delay—HEA expired Sept. 30, but had an automatic one-year extension—is the fact that the **Education Department** hasn't proposed what changes it would make in the law yet.

Congress also is late with its rewrite of vocational education and job training programs.

The House passed its voc ed bill, H.R. 1853, last summer, but the full Senate has yet to act on its legislation—which would combine voc ed, job training and adult education programs.

No date has been set for Senate action. Assuming both HEA and voc ed pass in both chambers, House and Senate negotiators will have to agree on compromise bills.

"We fully expect to have HEA signed into law this year," says the Senate staffer, seeking to assuage fears of some education lobbyists that negotiations could slip into 1999—when Congress is set to rewrite the main K-12 education law.

Major Traffic Jam

A host of other education-related laws are set to expire in fiscal 1999, but it is unclear how much Congress wants to—or can—devote to them with its already backed-up agenda in an election year.

The Goals 2000 school reform law is up for renewal, but there appears to be little appetite in Congress to take it up, given how contentious it was when it first passed in 1994. House Republicans have tried to chip away at funding for the program—one of President Clinton's favorites—which provides \$491 million in fiscal 1998 for states to set and develop their own academic performance goals and standards.

By contrast, staffers are optimistic that efforts to at least begin rewriting laws governing Head Start and school meals programs will get underway this year.

House staffer Klatt says the House committee this spring could look at Head Start, with an eye toward beefing up its teacher training requirements and examining its effectiveness (ED, Aug. 1, 1997).

The House education committee also is set to look at reauthorizing the school meals program, but likely won't propose block grants, an idea that proved politically disastrous in 1995.

The Senate Agriculture Committee could take up a bill as early as this spring. The Senate has yet to take up two high-profile measures passed by the House. H.R. 2614, the House GOP's alternative to Clinton's "America Reads" children's literacy plan, would emphasize funding for teacher training in reading and give families tutoring grants.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee is hammering out a companion bill. Carol Rasco, ED's America Reads director, said last month that she expects the Senate's version of the bill to hew more closely to the administration's proposal to focus on training millions of tutors.

However, committee staffers say that it's too early to characterize the bill. In fact, Chairman Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., is said to favor the House's general approach of stressing teacher training over volunteers.

Another House bill awaiting Senate action is H.R. 2616, which would channel charter school funds to states with the least restrictive charter school laws and speed existing federal funding to the experimental campuses. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate in the closing days of the session last year, and no schedule for action has been announced.

Vehicle To Halt Tests

It is perhaps a happy coincidence for Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House education committee, that the law on the nation's testing programs is expiring next year.

That gives him a forum to continue his crusade against President Clinton's plan for new voluntary national tests in reading for fourth-graders and math for eighth-graders.

The tests Clinton envisions would be individualized versions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is given to a sampling of students nationally and provides a snapshot of student performance. Authorization for NAEP (which is included in the Improving America's Schools Act) technically expired at the beginning of fiscal 1998, but it got an automatic one-year extension.

That law also authorizes the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which sets policy for NAEP and is doing the same thing for Clinton's national tests.

During the battle last year over fiscal 1998 education funding, Goodling successfully forced the administration to delay implementation of the tests. He is planning a series of hearings, beginning next week, in a veiled attempt to drum up opposition to them (ED, Jan. 9). Goodling's committee could have a bill ready by the summer.

In June, the National Academy of Sciences is due to report on whether scores from existing state and national tests can be compared with each other. If they can, that would provide more ammunition to those who oppose creating a new exam (ED, Nov. 20, 1997).

Meanwhile, NAGB plans a Jan. 21 public hearing on the outline of test questions already developed and another one the following day on suggested modifications to the contract with the test developers. As part of the White House- Goodling compromise on testing last year, Congress shifted development of the tests from ED to NAGB.

Block Grants Redux

Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., plans to reintroduce a plan to give billions of dollars in federal K-12 funding directly to school districts in block grants.

"This is one of his top priorities," said a spokeswoman for Gorton.

It could be a standalone bill or part of a GOP package of education legislation that Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott is scheduled to unveil next week.

Last year, by one vote, the Senate attached a similar plan to its fiscal 1998 education funding bill. Gorton's plan would have rolled \$13 billion in Title I, Goals 2000, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and other K-12 funding into a block grant.

Gorton backed down during White House-Congress negotiations when Clinton threatened to veto the bill if the measure was included (ED, Oct. 9, 1997).

Pressure for block grants could build in other quarters as well.

A task force on the education budget, run by Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., plans four hearings this month and next.

Frist has said his panel isn't predisposed to block grants.

But the task force was set up by Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who co- sponsored Gorton's block grant amendment (ED, Oct. 30, 1997).

In the House, Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., chairman of the House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, is readying a report, slated for release this month, based on his "Education at the Crossroads" hearings, where state and local school officials generally bashed the federal role in education (ED, Oct. 3, 1997).

Hoekstra wanted to introduce a block grant plan similar to Gorton's last year. He withdrew due to a lack of support, but pledged to renew his effort.

Indeed, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate education funding subcommittee, called block grants "the wave of the future."

Things To Come

Some education watchers say this year's anticipated skirmishes over block grants are merely a hint of what's to come next year when Congress must begin rewriting the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA).

"I think this Congress will be a prelude to whether there will be block grants," says former Hill staffer Jennings.

"The real test" is IASA reauthorization, he adds.

To stave off these moves, Democrats "will probably try to simplify programs without losing their focus on equity," Jennings predicts.

Bruce Hunter, lobbyist for the American Association of School Administrators, agrees, adding that Title I, particularly, could get caught up in a debate over block grants.

"Title I, for some reason, is in trouble," says Hunter. "It has a lot less support than it used to, and the support is no longer bipartisan." Title I basic grants were level funded this year at \$6.27 billion, and key congressmen have questioned its effectiveness (ED, Sept. 8, 1997).

End Of Deficit Politics

For the first time in 30 years, a president will submit a balanced budget to Congress, effectively ending the era of deficit politics.

President Clinton hasn't divulged the outlines of his proposed fiscal 1999 education

spending, but school advocates can barely control their giddiness.

"The discussion is centered around not cutting education, but increasing it," says Ed Kealy, executive director of the Committee for Education Funding.

Last year's budget agreement between Clinton and Congress set a blueprint to balance the budget by fiscal 2002. But Clinton's proposal, due out Feb. 2, could effectively reopen that deal.

Part of the budget deal limited how much spending for domestic programs—including education—could go up every year. After fiscal 1999, spending on education and training programs was slated for increases of about 2 percent a year.

Some education advocates hope that a new budget blueprint will leave more room for bigger increases. Joel Packer, a lobbyist for the National Education Association, notes that some members of Congress want to lift the caps to leave room for more highway funding.

However, Capitol Hill staffers say it is unlikely that Congress will raise those caps this year. Top Republicans say they want to shrink the size of government, and Democrats are loathe to be tarred with a "big spender" label in an election year, observes one staffer.

Clinton Drops Hints Last year, Clinton spent the bulk of his State of the Union speech talking about education initiatives and spending increases (ED, Feb. 6, 1997). It is still unclear whether he'll do the same thing this year.

So far, the education initiatives he's announced are modest.

They include \$200 million annually for after-school child care, part of a larger five-year \$22 billion package that GOP congressional leaders have greeted with skepticism (ED, Jan. 8).

There's also \$6 million for training in high-tech careers and \$70 million more for College Work-Study (ED, Jan. 13).

There is still no price tag for a Clinton initiative to fund competitive grants for urban school districts that shut down failing schools, encourage public school choice and end social promotion (ED, Dec. 9, 1997).

Advocates for urban schools are urging Clinton to be generous.

"We are not convinced that those challenges are adequately addressed by relying on 'zones' or competitive grants," said the Council of the Great City Schools, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and seven civil rights groups in a recent letter to Clinton.

"Our experience is that these approaches tend to be too piecemeal and too delimited to offer real hope for long-term success," the groups said.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Congress seem receptive to the "educational opportunity zones" plan. Klatt calls it "a very interesting idea," comparing it to a bill by Rep. J.C.

Watt, R-Okla., that would create "renewal communities" where low-income students would be eligible for private-school vouchers.

Politically, Clinton could be using the urban schools initiative to reach out to liberal House Democrats who opposed his voluntary national testing plan and were miffed over how quickly the White House dropped a \$5 billion school construction plan during budget negotiations with Congress.

It's likely some version of federal aid for crumbling schools will resurface.

Clinton's original proposal last year would have provided \$5 billion over four years to subsidize half the interest payments for state and local construction bonds. That went nowhere, but a much smaller plan to provide \$800 million over two years for tax credits on state and local bonds made it into the tax bill.

Senate Democrats have introduced a scaled-down subsidy bill and a separate one providing \$1 billion in tax credits.

"The tax side is attractive because there is likely to be a [comprehensive] tax bill, so there's a vehicle," says the NEA's Packer. "In addition, a tax bill might be more amenable to the GOP." He adds that the NEA has some doubts about how effective a tax-credit strategy would be.

It turns out that Republicans have similar doubts. "We wouldn't be that supportive," says House staffer Klatt. "It makes more sense for communities to handle school infrastructure needs in their area."

Election Year Context

With all 435 House seats and a third of the Senate jobs up for grabs this year, members of both parties are using education to position themselves.

Democrats seem content to let Clinton take the lead. House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt—who likely will challenge Vice President Gore for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2000—said in a speech last month that Congress should expand the school

day and year, help neighborhoods repair schools, improve teacher training and give extra help to schools that raise student achievement.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., also has called for hiring 100,000 new teachers over the next 10 years and expanding federal aid for college students (ED, Dec. 15, 1997).

The GOP will highlight its bill to allow interest to accrue tax-free on family savings used for education expenses, including private and parochial school tuition (ED, Nov. 5, 1997). That bill is sponsored by GOP education task force chairman Sen. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga., who is up for reelection this year.

Lott and Sen. Alfonse D'Amato—also up for a bruising reelection fight this year—have advocated local teacher testing (ED, Dec. 30, 1997).

Many expect the GOP to continue its push for private school vouchers. However, earlier this month, when House Speaker Newt Gingrich outlined his policy agenda, he did not mention vouchers but instead talked about how "passionately" he believes in public schools.

In addition, House Republicans suffered an embarrassing defeat when 35 of their own members voted against a bill that would convert \$310 million in existing federal block grants into vouchers (ED, Nov. 6, 1997).

"They raise the issue at their own peril," says Mark Zuckerman, spokesman for Rep. William Clay, D-Mo., the ranking Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee. "They lose support even of their own members."

But many education observers say it is less a question of what Congress does this year, but whether it does anything at all.

"We want to make sure we are able to accomplish initiatives on our joint [House-Senate] agendas," says Klatt, "and we only have so much time to do it." —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Week

January 14, 1998

Manufacturers Endorse National Tests, Vouchers

A leading business organization last week endorsed national tests, charter schools, and school vouchers as ways to improve the skills of high school graduates entering the workforce. Those ideas are listed among six "policy prescriptions" in "Education and Training for America's Future," a report released by the Washington-based National Association of Manufacturers.

The report says the capabilities of high school students are not keeping up with the skills requirements of manufacturers. Forty percent of all 17-year-olds do not have the math skills and 60 percent of 17-year-olds do not have the reading skills to hold down a production job at a manufacturing company, the report says.

Dennis Kessler, a co-president of Fel-Pro Inc., a Skokie, Ill.-based company that makes gaskets, said he can attest to the skills shortfall. "When we advertise for an entry-level punch-press job, we get 100 applicants. When we go through screening, only about three or four are qualified," he said in an interview.

The manufacturers' association, which represents 14,000 companies, called for "rigorous and meaningful" testing of students that can be compared on a state-by-state basis.

"A lot of school districts are able to escape responsibility for their inadequacies in education because in part there is no good way to measure achievement across district or state lines," said David Shapiro, the executive director of the Manufacturing Institute, the educational and research affiliate of the association. The body of the report was written by Anthony P. Carnevale, the vice president for public leadership of the Educational Testing Service.

The other policy prescriptions cited in the report include a national system of skills standards designed by industry, tax incentives to support education and training investments by businesses, consolidation of existing federal training programs, and a commitment by employers and employees to lifelong learning.

For a copy of the report, call the association at (202) 637-3088.

—MARY ANN ZEHR■

1. The Wall Street Journal

01/13/98

Clinton to Seek Boost in Funds For Education

By Christopher Georges

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — President Clinton will propose a major education initiative to recruit and train tens of thousands of teachers across the nation in an effort to reduce class sizes.

The program, which would cost \$7.3 billion over five years, is part of Mr. Clinton's overall plan to boost federal education funding by more than \$15 billion over the next five years. The president's sweeping education plan, which also includes \$5 billion in new funds for school construction, is outlined in White House budget documents. The plan will be formally unveiled in February with the rest of the administration's fiscal 1999 budget.

Mr. Clinton's plan, which also includes large increases in spending for children in poor and urban areas, sets the stage for a number of election-year conflicts with Republicans over education issues, in particular national testing and federal funding increases for school construction and charter schools.

Still, congressional GOP education leaders said they would likely support a number of items in the nearly 20-point Clinton education plan. A senior GOP congressional aide praised some of the president's proposals, but said a key concern would be whether the programs could be paid for while keeping the budget in balance.

Administration officials declined to detail exactly how the new spending would be offset, except to say that the president's budget wouldn't violate the balanced-budget agreement or rely on projections of future budget surpluses. Instead, the new spending, in education as well as in other areas of the president's budget, is expected to be paid for by proposed revenue raisers such as user fees and billions of dollars in new funds from an anticipated tobacco settlement.

Mr. Clinton's plan continues his longstanding tendency to push education and training programs to the top of his domestic agenda. But the funding boosts also take on added political significance this year. House Democrats have argued strongly in meetings with administration officials for such programs in hopes of enhancing their chances to unseat Republicans in the coming election.

Polls show that spending increases for school construction and hiring more teachers — which mean smaller class sizes — are strongly supported by voters. Campaigning Democrats aim to use their support for such initiatives to put Republicans on the defensive.

Mr. Clinton's plan also requests nearly \$200 million in new funds to aid Hispanics, a growing voting bloc for whose support Democrats and Republicans are vying. The budget plan, for example, highlights spending boosts for bilingual education, education aid for migrant children and colleges that serve Hispanic students.

While Republicans are likely to support some of these and other proposals in the overall education plan, they traditionally have argued that school-funding issues are best left to states and localities.

Still, Mr. Clinton's plan takes steps to head off the growing dispute between the parties over school vouchers by proposing to fund start-up costs for more than 1,300 charter schools — schools that are set up by local communities and are free from most school-board regulations. Currently, there are more than 700 charter schools in the U.S. Republicans, while generally not opposed to charter schools, have typically pushed instead for school-voucher programs that help parents pay for private school.

Among the most costly proposals is the \$7.3 billion teacher recruitment and training program. The aim is to help reduce class sizes, especially in poor and innercity areas, to 15 to 18 students. Along those lines, Mr. Clinton seeks to spend \$1.5 billion over five years to create "educational opportunity zones." Fifty poor, lowachieving districts would receive funds to institute reforms to help boost grades and test scores and finance programs allowing parents to choose which public schools their children attend.

One innovative proposal, labeled "College-School Partnerships," would allocate \$2.5 billion over five years to match college students and educators with more than 1.6 million high-school and gradeschool children. The mentoring program, aimed at 3,300 high-poverty-area schools, would inform the younger students about the advantages of a college education and ways to get financial aid.

The plan also proposes more spending to introduce computers into classrooms and train teachers in new technology. It also seeks more funds for the "Safe and Drug-Free Schools" program and for students with disabilities. Mr. Clinton also proposes to raise the maximum Pell Grant award to \$3,100 from \$3,000.

Meanwhile, Vice President Al Gore announced a plan yesterday to train more workers for high-tech jobs. The Departments of Labor and Education will disburse as much as \$6 million in grants for industry groups that expand their school-to-work programs. In addition, the Labor Department will spend \$3 million more on projects designed to train dislocated workers for technology jobs.

The administration move comes amid the release of a study estimating that 346,000 computer-programmer and systems-analyst jobs are vacant at U.S. companies with more than 100 employees. "It is critical that American workers are prepared to take advantage of these new high-skill, high-wage jobs," Mr. Gore said in a statement.

Separately, White House spokesman Mike McCurry said President Clinton may ask Congress to approve another increase in the minimum wage. "It's being looked at," Mr. McCurry told reporters yesterday. "I don't think there's been any decision at all one way or the other."

Two years ago, President Clinton and Congress agreed to a minimum-wage increase of 90 cents to \$5.15 an hour, which fully took effect last September. Later this month, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) is expected to introduce legislation to boost the minimum wage by an additional \$1.50 in the next three years.

Improving Education

President Clinton's major education proposals for 1999

— \$7.3 billion over five years to recruit and train elementary and secondary school teachers

— \$5 billion over five years for school construction

— \$2.5 billion over five years to help colleges promote the importance of education to primary and secondary students to stay in school

— \$1.5 billion over five years to assist schools in poor areas

— \$200 million in 1999 for programs to assist Hispanic students

— \$20 million in 1999 to help set up more than 1,300 charter schools■

21. Education Daily

January 9, 1998

NEWS BRIEFS

Congress Gets Head Start On School Issues: While Congress isn't scheduled to reconvene until Jan. 27, the House and Senate education policy committees are planning hearings before then.

The Senate committee plans three days of hearings on Washington, D.C., education and workforce issues for three days beginning Jan. 13. On Jan. 21, the House panel will hold a field hearing in Granada Hills, Calif., on national testing,

kicking off a series of events around the country to build opposition to President Clinton's plan to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math (ED, Nov. 11, 1997).

*** Economic Upturn Misses Urban Schools, Study Says.**

Despite downtown revivals in many of the nation's cities, urban schools largely fail to educate their children and are plagued by decrepit facilities, poor administration and thick bureaucracy, a

new report says.

More than half of fourth- and eighth-graders in urban public schools fail to reach even minimum standards on national tests in reading, math and science, said Education Week in its second annual report on the state of the nation's schools.

President Clinton used the report's release to renew his call for voluntary national testing, which Congress has delayed (ED, Oct. 20, 1997). "We must

not rest until every school system in the nation commits to adopting high standards — and helping their students meet them," he said in a statement.

Presently, 11 million children — nearly one in four U.S. children in public schools — attend an urban school. The longer they stay in school, the worse they compare to students in non-urban environments, the study said.

The report blamed white flight to suburbs for the decayed state of most urban schools, as well as poor administration, local politics and apathy. Combining an analysis of the state of

academic standards across the nation, the report gave the nation a grade of C for progress in school reform, the same mark as last year.

"Quality Counts '98: The Urban Challenge and Public Education in the 50 States," is \$10 from Education Week, 4301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20008, (202)686-0800.

*** Mr. President, You Have Mail:** A Connecticut school district won't limit student access to the Internet, despite suspending two middle school students who sent threatening e-mail to President Clinton and his daughter.

Superintendent Mary Jo Kramer of Milford, Conn., told the New Haven Register, "Obviously, kids can send e-mail to a legitimate site. Why punish 7,000 kids because of one?" Harborside Middle School suspended the two 14-year-olds for 15 days and 10 days, respectively, after Secret Service agents last month tracked the messages. One e-mail threatened to "blow up the President's toilet and kill Chelsea;" a second was less threatening.

No charges will be filed, according to the Secret Service. ■

Statement by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

To: National Desk, Education Writer
Contact: Julie Green of the U.S. Department of Education, 202-401-3026

ADVANCE For Release Thursday, Jan. 8 at 12:01 a.m. EST

/ADVANCE/ WASHINGTON, Jan. 8 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Following a statement by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley on the release of the Education Week "Quality Counts" report:

The "Quality Counts" special report is a stark and honest accounting of both the successes and failures of American education. The report should be read by every mayor, school superintendent, governor and citizen.

The report tells us in no uncertain

terms that the sheer drag of concentrated poverty can be just about crushing when it comes to improving education in our major cities. Too many of the children in our nation's biggest cities are getting short changed when it comes to getting a quality education and that, in many respects, is an understatement.

President Clinton has made education his number one domestic priority and we will continue to help urban school districts do the hard work of making change happen. The administration's FY 99 education budget will reflect major new investments with a special emphasis on fixing failing schools, higher standards, school construction and upgrading teacher quality. City

governments, states and the private sector must do their part as well and assume more responsibility for improving education.

Some will look at this report and say "what's new," the poor have always gotten a rotten education. But in these new economic times I do not think we can even think of giving up on 25 percent of our children and assume that this country will prosper in the coming times. And I for one will not abide by the tyranny of low expectations that haunts too many of our urban schools.

It is important to note that some of the cities reported to have the most severe challenges are the very ones that have signed up to take voluntary national tests

in fourth-grade reading and eight-grade math that some in Congress continue to oppose. These cities, to their credit, are being tough minded about adopting a "no excuses" standard and are willing to challenge their children to reach high standards. As this report notes many states are in the process of adopting standards but standards remain very

uneven.

This report also tells us that we are not dead in the water when it comes to facing up to the challenge of improving American education. Twenty-two states have a "B-plus" or better for the quality of their standards, 20 states are upgrading their teaching standards and seven states

have made "significant gains" on recent NAEP math scores. I am also pleased, as the report notes, that many states and communities are taking up the president's challenge to make sure that every child in the country is reading well and independently by the end of the third grade.■

State Does Well In Education Survey

By ROBERT A. FRAHM

Connecticut gets good grades in a new national report on public schools, but the news for children in the state's big cities remains bleak.

The performance gap in reading, math and science between urban and non-urban schools is larger in Connecticut than in most other states, says a report released today by Education Week newspaper.

The state "has thrown itself into urban issues . . . but it has a tough job ahead," the newspaper said in a book-length report on the condition of education in the 50 states.

The report comes a day after Gov. John G. Rowland proposed a \$93 million package of school improvements this year, such as more reading teachers, aimed at the state's neediest schools.

The report highlights an issue that has perplexed school officials here for more than a decade.

The failure of city schools, especially in Hartford, has led to events such as a state Supreme Court order to desegregate city schools, a failed experiment to run Hartford's schools under private management, and a decision by the legislature last year to dissolve the local school board and take control of Hartford's schools.

Across the nation, "urban students perform far worse, on average, than

children who live outside central cities on virtually every measure of academic performance," the report concludes.

The Education Week study, which includes previously unpublished data from a national test of fourth- and eighth-grade children, found:

- * 55 percent of urban fourth-graders in Connecticut fell below a minimum standard in reading, compared with only 22 percent in non-urban schools. Only New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania had a larger gap.

- * Connecticut also had large gaps in eighth-grade mathematics and science, with its urban schools scoring slightly above the national average and its non-urban schools scoring well above average.

- * In the poorest city schools, less than one-fourth of the eighth-graders in a science test and less than one-third in an algebra exam scored above a minimum standard.

- * Overall, Connecticut students did well on national tests, with 31 percent of fourth- and eighth-graders reaching the more difficult "proficient" rank in math, compared with 20 percent of fourth-graders and 23 percent of eighth-graders nationwide.

