

36. Education Daily

November 10, 1997 Category: Trade

ED FUNDING BILL SET TO PASS WITH SOLID DEAL ON TESTS

Congress was poised late Friday to pass a fiscal 1998 education spending bill after conservative lawmakers and the White House finally compromised on voluntary national testing.

As expected, the deal would bar the Education Department from spending fiscal 1998 funds on implementing or pilot testing the exams for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. However, development of test items could continue.

Details of the deal were confirmed Friday by Senate Democratic sources and aides for Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the testing plan's main opponent.

The compromise appeared to pave the way for Congress to pass H.R. 2264, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, which would boost ED funding from \$28.9 billion in fiscal 1997 to \$32.3 billion this year, excluding some mandatory programs such as student loans (ED, Nov. 4).

Both sides budged from their original positions: Goodling originally wanted to halt development of the exams entirely, while President Clinton wanted to begin field testing next fall.

Other elements of the compromise, which Goodling announced Thursday, include.

- * A National Academy of Sciences study of whether existing state and

commercial tests could be compared to each other and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

- * Congressional debate on the testing plan by education policy committees as part of reauthorization of NAEP and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

- * NAGB oversight of the tests, part of the Senate's version of the bill passed in September.

The House was expected to pass H.R. 2264 late Friday, while the Senate was expected to take it up Saturday.

ED and many other federal agencies have been funded through stopgap spending measures since the beginning of fiscal 1998 on Oct. 1. —Laureen Lazarovici■

37. Education Daily

November 10, 1997 Category: Trade

ADVOCATES BLAST IDEA RULES FOR 'QUALIFIED PERSONNEL'

Groups representing disabled students are urging the Education Department to change its proposed special education rules to better screen special educators.

At ED's third regional hearing last week about the draft rules, Kevin Dwyer, assistant director of the National Association of School Psychologists, lambasted ED's proposed definition of "qualified professional and qualified personnel," saying it would let bus drivers teach.

ED's rules don't mention bus drivers. However, they do say the word "qualified" would mean a person who meets state-approved certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements for the area in which he or she plans to work.

Dwyer proposed at Tuesday's session in Washington, D.C., that the term "qualified personnel" be defined as

someone "who has met the highest standard" for state licensing or certification "for that unique profession."

An Honest Appraisal Likewise, Christine Metzler, a lobbyist for the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), criticized the draft rules as too lax.

Before Congress passed the 1975 Education of the Handicapped Act, she, as an untrained English major, had provided physical and occupational therapy to retarded children in a school basement, she said. Local donations funded the services.

"I don't want the law to let me back into the classroom," Metzler quipped.

The new Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to uphold standards ensuring their staffs are "appropriately and adequately prepared and trained."

But in geographic areas suffering

personnel shortages, IDEA lets schools hire paraprofessionals and assistants who are within three years of completing their special education training (ED Supplement, July 17).

This provision also has advocates worried.

"Paraprofessionals should have a high school diploma," Joseph Stafford III, a doctoral candidate in psychology at Temple University, told ED Tuesday. While they could help trained educators, he added, "under no circumstances should the paraprofessional be the sole provider or substitute."

ED's rules for this new section of the law on staff-in-training merely repeat the statute. But a footnote adds, "As a practical matter, it is essential that a state have a mechanism for serving students if instructional needs exceed available personnel."

Mary Mühlenhaupt, another AOTA

Surprise! National school standards exist

But educational curricula are established by textbook companies, not the government

BY MATTHEW MILLER

President Clinton says national tests for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are vital to measure progress and raise student achievement. But last week, Republicans put the idea on hold for at least a year, saying that such moves toward national standards in education undermine local control over schools. Lost in the shouting, however, is a seemingly important fact: According to many publishing executives and educators, national education standards already exist, set indirectly by a handful of publishing giants whose textbooks guide instruction in classrooms across the country. "The textbooks are dictating the curriculum and the standards," says Robert Villareal, principal at East Ridge

Elementary School in suburban Denver.