- * The level of financial support for Connecticut's public schools was better than in most other states, meriting a grade of "A- minus" from the newspaper, one

of only seven states to get an "A" or "A-minus." However, the paper awarded Connecticut a "C" for financial equality among school districts and a "C-plus" for the proportion of school budgets actually spent on instruction.

- * Connecticut was listed among 14 states getting the highest overall grades, getting a "B" in school standards and a "B-plus" in quality of teaching. It received a "B-minus" in school climate, a category that takes into account such things as class size, absenteeism and parental involvement.

"Overall, you see Connecticut ranks very well in many categories, and they acknowledge what we have been attempting to do in urban school districts," said state Education Commissioner Theodore S. Sergi.

In recent years, the state has sent more money to urban schools, increased support for preschool classes in cities, supplied computers to city schools and worked closely with Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury and other urban districts to improve academic performance.

"We have a gap between the urban centers and others," Sergi said. "We have made closing the gap a clear goal the last couple of years."

How schools are doing in closing that gap will be measured in two new reports expected within a month. The first is the

annual report next week on the Connecticut Mastery Test, the state's chief benchmark of educational progress. The second is a report to the State Board

of Education by February on the financial disparities among school districts.

Sergi would not disclose whether the new Mastery Test results have shown

improvement, but he did say, "I am hopeful we can see a closing of the gap in achievement." ■

16. Richmond Times-Dispatch

January 8, 1998 Category: Local

Urban kids missing the mark

Report: School performance behind peers outside cities

BY ROBIN FARMER

Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

An educational magazine's report on public education in the 50 states found more than half of the fourth- and eighth-graders in urban districts fail to reach minimal standards on national tests in reading, math and science.

"Urban students perform far worse, on average, than children who live outside central cities on virtually every measure of academic performance," according to the report, *Quality Counts '98: The Urban Challenge*.

"The longer they stay in school the wider the gap grows," says the 270-page report released today by Education Week magazine.

Richmond is among the 75 cities assessed by the study, and the instability of its school superintendents is cited as an impediment to improving academic achievement — but not as something unusual in urban school systems. More than half of urban superintendents serve one to five years and nearly a third serve one year or less.

The report noted that a divided School Board fired former Superintendent Patricia C. Conn after 20 months on the job. "She was a change agent and the employees didn't want change," board member Alexina Fagan said in the report.

The report said that among other obstacles to success in urban schools are concentrated poverty, the hiring of more teachers who have only emergency or temporary licenses, and bigger and more chaotic schools with less parental involvement.

The report is supported by the Philadelphia-based Pew Charitable Trusts, which assists nonprofit activities in education and other areas.

One out of four children in public education — 11 million — attends an urban school. And where most students

are poor, the performance is worst.

The report found urban schools are fighting a battle they cannot win alone.

"The gulf in achievement between America's urban and nonurban students is a disgrace, but what's even worse is that political leaders and taxpayers are letting the gap widen," said Ronald A. Wolk, publisher of Education Week.

"In too many statehouses and communities, the attitude persists that city schools are someone else's problem," Wolk said.

The second annual report also found most states still earning C's for policies and performance in four major categories: standards and assessments, quality of teaching, school climate and funding.

Virginia's scores were slightly lower this year than last. The state was among a few earning an A for the rigor and specificity of its standards. But grades on quality of teaching dropped from a C plus to C.

The state earned a C plus, down from a B minus, for financing schools adequately. In terms of distributing funding equitably, the state's grade slipped from B plus to C. The biggest drop was for allocation, which looked at whether resources reached the classroom. That grade fell from a B to a D plus.

The state also earned a D in school climate, which examined whether schools were organized and operated in a manner conducive to learning. That grade can't be compared with last year's because it was calculated differently.

State Superintendent Richard T. LaPointe could not be reached to comment.

Virginia's new state standards, approved in 1995, have won praise from many national experts. Under the new standards, beginning in 2007 a school will lose accreditation if 70 percent of its

students fail to pass state exams.

States with the highest marks were Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont and West Virginia.

Five of these states also made the largest gains in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress between 1992 and 1996.

How urban students perform on the tests is alarming, the report found. Only 43 percent of urban fourth-graders scored at the "basic" level or higher in reading. Just 42 percent of eighth-graders met or exceeded the basic level in mathematics while only 38 percent did so in science.

In nonurban districts nearly two-thirds of the students performed at least at the basic levels.

Another barrier to success, the report found, is the access to, and use of, resources. Richmond spends an average of \$7,800 per pupil, more than all but the most affluent suburban districts in Virginia, the report noted.

"The district outspends the state average even when per-pupil expenditures are weighted for the higher cost of educational services and the greater number of poor children in Richmond," the report said. Yet, it noted, city students earn some of the lowest scores on state tests.

Richmond Superintendent Albert J. Williams could not be reached to comment.

The high per-pupil expenditure is misleading, say some observers, "because much of the budget is directed to services outside the typical classroom" such as school counselors, special education teachers and safety personnel, the report said.

Richmond students have more social and educational needs than suburban and

rural students, Roger Gray, Richmond Education Association President says in the report.

More than 36 percent of the city's students live in poverty compared with 13 percent statewide. Nearly 60 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and Richmond teens are three times more likely to be arrested for

a violent crime and become pregnant twice as often as their peers statewide.

These are reasons, the report noted, for urban educators to be disappointed with the state Board of Education's decision to allow districts to use money previously set aside for elementary school counselors to pay for reading specialists.

Asking districts to choose between the two is like "asking which you need most, water or electricity," said Shirley George, president of the Education Association of Norfolk.

The full report is available on the Internet at:

www.edweek.org/sreports/qc98. ■

27. The New York Times

01/08/98Section: National Desk; Section A; Page 12, Column 5

Report Shows Urban Pupils Fall Far Short in Basic Skills

By ETHAN BRONNER

Schools in the nation's cities are a picture of despair with more than half the fourth and eighth graders there failing to reach minimal standards in reading, mathematics and science, according to one of the most comprehensive urban educational studies ever conducted.

The report, to be released today by the journal Education Week, urges states to fashion special strategies for their urban schools rather than treat them as simply part of a statewide system.

"Urban schools are fighting a battle they cannot win without strong support from local, state, and Federal political leaders, and from voters and taxpayers outside the cities," the report says. "If the states, in particular, do not accept this challenge, the continuing national movement to improve schools will fail."

Some 11 million children, or one-quarter of all students in public education in the country, attend an urban school, including 43 percent of the nation's minority children and 35 percent of its poor. The study found that pupils in urban schools where a majority of students are poor performed worst of all with some two-thirds of them failing to reach the basic level on national tests.

Education Week based its conclusions on the results of 1994 and 1996 standardized achievement tests, notably the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is administered to a sampling of fourth and eighth graders.

The study broke down the data between urban and non-urban school districts. Education Week defined a school district as urban if at least 75 percent of the households in it were metropolitan.

The study highlights dramatic gaps in performance between urban and non-urban pupils. The differences are most notable in Maryland, Connecticut and New York but are also significant in

New Jersey and Missouri.

In Maryland, for example, 28 percent of urban fourth graders scored at the basic level or above in reading in 1994, compared with 59 percent of non-urban fourth graders. In science, 12 percent of urban eighth graders in Maryland scored at or above the basic level in 1996, compared with 60 percent of non-urban eighth-graders.

Part of the problem for many urban schools is a lack of money.

"America is getting what it is paying for," said Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban school systems.

In New York, 44 percent of the state's children and 70 percent of its poor children live in New York City, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse. But those four areas accounted for only 34 percent of state and local education revenue for fiscal 1994.

New York's urban fourth graders scoring at the basic level or higher in reading in 1994 was 39 percent, compared with 70 percent for non-urban fourth graders. In math, 39 percent of urban eighth graders scored at the basic level or higher in 1996, compared with 75 percent of non-urban eighth graders. And in science, 29 percent of urban eighth graders scored at the basic level or higher in 1996, compared with 73 percent for non-urban eighth-graders. Other, less tangible criteria, like school climate and class size, also show New York with wide gaps between its cities and non-urban areas.

"This is an unacceptable result and we are not going to let it stand," Richard P. Mills, the New York state commissioner of education, said. Mr. Mills said he has proposed an increase of \$723 million, or 6.7 percent, in state aid, the bulk of which would go to 45 high-need school districts, including all the large cities.

But the Education Week report makes clear that money is hardly the only problem. In a few underachieving urban school districts, spending per pupil is above the state average. In 1993-94, Hartford spent \$5,635 per pupil compared with a statewide average of \$5,604. Yet among Hartford's eighth graders who took the Connecticut Mastery Tests in the 1995-96 school year, only 18.4 percent met the state goal in reading, 15.4 percent in writing, and 8.8 percent in mathematics.

Craig D. Jerald, one of the directors of the study, said what mattered was how money was spent, not just how much. "Some districts, such as Washington, D.C., have spent heavily on administration rather than instruction, viewing the school system as a place to provide jobs for adults rather than educate young people," Mr. Jerald said.

Lynn Olson, the study's other director, said that urban schools also suffered from problems of overcrowding, violence and poor teacher qualification.

There are some bright spots in the report, which says that the focus on standards is gaining nationwide. And the report highlights seven states with significant gains in fourth-grade reading — Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

In Texas, the editors cited the El Paso school district, the fifth-poorest metropolitan area in the country with more than a quarter of its residents below the poverty line. Despite such problems, a majority of El Paso's students passed the state achievement tests, something that cannot be said about most urban districts.

The success is attributed to clear standards, new curriculums and teaching methods, and a single-minded focus on data. ■

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1. The Times Educational Supplement

January 2, 1998

United States: Dumbing down by numbers

Tim Cornwell reflects on the debates that affected American education during 1997

The volleys now fired at American schools by politicians, teachers and parents are so noisy and frequent it is sometimes hard to believe the 52 million children who went to school this year learned anything at all.

Out there in the classrooms teachers are still presumably struggling to inspire, cajole and otherwise persuade pupils to stay awake and do their homework. But in the political and public arena, education remains a hotly debated potato.

Early this year, in his State of the Union address, President Clinton promised to make education the central concern of his second four-year term. Last month a Republican Governors' meeting made it clear that its party sees education as a major issue in state elections in 1998.

In higher education, claims of a crisis have slackened with the improved economy, but in state schools, reformers play to a continued sense that something is amiss: that teachers are improperly trained, lazy children are classed as "learning disabled" and even the most basic education isn't happening.

In California, which sets the national scene, something akin to parental paranoia is developing over mathematics. The battleground is new guidelines being readied this winter. It highlights a broader national debate pitting new styles of "inventive" maths teaching against "traditional" methods.

Critics of "mathematical correctness" say its widespread adoption in schools is "dumbing" children by skipping the basics in favour of calculators and woolly "concepts".

Fights over maths teaching are nothing new. But the issue mirrors fears in other fields that well-meaning innovations, such as substituting "whole language" reading teaching for basic phonics instruction, may have short-changed a generation.

Bilingual teaching, where young children are taught in their own language first, is another source of criticism, and comes up for a public vote in California next year.

These curriculum issues have been sharpened by President Clinton's plan for national testing.

The tests have now been put up for study by an independent think-tank, but only seven states have so far agreed to use them, and Congress could still refuse funding.

Democrats say testing will stigmatise poor and minority children. On the Right, critics say Washington will use tests to write its own progressive curriculum.■

1. Boston Globe

January 7, 1998

A national priority

"We're happy to announce the worst test results in the history of the state." With that, Colorado's education commissioner, William Moloney, made public the results of the first statewide tests last November. "Unless you get bad results, it is highly doubtful you have done anything useful with your tests." As Moloney spoke, Governor Roy Romer sat at his side, nodding concurrence. Because the educational, political, business, and community establishments of Colorado joined forces, negative static from the poor test results produced no retreat. The state is moving ahead with an increasingly ambitious program of testing against high standards. "The bad news is the good news," Moloney says. "We're raising the bar." Nearly every state is pushing something it calls education reform, most with statewide testing. But some states, using less rigorous tests, are essentially papering over their deficiencies. The variation from state to state is one strong reason to support President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests. Republicans in Congress shelved that plan last year, saying it might lead to a national curriculum - an invidious prospect, in their view. In much of the developed world, however, children are taught from a national curriculum, or something close to it - especially in the early grades - and the vast majority achieve proficiency in basic subjects. This contrasts with the gap found in the United States, which has some very good public schools but far too many bad ones. Clinton's modest proposal includes no mandated curriculum, nor even a mandated test. But the voluntary tests he suggests to measure the reading ability of fourth-graders and the math skills of eighth-graders could provide the best assessment of public education nationwide. Children everywhere will benefit if Congress reverses itself this year and approves national testing. Education is clearly a priority across the nation. In his year-end press conference, Clinton mentioned education first among his goals for 1998. Also, an open-ended survey of public opinion by The Wall Street Journal last month found that "improving public education" was the issue most frequently raised by respondents - far more than stabilizing Social Security and Medicare, the runner-up. Only half as many people mentioned reducing crime, the budget deficit, or taxes. And since the question asked was, "What do you think needs the most attention from the federal government?" it is clear that the public does not share the far right's determination to wipe out any federal role. Local control of the schools, though it is giving way somewhat to state regulation, is still a treasured American tradition that can create healthy links among parents, communities, and individual schools. Still, there can be an enhanced federal role in subsidizing school construction, providing incentives for the thousands of new teachers who will be needed as an aging teacher corps retires, and helping districts replicate effective programs. Also, Washington should act more vigorously to equalize educational opportunity between rich and poor states, much as New Hampshire and other states are being required to equalize school funding from rich and poor communities. As it is, Massachusetts can draw some lessons, positive and negative, from its neighbors. New York State's Board of Regents, for instance, generated an instant whirlwind of opposition this fall when, with little debate, it approved a three-year foreign language requirement for graduation from high school. Some states have done a poor job of aligning tests with curriculum, thereby frustrating students and teachers. Kentucky had a serious scoring snafu involving Advanced Systems, a New Hampshire firm now working on the Massachusetts tests. But there are shining positive examples as well. In Washington state, the Partnership for Learning, financed mostly by businesses, coordinated an aggressive program of planning and outreach to spread the word that the tests were coming and were worth doing well. Cambridge-based Mass Insight has taken on a similar role for Massachusetts. Kentucky has insisted on rigorous standards. Maryland and Colorado put special effort into winning the participation, and therefore the support, of the teachers crucial to any hope of success - a strategy launched and then largely abandoned here. In the states that have shown progress with educational testing, preparation of the whole community has been the unifying theme. ■

1. USA Today

01/02/98; Edition: FINAL; Section: NEWS; Page 11A

Clinton's year: Pretty good

By Bill Nichols

The president's fifth year in office included some victories and a few setbacks. It was the year the White House became an empty nest with the departure for college of his daughter, Chelsea. He also got a dog. To grade the administration on substantive issues, USA TODAY reporter Bill Nichols gathered a panel of experts from across the political spectrum. They discussed what Clinton wanted to accomplish and how he did.

For President Clinton, 1997 was a year of transition.

Although he finished the first year of his second term, he's trying to shake the lame-duck label that many in Washington already have pinned on him. And he faces a Republican Congress with an even larger majority than in the 1995-96 session.

He injured his knee in March, prompting weeks of physical rehabilitation and a switch to a healthy diet that slimmed him down by more than 20 pounds.

His only child, daughter Chelsea, left home in September, and moved across the country to attend college at Stanford University in California.

He got a new dog — Buddy — to help fill the empty nest and a new set of irons — Wilson — to improve the presidential golf swing.

But amid all the change, Clinton's goals — education reform, free trade, economic growth, racial tolerance and the peaceful spread of democracy abroad — remain constant. So USA TODAY consulted a panel of presidential experts to grade him on those key issues.

In general, the panel — GOP pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, whose views are often conservative; congressional analyst Thomas Mann from the liberal Brookings Institution; former White House political adviser Dick Morris, who advises Republicans and Democrats; University of Wisconsin political scientist Charles Jones and Ronald Walters, political science chairman at the University of Maryland — gave Clinton solid, if unexceptional,

marks for his fifth year in office.

(excerpt)

Education

Grade: B+. Clinton passed major portions of his agenda: a \$1.5 billion increase in Pell grants, continuation of his Goals 2000 program and his \$1,500 HOPE scholarship aimed at making at least two years of college available to all Americans.

"This is an issue that's been a consistent theme throughout his career. It's a subject he can be terribly persuasive on, and it's certainly a major problem," said Jones.

But our panel lowered Clinton's grade slightly because he backed off his proposal to fund massive physical repairs to public schools and he barely kept alive one of this signature White House proposals, a call for voluntary national tests in reading and math. ■

1. Morning Edition

01/02/98 Section: News; Domestic;

American Education

Host Bob Edwards talks with NPR's Claudio Sanchez about some of the issues in American education last year. School districts in Milwaukee and Cleveland continue to experiment with a voucher program. With the vouchers, parents receive money to send their children to private and parochial schools. Universities in Texas and California have dropped quotas and affirmative action in the admitting of new students. Both systems have shown big drops in minority enrollment.

BOB EDWARDS, HOST: 1997 was a year in which education issues got a lot of attention here in Washington and in school districts across the country. Among the stories covered here, the debate over national academic standards, school vouchers, Ebonics, and affirmative action.

And here to discuss the year in education and what's ahead is NPR's education correspondent Claudio Sanchez. Happy new year.

TD CLAUDIO SANCHEZ, NPR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT: Good morning, Bob.

EDWARDS: Public opinion polls consistently show the quality of education is one of the things Americans are most concerned about. Why is that?

SANCHEZ: There is a great deal of anxiety and some degree of fear of the future because if nothing else, what 1997 showed was that Americans have realized that even in economic good times, they are still not secure.

We have heard experts say over and over that Americans in the future will need to retrain and re-educate to prepare for at least maybe four, five, six kinds of jobs. And education obviously is very much crucial to that.

I just came from Arizona where we'll be working on a series of stories about this whole notion of just-in-time education, which is fascinating because in Arizona what that has meant is colleges, community colleges, four-year institutions, high schools, even primary, elementary schools — coming together to create this hybrid educational institution where you have a seamless institution where adults are learning right alongside teenagers. And very young kids — are beginning to see that the earlier they prepare, the earlier they understand what it will take to keep and re-learn a trade or a skill, the more secure they'll be.

But again, we all have very, very serious questions about whether the institutions that are there now are providing these opportunities. And it seems that the national debate over education is very much focused on that — on this pragmatic view of education. Can it — will it allow us to earn a living, versus the more, I guess, abstract notion of education for the sake of education.

EDWARDS: President Clinton is very interested in education. He proposed last year national tests in reading and math, and the establishment of national academic standards.

SANCHEZ: And that, Bob, gets into the — really, the nuts and bolts of education and educational achievement. I mean, this is

unprecedented. No president in this history — in the history of this country has ever been as bold or has taken as extraordinary steps to introduce the federal government into this whole enterprise we call public education.

That, of course, has raised many fears. Does the government have a bigger role to play? After all, it doesn't provide more than six percent of the funding out there. Public school boards, local entities raise that money. And yet here's Washington saying: We need to all agree to — on certain standards; on minimum standards for high school students, for elementary school students.

And this, of course, has become a debate as well because for so long, this country has

gone about the education by essentially allowing local school boards to determine those things for themselves.

EDWARDS: Outside of Washington, there was the flap over Ebonics in Oakland, California.

SANCHEZ: It was a story really about, you know, this notion of black English being a distinct and separate language and whether or not certainly inner-city black children who do not master English as quickly. And so many people in Oakland, certainly, cited that as a major reason why kids in that school system were not doing well.

And though the Oakland school board in the end re-thought this and essentially stepped back and decided to not go ahead with this Ebonics approach to teaching English or standard English to kids because essentially it was saying that, you know, black English was an acceptable dialect. And of course, the debate centered around the fact that it was not, that it was essentially slang in the view of some people.

It did raise questions about: Well, what do we do with these kids who don't master English quickly enough? And that led, in many ways, to yet another debate about even the whole question of desegregation, you know. Is busing — and has busing helped these inner-city children? Most people think it has not, and so busing is out. Neighborhood schools are in, and if they happen to be all black, so be it.

EDWARDS: In Milwaukee and Cleveland, school districts continue their experiment with publicly-funded vouchers that allow parents to send their children to private schools.

SANCHEZ: This is a story about choice — about parental choice; about, you know, we hear so much about the need for parents to become involved in their kids' education. And yet in that ultimate important decision about where those kids or where a child should go to school and whether the parents have anything to say about it, here is a debate that has not been resolved.

And so it's really been left up to the courts. The courts in Milwaukee and in Cleveland, at least, have said: Look, parents should have the choice to send their kids to school.

And if it takes a voucher — and in Cleveland it happens to be about a \$2,500 voucher — for a kid to use in a parochial school or a private school. It's not a lot of money, but it does pay for at least a half, maybe three-fourths of a tuition at a good Catholic school.

In Cleveland, where most of the schools that kids have opted to go to and that families have chosen, 50 of the, I think, or something like 45 of the 52 schools, private schools, were Catholic. Of course, that raises a question of separation of church and state, and that has not been resolved.

This is — both these cases are winding themselves — are winding their way to the Supreme Court where many people feel if the, certainly the composition of the court remains the same, it has a good chance of passing. And we may see in the next two or three years a voucher program — a national voucher program, maybe even something subsidized by the federal government because there have been proposals by Republicans on the Hill to do exactly that.

EDWARDS: In Texas and California last year, another major story: Colleges and universities repealed their affirmative action policies.

SANCHEZ: And that, of course, is the enormously important news in higher education and certainly in admissions and hiring. California and Texas have essentially said: Race will no longer be a factor, certainly the factor, in choosing students or in hiring professors, faculty or anybody else that works at a university.

The results, at least in the short-term, have thus far shown that there's been minority decreases, or the decrease in minority enrollment, especially in law and colleges of medicine.

And in this coming year, it seems that the debate will again shift to, well first, the evidence of whether doing away with affirmative action, rolling it back, is going to hurt or help; whether it's going to make colleges more homogeneous; whether it's going to really deter or limit opportunity for minorities. We will hear a lot more about this in higher education in the coming year.

EDWARDS: NPR education correspondent Claudio Sanchez.

This is NPR's MORNING EDITION. I'm Bob Edwards. ■

1. Baltimore Sun

January 4, 1998

Education heats up as political issue at national, local levels

As other topics wane, voters maintain lively interest in schooling

"That is why [conservatives] run for state board and local school boards, to do what they think is right for America."

Richard Neill, a Fort Worth dentist on the state board

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

WASHINGTON — The economy is humming, the federal deficit is shrinking, crime rates are down and the Cold War is becoming a distant memory.

Now that those issues have lost their punch, any politician not wearing a dunce cap is talking about education.

Schooling has always ranked high on the list of voter concerns. But strategists in both parties say the issue has moved to the top of the 1998 political agenda — in Washington and in state capitals — for a variety of reasons.

Student drug use is a major concern, test scores are flat, and many school districts are dealing with large numbers of low-income and immigrant students.

For the 34 million households with children under age 18, education is an integral part of life. Most parents also realize that it is the most important determinant of financial success.

In 1996, the average college graduate earned \$36,980 a year, about \$5,500 more than the average high school graduate. Dropouts averaged \$14,013.

"People believe that education is the key to economic opportunity," Democratic pollster Mark Mellman said.

"They want more emphasis on the basics. They want drugs out of the schools and discipline back in. They want tough standards. They want action."

At the same time, the appeal of other top-tier issues has faded.

"In our society today, education is the most pressing and acute problem," said Jennifer Laszlo, a political consultant to the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union. "We don't have a Cold War. The big war now is the war for better schools and a better future."

Political analysts say there is agreement on the goal: a better educational system. But how to bring it about has prompted considerable debate.

The result has been a bewildering array of proposals to revamp the nation's schools.

In Texas, Republican Gov. George W. Bush has declared education his top priority in a 1998 bid for a second term. His plan would require students to meet what he called tougher standards before advancing to the next grade.

Land Commissioner Garry Mauro, Bush's likely Democratic opponent, has countered with an ambitious plan to reduce student-teacher ratios by building more schools and hiring more teachers.

Other battle lines are forming across the country. In California, a group hopes to force a statewide vote to end bilingual education.

In Michigan, teacher groups are bracing for a fight over voucher programs that would let students attend private schools at public expense.

Hot topics at the congressional level may include President Clinton's proposal to establish national testing standards and Republican efforts to promote vouchers.

Democrats generally favor spending more on schools, teachers and educational resources, such as links to the Internet. Republicans favor proposals that rely on tax breaks, competition from private schools and local control.

But on many issues, such as standardized testing, candidates frequently take positions tailored more to community concerns than to any national party vision. All of this might lead to confusing ballots at election time.

Both major political parties face internal pressure to make education a high priority.

Some conservative Christian groups with influence among Republicans view the nation's schools as the key battleground in a cultural war. They want to end federal aid to local schools, open the door to school prayer and focus on a curriculum that stresses reading,

writing and arithmetic.

"The biggest problem is they're not teaching children how to read," said Phyllis Schlafly, head of the conservative Eagle Forum.

On the other side, teachers unions and associations allied with Democrats are wary of sweeping changes. They want more government investment in schools, but oppose voucher programs, tax breaks for private school tuition, or any other proposal that could drain money and students from public schools.

The lines are clearly drawn in Texas, where Christian conservatives hope to expand their influence on the 15-member State Board of Education. Former board member Donna Ballard of Midland, an outspoken religious conservative, is running against Democrat Rene Nunez of El Paso for the West Texas seat.

Five of the eight Republicans on the current board were elected with strong support from Christian conservatives.

"I think conservatives, Christian conservatives or not, have a problem with what they see coming down from the Clinton administration," said Richard Neill, a Fort Worth dentist elected to the state board with the support of the Christian Coalition and other conservatives.

"That is why [conservatives] run for state board and local school boards, to do what they think is right for America." ■

1. Philadelphia Inquirer

January 1, 1998

Party strategists: Education is 1998's top political issue

By Ron Hutcheson

INQUIRER WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The economy is humming, the federal deficit is shrinking, crime rates are down, and the Cold War is becoming a distant memory. Now that those issues have lost their punch, any politician not wearing a dunce cap is talking about education.

Strategists in both parties say education, which always ranks high on the list of voter concerns, has moved to the top of the 1998 political agenda for a variety of reasons.

Student drug use remains rampant, test scores are flat, and many school districts are dealing with unprecedented numbers of low-income and immigrant students. For the 34 million households with children under age 18, education is an integral part of life. Most parents also realize that it is the single most important determinant of financial success.

In 1996 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), the average college graduate earned \$36,980 a year, about \$5,500 more than the average high school graduate. High school dropouts earned \$14,013.

"People believe that education is the key to economic opportunity," Democratic pollster Mark Mellman said. "They want more emphasis on the basics. They want drugs out of the schools and discipline back in. They want tough standards. They want action."

At the same time, other top-tier issues have faded from public view.

"In our society today, education is the most pressing and acute problem," said Jennifer Laszlo, a political consultant to the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union. "We don't have a Cold War. The big war now is the war for better schools and a better future."

President Clinton, who long has claimed education as one of his signature issues, will outline his plans for improving public schools in his State of the Union speech Jan. 27. Meanwhile, Republicans are looking for ways to put their own stamp on the issue.

"It's time to admit the obvious: Our public education system needs fixing," Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato of New York said in delivering the Republican response to Clinton's year-end radio address. "We need to shake the system up. It's time to meet the challenges of massive fundamental reform."

How to do that is the question.

In Texas, Republican Gov. George W. Bush is pushing plans to teach reading through phonics and to impose tough new standards students must meet before moving onto the next grade.

In California, a citizens' group hopes to force a statewide vote to end bilingual education.

In Michigan, teacher groups are bracing for a fight over voucher programs that would let students attend private schools at public expense.

At the congressional level, hot topics include Clinton's proposal to establish national testing standards and Republican efforts to promote vouchers.

"There are all kinds of proposals floating out there for vouchers and magnet schools and 10,000 other possibilities," said Peter Schramm, a former Education Department official in the Reagan administration. "Even I'm confused."

The two major political parties also face internal pressure to make education a high priority.

Some conservative Christian groups with influence among Republicans view the nation's schools as the key battleground in a cultural war. They want to end federal aid to local schools, open the door to school prayer, and focus on a curriculum that stresses the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

"The biggest problem is, they're not teaching children how to read," said Phyllis Schlafly, head of the conservative Eagle Forum.

On the other side, teachers' unions allied with Democrats are wary of sweeping changes. They want more government investment in schools, but oppose voucher programs, tax breaks for private-school tuition, or any other proposal that could drain money and students from public schools.

In the last election cycle, the Eagle Forum and other conservative ideological groups donated about \$3.8 million to Republican candidates for various federal offices, according

to the Center for Responsive Politics. Teachers' unions, led by the National Education Association, donated nearly \$4 million to Democrats. ■

66. Morning Edition

12/02/97 Section: News; Domestic; Category: Commentary

Textbook Standards

Commentator Matt Miller says there are already a set of national education standards — the ones determined by textbook publishers. The industry had \$3.5 billion in sales last year, and five companies control 70 percent of that market. School districts in California, Texas and Florida account for a quarter of all textbook sales, so the publishers tailor the books to the needs of those three states, changing very little for the rest of the country.

BOB EDWARDS, HOST: President Clinton's initiatives to create national education standards in reading and math have been controversial since he made them a priority early in his second term.

Commentator Matt Miller says many critics of the education reforms have overlooked an important point.

MATT MILLER, COMMENTATOR: Republicans just put President Clinton's plan for national tests for four-grade reading and eighth-grade math on hold for a year, saying that anything that smacks of national standards threatens local control over schools.

Lost in the shouting, however, was an indispensable fact: national education standards already exist, set indirectly by a handful of publishing giants whose textbooks guide instruction in classrooms across the country.

Here's how it works. Textbook publishing for grades K to 12 is big business, with \$3.5 billion in sales last year. Five companies make up 70 percent of the market. Since California, Texas, and Florida account for 25 percent of book purchases, the big five publishers regularly develop new texts around the big three states' needs, then adapt them

slightly at low cost for other states.

This process unsurprisingly produces look-alike books. School division presidents at McGraw-Hill and Simon & Schuster tell me that, broadly speaking, 80 percent of their texts' content doesn't vary from state to state. In turn, researchers say, these texts, along with the teachers guides, lesson plans, and other materials publishers offer as accessories, have enormous influence over classroom instruction.

If we do, therefore, have a tacit national curriculum, the key question is whether it's any good. Views vary.

Publishers say their books' sameness reflects good news: there's broad professional consensus on what topics should be taught when. Just about everyone, for example, teaches addition and subtraction in first grade, division in third.

Critics find the situation less benign. The desire to keep each state happy by including local favorites, like the Alamo, balloons texts until they cover too many subjects too superficially.

Meanwhile, California, Texas and Florida, plus 17 other states, approve books for statewide use through a politicized process marred by ideological warfare, shoddy analysis, and occasional corruption. California, for instance, faced

an uproar in the 1980s when publishers treated book-buying bureaucrats to plush golf weekends and moonlight yacht cruises.

Our students' disappointing scores on international comparisons suggests critics are right to worry that today's standards aren't high enough. And the respected National Assessment of Education Progress reveals an enormous gap between what states consider adequate performance and what the same students score on national assessments.

Sixty-eight percent of North Carolina's eight graders, for example, meet the state's own math standards. Just 20 percent are considered proficient or

advanced by the NAEP.

It would be crazy, of course, to blame texts for everything that ails American schooling. But their influence should push the standards debate beyond today's ideological posturing.

The real debate we need isn't over whether to have national standards, but over who should set them and how. And if three states working with one oligopoly set de facto standards that aren't good enough, maybe, just maybe, we need a federal call for something better.

EDWARDS: The comments of Matt Miller, a senior writer at U.S. News & World Report and a syndicated columnist.■

29. The Dallas Morning News

12/02/97; Edition: HOME FINAL; Section: EDUCATION EXTRA; Page 25A

U.S. education leader walks on fine line

By Karel Holloway

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley is in a delicate position.

He pursues education reform with a revivalist's zeal. He's been touring the country talking about the need for more and better teachers, the importance of learning to read and strong math programs, and the necessity of getting new technology in the classroom.

At the same time, he is well aware that the federal government's role in schools can only be limited.

Too strong of a push from Washington and citizens start screaming about local control. But if there's too little emphasis from the administration, then improving education may lose its place as an important national topic.

"I think the federal government can play a supportive role and a leadership role, but the real work is out there in the schools and communities," Mr. Riley said in an interview during a recent trip to Dallas. "Like so many things, we are not in a position, and don't want to be in a position, of controlling what happens, but of sharing good ideas."

What's needed, he said, is a national

approach with federal, state and local agencies all working together.

"It's amazing to me how when we focus on something, how when we can all come together, how much we can do," he said.

Administration role

The Clinton administration is doing its part at the top, he said. President Clinton has made education a priority.

The president has proposed, among other things, a national focus on reading. He called for tutors, some paid with federal college work-study money, to help children learn to read. The goal is that all children will learn to read well by the end of third grade.

He also pushed for stronger math and science instruction.

To help reach these goals, Mr. Clinton has proposed voluntary national tests in reading at the end of third grade and math at the end of eighth grade to show how students are doing.

Political fights

Critics see these proposals as too much meddling in local education by the federal government. They say that national tests will bring about a national

curriculum written by "educrats" in Washington.

Mr. Riley said he worries that political fights over the tests and a few other proposals may draw the focus away from improving what goes on in classrooms.

"The Washington end gets caught up in politics," he said.

Vouchers, which would give students tax money they could use at any school they choose - not just their public school - is a good example of an issue that is tying up debate on education reform, he said.

"That's an issue that is terribly divisive. That's all they talk about," he said, speaking of some members of Congress and others who favor vouchers. "You don't hear them talking about reading. You don't hear them talking about math. They just focus, focus, focus on vouchers."

Mr. Riley and the Clinton administration oppose vouchers.

Mr. Riley said his goal is to bring constant, supportive attention to improving education. He will do that through public appearances, and in conjunction with the president, federal

funding for selective programs to keep reform moving along.

"This is not like a silver bullet kind of

attitude. It's not a 'do one thing and everything will get better' attitude," Mr. Riley said. "This is about real education."

Karel Holloway is education editor of The Dallas Morning News. ■

1. The Washington Post

12/23/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A01

School Plan To Propose Urban Aid

Clinton, Advisers Focus '98 Education Initiative On Big-City Problems

By Rene Sanchez

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Clinton administration is drafting plans to expand its education agenda next year with initiatives that target the problems in urban public schools, many of which are overwhelmed with academic failure and are physically falling apart.

Final details of the plan have not been resolved, but a variety of ideas are emerging — from reviving an initiative to repair thousands of crumbling schools to creating a program that would reward urban districts that enact tougher academic standards and let parents choose whatever public school they want for their children.

The White House and the Education Department have been working all month on the proposals, which they expect President Clinton to unveil in January and which could ignite another round of important political battles with Republican leaders in Congress over a subject that he has vowed to make the defining priority of his second term.

Clinton already has a lengthy list of education initiatives making their way, with mixed results so far, through Congress. But some school leaders and lawmakers have criticized him for not putting more emphasis on urban public education. During budget negotiations with Republican congressional leaders earlier this year, Clinton shelved the proposal that urban educators wanted most: \$5 billion to fix dilapidated schools.

"Urban education has not been a very visible part of the administration's agenda so far," said Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools, which represents the nation's largest urban districts. "We're hoping what they're working on now will correct that and get help to schools that need it most."

Across the country, many urban school systems are attempting to address their dire predicaments with an array of new, and in some cases radical, strategies. It is a period of growing upheaval: Districts are hiring business or

former military leaders to take charge of their schools, revamping what they teach, turning to private companies for help in the classroom, and struggling to impose strict new academic standards on faculty and students who fall short of expectations. Administration officials said that Clinton wants to support some of that difficult and as yet unproven work.

"You've got a confluence of things starting to happen in many urban school sites that really make the time ripe to focus more special attention on them," said **Marshall Smith, acting deputy secretary of education**. "We want to help them move in the right direction."

The plight of urban schools is also receiving substantial new attention in Congress, where many Republican lawmakers, and some Democrats, are making it a top priority to pass legislation that would give the neediest students in some cities the option of using publicly paid tuition vouchers to escape bad public schools and attend private ones.

An attempt to start a federally funded voucher program nationwide was defeated in the House this fall. Republican leaders say that vouchers, which appear to be gaining support among minority parents, are necessary because so many traditional approaches to improving public schools in the nation's large cities have failed.

But Clinton adamantly opposes the idea. He favors a more limited form of school choice — letting parents pick any public school they want in their district, instead of being forced to attend a school in their neighborhood, no matter how bad it is. The administration is bracing for more political showdowns soon over that issue.

"We expect to see voucher proposals all year next year, in every possible guise," Smith said. "It will be a fight."

A key part of the plan the White House and Education Department are developing is focused on that looming political conflict: Clinton wants to reward high-poverty urban school districts with new federal grants if, among other things,

they give parents the freedom to enroll children anywhere within the public system. Some districts are moving in that direction, but most still rely on neighborhood schooling.

Clinton recently said he intends to designate a select number of troubled urban districts "education opportunity zones" and make them eligible for grants that they could use in many ways to improve schools.

But to qualify for the money, districts also would have to show that they are holding faculty accountable for performance and are requiring students to meet strong academic standards. Some especially poor school districts in rural areas across the country also would receive the new grants. The cost of the plan has not yet been determined, and none of the sites for it have been selected yet, administration officials said.

Clinton may have a difficult time getting Congress to support another expensive new education plan, however, if he is not willing to test vouchers even on a small scale.

"It sounds like the administration is missing the mark again," said Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, which supports vouchers. "Communities nationwide are recognizing that schools need severe changes, but Clinton is still doing only as much as he can without offending the teacher unions."

Another aspect of Clinton's plan is school construction. Earlier this year, the president caved to congressional skepticism about the \$5 billion he wanted to give school districts to repair their aging, tattered buildings. But administration officials now say Clinton intends to push the issue again early next year. Clinton also wants to give urban schools more money to recruit and train better teachers. In many cities, finding good teachers is a chronic problem that is getting worse.

Urban school leaders have been pressing Clinton for additional aid ever since more than a dozen of the nation's largest urban school districts, including

Chicago and New York, pledged their support a few months ago for the president's controversial plan to give students national tests in reading and math for the first time. Only a few states have agreed to use the tests, which still face a tough fight for approval in Congress.

Urban officials also have complained that some of Clinton's other education

initiatives have not yet had a significant effect in their classrooms.

Goals 2000, a loosely structured federal grant program to improve schools, is managed by states, and they are under pressure to give all schools a share of the money. The president's reading initiative — he wants to recruit and train a nationwide army of volunteer reading tutors — is still being developed,

although hundreds of universities have agreed to use work-study students for the project.

Clinton officials bristle at the criticism. "We think we've been aggressive on this. We're trying to make help for urban schools a constant refrain," Smith said. "Now we want to put it all together in a new program."■

1. San Francisco Chronicle

December 19, 1997

Man of Science Has a Problem With Real Math

DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

THIS STORY demonstrates why you can't trust Clinton's education gurus to write national tests for America's students. If there's a sure thing in life, it's that D.C. educrats will dumb down any subject, given half a chance and millions of dollars.

The tale begins this month as California's state Board of Education was about to vote on math standards for public school students. A standards panel had written a document rich in trendy educratsese. ("Show mathematical reasoning in solutions in a variety of ways.") The board wanted — and ultimately approved — a meatier document with solid standards for computation and less fluff about writing about math.

By injecting more math into math — actually expecting kids to memorize multiplication tables in the third grade and master long division in the fourth — the board invited the ire of state schools chief Delaine Eastin and the federal government. On December 11, the day before the final vote, Luther S. Williams, assistant director of the federally funded National Science Foundation, fired off a letter to board president Yvonne Larson. Basics wags call it "the blackmail letter."

Williams, who didn't call me back, criticized the new standards for not "elevating problem-solving and critical thinking." His letter chided the board for preferring the "wistful or nostalgic 'back-to-basics' approach," which he wrote, "has chronically and dismally failed."

He then reminded Larsen that his bureaucracy gives grants totaling more than \$50 million of taxpayer money to six California school districts, including Oakland. "You must surely understand," he wrote, that his group "cannot support individual school systems that embark on a course that substitutes computational proficiencies for a commitment to deep, balanced, mathematical learning." On what planet does this man of science live?

First, Williams has a little jurisdictional problem. President Clinton says he doesn't want the federal government to butt into local school business. Also, the guy works for a science — not math — agency. But he is so arrogant and power drunk that he feels free to sic his Science Foundation on California math dissidents.

Second, the state's commitment to "deep, balanced mathematical learning" — aka new-new math — has resulted in computational deficiencies, as well as general arithmetical idiocy. For some years, trendy California educators have focused on students writing about math, repeatedly explaining how equations work and exploring their feelings about math. They've also taken to giving students credit for wrong answers. Thus, "critical thinking" has come to mean not being critical of students.

The result: In the last National Assessment of Educational Progress math test, California fourth-graders scored behind students from every state but Mississippi and Louisiana. Only 13 percent were rated proficient. Eastin has suggested that the state board should "get out of the dark ages." She ought to get the schools out of the dark ages.

No wonder some parents are "nostalgic," as Williams put it, for the days when basics were emphasized, and cash registers all had numbers on them instead of pictures of hamburgers. Back in the days of what Williams classified as failure, students scored an average of 22 points higher on math SATs. Here's a novel thought. Let the National Science Foundation give a grant to solve the great mystery of modern education: How is it that swells like Williams can look at the 1950s as years of math failure, but see no problem with high-school kids needing a calculator to compute 10 percent? How can you say you stand for problem solving without being able to recognize a problem?■

19. CongressDaily

12/15/97Section: EDUCATION; Category: Trade

House Frustrated Over Senate Pace On Education Bills

House Education and the Workforce Committee members are becoming increasingly frustrated with the pace at which the Senate - and, specifically, Senate Labor and Human Resources Chairman Jeffords - is proceeding on education bills, according to sources. While disagreements between House and Senate committees controlled by the same party are as old as Congress itself, House committee aides said the slow pace in the Senate may jeopardize several of the education reforms Republicans want to cite as accomplishments during the 1998 elections. "We are starting to fear that the Senate and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee will not act on anything," said a GOP House committee aide. "They just don't seem to be able to get anything out of that committee. It seems like they're in total gridlock."

But Joseph Karpinski, spokesman for

the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, contended the GOP education agenda is right on track - with several of the House-passed issues to be addressed early next year. And because the House and Senate committees have different jurisdictions, the Labor and Human Resources Committee had much more on its plate this year, he said. Jeffords spent a good part of his time working on legislation reforming the FDA and the Prescription Drug User Fee Act, which was handled in the House by the Commerce Committee. "The Senate has a different jurisdictional framework," Karpinski said. "Senator Jeffords had to focus on FDA reform more than the education bills." Also, the all-encompassing Senate education bill, S.1, earlier this year was referred to the Finance Committee because of its tax provisions.

House members are waiting for Senate

action on job training, charter schools, literacy programs, vocational education, so-called education IRA accounts and a juvenile justice bill. The House early next year also plans to move Head Start reauthorization, the Community Services Block Grant bill, Older Americans Act reauthorization - which includes job training - and a National Assessment of Educational Progress bill that reauthorizes voluntary national tests. The Senate spokesman countered that the committee is readying to take action on most of those issues. The Senate committee already passed a bill combining job training and vocational education that is awaiting floor action, and the juvenile justice bill is the province of the Judiciary Committee. "We were ahead of them on some issues, they're ahead of us on others," Karpinski said.■

41. Chicago Tribune

December 16, 1997

Lawsuit by East St. Louis parents tests school system

By Ron Grossman

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

EAST ST. LOUIS —When Anita Hicks registered her 6-year-old twins for 1st grade at the Jackson Math and Science Academy three years ago, she was entitled to an extra dose of the pride and hope a mother feels on her children's first day of school.

Their test scores had won Aaron and Alia admission to a special program for gifted children, and, as is true perhaps nowhere else, the American faith in education as a route out of poverty is a psychological necessity here. Scarcely an intact building or two survive on most blocks of this virtually all-black community where 70 percent of the residents are on some form of public aid.

But Jackson's program fell so short of its billing as the premier offering of School District 189 that Hicks went to court, charging that East St. Louis' schools exist less for the education of students than to line the pockets of politicians and their friends.

At the heart of the suit, which would be precedent setting, said legal experts, is the question: Do children have a constitutional right to a minimal quality of education? And if a local district fails to provide it, is the state obligated to step in and run the system?

The little-publicized suit is playing out amid a flurry of state court decisions and legislative initiatives—including a recently concluded battle in Illinois—that, in effect, guarantee a minimal level of funding for local schools. But inadequate funding isn't the issue here: District 189 spends about \$6,000 a year per pupil, about the same as much more fortunate communities like Naperville or St. Charles.

Hicks' suit asks that state authorities be required to take a giant step further by ensuring that all students have at least minimal opportunities to learn in the classroom.

In fact, under recent school reform legislation, the State Board of Education has the authority to take control of grossly failing schools, if all other attempts to repair them fail. But that discretionary power has yet to be exercised, and the state board —a

co-defendant in the case along with District 189 —has vigorously resisted Hicks' suit all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court, where briefs for both sides are due in mid-January.

Hicks' view of the shortcomings of the East St. Louis system found partial confirmation when a Tribune reporter recently asked Supt. of Schools Geraldine Jenkins, a defendant in the suit, her opinion of the case, which is being closely followed by educators nationally.

"What lawsuit?" Jenkins said. "I don't know about any lawsuit. I guess I'd better inform myself."

Later that same evening at an emergency meeting of the school board, Jenkins was granted a leave of absence (with pay) until the expiration of her contract. The leading contender for her replacement was the sister of a school board member.

Pearson Bush, the school district's attorney (and brother of the mayor), declined to comment on the suit.

Hicks' disillusionment with her children's school began with the discovery that there was no teacher posted to the twins' 1st-grade room.