Textbook publishing for grades K-12 is big business, with \$3.5 billion in sales last year. Five companies — Simon & Schuster, McGraw-Hill, Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt General, and Addison Wesley Longman — make up 70 percent of the market. While in theory the companies produce different texts to accommodate the needs of different states, the presidents of McGraw-Hill, Simon & Schuster, and Addison Wesley Longman told U.S. News that, broadly speaking, 80 percent of their texts' content doesn't vary from state to state. Since California, Texas, and Florida account for 25 percent of book purchases, the major publishers regularly develop new texts around these states'

needs, then adapt them slightly, at low cost, for others. According to researchers, these texts and the accompanying teachers' guides, along with standardized tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test, have enormous influence over classroom instruction across the country.

If, as some analysts suggest, the result is a de facto national curriculum, the real question may be whether it is any good. Views vary. Publishers say their books' sameness reflects good news: Thanks in part to efforts to improve school standards, 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. "We find a tremendous amount of

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overlap in what states are looking for," says McGraw-Hill schools division chief Roger Rogalin.

Critics find the situation less benign. The understandable desire to keep each state happy by including local favorites (such as the Alamo) balloons texts until they cover too many subjects too superficially. Meanwhile, California, Texas, and Florida (along with 17 other states) approve books for statewide use through a highly politicized process that critics say is marred by ideological warfare, shoddy analysis, and occasional corruption. In more liberal states, for example, publishers scramble to meet quotas for photos of minorities or disabled people; a conservative protest in Texas got the New Deal taken off one text's time line of key events in U.S. history.

Moonlight cruises. Like most

government contracting, text buying has also seen its share of scandal. California faced an uproar in the 1980s, when publishers treated book-buying bureaucrats to plush golf weekends and moonlight yacht cruises. Last year, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin caught flak for taking campaign contributions (inadvertently, she claimed) from a publisher's parent company while millions in new book purchases were pending.

Recent evidence suggests critics are right to worry that today's standards aren't high enough. In the well-regarded Third International Mathematics and Science Study, for example, U.S. fourth graders scored above world averages in math, only to dip below average by eighth grade. Many educators attribute the drop to curricula and texts that cover

twice as many topics in less depth than, say, Japan. Another national measure of math and reading achievement, the 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 eighth graders, for example, meet the state's own standards; just 20 percent are considered "proficient" or "advanced" by NAEP.

With only a small fraction of education dollars going to texts, of course, they're hardly to blame for everything that ails American schooling. For now, though, their influence forces the standards debate in a different direction. The question becomes not whether there should be national standards but who should set them. ■

TRADE

remained steady in the past decade.

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, arguing that "African Americans are struggling to overcome 200 years of white supremacy and educational segregation" and, therefore, need affirmative action to progress, included in its most recent issue a comparison between white and black scores on the SAT, ACT, LSAT and Medical College Admission Test, or MCAT. The article sought to show that a reliance on such scores would prove devastating to blacks.

Among the data cited were that the median combined MCAT score for whites rejected for admission to medical

schools nationwide in 1996 — 25.2 out of 30 — was significantly higher than the median MCAT score of blacks — 23.5 — who were admitted.

In addition, the article pointed out that while blacks make up 10 percent of the more than 1.1 million high school seniors who took the SAT, they constituted only 1 percent to 2 percent of those scoring in the range required by many of the nation's elite universities.

The gap, the study argued, means little about the potential for blacks' achievement, and the authors cited an arresting example from history.

In 1951, Martin Luther King Jr. took the Graduate Record Exam for admission

to a doctoral program at Boston University. The verbal aptitude score of a man who is viewed as among the nation's greatest orators was in the third quartile, or below average. His quantitative score was in the bottom 10 percent, and he was in the bottom quarter for tests in physics, chemistry, biology, social studies and the fine arts.

The journal said that if tests were used as the main measure of potential by admissions committees at the nation's top colleges and universities, "black enrollments at these institutions will drop by at least one half and in many cases by as much as 80 percent." ■

20. Business Week

November 17, 1997

A CRASH COURSE FOR THE GOP IN EDUCATION

Capitalizing on issues such as vouchers and school choice, Republicans make inroads on Democratic turf

African American leaders and Newt Gingrich, an avowed foe of affirmative action, rarely see eye to eye. But on Oct. 30, the conservative Speaker of the House stood shoulder to shoulder on Capitol Hill with liberal Representative Floyd H. Flake (D-N.Y.) and the Reverend Jarrett Ellis, grand-nephew of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to promote a bill that would provide vouchers for poor kids to attend private and parochial schools. "Doesn't every child of every background in every neighborhood deserve the right to go to a school that their parents believe succeeds?" asked Gingrich as Flake, Ellis, and dozens of black schoolchildren from a church-run academy nodded approvingly.