Every time she asked why, the explanations changed. One day she would be told a much beloved teacher had retired, and it wasn't easy to find her equal. The alternate excuse was that funds had yet to be appropriated for a replacement.

"They were bringing in people off the street to baby-sit with the students," Hicks said. "There'd be days when no adult was in the room. A teacher would pop in from next door just to check on them."

For months, Hicks came home from work each evening to give her twins the reading lessons they weren't getting in school, meanwhile badgering the principal and haunting school board meetings. Finally, she decided to throw her lot in with some equally frustrated parents whose children were going to schools where toilets didn't work and classrooms went unheated. A high-school teacher complained of having to teach a course in current events with a 25-year-old textbook.

When teachers were absent, classes

were marched down to the gym to sit idle all day, parents charged. One group of 3rd graders had had, as their substitute, a 6th-grade student.

So Hicks and five other parents made their children parties to a lawsuit, naming as defendants not only the East St. Louis school district but also the State of Illinois' Board of Education. The children's lawyers think that Aaron and Alia's school and others here are so bad that District 189 should simply be abolished, and the state required to run the school system.

Should the plaintiffs be successful, the case would represent an abrupt break with America's tradition of local responsibility for education—witness the resistance to President Clinton's call for national testing of students.

"I don't know of any case where the courts have ordered a school district to be abandoned," said Mary Fulton, a policy analyst with the Education Commission of the States, a think tank that works with government officials. "That would really hold the state's feet to the fire, making it directly responsible for seeing that children get a decent education."

When the suit was first filed in 1995, a state assistant attorney general went to court asking for it to be dismissed. He argued that, under the Illinois Constitution, a quality education may be a "fundamental goal," but wasn't a "fundamental right" of young people.

When the judge agreed and dismissed the suit, lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union appealed to the Fifth District Appellate Court.

Last May, the appellate judges ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, and the state appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court.

"We hold," the appellate justices wrote in their opinion, "that the Illinois Constitution does indeed provide for at least a minimally adequate education and that those allegedly harmed by the lack of education, such as these plaintiffs, may bring that cause of action in the circuit courts of Illinois."

Even a brief visit to the East St. Louis schools makes it clear that few students can be getting an adequate education here. Like schools across the country, Jackson Math and Science Academy has

been equipped with computers, putatively so students can benefit from this new, cyberspace age of education.

Unfortunately, Jackson's computers don't have any software installed in them, making it impossible for students to get onto the Internet or even to learn basic computer skills. Instead, the school's computer lab is limited to using its electronic-wonder machines for typing lessons.

Recently, a group of 8th graders were practicing letter-combination exercises taken from a 25-year-old typing textbook, of which only two copies were available. Student aides were running back and forth to a nearby storeroom, photocopying pages for their fellow students to work from.

According to East St. Louis school officials, that and similar deficiencies could be eliminated if they only had more money at their disposal. But that argument was vigorously questioned by Carla Hill, a senior at East St. Louis High School, where the corridors are marked by burnt-out lockers that look like miniatures of the building hulks on nearby streets.

"I believe that the state is sending enough money," Hill said. "But somewhere between Springfield and here, the money isn't getting to our classrooms."

To illustrate her thesis, she asked fellow members of a human anatomy class how many still didn't have textbooks, two months into the semester. Hands went up all over the room.

The principal tried pointing the finger at Hill's teacher, demanding to know why he hadn't distributed more textbooks.

"Because there aren't any in the book room," the teacher replied.

Richard Mark, the president of St. Mary's Hospital—which provides about the only job base here besides the school district—agrees that lack of school funds isn't the issue. He heads a three-person Financial Oversight Panel put in place by state authorities because the district repeatedly overspent its budget.

Mark noted that East St. Louis spends more per pupil on education than do nearby districts whose students score much higher on reading and math tests than those of District 189—which recently ranked third from the bottom among all Illinois districts. The problem is not money but what school officials choose to do with it, said Mark, whose panel has to approve all spending proposals.

"The board wanted to spend \$40,000 for some 11-year-old, used textbooks, when for a dollar more each, they could have bought much newer ones," Mark said. "We thought it was because they wanted to send the business to a friend who is a textbook dealer. The board has been sitting on funds earmarked for desperately needed school repairs because we wouldn't approve the contractor they wanted."

Mark traces the school mess to the historical confluence of two factors: a local tradition of patronage politics and the town's impoverishment in recent decades.

In the 1960s, factories closed and East St. Louis underwent massive white flight that so reduced its tax base there weren't any plums left to hand out at City Hall. For a while, in fact, there wasn't even a City Hall: A judge awarded it to a creditor of the nearly bankrupt city. So the politicians turned to the school district as an alternate source of jobs and contracts for their supporters.

"At election time, or just before the holidays, if someone needed a job, they'd give him one," Mark said. "People would show up at a school and tell the principal: 'So and so board member told me to show up here today.'"

East St. Louis came to have one of the highest ratios of non-teaching employees—cooks, janitors, etc.—to students in the state. Dead employees were kept on the payroll, and relatives and friends were enrolled in the district's health plan, Mark said. When the Financial Oversight Panel got a hold of the district's books, Mark and his colleagues couldn't even

figure out how many employees the school district had—a charge that former superintendent Jenkins categorically denied.

"We knew how many employees we had," Jenkins said. "We just didn't know where they were."

Mark confesses to not quite knowing how to ensure such abuses don't resume, once his panel's mandate runs out. In an ideal world, he said, the solution would be to have the state take over the schools. But what public official is going to leap at that thankless task? As an alternative, some critics of the school board have suggested that East St. Louis students be parceled out among nearby, largely white, school districts. But given today's racial climate, that seems unlikely.

Accordingly, the children's lawyers said that the courts will ultimately have to craft a solution to the East St. Louis school crisis.

But one young person here isn't content with waiting to see what the Supreme Court justices might do.

Recently, the girl tried reaching out beyond the housing projects and inadequate schools that are her daily reality by writing a letter on three-ring notebook paper to a black person who, as television shows her, has been able to make something of her life:

Dear Oprah,

My name is Lakeshia Robinson. I attend the A. M. Jackson Math and Science Academy in East St. Louis. It is supposed to be the only gifted school in the district but we have no access to computers and our gym, band time was cut in half due to lack of money, which really makes me mad."

Lakeshia, who is 11, put the blame for her and her fellow pupils' plight squarely on adult shoulders: Teachers, whose strikes cut into the school year, and "our corrupt school board."

"I am not asking for money," she wrote just above her signature. "I am only asking for a chance to make it in this world."■

31. The Washington Post

12/10/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Metro; Page B01

Scores Rise In Reading in Montgomery **Disparity Persists For Racial Groups**

By Fern Shen
Washington Post Staff Writer

Montgomery County students continued their modest, steady overall improvement in reading scores last year, but pronounced racial disparities in student achievement remain, according to

results released yesterday by Montgomery County's public schools.

Since the county began administering its own self-assessment tests four years ago, students have consistently improved their scores. The results from tests the students took in the spring continue that trend: In the reading test, for example,

the percentage of students who met the county standard rose from 68.5 in 1996 to 69.6 in 1997.

But the achievement of African American and Hispanic students who took the so-called Criterion Reference Tests, which are given to third- through eighth-graders, remained dramatically

lower.

In the seventh-grade reading test, for instance, the passing rate of white students was about twice that of blacks. Only 41 percent of African Americans who took the test in the spring passed, while 81 percent of white students met the standard. For Hispanic seventh-graders, the passing rate was 46 percent; for Asians it was 75 percent.

Like the national testing standards President Clinton wants to impose on America's schools and the testing requirements many states have imposed in recent years, the Montgomery County tests aim to raise the achievement of all students, eliminating the gaps among racial, ethnic and economic groups.

But unlike the Clinton proposals and the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, the Montgomery County tests are given in each of grades 3 through 8 and provide specific results for each student. The test is tougher because the standards are designed to assess students' mastery of the county's ambitious curriculum.

Some Board of Education members said they thought school officials' presentation of the results yesterday minimized the learning disparities among students.

"As we celebrate our successes, we ought to be very clear that we still have some major defects," said board member

Blair G. Ewing (Silver Spring). "We still do not know why African American students and Hispanic students do not do as well as other students."

School staff members, in presenting the data, said repeatedly that the information should be viewed in terms of individual students, not racial or ethnic groups.

"There are too many myths and stereotypes that cloud perceptions about the potential of student achievement," said Superintendent Paul L. Vance in his foreword to the 218-page booklet of statistics. Staff members presented graphs to prove the point, including one showing that the reading achievement of Montgomery County's African American third-graders virtually mirrors that of all students nationwide.

But one observer in the audience for yesterday's presentation said he was upset that the only reference to black and Hispanic students' low achievement was a warning to critics that they perpetuate stereotypes by bringing the problem up.

"I am somewhat disturbed that all of this has been lumped under the rubric 'myth-making,'" said James L. Robinson, a longtime community activist who has focused on the concerns of African American and Hispanic students. "There is a disproportionately large percentage of students who don't do as well as they ought to do. We ought to find out why."

School officials said they could not explain the disparities beyond citing the same complex social forces that have resulted in disproportionately lower achievement for black and Hispanic children nationwide.

"These disparities exist everywhere else in the United States," said school spokesman Brian J. Porter. "These conditions are not unique to Montgomery County, but we are determined to eliminate them by raising our expectations of all students, by pinpointing areas of need to specific schools, if not classrooms."

School officials said that the tests are part of a major initiative, the Success for Every Student Plan, created in large part to address that very problem: how to equalize achievement systemwide.

By some measures released yesterday, the gap between racial and ethnic groups is being closed. For example, the number of College Board Advanced Placement Tests taken by African American students increased 188 percent over the last seven years, while the number taken by whites increased by 82 percent. During the same period, AP tests taken by Asian students increased 63 percent; for Hispanics, the number rose 118 percent.

Math scores released yesterday showed that nearly 60 percent of students have reached new county standards. ■

14. Education Week

December 10, 1997

Clinton School Plans Advance On Some Fronts

By David J. Hoff
Washington

President Clinton began the year promising that education would be the hallmark of his second term. He ends it with a mixed report card on his 10-point "Call to Action for American Education."

The president delivered on his 1996 campaign promise for higher education tax incentives, getting almost everything he wanted from a reluctant Congress. But he failed to keep his national testing program on the fast track he laid out in his 1997 State of the Union Address, and he still could lose the larger fight over whether to create the assessments at all.

Many other pieces of the 10-point plan he unveiled in that same address are partly in place. The federal government will substantially increase spending on school technology and charter schools in the current fiscal year, for example. It's on its way toward expanding the Head Start program to serve 1 million preschoolers. It also started a \$40 million grant program for after-school projects. ("Clinton Gives Top Billing to Education Plan," Feb. 12, 1997.)

A reading initiative focusing on young children is halfway through Congress, but it has changed substantially from what Mr. Clinton proposed. Likewise, the president's plan to create vouchers for job training has cleared the House, but not the Senate. ("Clinton Administration

Shifts Gears on Reading Bill," Nov. 19, 1997.)

The only place Mr. Clinton and his team failed to deliver at is in their promise to provide \$5 billion to help underwrite the cost of financing school construction. He and his advisers say, however, that they will propose a new construction plan in their fiscal 1999 budget, scheduled to be submitted in late January.

"We've made progress on most, but not all of them," Michael Cohen, the president's education adviser, said of Mr. Clinton's education objectives. "In sum, we've done quite well."

Taking Credit

While the administration's critics concede that the Clinton team has chalked up some victories, they also complain that it is hogging the stage.

"He's a master at taking credit ... for something he had little to do with," Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, said in an interview.

"Clinton is very savvy when it comes to talking about education reform," said Nina H. Shokraii, the education policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington think tank.

The president touts the rapid growth in the number of charter schools, but the federal government has played only a minor role in passing state laws and

paying for the estimated 700 such schools now operating, Ms. Shokraii said.

Mr. Clinton also boasts of his role in more than doubling federal spending for school technology, even though Congress appropriated \$39 million more than the president requested in his fiscal 1998 budget, Mr. Goodling added.

Even so, supporters and critics alike say Mr. Clinton has been an effective spokesman for education.

"The president has done what a president can do: use the bully pulpit to remind the public of the importance of education," Mr. Goodling said.

Testing Troubles

Mr. Clinton can lay claim to accomplishing major changes in how the next generation of students will pay for college. Last summer, Congress passed a \$40 billion package of higher education tax breaks as part of a five-year package designed to balance the budget and provide tax cuts. ("Budget Pact Includes College Tax Credits," Aug. 6, 1997.)

The incentives will arrive in a variety of formats starting in the 1998 tax year.

Students or their parents will receive federal income-tax credits of up to \$1,500 for the first \$2,000 they spend on higher education during the first two years of college.

For juniors and seniors, the credit will amount to 20 percent of the first \$10,000

of their costs.

The tax measure also created new savings incentives to pay for college, modeled after individual retirement accounts. Under a separate spending law, the maximum Pell Grant for low-income students will be \$3,000, an increase of \$300.

"The bottom line is: I think this is the best year that higher education has had in two decades," said Terry W. Hartle, the vice president of governmental relations for the American Council on Education, a Washington-based umbrella group representing colleges and universities.

But while the president realized most of his college objectives, he failed to get what he wanted in K-12 testing.

He originally tried to circumvent Congress and spend existing **Department of Education** money to create the voluntary 4th grade reading assessments and 8th grade math tests by the spring of 1999. That would have required validating test questions in field and pilot assessments this fall.

Faced with congressional opposition to the testing from conservatives and liberals alike, the administration agreed to halt the pilot- and field-testing during fiscal 1998, which began Oct. 1, so the

independent National Assessment Governing Board could review the project and make recommendations for its future. ("White House, GOP Craft Agreement on Testing," Nov. 12, 1997.)

"It might have been unreasonable to expect that in one session of Congress such a notable departure in national education policy would be accomplished," said Michael Timpane, a senior adviser for education policy for the Washington office of the RAND Corp., a Santa Monica, Calif.-based think tank.

Still, the tests' future is uncertain. Many of the forces, especially those on the right, that delayed it this year appear to be dead set against national testing of any kind, even the voluntary assessments that Mr. Clinton proposes.

White House officials are hoping that by next fall, when the testing plan's fate is decided, potential test items and final specifications will ease critics' fears that the tests would usurp local curriculum decisions while also failing to adequately challenge students.

"By the time Congress has to take another look at this, there will be a lot of additional work done to make the debate

more concrete and alleviate some of the fears," Mr. Cohen said.

Focusing Attention

Although some say the president exaggerates his role in the expansion of education technology and charter schools, supporters of those causes say his public statements have been invaluable in swaying public opinion in favor of them.

"We've had lots of fits and starts," said Frank B. Withrow, the director of education for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Classroom of the Future project at Wheeling University in West Virginia. "But the fact that the president has pushed [education technology] gives it a great deal of visibility."

Whatever Mr. Clinton accomplishes in Congress next year, he will maintain a busy schedule of education events, Mr. Cohen said.

"I believe that education is a big part of this, and I believe that the economics is a big part of this," Mr. Clinton said at a town hall meeting in Akron, Ohio, last week on race relations. "I've spent most of my public life —more than 20 years —working on those two things." ■

34. Education Week

December 9, 1997

Clinton Plan Would Target Poor Schools

By David J. Hoff
Washington

While President Clinton's new proposal to help high-poverty schools played only a minor part in his first town meeting on race last week, it offered a revealing preview of his administration's 1998 agenda for poor urban and rural districts.

The program is the first piece of a plan

to help such districts raise student achievement, administration officials said.

"We've obviously stressed [urban issues] before," Marshall S. Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education, said. "But this kind of ups the ante."

What else will fill out that package is still undecided, according to Mr. Smith and Michael Cohen, the president's

education adviser.

So far, administration officials have a sketchy outline for Mr. Clinton's proposed "education opportunity zones"—the program he announced at the town meeting in Akron, Ohio—and for plans to revive a failed attempt to support school construction projects. But they don't know how much money they will request for those or any other initiatives

in Mr. Clinton's fiscal 1999 budget.

Despite the lack of specifics, the focus on poor schools has heartened urban school leaders. They say it represents the Democratic administration's first attempt to make city schools a priority since Mr. Clinton took office nearly five years ago.

"It looks like a great first step and a quite promising one," said Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a Washington group representing the nation's 50 largest urban school districts. "I expect the whole issue of urban education will be much higher on the national agenda next year."

Limited Details

At the Dec. 3 town hall meeting, one of a series planned as part of Mr. Clinton's effort to heighten national discussion of racial issues, the president briefly mentioned the educational-opportunity-zones plan. It was the only addition to the racial-reconciliation agenda he endorsed in the two-hour event at the University of Akron.

The "proposal [is] to create educational opportunity zones to reward school districts in poor urban and rural areas who undertake the kind of sweeping reform that Chicago has embraced in the last couple of years," Mr. Clinton said.

To qualify for aid under the proposed program, school districts would need to promise to offer students a choice of public schools to attend, adopt challenging student-performance standards, tie grade promotions to students' success in meeting them, and overhaul schools where students consistently fail to meet the standards.

Whether local districts would have the authority to take all such actions on their own is unclear, according to one expert on state education laws. Only 30 of the states, for example, have laws allowing public school choice, according to Chris Piphio, a spokesman for the Education Commission of the States, a Denver-based coalition of state officials.

While the program would reach rural schools as well, its premise is built around reforms already under way in Chicago, San Francisco, New York City, and other cities.

"School board members are on the same page, but are trying to find out what works best," said Katrina A. Kelley, the director of the Council of Urban Boards of Education, a division of the Alexandria, Va.-based National School Boards Association.

Others question whether the scope of project, which Mr. Smith of the **Education Department** said would not cost more than \$1 billion a year, would be great enough.

President Clinton is "essentially nibbling around the edges of what are some major issues that need to be addressed," said Milton Bins, a former deputy director of the city schools' group and the chairman of the Council of 100, a group of black Republicans. "It may be enough to keep you happy through the Christmas holidays, but come January 1 you're back to square one."

Voucher Link

To be enacted, the new initiative and any others must clear Congress, where Republicans have made school vouchers for impoverished children the top priority in their education agenda.

"Republicans have made it clear that some shift [on vouchers] would be the ticket for entry," said William A. Galston, a former domestic-policy adviser to Mr. Clinton who is a professor at the University of Maryland school of public affairs.

Mr. Galston, a centrist Democrat, is urging the administration to support a small, structured private-school-choice program. If it were carefully designed, research would demonstrate whether choice boosts student achievement, he said. The results either would prove most Democrats and public school officials right—or force them to change their opposition, Mr. Galston believes.

But Mr. Galston's proposal would fall flat before the public school lobby and, probably, the administration. Both worked to help defeat a series of GOP private-school-choice proposals this fall. A bipartisan majority in the House stopped an attempt to allow districts to issue vouchers from their portions of a federal block grant. ("Voucher Bill Fails on Bipartisan Vote In House," Nov. 12, 1997.)

In the Senate, Democratic filibusters killed a proposed voucher program for the District of Columbia in a spending bill for the city and tax incentives to benefit parents of private school parents. Mr. Clinton and his team had threatened vetoes if either bill cleared Congress.

Such victories make Mr. Casserly optimistic that a GOP attempt to attach vouchers to any new school legislation would be defeated.

"You run the risk [of losing], but I hope it's an acceptable one," Mr. Casserly said.

While the opportunity-zones plan

would serve impoverished rural districts, as well as urban schools, it clearly is intended to spur reform in inner cities.

As Mr. Clinton said, it is designed to help schools follow Chicago's lead in dramatic reforms that include putting schools on probation, requiring summer school on a massive scale, and firing employees in schools where student performance is dismal.

In addition, it is rural states that lack the well-defined standards that would be required to qualify for an opportunity-zone grant, Mr. Piphio said. That could leave schools in Iowa and Wyoming without a chance to compete for the money, he said.

Urban Victory

The opportunity zones, and any plans that follow, mark a victory for the Council of the Great City Schools, which has had a rocky relationship with Mr. Clinton's administration.

In the 1993 debate over the administration's Goals 2000 school reform plan, for example, city schools complained because all of the money would be funneled through state education departments.

"When so much emphasis is put on states, cities tend to do poorly," Mr. Casserly said. As a result, urban centers haven't received grants from the program that are proportionate to their school enrollments, "much less their need," he said.

City schools would have been winners under a new **Department of Education** formula for distributing \$8 billion in money for the Title I program for disadvantaged students, Mr. Smith said. But the 1994 effort failed when Congress decided to protect wealthier areas from cuts. In recent years, Congress blocked the compromise formula from being updated with the latest data.

Relations between urban advocates and administration officials improved in 1996 when Mr. Clinton proposed the \$5 billion school construction initiative. They became strained again last spring when the president abandoned the program during the balanced-budget negotiations.

After 15 city school districts volunteered last summer to participate in Mr. Clinton's proposed new national tests, the administration started to consider an urban agenda, Mr. Casserly said. The city schools needed to prove that they are willing to take the risk of having poor test scores made public in order to win federal favors, he said.

Mr. Casserly said his group and other

urban advocates are "kicking around" ideas to pitch to the administration.■

32. Education Week

December 9, 1997

Educators Grapple With Assessing Non-English-Speakers

By Millicent Lawton

One of the key policy decisions that cut into support for President Clinton's plan for new national tests was that the reading test be given only in English.

Although every aspect of the proposed voluntary tests is in limbo while an independent body takes them under review, that decision highlights the ongoing educational challenge of assessing the literacy skills of the many students from immigrant families who are not yet proficient in English.

The goal of the proposed national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, from the administration's view, was to help parents and teachers measure individual student achievement.

But advocates for students with limited English proficiency, representatives of civil rights groups, and many liberal members of Congress, among others, countered that students who are still learning English would be shut out of a measure of their reading ability.

If students with limited English proficiency were given no option but to take the reading test in English, they argued, it would reveal nothing more than how little or how much English they knew. The issue even prompted Los Angeles, Houston, and El Paso, Texas, school officials to change their minds about taking part in the planned reading test.

In those and other districts, educators must deal daily with assessing the reading and other skills of students who are not yet competent in English. Many literacy experts say that if the goal is to find out how well a student reads, the assessment is far more meaningful if it is administered in the student's native tongue.

For language-minority students, said Irma Trujillo, the director of bilingual education in the Ysleta district in El Paso, there are two questions in assessing

reading ability: "Is the child learning to read, and is the child learning English?"

"They are separate issues and you test both of them," she argued.

Forty percent of the students who enter the 48,000-student district do so speaking Spanish as their first language, Ms. Trujillo said. "If you assess reading in a second language for a student [who is] not fully proficient, then you are not assessing reading, you are assessing language," she said.

"Reading skills are reading skills," Ms. Trujillo said. "Reading skills transfer even with a language, such as Chinese, when you're dealing with totally different characters."

One for All

According to the latest and best research, Ms. Trujillo said, it takes between four and seven years for students from immigrant families to learn English sufficiently to compete comparably in school with native English speakers.

In Texas, as in many states, a mandatory statewide test measures students' achievement in academic subjects. Spanish-speaking students may take the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in Spanish through the 6th grade, Ms. Trujillo said. Using such test results, she said, the Ysleta district learned it needed to do a better job at teaching reading—in Spanish.

But some see a downside to testing students in their native languages. While as many students as possible should be included in standardized tests, "everyone should be given the exact same standardized test, in English," said Jorge Amselle, a spokesman for the Center for Equal Opportunity, a Washington-based organization that advocates greater assimilation of immigrants into the U.S. mainstream and an emphasis on English instruction in schools.

If a test of academic skills reveals an LEP student's weaknesses in English, so be it, Mr. Amselle said. Over time, he

argued, the student's grasp of English will improve. "If you can't communicate effectively in English, it's going to be tough to get a job no matter how smart you are."

"Rather than improve the education of students," the attitude of some educators, Mr. Amselle said, is to "improve the test to make the students look smarter."

More Measurement Methods

In San Francisco, the public schools use a variety of assessments with their students still learning English, said Rosita Apodaca, an assistant superintendent there. Limited-English-proficient students represent about one-third, or 20,700 of the district's 62,000 students, she said. Of the LEP students, 36 percent are native Spanish speakers and 35 percent are native Chinese speakers.

District educators assess reading using standardized, norm-referenced tests in English and Spanish. Spanish is the only other language in which such tests—which compare students with one another, rather than against a fixed standard—are available. And, across the curriculum, schools are encouraged to use portfolio assessment—looking at an accumulation of student work—to gauge achievement. That method comes in handy for evaluating the knowledge and skills of students who are speakers of languages other than English or Spanish, Ms. Apodaca said.

Another commonly used "qualitative instrument," Ms. Apodaca said, is rubrics—guidelines that tell a teacher whether a student has met certain standards of achievement.

The district, she said, had been working with a test developer to try to create a norm-referenced, quantitative assessment for Chinese students. But it stopped when district officials realized the state was about to make changes to the statewide testing program.

Indeed, California and Illinois are two

states venturing into new assessment territory to try to help educators measure the achievement of LEP students.

Both states have in place or are working on two kinds of assessments for LEP students: one measuring student proficiency in English and the other gauging what students know in academic-content areas—as expressed in their native language.

California this fall passed into law a new assessment system that requires basic-skills testing in English of all students in grades 2-11. Pupils with limited proficiency in English who have been enrolled in school less than a year will be required to take a test in their primary language—if there is one. A Spanish version is available. If a district chooses, it can give LEP students enrolled longer than 12 months two tests—one in English and one in their primary language.

In addition, the state is going to give LEP students what it calls an

English-language-development test, which is to be an annual indicator of how well such students are doing at mastering English.

Illinois gave its first full-scale administration of a similar standardized English-proficiency test for LEP students earlier this year. The test, custom-designed for Illinois, covers reading and writing skills and is required each year for students in grades 3-11 who have been receiving English instruction in state schools for six months to three years.

The test, the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English, or IMAGE, was prompted by 1993 legislation and is meant to be a precursor to the state's mandatory achievement test, the IGAP, or Illinois Goal Assessment Program.

"What we needed ... was a test that would both accommodate the special needs of learners of English and to get them used to the kind of testing that they

would face when they get into the IGAP," said Anne Marie Fuhrig, an accountability consultant at the state education department.

'A Big Step'

The state also expects to start providing next month new "exemplars," or models for instruction and assessment, to help districts assess the social science, science, and math knowledge of K-12 students who speak any language.

The exemplars provide "a way to say what is language and what is conceptual development, and that's a big step," said Christine Ewy, an independent education consultant who has been working on the assessments. The exemplars use graphics to help students show their knowledge, even if their English skills are limited, she said.

"Many times, when children are assessed in social studies, for example, they don't have the language to say what they know."■

1. Investor's Business Daily

December 9, 1997

U.K. ED REFORMS MODEL FOR U.S.?

School Choice, National Testing Already In Place

Author: Adrienne Fox

If the U.S. is serious about reforming its educational system, it might do well to look across the Atlantic for clues as to what works.

While the U.S. continues to debate reforms such as greater autonomy in spending, school choice and national testing, the U.K. has already put these reforms in place.

Schools there are regularly audited and ranked. Each year, rankings are published in the newspapers - which trumpet the best and worst and talk about why schools are working or failing.

The results of these reforms are starting to trickle in. The share of 16-year-old students who scored well on national tests, for instance, jumped from 30% in '88 to 45% last year.

To be sure, Britain's parliamentary system made it much easier to get the changes passed. Reform efforts started when the Conservatives came to power in '79, and sped up with the '88 Education Reform Act.

And while teachers unions opposed the reforms early on, they don't have nearly the political clout that U.S. unions do. The six major unions in the U.K. spend more time fighting each other than the government, one union member said.

Britain centered its reform plan on three areas: direct funding, school choice and accountability of students and schools.

Direct funding. Since the early '80s, Britain has gradually shifted control of budgets toward individual schools and away from local governments.

Some 90% of education money now goes directly to schools. The local government holds back the remaining funds for meals, transportation and services for students with special needs.

The school's principal - called the head teacher in the U.K. - and department heads are free to spend the money as they see fit.

Not surprisingly, local governments opposed this change, said Toby Linden of the British Council in Washington. He heads a project to promote dialogue between the U.S. and U.K. on education reform.

But he added, "I think it's fair to say that most schools are in favor of it."

Head Teacher Michael Tudor says the new arrangement is working out well for teachers and students at Chudleigh Primary School in Chudleigh, Devon, England.

"We are best-suited to know what our students need," he said at an interview at the school.

Head teachers make decisions on everything from staffing to building maintenance. Because of the new management duties, the government added a training program for new head teachers that focuses on personnel and financial skills.

"A few of the rather large secondary schools (high schools) are going outside of the teaching profession to find managers with business backgrounds to head the school," Linden said.

School Choice. Another reform put in place in '88 lets parents send their child to any government-funded school, in or out of their school district, as long as the parents provide transportation.

Linden says school choice has had a positive effect on the quality of education, even though 90% of parents still send their children to the nearest school.

"The schools need to attract parents, so they need to provide the best education they can," he said. "They know if they don't, then parents can go elsewhere."

Parents who can afford it also can send students to fee-based independent schools such as Rugby or Eton.

School choice hasn't had much of an impact on the small town of Chudleigh, Tudor says. But in nearby Newton Abbot, where there are four primary schools, competition exists.

"The danger is that you get a 'sink' school," Tudor said, "where parents pull children out of one school because it develops a reputation for being a bad school. And because funding is based on the number of pupils, that school sinks."

Accountability. Thanks to the reforms, parents have plenty of information about which

schools are better than others.

Students are tested at regular intervals between ages 7 and 16 on language, math and science skills.

With national testing came a national curriculum, which includes 10 subjects. But the focus is more on performance targets than methodology. All head teachers know what the students must learn by a certain age. But it is up to them to decide how to teach it.

The government says the national tests make sure schools' teaching methods are working. It uses test scores to rank schools.

Local and national newspapers publish the government's rankings - called "league tables" - each year. They often highlight the best and worst schools, the most improved schools and the schools with the worst attendance records.

Backers say other schools will be able to learn from those that are performing well. But critics worry that the rankings don't paint a clear enough picture of how a school is performing.

Tudor and other critics say it is not fair to compare one school to another, since some are selective in their admission. And some top-rated schools are in wealthier suburbs, where parents tend to play more of a role in their child's education.

The rankings can be demoralizing. "There is an element of fear in the teaching profession now," Tudor said. "Morale is very low among the teachers, in large part because of these rankings."

The government is trying to refine the tables, adding new measures to give parents a bigger picture, rather than just listing the raw data.

"The government will start using the schools' annual reports and brochures, which list what the schools offer, in upcoming tables," Linden said. "It will also show how the schools have improved, rather than (just) where they are now."

In addition to league tables, schools are inspected every four years. The inspections last anywhere from three days to two weeks, depending on the size of the school. Inspectors look at every aspect of the school, from teachers to financial books.

Inspectors then file a report for the public record. The school must draw up a three- or five-year action plan, also made public, outlining how it will solve problems cited by the inspectors. In some cases, schools hire private consultants to help schools with their action plans.

"There is a thriving private market now in education consultants in the U.K. because of this new system," Linden said. "The cost comes out of the school's budget."

Since '92, the government has cited about 300 of the roughly 25,000 primary and secondary schools for poor performance. It has shut down six of them.

"Every attempt is made to turn them around, but sometimes the best thing to do is to close them," Linden said. Students will then be moved to a nearby school.

"The inspections, national tests, action plans and annual reports are getting schools to be self-critical about whether or not their approach is working," Linden said. "The focus now is on how to use all this information to improve the schools." ■

N.J. pupils do poorly on math test

By BRIAN KLADKO EDUCATION WRITER

NEW JERSEY'S top education official, Leo F. Klagholz, describes the state's eighth-grade Early Warning Test as too easy. Now he has some evidence.

While 18 percent of the state's eighth-graders failed the 1996 Early Warning Test in math, 31 percent failed to meet the federal government's standards on a math test given to a sample of students the same year.

The higher failure rate on the national test, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, isn't unusual. Almost all of the tests given by state governments tend to paint a more flattering portrait of students' abilities than the NAEP.

President Clinton has used such discrepancies to justify his quest for national tests in reading and math. Without a consistent standard from state to state, Clinton argues, parents never can be sure how well their children are doing.

The performance of New Jersey's eighth-graders on the national test wasn't revealed until last week, after the Asbury Park Press made repeated requests to the U.S. Department of Education.

Officials initially resisted releasing the scores for New Jersey because too few of the state's schools chose to participate in the testing. Without a large enough sample

size, federal statisticians considered the results unreliable.

As a rule, NAEP officials insist that 70 percent of the schools first contacted actually participate. New Jersey's participation rate was 64 percent.

Though New Jersey's 1996 results were considered too unreliable to be published by the U.S. Department of Education, they were consistent with results from the last NAEP math test in 1992, said Joseph G. Rosenstein, a Rutgers University math professor and head of the New Jersey Mathematics Coalition, a group that works to improve math education. New Jersey's ranking among other states hardly changed at all, he said.

Nevertheless, state officials refuse to give the results much validity.

"We think it's irresponsible to conduct this comparison," said Peter Peretzman, a spokesman for the state education department.

Peretzman contends that the inadequate participation among New Jersey schools renders the results highly suspect. For example, the 1,975 students who took the test may not be a truly representative sample of the state's eighth-graders.

Peretzman also warns that the national and state tests measure different types of knowledge and skills. The two tests, he

says, aren't as comparable as two eighth-grade math tests would appear to be.

The different failure rates between the state and national tests may not be due to different levels of difficulty, said Rosenstein, the Rutgers professor. The federal government's math experts, who determine what score is needed to pass the test, may simply be tougher graders.

"They didn't necessarily give a tougher exam," Rosenstein said. "They may have set the bar higher."

Setting that bar has become a crucial part of attempts to improve public education nationwide. Last year, New Jersey joined many other states in establishing official standards for students at fourth grade, eighth grade and 12th grade, and the state education department intends to revise its tests to conform to those benchmarks.

In coming years, NAEP will be a crucial indicator of whether New Jersey's tests are as rigorous as officials claim.

The NAEP tests also reveal how one state's children compare to their peers in other states. On that score, state officials have reason to be pleased with the latest results.

The average score for New Jersey's eighth-graders would have put them in a tie with Vermont for ninth place (with

Vermont) among the 41 states whose scores are known. The percentage of students deemed to be "proficient" or better rose from 28 percent in 1992 to 30 percent in 1996.

New Jersey eighth-graders didn't fare as well in the 1996 NAEP science test, but the state still would have ranked 18th among the 41 states. New Jersey's average

score was 152 (on a scale of 0 to 300), compared with a national average of 148.

NAEP officials haven't set break points for passing or failing on the science test.

On the NAEP math test, 18 percent were classified as "below basic." Among those who passed the test, 39 percent of students were deemed basic (demonstrating "partial mastery" of the

knowledge and skills needed for proficiency), 24 percent were considered proficient (demonstrating "competence in a range of challenging subject matter") and 6 percent were pegged as "advanced."

The NAEP tests are given to a small but representative sample of students across the country. Different subjects are assessed each year. ■

17. Education Week

December 3, 1997 Category: Trade

Assessment Board Wrestles With Test Mandate

By Millicent Lawton
Arlington, Va.

As President Clinton highlighted their efforts in a recent weekly radio address, members of an independent panel delegated by Congress to study his proposal for new national tests began grappling with many of the questions that have surrounded the plan since its announcement 10 months ago.

How will the voluntary tests of reading and math be used? Can such use be monitored? What does "voluntary" participation mean? What is the best design for the tests? Can the new testing program, which is to be based on the frameworks of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, be linked to naep without damaging the reliability of either?

But even as the National Assessment Governing Board climbed into the driver's seat on the issue, Mr. Clinton continued, in his radio talk Nov. 22, to gun for rapid execution of the testing plan.

Members of the 26-member governing board gathered here Nov. 20-22 for their first quarterly meeting since Congress handed them exclusive authority over the plan for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math exams. The bipartisan group is made up of governors, state legislators, scholars, state schools chiefs, a principal, teachers, and parents. Concerns about the tests voiced during the meeting reflected some of the worries that have divided both educators and Capitol Hill lawmakers since Mr. Clinton proposed them in his State of the Union Address last February.

Since 1988, the governing board, known as nagb, has set policy for the national assessment, which is the only continuing, nationally representative survey of student achievement in core academic subjects. NAEP, mandated by Congress and given since 1969, is administered by the Department of Education. The assessment is prohibited from yielding results on individual students, which is a main selling feature of the proposed new tests.

Adam Urbanski, a board member and the president of the Rochester (N.Y.) Teachers Association, told the board that teachers, for instance, are alarmed about the possibility of being penalized based on the test results.

"The whole notion of the uses of the test is not only sensitive, but, in some respects, explosive," the union leader said. "These are unfounded fears, but they are a result of a lack of information." Mr. Urbanski, who is also a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, urged the board to spread the word that it was aware of such issues, and members seemed to agree.

The board chairman, Mark D. Musick, was careful to make clear to members that even though NAGB was given responsibility for the tests, it has yet to take a position on them. "The board has not endorsed the voluntary national tests," he said, "and the board has not opposed the voluntary national tests."

An 'Optimistic' President

Board members indicated they were well aware of how politically charged the issue of national exams is. And they could not escape the political arena during their meeting.

In his radio address, recorded the previous evening before an audience of NAGB members, Mr. Clinton projected his own enthusiasm for a quick implementation of the tests onto the board's outline for how it intends to proceed.

He said the board members have "just presented me with their plan for developing national tests—including a pilot test next fall." But, in fact, a statement submitted earlier that day to the White House by Mr. Musick was far less specific.

In his statement, Mr. Musick said: "The board will seek to complete all of the work directed by Congress by Sept. 30, 1998, so that there can be pilot and field testing later." Indeed, the governing board is only authorized to decide whether to continue, change, or cancel the current testing contract—awarded when the Education Department was overseeing the tests—by Feb. 11.

Mr. Musick said in an interview last week that the president was taking the "optimistic view" with his remark about pilot testing. Such testing could occur next fall, Mr. Musick noted, if Congress approves the controversial plan.

"It's probably more a matter of emphasis, or a matter of the president assuming everything is going to go exactly

according to schedule," said Mr. Musick, who is also the president of the Southern Regional Education Board, a 15-state consortium based in Atlanta that works to improve education.

Ravitch Joins Board

But Jay Diskey, a spokesman for Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the House education committee and the chief congressional opponent to the testing plan, had a different take.

"From our point of view, it's the Clinton administration at work one more time trying to get print [media coverage] for one of its education initiatives even if it's far, far from reality," Mr. Diskey said.

Governing-board members made up about half the audience for the Nov. 21 audiotaping of the radio address in the Roosevelt Room at the White House—an event closed to the press. They then posed for photographs with Mr. Clinton, who had declined an invitation to address their public meeting. There was no formal discussion between the board and the president about the national tests, said Mary R. Blanton, NAGB's vice chairwoman and a North Carolina lawyer.

"There was certainly no arm-twisting or any kind of advocacy" by Mr. Clinton, she said.

In the radio address, Mr. Clinton announced that Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley had appointed three new members to the board, including Diane S. Ravitch, a former assistant secretary of education under President Bush. A senior research scholar at New York University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, Ms. Ravitch has been a supporter of national tests as a way to raise national academic standards. But she had faulted the fact that the independent board had not, until now, been given responsibility for overseeing the effort, leaving the plan open, she said, to political interference.

Ms. Ravitch was traveling and unable to attend the NAGB meeting, but the other new members did. Also named to three-year terms were Lynn Marmer, a lawyer and former teacher who is the president of the Cincinnati school board, and Jo Ann Pottorff, a former school board member who is a Republican legislator in Kansas. ■

15. Education Week

December 3, 1997 Category: Trade

Odyssey of a National Test: From Napkin to Classroom?

Arlington, Va.

Five days before President Clinton proposed them in his Feb. 4 State of the Union Address, the plan for new national tests was born on the proverbial cocktail napkin in a Washington tavern.

The tale of the diminutive forest product's pivotal role became public here at a Nov. 21 meeting of the National Assessment Governing Board. The independent, bipartisan panel was recently charged by Congress with exclusive authority over the president's plan for voluntary new national exams in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math.

Gary W. Phillips, an associate commissioner at the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, sketched out the

national tests' odyssey for board members just as he had first sketched out the plan on a napkin with his coffee at the Dubliner, a Capitol Hill watering hole.

As Mr. Phillips told it, his boss, NCES Commissioner Pascal D. Forgione Jr., informed Mr. Phillips on Jan. 30 that the White House was interested in the feasibility of a national exam and was seeking their expertise. The statistics center runs the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only ongoing survey of student achievement in core academic subjects. But Congress prohibits NAEP from yielding results for individual students —something Mr. Clinton's proposed tests would do.

Over lunch that day, Mr. Phillips

roughed out some parameters for a new national test: It should be based on the national assessment and be 80 percent multiple-choice, among other features. After briefing Mr. Forgione and drafting the proposal, he got a call the next morning saying the statistics center had "the green light."

That afternoon, Mr. Phillips took part in a standing-room-only meeting with Marshall S. Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education. "Suddenly, Mike started describing the national test," Mr. Phillips recalled incredulously, in the same terms that he had set down on the cocktail napkin. "The rest," Mr. Phillips said, "is now public history."

—MILLCENT LAWTON■

Textbook Standards

Commentator Matt Miller says there are already a set of national education standards — the ones determined by textbook publishers. The industry had \$3.5 billion in sales last year, and five companies control 70 percent of that market. School districts in California, Texas and Florida account for a quarter of all textbook sales, so the publishers tailor the books to the needs of those three states, changing very little for the rest of the country.

BOB EDWARDS, HOST: President Clinton's initiatives to create national education standards in reading and math have been controversial since he made them a priority early in his second term.

Commentator Matt Miller says many critics of the education reforms have overlooked an important point.

MATT MILLER, COMMENTATOR: Republicans just put President Clinton's plan for national tests for four-grade reading and eighth-grade math on hold for a year, saying that anything that smacks of national standards threatens local control over schools.

Lost in the shouting, however, was an indispensable fact: national education standards already exist, set indirectly by a handful of publishing giants whose textbooks guide instruction in classrooms across the country.

Here's how it works. Textbook publishing for grades K to 12 is big business, with \$3.5 billion in sales last year. Five companies make up 70 percent of the market. Since California, Texas, and Florida account for 25 percent of book purchases, the big five publishers regularly develop new texts around the big three states' needs, then adapt them slightly at

low cost for other states.

This process unsurprisingly produces look-alike books. School division presidents at McGraw-Hill and Simon & Schuster tell me that, broadly speaking, 80 percent of their texts' content doesn't vary from state to state. In turn, researchers say, these texts, along with the teachers guides, lesson plans, and other materials publishers offer as accessories, have enormous influence over classroom instruction.

If we do, therefore, have a tacit national curriculum, the key question is whether it's any good. Views vary.

Publishers say their books' sameness reflects good news: there's broad professional consensus on what topics should be taught when. Just about everyone, for example, teaches addition and subtraction in first grade, division in third.

Critics find the situation less benign. The desire to keep each state happy by including local favorites, like the Alamo, balloons texts until they cover too many subjects too superficially.

Meanwhile, California, Texas and Florida, plus 17 other states, approve books for statewide use through a politicized

process marred by ideological warfare, shoddy analysis, and occasional corruption. California, for instance, faced an uproar in the 1980s when publishers treated book-buying bureaucrats to plush golf weekends and moonlight yacht cruises.

Our students' disappointing scores on international comparisons suggests critics are right to worry that today's standards aren't high enough. And the respected National Assessment of Education Progress reveals an enormous gap between what states consider adequate performance and what the same students score on national assessments.

Sixty-eight percent of North Carolina's eight graders, for example, meet the state's own math standards. Just 20 percent are considered proficient or advanced by the NAEP.

It would be crazy, of course, to blame texts for everything that ails American schooling. But their influence should push the standards debate beyond today's ideological posturing.

The real debate we need isn't over whether to have national standards, but over who should set them and how. And if three states working with one oligopoly set de facto standards that aren't good

enough, maybe, just maybe, we need a federal call for something better.

EDWARDS: The comments of Matt Miller, a senior writer at U.S. News &

World Report and a syndicated columnist.■

29. The Dallas Morning News

12/02/97; Edition: HOME FINAL; Section: EDUCATION EXTRA; Page 25A

U.S. education leader walks on fine line

By Karel Holloway

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley is in a delicate position.

He pursues education reform with a revivalist's zeal. He's been touring the country talking about the need for more and better teachers, the importance of learning to read and strong math programs, and the necessity of getting new technology in the classroom.

At the same time, he is well aware that the federal government's role in schools can only be limited.

Too strong of a push from Washington and citizens start screaming about local control. But if there's too little emphasis from the administration, then improving education may lose its place as an important national topic.

"I think the federal government can play a supportive role and a leadership role, but the real work is out there in the schools and communities," Mr. Riley said in an interview during a recent trip to Dallas. "Like so many things, we are not in a position, and don't want to be in a position, of controlling what happens, but of sharing good ideas."

What's needed, he said, is a national approach with federal, state and local

agencies all working together.

"It's amazing to me how when we focus on something, how when we can all come together, how much we can do," he said.

Administration role

The Clinton administration is doing its part at the top, he said. President Clinton has made education a priority.

The president has proposed, among other things, a national focus on reading. He called for tutors, some paid with federal college work-study money, to help children learn to read. The goal is that all children will learn to read well by the end of third grade.

He also pushed for stronger math and science instruction.

To help reach these goals, Mr. Clinton has proposed voluntary national tests in reading at the end of third grade and math at the end of eighth grade to show how students are doing.

Political fights

Critics see these proposals as too much meddling in local education by the federal government. They say that national tests will bring about a national curriculum written by "educrats" in Washington.

Mr. Riley said he worries that political fights over the tests and a few other proposals may draw the focus away from

improving what goes on in classrooms.

"The Washington end gets caught up in politics," he said.

Vouchers, which would give students tax money they could use at any school they choose - not just their public school - is a good example of an issue that is tying up debate on education reform, he said.