Sure it was a photo op, but it was one that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. When Republicans took control of Congress in 1994, their education policy amounted to calls to abolish the Education Dept. — to the dismay of blacks and Hispanics. Now, Republicans are touring high schools, reading to preschoolers, and holding town meetings to plug initiatives such as vouchers, education savings accounts, and more money for charter schools.

VETO THREAT. And it may be working: Polls show Republicans are starting to make inroads on an issue Democrats have long owned. So the

Dems are battling furiously to hold their turf. On Oct. 27, some 75 Democratic lawmakers visited classrooms around the country to promote their own goals, such as giving parents the right to choose their kids' public schools and providing money to repair crumbling buildings. And on Nov. 4, Senate Democrats succeeded in killing a GOP bill that would have given parents tax breaks on education savings accounts. President Clinton, meanwhile, is threatening to veto other GOP bills that establish vouchers or that block his plan for national reading and math standards.

What prompted Republicans to retool their education game plan? Fear. They were getting creamed by Democrats, who assailed the GOP for education budget cuts at a time when better schools are a top priority for voters. "It has exploded as an issue," says Republican pollster Frank Luntz. Besides, the GOP's harsh attacks on the Education Dept. and teacher unions turned voters off. Says Representative Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.), who chairs a House education panel: "We have to demonstrate that we have appealing solutions."

That's why a crisp October morning in New Hampshire found Representative John E. Sununu (R-N.H.) playing teacher to eighth graders at Dover Middle School. The students listened attentively as he quizzed them about how laws get

passed and what the federal budget covers. A few gutsy kids asked the first-termer how much time he spends raising campaign cash and whether he'll follow in his father's footsteps and become governor. Dropping in on classrooms, something he has done about 30 times this year, gives Sununu a chance to show the GOP cares about education. "People all over the country are concerned about education," says Sununu. "It's important that we have a positive position on how we can improve schools."

SLIPPERY SLOPE. The GOP now boasts an array of proposals geared mostly to helping parents sidestep a public education system that Republicans argue has failed. Among the most prominent GOP initiatives are tax breaks to pay for computers and other K-12 expenses at private or public schools, and more money for charter schools — public institutions that operate with wide autonomy. Such planks appeal to the GOP mainstream: suburban, middle-class whites.

The GOP also opposes national standards as the first step on a slippery slope toward a Washington-dictated curriculum. That plays well with the Republican Right and minorities. Conservatives who send their kids to religious schools fear Washington's

meddling; black and Hispanic lawmakers worry that standards may be skewed against minorities.

But the centerpiece of GOP education policy is an old favorite — school tuition vouchers — dusted off and targeted at needy kids. "Thousands of low-income students are trapped in schools where they don't learn, where they aren't safe, and where no one with money would ever send their children," argues Representative James Talent (R-Mo.), co-sponsor of a voucher bill. With Gingrich readying a new assault on affirmative action next year, vouchers could help the GOP deflect charges that it is anti-minority. "This is their way of saying, 'Giving children a good education is a better way to get ahead than affirmative action,'" says Nina Shokrati, education analyst at the

Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Vouchers are catching on — even among Democrats — and could help the GOP break the Dems' lock on the urban minority vote. "Those we can rescue from the [public] system, we need to do so," says Flake, a leader of the Black Caucus and a minister who founded a private school in his New York City congressional district. Adds preacher Ellis: "This is not a race issue. It is a survival issue."

Pollster Mark J. Penn pegs support for vouchers for disadvantaged students at 69% of the general public and 68% of Democrats. "It's a potent issue," he says. A June survey by the Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies found that 57% of blacks support vouchers, up 10

percentage points from a poll in January, 1996.

Democrats attack the GOP agenda as a threat to public education. "Theirs is a bumper-sticker solution that solves the problem for a few thousand kids," scoffs Representative Tim J. Roemer (D-Ind.), co-sponsor of a bipartisan bill to expand funds for charter schools. Still, Republicans have tapped the public's frustration with the status quo. "All the innovative ideas are coming from the Republican Party," says Gerald Reynolds, president of the Center for New Black Leadership in Washington. By giving voters more solutions for fixing education, the GOP is stealing Democratic thunder — and courting an important new constituency.

By Amy Borrus in Dover, N.H. ■

21. Business Week

November 17, 1997

LESSONS FOR SYLVAN LEARNING SYSTEMS

The tutoring and testing company's fast rise leads to growing pains

It's more than a bit ironic that Douglas L. Becker and R. Christopher Hoehn-Saric have become leaders in the education business. The entrepreneurs built Baltimore-based Sylvan Learning Systems Inc. into a top provider of tutoring and testing services, yet neither graduated from college. Hoehn-Saric dropped out of Johns Hopkins University in his senior year. Becker made it into Harvard University but never got around to enrolling. Instead, they gambled on a launch of their own business.

The bet has paid off nicely. After that initial venture, as well as a few others, Becker, now 31, and Hoehn-Saric, 34, bought Sylvan in 1993 from then-ailing KinderCare Learning Centers Inc. In just five years, acquisitions and partnerships have helped them build one of the most innovative and fastest-growing companies in education. Sylvan controls some 670 learning centers that tutor school-age children around the country. It also has a fast-growing business administering professional and academic tests, including the widely used Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). Morgan Stanley, Dean Witter, Discover & Co. analyst David A. Nadel thinks Sylvan will rack up \$241 million in sales

this year, up from \$30 million when the company went public in 1993. Net income should hit \$28 million, vs. a loss in 1993.

Now, Sylvan's whiz kids have to prove they can run a big company as successfully as they built one. In the past six months, a few operational glitches in the testing business have left some customers fuming. But most observers are betting that Becker and Hoehn-Saric, who share the title of chief executive officer, can work through such problems. "Growing pains like this should be expected," says Morgan Stanley's Nadel.

But even while the duo hustles to work out the kinks, demand for their product remains high. Education in the U.S. is going through a powerful shift, with more services being delivered by the for-profit sector. "We want to be the source of all types of educational content throughout people's school and professional careers," says Hoehn-Saric.

Becker and Hoehn-Saric were hatching ambitious business schemes when most of their peers were worrying about prom dates. The two met in 1982 while working at a Baltimore ComputerLand store. Becker was still in high school and a budding computer

geek; Hoehn-Saric had just started at Johns Hopkins. Their first invention, an identification card that used an embedded computer chip to store a person's medical history, was bought by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maryland in 1985 for several million dollars. "We didn't think it would actually work," Becker says with a laugh.

BIG BREAK. They put their riches to work investing in a series of small businesses, from software-training programs to beef processing. In 1990, they bid for Sylvan, owned by then debt-ridden day-care operator KinderCare. KinderCare agreed to a joint venture, giving Becker and Hoehn-Saric a 50% stake. The duo bought the rest in early 1993.

Almost immediately, Becker and Hoehn-Saric saw ways to capitalize on Sylvan's franchised network of tutoring centers. They won a contract with testing giant Educational Testing Service to deliver computerized versions of exams. Today, ETS represents about 10% of Sylvan's revenue. Thanks in part to acquisitions, including its \$75 million purchase of main rival Drake Prometric in 1995, testing makes up more than half of sales.

16. National Public Radio Morning Edition

Nov. 7, 1997 6:45 a.m.

Clinton Administration and Congress reach agreement on national testing of students

ALEX CHADWICK The Clinton Administration and Congress have reached an agreement on the issue of national testing of students. But, as NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports, the agreement is so shaky neither side expects it to be final.

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ The proposed reading and math tests have been such a political football that no one has really talked about the tests themselves or what national tests could tell us about kids and schools. So, it came as no surprise that the agreement made public yesterday by Representative Bill Goodling, a Republican from Pennsylvania, deals exclusively with who has the political power to create and control the test.

REPRESENTATIVE BILL GOODLING, R-Pennsylvania The White House now agrees with us that Congress would play a very large role in deciding how and if and when any new national tests would be implemented. The White House now agrees with us that there are many existing tests out there that might give all the information that they need, and they also understand that certainly much more study is needed in relationship to the President's plan.