"That's an issue that is terribly divisive. That's all they talk about," he said, speaking of some members of Congress and others who favor vouchers. "You don't hear them talking about reading. You don't hear them talking about math. They just focus, focus, focus on vouchers."

Mr. Riley and the Clinton administration oppose vouchers.

Mr. Riley said his goal is to bring constant, supportive attention to improving education. He will do that through public appearances, and in conjunction with the president, federal funding for selective programs to keep reform moving along.

"This is not like a silver bullet kind of attitude. It's not a 'do one thing and everything will get better' attitude," Mr. Riley said. "This is about real education."

Karel Holloway is education editor of The Dallas Morning News. ■

1. Education Daily

November 25, 1997

BOARD MULLS WHETHER TO BAG CONTRACT FOR NATIONAL TESTS

While President Clinton has announced that pilot versions of two voluntary national tests will make their debut in schools next fall, the board overseeing the tests is not so sure.

Under a schedule adopted Saturday, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) will decide by Feb. 11 what to do about a contract the Clinton administration set up with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to design the tests.

Then the board would complete preliminary work on the test development by Sept. 30, 1998, so that pilot and field testing can take place later.

"We will carry out the job Congress has asked us to do — develop an individualized version of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)," said NAGB Chairman Mark

Musick. "We are confident that we can meet the timetable that Congress has laid out."

Handed the reins on national testing when Clinton signed this year's education funding bill on Nov. 13, NAGB faces the immediate task of whether to accept, modify or scrap work already done on the tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. Clinton insists that the tests be piloted in schools by next October (ED, Nov. 14).

Shared Destiny Although the board clamored for a role in the tests' development because of their likeness to NAEP, it is starting with work begun by ED contractors, work which GOP opponents and critics of ED's management may deem unobjective (ED, Aug. 4).

Congress told the board to base the tests on the same performance standards NAEP uses, and to ensure the tests are "linked to NAEP to the maximum extent possible."

However, Musick said the board is aware of the "complexity and controversy" surrounding the tests. So politically charged is the issue that Congress directed the National Academy of Sciences to try to find a way to link existing tests without creating a new one (ED, Nov. 20).

"In the end, it's not going to be about the quality of the document," said board member William Moloney. "It will be about the political dynamics." He suggested dropping the contract and starting over. "We ought to try to avoid having it psychologically identified" with ED and AIR, board member Ed Donely said.

Math Specs Don't Add Up NAGB has formed two committees to review the specifications.

NAGB member Marilyn Whirry noted that the reading test comes close to NAEP, but differences exist between NAEP and proposed specifications for the math test.

For instance, rules on calculator use differ. NAEP allows calculator use on 30 percent of its questions, but the national test would allow them all the time. In addition, NAEP specifies a type of calculator, while the test would allow use of any calculator. — Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

3. The New York Times

11/23/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section 1; National Desk; Page 29, Column 1

Clinton's School Testing Plan

Reuters

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22 — President Clinton said today in his weekly radio address that pilot tests in reading and mathematics for elementary school students would be developed by next fall under his plan to insure that every schoolchild masters the basics.

Mr. Clinton signed an education bill last week supporting national standards and the introduction of the first voluntary reading tests for fourth graders and math tests for eighth graders.

Under the legislation the independent National Assessment Governing Board, which includes governors and legislators of

both parties, business leaders, parents and teachers, would control the testing.

"I'm confident the board will insure that the new tests measure what they should — the basics — nothing more, nothing less," Mr. Clinton said in his address. "These tests will be national, not Federal."

Mr. Clinton had to battle long and hard to get the national education testing standards through Congress, where conservatives feared Federal control and liberals worried about the impact of tests on poor schools.

But the President called them "a vital measuring tool" to help parents, teachers

and school officials. "They will be a yardstick, not a harness," he added.

Mr. Clinton announced the appointment of Diane Ravitch, an assistant secretary of education under former President George Bush, along with Lynn Marmer, a lawyer and Cincinnati school board president, and JoAnn Pottroff, a Kansas state representative, to vacancies on the board.

Mr. Clinton called the tests "a breakthrough for education" and said they represented a "landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out." ■

1. The Washington Post

11/23/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A10

Pilot National Reading, Math Tests to Be Ready by Fall, Clinton Says

By Stephen Barr

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton announced yesterday that pilot tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math will be developed by next fall under his plan to raise educational standards through voluntary national exams.

A number of congressional Republicans have fought to stop Clinton from giving national tests, but the first legislative battle ended this month in a compromise that shifted development of national tests from the Education Department to a bipartisan, independent National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

Yesterday, in a signal that he wants to continue pressing Republicans on the issue, Clinton used part of his weekly radio address to praise the NAGB for welcoming three new members, including Diane Ravitch, who was an assistant secretary of education during the Bush administration.

Ravitch, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, has described herself as an "enthusiastic supporter" of Clinton's proposal for national testing but argued that NAGB should be in charge of the tests. She was traveling yesterday and could not be reached for comment.

NAGB includes governors and lawmakers of both parties, business leaders, parents and teachers. The board developed the current national assessments that track student progress on core subjects, used by 43 states, but does not provide individual student, school or district results. Clinton's proposal, building on that framework, will provide test scores for individual students.

"I'm confident the board will ensure that the new tests measure what they should, the basics — nothing more, nothing less," Clinton said. The president stressed the tests "will be national, not federal. And, as Diane Ravitch said, they'll be a yardstick, not a harness."

The national school testing idea has been controversial because many conservatives fear it would enlarge the federal government's role in schools. Clinton's proposal also has been criticized by black and Hispanic members of Congress who think such tests could stigmatize poor minority students who attend schools that lack the money or staff to prepare for them.

But Clinton yesterday called national tests "a landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out." ■

2. Associated Press

11-22 4:34p

Clinton confident of education tests as board weighs their future

By SANDRA SOBIERAJ

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Congress gave him a year to prove national math and reading tests are needed, and President Clinton expressed confidence Saturday that he will prevail. The tests are "a yardstick, not a harness," he said.

"They're a vital measuring tool to help

parents, teachers and school officials demand accountability and excellence," Clinton said in his weekly radio address. The National Assessment Governing Board sat in on the taping.

The 25-member board, established by Congress in 1988, was wrapping up two days of meetings on developing the proposed tests, with a pilot exam proposed for next fall.

The board was given control over the tests in a compromise this month with congressional opponents, mostly Republicans.

Under the same bill, another independent body, the National Academy of Sciences, must determine whether an array of existing tests offered by states and commercial test publishers can be used instead of newly created tests proposed by

Clinton.

Last January, the president recommended voluntary tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics. No other exams let parents measure against a national standards how their own children and schools are doing.

The recently passed bill blocked any further Education Department spending on the project during the year ending Sept. 30, 1998, and Congress will have the ultimate say whether the tests are given.

Some opponents argued testing would be a wasteful duplication of existing tests. Others contended they would lead to federal control of education. Still others feared they would be used against poor blacks and Hispanics.

In his radio remarks, Clinton said: "I'm confident the board will ensure that the new tests measure what they should - the

basics - nothing more, nothing less." He said they "will be national, not federal."

"This is a landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out," he added.

In a move to bolster Republican support, Education Secretary Richard Riley named a Bush administration education official, Diane Ravitch, to the governing board. A longtime advocate of education standards, Ravitch had earlier quit the department's testing advisory committee, contending the administration would have too much control over the tests.

Noting her view, Clinton quoted in his radio address Ravitch's assurance that the tests "will be a yardstick, not a harness."

The assessment board must determine early next year whether the current

test-development contract should be modified or ended. The board also must determine whether the national tests it now gives to groups of students to measure trends in student achievement, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, can be modified to give individual scores.

"We are aware of the difficulties and challenges that are part of the directives from the president and Congress," board chairman Mark D. Musick said. "We are not unaware of the complexity and controversy surrounding the voluntary national tests."

Board members are chosen from categories set by law. They must include current or former governors, state legislators, educators and testing experts, among others. ■

1. Associated Press

11-22 8:28a For release at 10:06 a.m. EST

Clinton confident of education tests as board weighs their future

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Although his educational testing proposal was scaled back by Congress, President Clinton said today he is confident that voluntary national exams in reading and math will become a reality.

"They're a vital measuring tool to help parents, teachers and school officials demand accountability and excellence," Clinton said in his weekly radio address, recorded Friday at the White House in the presence of the National Assessment Governing Board.

The 25-member board, set up by Congress in 1988, was wrapping up two days of meetings on developing the proposed tests, with a pilot exam proposed for next fall.

The board was given control over the tests in a compromise this month with congressional opponents, mostly Republicans.

Under the same bill, another independent body, the National Academy of Sciences, must determine whether an array of existing tests offered by states and commercial test publishers can be used instead of newly created tests proposed by Clinton.

The president last January called for voluntary tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics. He said no other exams gives parents a chance to see

how their children and schools are doing in those key subjects when measured against a national standard.

Before Congress intervened, the Education Department had appointed its own advisory committee and awarded a five-year, \$65 million contract to a consortium of testing companies. The department obligated \$13 million before the recently passed bill blocked further spending.

Congress will have the ultimate say on whether the tests are given. But supporters believe that the independent reviews will come out in their favor.

Some opponents argued the tests would be a wasteful duplication of existing tests. Others contended they would lead to federal control of education. Still others feared they would be used against poor blacks and Hispanics.

But in his radio remarks, Clinton said: "I'm confident the board will ensure that the new tests measure what they should - the basics - nothing more, nothing less." He said they "will be national, not federal."

"This is a landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out," he added.

In a move to bolster Republican support, Education Secretary Richard Riley named a Bush administration education official, Diane Ravitch, to the governing board. Ravitch, a longtime

advocate of education standards, had earlier quit the department's testing advisory committee on grounds the administration would have too much control over the tests.

Clinton took note of her view and offered assurance, saying of the tests: "As Diane Ravitch has said, they'll be a yardstick, not a harness."

The assessment board must determine early next year whether the current test-development contract should be modified or ended. The board also must determine whether the national tests it now gives to groups of students to measure trends in student achievement, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, can be modified to give individual scores.

The board chairman, Mark D. Musick, said Friday that members know the pressures they face.

"We are aware of the difficulties and challenges that are part of the directives from the president and Congress," he said. "We are not unaware of the complexity and controversy surrounding the voluntary national tests."

Board members are chosen from categories set by law. They must include current or former governors, state legislators, educators and testing experts, among others. ■

33. Cincinnati Enquirer

November 20, 1997

Marmer to design national test

BY MARK SKERTIC

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Cincinnati Board of Education President Lynn Marmer will represent the nation's local school boards on a citizens panel designing a national exam.

Ms. Marmer learned this week of her appointment to the National Assessment Governing Board by Secretary of Education Richard Riley.

While she rejects the notion of national curricula and control of schools, Ms. Marmer said she wants a way for parents and communities to measure the success of their schools. Tests can provide the public with one way of measuring performance, she said.

"I have a very strong, conservative

belief in the power of local schools, local control," Ms. Marmer said. "I don't see that changing." Ms. Marmer, an attorney for Kroger Co., began her career as a public school teacher and moved into city government as a planner before becoming a lawyer.

Her term begins immediately and runs through September 2000. The board already sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, an assessment program that measures student progress in a variety of subjects at grades 4, 8 and 12. It is the only test that provides scores that are comparable state to state.

The \$29.4 billion education bill that became law last week revived plans for a national, voluntary test in fourth-grade

reading and eighth-grade mathematics.

The plan had been in jeopardy because some members of Congress feared it would lead to a national curriculum or result in a test that was biased against some groups.

A White House-congressional compromise shifted control of the effort from the Department of Education to the National Assessment Governing Board. Its 26 members meet Friday in Arlington, Va.

Plans are for the national exam to be ready by 2000. Seven states and 15 school districts - including Cincinnati Public Schools - have already said they plan to participate. ■

28. Education Week

November 19, 1997

Test Proposal To Be Tested by Experts

By Millicent Lawton
Washington

Philosophical differences and political deal-making have for months overshadowed the policy contained in President Clinton's proposal for national student testing. But now that Mr. Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress have agreed that the tests can move forward in a slower and more limited way, independent monitors are to begin figuring out if the planned tests are fair, accurate, and worth pursuing.

In the \$29.4 billion education appropriations bill that the president signed into law last week, Congress included several steps to solicit independent, expert opinions on the proposal for voluntary tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics.

The law shifts the exclusive authority over creation of the tests, one of Mr. Clinton's top policy priorities, away from the **Department of Education**. And, as expected, it gives that power to an existing, independent citizens' panel, the National Assessment Governing Board. In addition, Congress asks the National Academy of Sciences to conduct three studies that will look at such issues as whether existing tests can be linked to yield the results the proposed tests are supposed to deliver. ("White House, GOP Craft Agreement on Testing," Nov. 12, 1997.)

The hope is that the two groups can examine the proposal in an objective fashion—a move education leaders outside Washington are welcoming.

"I'm eager to see the whole issue move into an arena where it's less a question of partisan political debate and more a question about what's important to help chart the progress of schools," said Mike Ward, the state schools chief in North Carolina. His state is one of only seven to agree so far to take the proposed tests.

Mr. Clinton had touted the tests as a way to hold students nationwide to uniform and high academic standards. **Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley**, among others, had pointed to the relatively low standards set by some states' assessments of student learning as a reason to make a tougher national test available.

Regardless of what conclusions the national academy and the assessment governing board come to, Congress has the

power to scrap the testing idea by withholding future funding. For now, though, testing could begin no earlier than 2000, a year later than President Clinton had hoped.

Checking for Bias

Within the next 90 days, the governing board is to review the test-development contract awarded earlier this year by the **Education Department** to a consortium headed by the American Institutes for Research in Washington. The board is to modify the \$13 million contract as it sees fit or terminate it and negotiate a new one.

The governing board, known as NAGB, is also directed to determine whether:

Test items already selected for use on the tests are free of racial, cultural, and gender bias.

The test-creation process and the existing test items assess students' reading and math knowledge in a way that is most likely to yield accurate information on student achievement.

The process of test development and test items take into account the needs of disadvantaged, limited-English-proficient, and disabled students.

That same process takes into account how parents, guardians, and students will be informed appropriately about the content, purpose, and uses of the tests.

The directive creates a broader and much more hands-on role for NAGB than it has had in its current role, setting policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. NAEP, which is administered by the Education Department, is the only ongoing, nationally representative survey of what students know and can do in core academic subjects. It was mandated by Congress and has been given since 1969.

The proposed new tests are to be based on NAEP's content and performance standards. But the new tests are to produce results for individual students, which NAEP does not do.

The assignment is a mixed blessing for the National Assessment Governing Board. Even though its members asked for the job, the board inherits an undertaking that drew criticism from both the political right and left and created divisions within the GOP and the Democratic Party.

"We know we haven't been handed a rose bouquet," said Mark D. Musick, the

chairman of the governing board. "But we'll be fair, and we'll also be diligent."

Mr. Musick, who is also the president of the Southern Regional Education Board, an Atlanta-based consortium of 15 states that works to improve education, said the assessment governing board would take up the issue of the proposed new tests at its regularly scheduled meeting this week.

Because NAGB meets quarterly, Mr. Musick said he was working last week to schedule a special board meeting in January and to assemble a committee within the board to study the national test issue.

AGB's involvement makes sense from a political standpoint, said Robert L. Linn, an education professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"One of the things [members of Congress] were upset about was this would be the Department of Education calling the shots on what the [tests'] content was, and they wanted to have a body that could be more bipartisan in nature and less a creature of the administration," said Mr. Linn, who is also the co-director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Waste of Time?

As directed by Congress, one of the National Academy of Sciences' studies is to figure out whether existing tests could provide the same kinds of results that the new tests would yield. If a way could be found to make scores on existing commercially available basic-skills tests comparable to each other and to those generated by state assessments and by NAEP, then that could be seen as making the national tests redundant and unnecessary.

But, according to at least one assessment expert, the academy could be wasting its time.

Edward H. Haertel, a professor of educational testing and measurement at Stanford University, said he is aware of at least three studies over the past 20 years showing that attempts to make results on several different tests comparable are not successful. One other study offered mixed results, he said.

"I would not say [the national academy] study is not worth doing," he said, "but I'd

be pessimistic.

"If you want to have comparable scores, you've got to use the same test," said Mr. Haertel, who is a member of NAGB. "I can't imagine how [we would] have all these tests aligned with the NAEP frameworks."

Another national academy study is to evaluate whether the test items developed under the American Institutes for Research contract are of strong technical quality and

are valid and reliable. The academy is also to gauge the degree to which test questions provide valid and useful information to the public, and whether the items are free from racial, cultural, and gender bias.

That same study is also supposed to look at two of the issues that helped make the national tests a lightning rod for controversy: Do the test items address the needs of disadvantaged, limited-English-proficient, and disabled

students, and can the items be used in the academic tracking, promotion, or graduation of students?

In a third study, Congress also called on the NAS to recommend appropriate ways to ensure that existing and new tests of student performance are not used in a discriminatory manner "or inappropriately for student promotion, tracking, or graduation."■

REQUEST TO LINK TESTS EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Congress wants the National Academy of Sciences to figure out if existing national tests, commercially available tests and state assessments can all be compared to each other.

Forget it, several top testing experts say.

The academy study is part of Congress's compromise with President Clinton over his national testing proposal.

Opponents of national testing hope they can find other instruments out there that will measure individual student achievement against a uniform national standard without having to develop a new exam, as Clinton wants (ED, Nov. 11).

But that's no easy task.

Linking tests is "educational assessment's counterpart to perpetual motion machines," says Robert Mislevy, a longtime Educational Testing Service (ETS) researcher.

In a paper by two of his ETS colleagues, Mislevy says linking "is an appealing and compelling idea, eminently plausible on the surface. It unavoidably leads to disappointment at best, or disaster if there are stakes attached."

Still, no one would rule it out

completely before the study is completed.

"I am optimistic about being able to pull together the information needed to inform this question," says Michael Feuer, director of the academy's Board on Testing and Assessment.

Apples And Oranges

Researchers will need to examine whether different tests cover equivalent measures of skill and knowledge. For instance, linking one math test with simple computation to another math test focusing on algebra and geometry wouldn't be useful, acknowledges Robert Linn, a University of Colorado testing expert who serves on the board overseeing the study.

The quality of state assessments varies widely, posing challenges for comparing them, notes H.D. Hoover, author of the widely used Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). In fact, that's a key argument the Clinton administration used to convince Congress and the public that a national test is needed.

For example, 88 percent of fourth-graders in Louisiana rate as "proficient" on their state reading tests, while only 15 percent score that well on the National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP), the test providing state-by-state snapshots of student achievement.

By contrast, some states have their own exams that are harder than NAEP. In Delaware, a quarter of fourth-graders get a proficient score on NAEP, but only 11 percent do that well on the state test (ED, April 30).

Another complication: Most commercial tests rely on multiple choice questions. NAEP uses more problem-solving and extended responses. State assessments have a mix (ED, May 6).

Different tests are used for different purposes, too, which can affect student scores. Some state test results lead to serious rewards (such as individual student graduation or extra school funding) or punishments (such as schools being reconstituted or shut down).

These high stakes pressure instructors to teach to the tests, which can artificially inflate scores, explained Don Koretz, a researcher at Rand. NAEP scores, by contrast, essentially have no stakes attached. "No one worries about teaching to NAEP," Koretz says.

In addition, states and localities have a

patchwork of rules on which students take tests; some go to all students, others are samples.

Not Impossible All this is not to say that comparing tests is impossible, researchers stress. It's been done before, and the academy will review past studies on linking tests.

For instance, data from the 1992 NAEP

and 1993-94 ITBS show that just about the same percentages of Iowa students earned scores above the national median on both exams in reading in fourth grade and math in both fourth and eighth grades.

As difficult as linking tests might be, critics say it is no more perilous than Clinton's plan, which is so controversial it

held up agreement on fiscal 1998 education funding for weeks.

"The national test [isn't] going to give anyone new information," says Hoover. "Parents know whether their kids know how to read. It's an attempt to solve a problem that isn't there." —Laureen Lazarovici

17. Associated Press

11-18 5:37a Category: Local

Area's successes are showcased at education summit

ABILENE, Texas (AP) - The federal government is targeting ways to be of more help to local schools, education secretary Richard Riley says.

Riley fielded questions from teachers and others at an education summit at the Abilene Civic Center.

U.S. Rep. Charlie Stenholm, D-Stamford, organized the event, which showcased the successes of various schools and educational organizations in the Abilene area.

Riley said education is a community-wide responsibility.

"We are targeting ways that are more helpful" to local schools, Riley said,

including continued development of national tests, bringing technology to the classroom, and funding the America Reads Challenge.

"The president thinks that every child ought to be able to read well by the third grade," Riley said.

Riley said the government's education budget for 1998 is a "tremendously pro-education budget" that provides almost \$300 million in new funding. The budget will pay for work-study reading tutors at approximately 800 colleges, Riley said. Last week's Appropriations Bill increased the maximum Pell Grant for higher education to \$3,000 per student - the largest increase in two decades. The

measure will affect roughly 3.7 million students nationwide.

The bill also earmarked nearly \$4.4 billion - a 57 percent increase since 1993 - for the Head Start program for socially and economically disadvantaged children.

Riley said the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund helps states and schools acquire hardware, software and connectivity linkages for technology in the classroom.

After a brief address to roughly 300 spectators, Riley listened to representatives of 11 area educational organizations outline their trials and triumphs in education. Each speaker concluded with a question for the secretary.■

1. The Washington Post

11/17/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: OP-ED; Page A23

A Choice of Problems

By Gary R. Galluzzo

The privilege for parents to choose their child's education is probably an inevitability in the not-too-distant future. As the advocates of vouchers and charter schools pile up more survey data, it is not too hard to conclude that choice is in the future of our education system. This is not just because of dissatisfaction with the performance of our nation's public schools, but also because education just might be society's last outpost of non-choice and that is anachronistic.

But just because choice is a feature of late-20th century American society, does that mean it is the right thing to do when it comes to educating our children?

I have a beautiful 14-year-old daughter who attends our neighborhood school. Every day she meets the other middle-schoolers in the neighborhood and takes the bus to the same school. The only choice my wife and I had in this came when we chose where to buy our house.

Like any parent, I want what is best for my daughter. I might even like to choose where she goes to school, but current conditions make it such that I cannot. Is that bad?

Certainly, schools supported by vouchers or charter schools provide opportunities to explore alternative arrangements, which are sorely needed on the education landscape. The idea of choice also provides options beyond selecting the school, and they compel me to wonder where the choosing stops.

Most discussions of choice are focused on parents choosing the school. But if I can choose the school, I should be able to choose the curriculum the school offers. It is easy to imagine poor parents having the freedom to choose the school in the wealthier part of town. But what if they don't like the curriculum offered there? What if they don't like the more concept-driven approach to learning in that particular school? Or, what if they don't like the core curriculum at the local school? A choice advocate might tell them to keep looking — the marketplace eventually will create the school they want.

But if parents can choose the school, can they choose the teachers with whom their children will study? And if they find that they don't like one or two teachers, can they choose different ones in October? Teacher choice sounds a bit far-fetched, but why not?

What about parents who don't particularly like standardized testing for their children, another of the latest cures to our education system. Some parents won't want their children taking those state or national tests, but they like the school curriculum and the teachers. Can they choose not to have their children participate in the testing? Is this choice available to them? A good advocate of choice should say yes.

Can the school that receives state and federal funds choose not to give the state and national tests to attract more students? Can it choose that and still remain accredited?

If the answer to each question is yes, then we are approaching a system of education in which choice is the basic value. Before that, we all loosely subscribed to a curriculum as the basic value. But if choice is our future, then what is it that makes our nation or any state in the Union a commonwealth? What will bind us together other than the pursuit of choice? In this new public marketplace of the commonwealth, our greatest strength will be the fact that nothing holds us together other than the freedom to choose to be together. What then happens to our definition of democracy or a democratic republic? What happens when individual, ideological pursuit is the game, and our children are the pieces we move about?

Nothing would make me happier than to see the resurrection of public education in America. But it was based on a kind of naive kinship of the '40s and '50s that told us we were one before it told me I was one. Those days are gone, and in our contemporary society and economy, school choice is one result.

I have little reason to believe choice will cure the ills of our education system in the way its true believers tell us it will. Choice will only create a new set of problems to solve in a new arena, and it too will be as tyrannical as the current monopoly on compulsory education without choice, just in different ways.

The writer is dean of George Mason University's Graduate School of Education. ■

1. Education Daily

November 17, 1997

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

President Clinton signed the fiscal 1998 education funding bill last week as Congress and the White House compromised to delay administration of voluntary national tests. Congress has adjourned for the year and plans to return in late January.

New Public Law ...

Fiscal 1998 Appropriations/ National Tests P.L. 105-78: The law, formerly H.R. 2264, will provide \$36.3 billion for education programs, up from \$32.8 billion in fiscal 1997+a \$3.5 billion boost, according to **Education Department** figures. It allows the National Assessment Governing Board to continue developing voluntary national tests, but delays test administration until at least 2000.

1. The Washington Times

11/16/97; Edition: 2; Section: A;NATION; Page A4

Hurdles bedevil efforts to compare U.S. and foreign student test scores

By Carol Innerst

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Equating different standardized tests for comparison of student achievement is more easily said than done.

The U.S. Department of Education is experiencing difficulty in using results from American exams in math and science to tell states how their students compare with students in other countries.

The problem casts a shadow on the hopes of critics of President Clinton's new national tests in reading and mathematics that the major commercial tests already used by the states can be linked to compare individual student achievement against national and international standards.

The department had hoped to use results from the congressionally mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to tell states how their students would have performed on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

"Fourth grade is where the trouble is," said Pascal D. Forgione Jr., commissioner of statistics for the department's National Center for Education Statistics.

In Minnesota and Colorado, where fourth-graders took both the 1996 NAEP and 1995 TIMSS tests, actual results on the TIMSS were worse than the predictions made based on their NAEP scores. Why remains to be seen.

Mr. Forgione said the problem is not with the "link," or mathematical equation, but appears to be with the types of questions and content of the test, the sampling of students who took it, the weighting of questions or possibly the curriculum of the state.

"We have an independent group looking at the issue," he said. "They'll report in early December. It looks like fourth-grade will be difficult to report, but in grade eight the data look stronger."

Some testing experts say linking the most widely used commercial tests will be difficult if not impossible. An attempt in the 1960s to link the major commercial tests was abandoned.

But Bill Honig, former superintendent of public instruction in California, says commercial tests can be equated, most easily in reading and with some difficulty in math.

"Testing people will say it's a problem, but it's really not that difficult," said Mr. Honig, now a professor at San Francisco State University and president of the Consortium on Reading Excellence. "Equate tests to a common standard and then you don't really need a new {test}. You can link to NAEP by taking an agreed-upon set of ideas and saying how the tests equate in those common standards."

The department is using an "innovative and experimental" methodology called "moderation" to equate the NAEP and TIMSS tests, Mr. Forgione explained. It involves taking two national probability samples and overlapping the two distributions.

"It's the lowest form of this type of linking," Mr. Forgione said, and not as strong as the linking, for example, of the SAT test, achieved by putting a number of questions in the test that aren't scored for an answer but are linked and used in subsequent years.

"Then they can statistically put those questions in the following year and equate the SAT over time - or they could until they just did the change - but supposedly my SAT score in the '60s and my son's score in the '80s could be equated," he said. "This is a strong type of equation. The other, weakest form is the 1995 TIMSS and the 1996 NAEP equation."

Using data from national samples of NAEP and TIMSS, the department tried to predict the TIMSS scores of 45 individual states based on their state NAEP results. Only two states took both tests.

"I'd love to be able to tell Connecticut, which took NAEP, how they'd do on TIMSS," Mr. Forgione said.

The "research and development activity," as he calls it, worked for grade eight and accurately predicted the TIMSS score that Minnesota students who took TIMSS actually attained. But the statistical link failed for the fourth grade in Minnesota and Colorado, where actual TIMSS scores ended up lower than projected scores.

"This is very innovative methodology," Mr. Forgione emphasized.

The problem has been turned over to the National Institute of Statistical Sciences in North Carolina's Research Triangle, he said.

46. Detroit News

November 13, 1997

Education reforms: All talk, no action

By Richard Whitmire
Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — There was more radical talk about education reform in Congress this session than there was radical action.

What the public heard was a lot of arguing about vouchers and national testing. Vouchers ended up going nowhere and national testing was ordered to serve one year of bureaucratic hard labor. "They flunked on every education issue they touched, and it's a shame because they had the right ideas starting out," said Jeanne Allen from the Center for Education Reform, which promotes reforms such as charter schools and vouchers.

The only action taken to reform the nation's schools was a modest, little-noticed \$150-million bill to encourage schools to adopt academic programs based on proven research models — a course most parents probably hoped schools were pursuing all along. "This is a real opportunity for schools across the country to reinvent themselves from top to bottom," said sponsor Rep. John Porter,

R-Ill. The legislation will permit 2,500 schools to shift to successful programs such as the "Success for All" reading program developed at Johns Hopkins University. House and Senate Republicans claim they took radical reform in approving 2,000 "opportunity scholarships" for the District of Columbia. But lawmakers knew from the beginning these \$3,200 vouchers would draw President Clinton's veto, and in the end they sliced the vouchers from the rest of the district's budget to allow Clinton a clean-and-easy veto. "It's a dirty little secret of the Senate," Allen said.

A more moderate school reformer, Chris Cross from the Council on Basic Education, agrees that little was accomplished. "With the exception of national tests there was no new ground broken on K-12 education," Cross said. The big events in education occurred during the budget agreement, said former Clinton domestic adviser Bill Galston, citing tax credits and scholarships aimed at helping students pay for college. But in K-12 education, where reforms truly are needed, nothing was accomplished,

Galston said. "We really don't have one school system in this country, but two," he said. The first, said Galston, is the network of suburban schools providing mostly mediocre education to students. "The second system is based in urban areas, with outposts in rural areas, and that system is indeed in crisis," said Galston. "The president ought to declare a national urban emergency and we should be prepared to think outside the envelope."

What Congress did

- * Made adjustments in the special education law known as IDEA — Individuals With Disabilities Act. But the government still fails to pay local schools to carry out extra services required by IDEA.

- * Approved \$100 million to create more charter schools — independent schools that use public money. Currently, there are about 500 charter schools operating in the United States, and federal support has grown from \$6 million in 1995 to \$100 million in 1998.

- * Derailed President Clinton's national testing program for at least a year.■

81. Philadelphia Inquirer

November 13, 1997

Tests are only as good as the material taught

By Linda Chavez

In the waning days of the 105th Congress, Republicans finally nixed the President's plan for a national test of fourth- and eighth-graders in reading and math. But the victory, spurred by conservative education groups, could come back to haunt Republicans if they don't do a better of explaining why a national test is a bad idea.

Simply repeating that American education policy is set at the local level won't be enough to satisfy most parents in this increasingly mobile society. Families often change school districts over the course of their children's school careers.

In fact, the problem with a national test is not, necessarily, that it would be uniformly administered across the country or that schools would therefore begin to homogenize their curricula to conform to the test. The real problem is that the education bureaucrats who would devise the test are the same ones who have dumbed-down the curriculum for the last several decades and would lower standards, not raise them.

Parents have plenty of experience with education reforms that make matters worse for their children. We've lived through "open classrooms" that tore down walls and created "learning environments" where children wandered chaotically in large, noisy, open spaces. We've put up with "values clarification" lessons, which taught our children to "question authority"

and to solve "moral dilemmas." And we've watched figures like Albert Einstein and the Wright brothers disappear from textbooks to make room for obscure feminists and ancient Mayan rulers.

Parents are not so much wary of testing or standards as they are concerned about exactly what students will be expected to know and why. Too often, parents who expect schools to teach their children to write a grammatically correct sentence with no spelling errors, find their home state on a map and calculate the change they're owed when they make a purchase find that some schools seem more interested in indoctrinating kids to recycle newspapers and cans.

It wouldn't be difficult to devise a sensible test of fourth-graders' reading skills or eighth-graders' math skills — so long as professional educrats had little say in its makeup. If you ask me, the average American 9-year-old should be able to read and comprehend a simple newspaper story or newsmagazine article and answer basic, factual questions on what he or she has read. The student should be able to spell and define words such as assignment, neighbor and receive. The average eighth-grader should be able to do long division, figure percentages, measure the area of room, balance a checkbook, calculate with decimals and solve a simple equation.

My grandmother never attended school past third grade, and my father's education

ended in the ninth grade, but both of them could have easily passed a test meant to measure such skills.

American children spend more years in school now than at any time in history. But they seem to learn less, even while the money for education has increased. The problem is not that we don't know how to measure what children have learned but that we've given up teaching them skills that merit measuring.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that a new, "standards-based" math curriculum in wide use in public high schools focuses on "team learning," a "guess-and-check" approach to problem-solving and "constructivism" (whereby students discover, for example, that the circumference of a circle is 3.14 times greater than the diameter by repeatedly measuring circles with a string rather than memorizing the formula). One parent who attended her child's sophomore math class found "there was no emphasis on right answers. In an effort to improve self-esteem, everyone's solution was discussed and valued equally." No wonder "standards" have gotten a bad name. Until schools commit themselves to teaching skills worth knowing, no national test will solve the problem of declining academic standards.

Linda Chavez is president of the Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C. ■

1. Los Angeles Times

* 11/14/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: National Desk; Page A-36

Congress Plows Through Bills, Adjourns for the Year

Among flurry of measures, lawmakers OK Amtrak deal, approve \$30 billion for State, Commerce and Justice departments.

By SAM FULWOOD III
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — Congress completed its 1997 session Thursday, resolving controversies over Amtrak reform and the next census and sending the last of its annual spending bills to President Clinton.

But before leaving for home until January, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) reversed course and said he would permit full-throated debate on campaign finance reform early in next year's session. He has prevented the House from taking up the issue this year.

With the Senate already scheduled to take up the controversy early next year, Gingrich's announcement sets the stage for what promises to be a knock-down, drag-out battle over a high-stakes issue on which members of Congress hold strong—but often clashing—views.

In a final flurry of votes, lawmakers approved expenditures of \$13 billion for foreign aid and \$855 million in federal assistance for the government of the District of Columbia. Late Thursday, the House approved the last piece of legislation, a \$30-billion appropriation bill for the departments of State, Commerce and Justice.

Disagreement over abortion and family planning ended an earlier agreement between the administration and congressional leaders to begin repayment of the U.S. debt to the United Nations, which totals almost \$1 billion. The House approved a foreign aid bill after midnight EST Wednesday after it scuttled a plan to begin the payments. The Senate passed the legislation Thursday—even as a U.N. showdown with Iraq, prompted by that country's expulsion of U.S. weapon inspectors—continued to escalate.

In another provision that could have serious consequences, the foreign aid bill dropped a planned \$3.5-billion credit line for the International Monetary Fund. The credit would have helped stabilize some foreign currencies at a time when Asian markets are in turmoil.

In a pair of unanimous voice votes, the House and Senate approved a deal to provide \$3.4 billion to Amtrak for operations and improvements through 2000—if the troubled railroad makes changes in some of its labor agreements.

The Senate approved the measure last week, but some GOP House members demanded that Congress have a say in the composition of the railroad's board. House Democrats, representing organized labor groups, had refused to yield on that point.

Late Wednesday, a deal emerged that saved the legislation. It would keep the board at seven members, all chosen by the president in consultation with Congress. The Senate would then have to approve the choices. Enactment would also release \$2.3 billion for capital investment for the rail line, money that was set aside in the balanced-budget deal earlier this year.

Showing how eager it was to end the session, the Senate had voted in advance to accept the House version of the State, Commerce and Justice appropriation bill. House leaders debated the legislation late Thursday after their Senate colleagues had departed, a debate that included a contentious dispute over permitting the Census Bureau to use computer-aided statistical sampling as part of the national count in 2000.

An agreement that allowed the bill to advance delays a decision on whether to use sampling to supplement the standard census head-count. The sampling method uses statistical projections to determine numbers of the most difficult 10% of the population to count. Minorities and urban poor are often undercounted by traditional census methods.

The undercount in the 1990 census hurt California more than most states because of its high proportion of these groups. Congressional districts and federal funds for many programs are apportioned to states according to the population count.

Democrats and minority groups tried without success to kill the bill because it does not guarantee that sampling will be used in the 2000 census. They maintained

that the legislation gives Republicans—who oppose sampling—plenty of time to kill the measure before the census. However, the compromise calls for the method to be tested in Sacramento this spring.

The appropriation bill was the last of 13 spending bills that Congress must pass each year to keep the government functioning through the next fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

At the White House on Thursday, Clinton signed a \$276.9-billion bill providing funds for the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services. Final approval of the bill had been stalled for more than a month as House and Senate conferees argued over a Clinton-sponsored provision for national testing of the nation's schoolchildren in reading and math.

Under a compromise, the development of national tests will be delayed while experts study whether existing state and commercial exams can be used to determine whether students are performing adequately in reading and math. But even if the review ultimately concludes that uniform national tests are preferable, the administration would not be permitted to develop them without Congress' approval.

The administration sees national testing as a cornerstone of its education reform agenda.

Signing the bill, Clinton said he had "the privilege of signing into the record books what is plainly the best year for American education in more than a generation."

*

Gingrich's decision to allow debate on campaign finance reform comes after about 100 reform measures—introduced in the wake of revelations of campaign fund-raising irregularities in the 1996 elections—died without debate or votes in either chamber.

"There is really no consensus about where we should be going [on campaign reform], not even in our own party," said Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-Ohio). "And so we have a lot of hard work ahead of us."

But Gingrich, who has opposed most reform measures, was optimistic about the process if not the results. "It will be a thorough, exhaustive process," he said. "We hope to have a very fair bipartisan process of voting when we bring the bills to the floor."

On another matter, Gingrich cited allegations of voting by noncitizens in the disputed 1996 Orange County race in which Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove) narrowly defeated former Rep.

Robert K. Dorman.

The speaker said that "there is, in fact, growing support, I think, on the House floor for the idea of some kind of a . . . photograph or other identification [to identify] voters."

Congress also authorized the Treasury to produce a gold-colored dollar coin to replace the Susan B. Anthony silver dollar, and President Clinton vetoed a bill that would have restored 38 items that he had pared from a military construction bill

earlier this year using his line-item veto power.

The projects in 24 states would cost a total of \$287 million. A two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress will be needed to override Clinton's action.

Times staff writers Edwin Chen, Janet Hook and Faye Fiore contributed to this story. ■

13. Education Daily

November 14, 1997 Category: Trade

DONE DEAL: CLINTON SIGNS EDUCATION FUNDING BILL

President Clinton yesterday signed a bill funding education programs in fiscal 1998, calling it evidence of "plainly the best year for American education in more than a generation."

Clinton sought to cast the compromises he made with Congress in a positive light, insisting that his voluntary national tests in

reading and math "will be piloted in schools next October." The GOP Congress forced the administration to delay giving the tests, though development can continue (ED, Nov. 10).

He also touted the \$210 million for a new childhood literacy program, even though a House-passed bill bears little

resemblance to his plan that emphasized tutors to help students learn to read (ED, Nov. 13).

The bill, formerly H.R. 2264, provides \$36.3 billion for education programs, up from \$32.8 billion in fiscal 1997. — Laureen Lazarovici■

15. Education Daily

November 14, 1997 Category: Trade

STATES SHRUGGING OFF NATIONAL TESTING DELAY

Five of the seven states that signed up for voluntary national tests are reacting to the congressionally imposed delay of the exams with big yawns.

"The postponement has no impact on us because we are way ahead," said Massachusetts education commissioner Robert Antonucci, referring to his state's own testing program.

"When they are ready, we are ready."

President Clinton wanted to administer the first tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math in spring 1999. But a compromise with a recalcitrant Congress pushes the schedule back a year—and maybe longer if attempts to stop the program are successful next year (ED, Nov. 11).

W. Va. Wants Benchmarks West Virginia's state superintendent was the only official to express real regret.

"We wanted to have it as quickly as we could," said Hank Marockie, who hopes to

replace existing state tests with the national tests (ED, April 9). "It will delay us in getting our benchmark" to national and international standards.

The new national tests will be linked to the existing National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and to international exams in math.

Ron Peiffer, spokesman for Maryland schools, acknowledged that the national tests "would have given us individual data that we know parents would have liked" but that "it won't impact us."

Maryland's state tests yield only school-specific, but not student-specific, scores.

Officials in Kentucky, Michigan and North Carolina also said the delay would have no effect.

Most are busy grappling with implementing their own state assessments.

For instance, Maryland will soon begin phasing in high school graduation exams, and Michigan in January will administer

state tests to fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, eighth- and 11th-graders under the watchful eye of a skeptical state legislature.

Alaska also signed up to give the exams. Officials there weren't available for comment.

NAGB Will Be Busy The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) will be busy developing the new national tests even though administration has been delayed.

Mike Smith, the Education Department's acting deputy secretary, said yesterday NAGB would likely have to create up to five versions of each test to ensure reliability and security.

Under the White House-Congress compromise, NAGB will assume control of the testing program from ED, and Congress will further debate Clinton's initiative when it considers reauthorizing NAEP and NAGB next year. —Laureen Lazarovici■

94. WORLD Magazine

November 15, 1997

A zero on national tests

Overly cautious GOP leaders seem to hand Clinton a win

By Bob Jones IV

Republicans were put to the test last week on a key education issue, and conservatives gave the resulting compromise a barely passing grade. With the witching hour of fall recess approaching, lawmakers were scrambling to finish up last-minute business, but the president's proposal to develop national tests in reading and math was proving difficult to deal with. The Education Department's \$80 billion budget hung in the balance as President Clinton threatened to veto a major appropriations bill if he didn't get the needed funding for his tests. On October 30, conservatives, who had vowed to block national testing at all costs, started hearing things go bump in the night. It turned out to be the House leadership fumbling another opportunity to confront the president on an issue that looked winnable.

The House had voted earlier, by an overwhelming 295 to 125 margin, to bar the administration from spending any Education Department funds to develop national tests. Because the Senate failed to include such a provision in its appropriations bill, the issue went to a House-Senate Conference Committee. Rep. Bill Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Education Committee and a strong opponent of national testing, says House GOP leaders promised him the right to sign off on any compromise reached by the conference committee. Like his conservative supporters, Mr. Goodling argued that national testing would inevitably lead to a nationally mandated curriculum for all schools.

Under pressure to adjourn by Nov. 7, conferees on Oct. 30 approved a compromise without first checking with

Mr. Goodling. The Pennsylvania Republican responded angrily, charging House leaders with breaking a promise and caving in on the testing issue. In a memo to Newt Gingrich faxed to conservative supporters, Mr. Goodling accused the Speaker of cutting a deal that violated "the Republican philosophy of making sure that education decisions are decided on the local level and not in closed-door meetings in Washington or by this city's bureaucracy." In another memo to his Republican colleagues, Mr. Goodling mocked the Speaker's promise that he would have final approval on any compromise language. Quoting a fellow Republican, Mr. Goodling noted that "that promise was made at 11:15 a.m.—wait until you see what the next hour will bring."

Scrambling to avoid another confrontation with disgruntled conservatives, House leaders insisted that the compromise was merely a matter of miscommunication and said they had never approved such a move. A Gingrich spokesman told WORLD that "Chairman Goodling has primary responsibility for the compromise, and we've been consistent with that position throughout." But Appropriations Committee members countered that they would never have approved the compromise plan over the objections of Mr. Goodling without the blessing of the leadership.

Finally, a week after the initial blowup, negotiators reached a compromise of sorts. Although test development will go on as planned, a divided GOP won White House approval for a year-long study by the National Academy of Sciences to see whether a scale could be developed to link results from the patchwork of existing state tests. This would give the president the

data he wants, without extending the power of the federal Education Department.

Another key provision of the compromise prohibits any pilot testing or field testing of the exams before fiscal year 1999, giving conservatives another chance to kill the whole program next year. "We will mount vigorous efforts in the spring to totally stop this thing," says a top Republican aide, adding that development of a valid exam is all but impossible apart from simultaneous pilot testing. "We have dead-ended development of this test," the aide says. "There's just not much they can do [without pilot tests]."

But the Clinton Administration has proven effective at getting around the will of Congress before, so there is little doubt that development of national tests will proceed one way or another. Once development money is spent, critics charge, it becomes that much harder to scrap the tests. The time to make a stand was last week, they say.

"The party was begging for a winning issue in education," says Martin Hoyt, a lobbyist for the American Association of Christian Schools, which strongly opposed the testing proposal. "This should have been the one. We had the support of the black caucus, the Hispanic caucus, and a moderate Republican [Mr. Goodling] whose committee had jurisdiction, and we still couldn't win. There's a problem with leadership when you can't win with all those elements. They're stymied by fear and demoralization. It's like a guy who gets hit by a pitch in baseball and doesn't want to get back in the box. They're afraid of a veto. They just want to get the session over with and get out of here." ■

bargaining rights for each others' current members. The "no raid" agreement is up for renewal next year.

"These issues are very complex," Ms. Feldman said at the press conference.

"But what still divides us are not issues that deal with education." ■

26. Education Week

November 12, 1997

White House, GOP Craft Agreement On Testing

By David J. Hoff
Washington

President Clinton and congressional Republicans neared a compromise last week that will delay a final verdict on the proposed national testing plan until next year, while allowing the Department of Education to make minor progress on the plan, one of Mr. Clinton's top domestic priorities.

In the outline of a hard-fought compromise, House Republicans backed away from their demand that all testing preparations stop, and the administration agreed to slow an ambitious schedule that would have put the tests in front of students in the spring of 1999.

But the agreement settles nothing for the long term. Over the next 12 months, both sides will continue the debate over whether the federal government should pay for and endorse the creation of new tests to be given to 4th graders in reading and 8th graders in mathematics.

"In September or October of next year, if we haven't resolved this issue, we're right back where we are now," Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a testing foe, said at a press conference last Thursday.

Still, both sides claimed partial victory as they negotiated the final details of the compromise language to be attached to a bill appropriating \$32 billion for federal education programs. ("Congress Poised To Pass Bill To Hike School Funding," in This Week's News.)

"I'm pleased because it enables us to continue with development of the test," Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said in an interview last Thursday morning.

"Congress will play a very large role in deciding how and if and when" there will be national testing, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa. —who led the push to halt Mr. Clinton's plan —said later that day at a Capitol Hill press conference. "The ball is in our court."

The testing compromise was to be attached to a fiscal 1998 spending bill for education, health, labor, and welfare programs. Congress spent Friday trying to finish it and other bills so it could

adjourn for the year.

Last-Minute Details

Even though the general deal had the support of Mr. Clinton and GOP leaders, as of late last week one detail had to be finished.

In the final hours of negotiations, Mr. Goodling and the administration haggled over the date that the experiments with test items could begin.

Mr. Goodling wanted to delay that step until Oct. 1, 1998 —the start of the next fiscal year. The administration wanted it to begin one month earlier.

Mr. Goodling insisted that pilot- and field-testing, which is done to ensure the validity and fairness of test questions, be postponed until Congress resolves the assessment plan's fate once and for all. The costs of that preparation would be wasted if Congress eventually abandoned the project, he said.

As the House prepared to vote on the bill Friday, Republicans planned to ban preliminary testing in fiscal 1998, GOP and Democratic sources said. That would dare the president to veto the entire spending bill over the issue.

Even if the field-testing were to begin Oct. 1, 1998, the administration would be unable to launch the full-scale testing program in the spring of 1999, as the president had hoped to do since unveiling his testing plan in his State of the Union Address earlier this year.

The delay probably would be for one year, meaning testing would not happen till 2000.

"That disappoints me, but it's not the end of the world," Mr. Riley said in the interview.

Difficult Deal

The deal took two months to broker. The House voted in early September to bar the administration, which already had the testing project well under way, from spending any more money on it. A few days earlier, the Senate had approved testing legislation that hinged on handing control of the assessments to an existing, nonpartisan board. ("House Blocks, While Panel Settles On, New Tests," Sept. 24, 1997.)

Last week's deal emerged from a Nov. 5 meeting between the president and Mr. Goodling.

Under the terms of the accord, the House Education and the Workforce Committee, which Mr. Goodling chairs, would hold hearings on national testing when it considers a renewal of the law governing the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the federal government's current sampling of student achievement across several subject areas and grade levels.

Last week's agreement makes no promises that Mr. Goodling and conservatives on his committee will authorize individual student testing as the president has proposed when they write their new NAEP bill. Mr. Clinton's plan has also drawn the opposition of many liberal House Democrats from urban districts.

While Congress considers the testing plan's future, the National Assessment Governing Board, the nonpartisan panel that oversees NAEP, will review the work of the contractors the Department of Education hired to write the proposed tests.

But the assessment governing board, known as NAGB, would not start pilot-testing or field-testing, as the existing Education Department contract requires.

At the same time Congress starts its hearings and NAGB reviews the existing work, the National Academy of Sciences will study whether existing off-the-shelf assessments could be used to measure student progress toward national standards. A draft of the study is due June 15, with the final report to be done next fall.

The study could be especially influential in the debate.

If a panel of experts assembled by the academy determines that available tests could yield the same information that Mr. Clinton promises his tests will deliver, GOP leaders could justify abandoning the president's testing proposal.

Rocky Road

While the testing compromise had the

support of many of the principal players on Capitol Hill, it could run into significant opposition before it becomes law.

Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., the Senate's biggest critic of the proposed tests, threatened late last week to use the power of the filibuster—or prolonged debate—to hold up consideration of the spending bill containing the compromise.

"I am prepared to debate this issue all weekend ... if that is what it takes to prevent the federalization of our schools," he said Thursday afternoon in a statement.

As of Friday morning, Sen. Ashcroft had not decided whether he would try to derail the bill.

But Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., who

threatened his own filibuster of a bill that sought to block the tests, said he would back the compromise.

In the House, black and Hispanic members decided to support the compromise because included assurances that the tests would not discriminate against minorities or limited-English proficient students. ■

27.

The Chronicle of Higher Education [Academe Today]

November 12, 1997

College President Quits Amid Lawsuit Over Alleged \$2-Million Aid Fraud

By JEFFREY SELINGO

The president of Brewton-Parker College resigned Monday amid accusations in a lawsuit that the Baptist institution in Georgia had improperly distributed more than \$2-million in federal financial aid over 10 years.

In a prepared statement announcing his resignation, Y. Lynn Holmes said, "It is in the best interests of Brewton-Parker College for me to step aside at this time."

Dr. Holmes, who had been president for 14 years, will remain at the college as

a faculty member. He refused to comment Tuesday.

In September, the federal government joined a lawsuit against the college that had been filed by a former assistant financial-aid director. The suit alleges that fraud pervaded the financial-aid office.

The complaint prompted an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education that found numerous violations of department rules on the

disbursement of federal grant and loan money. Pell Grants were credited to ineligible students, federal money was distributed to foreign students, financial aid was given to students who lacked the required documents, and refunds were not paid to students who were due them, according to the lawsuit.

College officials have said that they are negotiating a settlement with the government, but have declined to give details of the proposed deal. ■

28. The Chronicle of Higher Education [Academe Today]

November 12, 1997

Dartmouth President Documents College's Anti-Semitic History

By JEFFREY SELINGO

The president of Dartmouth College disclosed documents on Friday that revealed, in plain language, the anti-Semitic views of Dartmouth officials earlier this century and their role in restricting Jewish admissions. The disclosure, which confirmed what many had suspected, drew praise from students.

At a dinner following the dedication of a new social and religious center for Jewish students on the campus, James O. Freedman read from documents in the Dartmouth archives. In an interview in Tuesday's New York Times, Mr. Freedman, who is Jewish, said his

decision to draw attention to the documents had no connection to his decision to retire in June 1998.

"We must confront the ghosts of the past and recognize that we have a history that's not commendable in this respect," he told the newspaper. "It's not just Dartmouth. It was the same at Harvard and Yale." He added that "Jewish students have a proud place at Dartmouth today."

Mr. Freedman was in Boston on Tuesday and was not available for comment.

Many of the documents are letters from alumni complaining that the

campus was becoming "more Jewish," and replies from college officials saying that they were aware of the "Jewish problem." In one letter, the director of admissions wrote, "If we go beyond the 5 percent or 6 percent [of Jewish students] in the Class of 1938, I shall be grieved beyond words."

Shirley Sperling, a senior majoring in government, said on Tuesday that the anti-Semitic history of the institution was not surprising, although she was stunned by the documents' overtly anti-Semitic language.

"We all knew about it," said Ms. Sperling, a former president of

say Clinton's seeming victories in education may prove to be hollow because many of his initiatives have been diluted by deals he has made to appease Republican moderates.

Republican leaders say they are forcing Clinton to make important concessions. On national testing, for example, they shifted control away from the Education Department to an independent board and won a larger role in deciding the fate of the tests.

"We are now in the driver's seat," Goodling said.

Nevertheless, Clinton still appears to

to come under any Clinton has made education a national issue."

On some education issues, Republican leaders and Clinton have reached consensus. Both want to develop new charter public schools, which operate independently from public school bureaucracies. Both sides also have agreed to spend more federal money to help children improve their reading skills and to help needy students pay for college.

But political divisions remain large on other issues.

education is also angering many Republican lawmakers, who contend that he unfairly brands any criticism they raise about an initiative as a sign of deep hostility toward public schools.

"But remember how Republicans painted Clinton anti-health care," said Jack Jennings, the director of the Center on Education Policy, a Washington group. "The other side always says the winners are demagogues. Republicans keep trying out new themes in education, but they still haven't been able to crack Clinton's hold on it." ■

3. The New York Times

11/12/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section B; National Desk; Page 7, Column 5

Unlike Public, Teachers Oppose National Tests

By JACQUES STEINBERG

By the time the 28 pupils in Adele Schroeter's fourth-grade class move on to fifth grade next June, they will have taken eight standardized tests in 14 months.

Last spring, they took a battery of reading and mathematics tests, once for

the city and again for the state. Later this year, they will take three more city tests, in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as a state test in science.

So perhaps it is understandable that Ms. Schroeter, who teaches at Public School 321 in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, was somewhat unnerved by the prospect of preparing future classes

of 10-year-olds for yet another examination: the proposed national test in fourth-grade reading. For now, she can relax. Congress decided last week to delay the test and its counterpart in eighth-grade mathematics, pending study of whether they are needed.

While a majority of Americans support the idea of national tests, most

teachers oppose them. A survey this month by Phi Delta Kappa, an academic association, found that 69 percent of teachers oppose such tests, many of them agreeing with Ms. Schroeter that their students are already over-tested.

"I understand the need to have some kind of way to communicate how effective we are being as teachers and, more importantly, where we need to provide better support to our students," Ms. Schroeter said. "But I think it's a bit of overkill to add another one."

In Chicago, pupils take a total of 12 standardized tests from the winter of third grade through the spring of fourth grade — three more tests than they would have taken a decade ago. In Los Angeles, the number of tests given in those grades this year will be eight — two more than last year.

Because of concerns that testing, particularly of young children, has grown too extensive, Cincinnati's public schools reduced the number of standardized tests given in the third and fourth grades last year, from five to three.

"One thing our teachers are saying," said Tom Mooney, a Cincinnati teacher and teachers' union leader, "is, 'We already test kids too much, so if you have national tests, which tests are you going to take away?'"

The national tests were to have been introduced in New York and 14 other school systems in the spring of 1999. But last week, Congress reached agreement with President Clinton to delay introducing the tests for at least a year.

Led by a former teacher, Representative Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania, the Republican leadership withheld financing for the Administration's proposed national testing program until an independent panel from the National Academy of Sciences completes a study of whether

the results of various standardized tests already given can serve the President's goal of comparing students and districts.

While the Congressional debate focused on whether the tests would draw the Federal Government too far into local policy, educators and policy makers have found no shortage of other details on which to disagree, like whether the reading test should emphasize phonics skills or a broader whole-language approach.

In the Phi Delta Kappa survey, some teachers said they welcomed national tests as a road map to what their students should know, echoing the hopes of Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley.

But others said they feared they would be pressured to devote much of their time to "teaching to the test" so that, like college football coaches, they would be sure to put big points on the scoreboard.

Judy Pessa, a mathematics teacher at Middle School 51 in Park Slope, said she was already under enough pressure to insure that the 75 eighth graders in her two advanced classes passed the New York State Regents examination in ninth-grade mathematics, a major college-preparatory test. She said school administrators had left no doubt that a poor performance by her students would affect her own standing.

"The pressure is very strong," said Ms. Pessa, who began teaching two decades ago. "Chances are if I didn't continue to get a high level of kids' passing, someone else would end up teaching these classes."

Mr. Mooney, the president of the 50,000-member Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, said his members wondered whether the national standards to be

covered by the tests would conflict with local curriculums. Cincinnati, for example, has clear-cut standards for promotion out of the third, sixth and eighth grades, he said. The risk, he added, is "we are going to confuse our teachers and confuse our kids."

Valeria Massimo, an eighth-grade mathematics teacher at Junior High School 194 in Whitestone, Queens, said that for the national test to improve teaching, the standards must relate to specific work done in the classroom and must spell out how one grade builds on the next. This way, eighth-grade teachers are not left scrambling to introduce subjects in preparation for the national test that students should have mastered in earlier grades.

Most teachers already feel great tension over how much time to devote to preparing students for required tests. They expect a national test would only increase that tension by pitting one school against another.

In New York City last year, Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew identified third-grade literacy as his top priority, with schools and teachers judged by the results. For Ted Kesler, a third-grade teacher at Public School 75 in Manhattan, the challenge was to ready his students for the test without straying from his goal of instilling a lifelong love of reading. "Some literacy practices overlap with the test-taking techniques, like rereading for proof, rereading for evidence and supporting your own argument," he said. "But some literacy practices don't relate to test-taking, like choosing books that are right for you."

Nonetheless, he said he supported the idea of "one comprehensive test" for pupils, provided that it took the place of the myriad other tests now in use.

"Then let us do our jobs," he said. ■

4. Gannett News Service

11/10/97; Edition: FINAL; Page arc

Torricelli proposal targets hate crimes committed on college campuses

By DEBORAH KALB
Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — In an effort to document and combat the number of hate crimes committed on college campuses, Sen. Robert Torricelli introduced

legislation Sunday that would toughen requirements on colleges to report these crimes.

The problem of hate crimes — offenses motivated by such factors as race, religion or national origin —

"remains endemic in American society," Torricelli, D-N.J., said.

Torricelli's bill, which would expand the scope of a 1990 law under which colleges report their hate crimes to the U.S. Department of Education,

missed payments for at least six months. That compares with 10.7 percent the year before and a high of 22.4 percent in 1990.

But even though rates were improving, there was a disturbing sign. The default rate for borrowers at four-year and two-year universities and colleges edged up a little. For graduates of private, four-year institutions, it went from 6.3 percent to 6.9 percent.

That increase was offset by a drop in default rates at the usual institutions that account for a high percentage of loan losses: for-profit enterprises such as barber, beauty and technical schools. The rate was 20 percent, compared with 21 percent the year before.

number of lawsuits against student defaulters - from 200 in 1995 to 25,000 in fiscal 1997.

An excessive default rate can cause a school to be dropped from student loan and other aid programs. The department reported that 269 institutions had lost or restricted eligibility because student default rates were at least 25 percent for three years or at least 40 percent for one year, or both.

Student debt can be burdensome. Half the students who graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1995-1996 owed the loan program at graduation. The average amount borrowed during the college career was \$12,000 at public schools,

university.

The department introduced those loans in 1994 and believes they will have a favorable impact on default rates because of their more flexible repayment plans. But Congress favors the guaranteed program.

Congress next year also must renew student aid legislation, deciding whether to raise loan limits and change interest rates and borrower fees.

According to today's report, nearly 200,000 borrowers attending more than 7,600 schools were in default as of Oct. 1, 1996. The number is slightly higher than for 1994, but the number of borrowers was higher. ■

2. The Washington Post

11/12/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A11

GOP Can't Seem to Get School Credit

Clinton Has Made Education a National — and White House — Issue

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

In their recurring battles with President Clinton over education, Republican leaders in Congress have tried one strategy after another to seize the political advantage.

They have little to show for it.

Their latest move came on the House floor last week, when Republican lawmakers sought to create a showdown with Clinton over the contentious issue of school vouchers. But they lost. The furious attempt by many Republicans to ban Clinton from ever giving students national tests also just ended, for now, in compromise.

Last year, GOP leaders spoke seriously of abolishing the Education

Department. That talk brought great criticism and fizzled. They also threatened to make deep cuts in Goals 2000, a prominent Clinton program to give states grants for school reforms. But now they provide precisely the amount of money he had requested.

As Congress wraps up its work this year, Clinton is continuing to prevail in the political debate over education. His classroom initiatives, which he has called a top priority of his second term, are for the most part still intact. And among voters, it is the White House, not Congress, that the public appears to trust more to improve schools.

When they took charge on Capitol Hill three years ago, Republican leaders vowed to reduce the federal government's role in schools. But they are having only

limited success in stopping Clinton from expanding it, or defining their own agenda on education.

"Republicans are on the defensive — they're still confused over how to be for education without supporting new programs from Washington," said Chester Finn, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and assistant secretary of education during the Bush administration. "Clinton's political instincts have been very shrewd."

In last week's voucher vote, House Republicans rushed a bill to the floor without sending it to committee first, only to find they lacked the votes to pass the measure. Several dozen GOP lawmakers ignored the wishes of Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Majority Leader Richard K. Arney (R-Tex.) and

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opposed the idea.

The bill, which Clinton threatened to veto, would have allowed states to use federal money to give poor students tuition stipends for private schools. Republicans, trying to capitalize on evidence of increased public support for vouchers, said that too many other traditional forms of aid to improve public schools were not succeeding.

"We've tried, and tried and tried," said Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. "And it was all well-meaning, but it didn't work."

Another Republican bill that would have helped parents pay for private schooling through tax breaks — which the president also fought — was shelved last week by the Senate.

Yet many lawmakers and educators say it is important to draw a distinction between the political gains Clinton is making and the effects of his policies on schools. Some question whether his agenda will lead to the profound improvements he promises.

After all, state and local leaders — not the White House — still determine most teaching policies and classroom spending. Also, even some Democrats say Clinton's seeming victories in education may prove to be hollow because many of his initiatives have been diluted by deals he has made to appease Republican moderates.

Republican leaders say they are forcing Clinton to make important concessions. On national testing, for example, they shifted control away from the Education Department to an independent board and won a larger role in deciding the fate of the tests.

"We are now in the driver's seat," Goodling said.

Nevertheless, Clinton still appears to

have a political edge overall on a subject that Republicans dearly want to put their own imprint on, for education now ranks consistently atop the concerns of voters.

In a recent Washington Post national survey that mirrored findings in other polls, voters were asked to name the political party they trusted most to improve education. Democrats were chosen by 51 percent; 30 percent chose Republicans.

Dick Morris, a former political consultant to Clinton and an architect of his education plan, wrote an open letter to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) in *The Hill* newspaper last week urging him to chart a new course for Republicans on the issue.

Morris, who also has worked for Lott, warned the Senate leader that the GOP is wasting its time by focusing on a divisive subject like vouchers, or by insisting education is a local matter. He urged Lott to take the lead on education issues that have broader appeal, such as improving the quality of teaching.

"Democrats lost 20 years of elections by maintaining that crime was not a national issue even after Richard Nixon made it one," Morris wrote. "Now, Republicans will lose elections for years to come until they realize that Bill Clinton has made education a national issue."

On some education issues, Republican leaders and Clinton have reached consensus. Both want to develop new charter public schools, which operate independently from public school bureaucracies. Both sides also have agreed to spend more federal money to help children improve their reading skills and to help needy students pay for college.

But political divisions remain large on other issues.

Republicans who support vouchers say the stipends would give poor students in failing public schools some of the same choices those with affluent parents have. Republican leaders also hope that by embracing the issue they will improve their standing among minority voters, where support for vouchers is growing fastest.

Clinton, arguing that vouchers will ruin public education, has vowed to veto any Republican legislation that even remotely resembles the idea.

Another feud still exists on Clinton's plan to give national tests in reading and math, which would be an unprecedented step for schools. The compromise forged last week may preserve the tests, although in a different form than Clinton had intended. Both sides expect to resume their battle over the tests next year.

One problem Republicans have had in the education debate is that while Clinton travels the country giving speeches with the same message about schools, GOP lawmakers have deep differences on the subject. Last month, Senate Republicans strongly backed a modified form of Clinton's tests even as the House voted to ban them.

Clinton's tone in debates over education is also angering many Republican lawmakers, who contend that he unfairly brands any criticism they raise about an initiative as a sign of deep hostility toward public schools.

"But remember how Republicans painted Clinton anti-health care," said Jack Jennings, the director of the Center on Education Policy, a Washington group. "The other side always says the winners are demagogues. Republicans keep trying out new themes in education, but they still haven't been able to crack Clinton's hold on it." ■

3. The New York Times

11/12/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section B; National Desk; Page 7, Column 5

Unlike Public, Teachers Oppose National Tests

By JACQUES STEINBERG

By the time the 28 pupils in Adele Schroeter's fourth-grade class move on to fifth grade next June, they will have taken eight standardized tests in 14 months.

Last spring, they took a battery of reading and mathematics tests, once for

the city and again for the state. Later this year, they will take three more city tests, in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as a state test in science.

So perhaps it is understandable that Ms. Schroeter, who teaches at Public School 321 in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, was somewhat unnerved by the prospect of preparing future classes

of 10-year-olds for yet another examination: the proposed national test in fourth-grade reading. For now, she can relax. Congress decided last week to delay the test and its counterpart in eighth-grade mathematics, pending study of whether they are needed.

While a majority of Americans support the idea of national tests, most

children. And they questioned the wisdom of paying \$2.75 billion for volunteers when that much money could buy additional reading teachers for every school in the country.

On Saturday, the House passed a more modest, and realistic, alternative. The \$210 million compromise borrows heavily from some elements of Clinton's proposal, including funding to provide more classroom teachers with specialized training in reading instruction.

Instead of relying on volunteers, though, the House bill funds grants for specialized reading tutors to work in low-income neighborhoods after school, on weekends and during summer breaks.

The Department of Education and teacher unions oppose the bill's tutoring grants, labeling them "after-school vouchers." Their objections are unfounded and unfair. Unlike vouchers, which use public money to pay private-school tuition, these tutoring

grants would be administered by public schools. And they would pay only for reading specialists sanctioned by the schools themselves.

Rather than undermine the work of public schools, these reading specialists would work with children to supplement school programs. As professionals, that's what effective teachers are trained to do.

The Department of Education declined to provide an opposing view. ■

PRESS RELEASES

83. The Salt Lake Tribune

11/08/97 Section: Opinion; Page A14

More Time for Testing

Congress and President Clinton have reached a compromise on national academic testing that increases chances the job will be done right.

Instead of testing fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math in 1999, as President Clinton wanted, the process will be postponed until 2000 and revised.

Rather than assign the U.S. Department of Education to develop and field test new national standards, an independent group, the National Academy of Sciences, will determine whether existing exams can be adapted and compared for that purpose. The Congress-created National Assessment Governing Board will be in charge of developing any national test.

This makes sense, since some of the biggest objections to the Clinton plan were its link to his administration and its

potential for imposing another expensive, time-consuming exam on schools. The nation needs more time to develop nonpartisan academic standards and to decide how to use them.

Rep. Bill Goodling, a Pennsylvania Republican who fought hard against Clinton's plan but helped design the compromise, had argued that public schools need no new test because they already know where they fall short. Unfortunately, that's not entirely true.

Many schools know only how well their students stack up against a random sampling of other students on specific tests, not whether they have learned the skills necessary for success in this country. The current system of averages tends to move up and down, masking individual and general learning. It isn't necessarily good news that a child scores in the 60th percentile of his peers if his

peers cannot understand multi-syllable words.

With the additional time and incentives, American educators might agree that the National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, would serve as the national standard. They also might conclude that states should voluntarily give the tests to all fourth and eighth graders — or even to students at every grade level.

Meantime, however, educators and the public must set high expectations for the public schools and let them teach to a uniform standard, hold back students who fall behind and intervene when a school falls short, even if it means firing teachers whose students consistently fail to learn. What is the value of a new standard, after all, if meaningful measures to meet it are forbidden? ■

84. The New York Times

11/10/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; Editorial Desk; Page 30, Column 1

Rebuild CUNY, but Fairly

After a decade of budget cuts and hiring slowdowns, the City University of New York is running with a stripped-down faculty and with poorly paid adjuncts who stand at the very margins of academic life carrying more than half the

17-campus system applaud the effort. But some are troubled by a provision that would assign fewer faculty positions to campuses that have lower graduation rates. The discrepancies are relatively small at this point. But if deepened,

from more privileged backgrounds.

The emphasis on full-time faculty is long overdue. Since the late 1980's the teaching load of adjuncts has gone steadily upward, nearing 60 percent in