SANCHEZ The agreement calls for two studies — one would look at all the things that need to go into a reliable, high quality national test; the other would look at state, federal and commercial tests that are already in use to see if

together they could tell us how well kids are doing or how kids compare school to school and state to state. Both studies would be conducted by the National Academy of Science, an independent research agency, and would take a year to complete. The President, meanwhile, would have to keep the tests that his administration is developing under wraps, at least until next fall. This delay is crucial to conservatives in Congress who are still fundamentally opposed to national tests, conservatives like Representative Lindsay Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, who helped negotiate the agreement.

REPRESENTATIVE LINDSAY GRAHAM, R-South Carolina The position that we were in a few days ago would have institutionalized, I think eventually, what would be considered a bad idea and more threatening than anything we have today.

SANCHEZ The threat — inherent in national testing, Republicans insist — is more federal government intrusion in local education matters or worse, a federal curriculum for schools. Diane Ravitch, a former Assistant Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration, says the compromise in Washington is very disappointing because it ignores the most important question of all.

DIANE RAVITCH, former administrator in Bush Administration Do

we really want to know? Do we really want to have high standards in schools? Do we really want to know how our schools are doing compared to a real standard of achievement? Most kids in the country are being told, most school districts are reporting that their kids are well above average, so we're not getting the kind of honest assessment that I think most parents apparently want. And I don't think the this study from the National Academy of Sciences is going to resolve it.

SANCHEZ There's no point in studying the test that exists now, says Radich, because most of them don't tell us very much. Radich says there is one test, however, that says, "Here is what the average fourth-grader or eighth-grader should know and be able to do in math or reading." It's called NAEP, short for National Assessment of Educational Progress, and is given periodically by the federal government in over forty states. All that Congress needs to do, says Radich, is make NAEP available to anyone who asks for it. The agreement announced yesterday does not preclude that from happening. Congress and the White House both agree NAEP is a good test. But that's not the issue. The issue is control — when and where the test is made available. On that, there really has been no agreement. I'm Claudio Sanchez, NPR News, Washington. ■

17. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

November 10, 1997

Catholic bishops get together to discuss health care, education

BY PATRICIA RICE
Post-Dispatch Religion Writer

WASHINGTON — The nation's Catholic bishops have gathered in Washington to begin their 54th annual meeting today at which they will

consider the spiritual needs of the United States' more than 61 million church members.

St. Louis Archbishop Justin Rigali, a member of the administrative committee, helped to fine-tune the agenda. The

four-day meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency. Major topics for the approximately 285 bishops will be Catholic education, health care and education for the poor. The bishops are expected to speak out against Oregon's

14. The Wall Street Journal

11/10/97 Section: Politics & Policy;

GOP, White House Produce Year-End Budget Deals

By David Rogers

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — Crossing the Capitol last Friday, Speaker Newt Gingrich chanced upon House Appropriations Chairman Bob Livingston escorting Louisiana visitors through a hall decorated with statues from different states.

Mr. Livingston shooed his guests away: "Go over there with Huey Long," he said. As tourists gawked, the tall chairman from Louisiana and the stocky speaker from Georgia stood beneath a likeness of Tennessee's first governor and mapped a plan to pass spending bills linked to President Clinton's campaign for "fast-track" trade authority.

The impromptu meeting captured the frenetic, up-and-down pace of this past weekend, as Republicans and the White House struck year-end deals to free up billions of dollars for Mr. Clinton's domestic budget. While the administration denied any links to fast-track, Mr. Gingrich had telegraphed his strategy days before. Like the director on a movie set, he moved easily between leadership offices and the Appropriations panel, even showing up at the committee offices one night as astonished clerks were heading home.

A \$268 billion bill funding the departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services cleared Congress Saturday after a pact was reached on national testing for school children. And House-Senate negotiators were near agreement on the outlines of a separate \$31.7 billion measure funding the Commerce, Justice and State Departments. --

Embarrassed Republicans jettisoned their costly plan for a mail survey of taxpayer attitudes toward the Internal Revenue Service. For its part, the White House agreed to give the GOP a greater voice in preparing for the census in the year 2000. Republicans, who oppose the use of statistical sampling in the census, will have four seats on a new eight-member monitoring board, and the promise of an expedited court review of the constitutionality of sampling instead of an actual head count.

A \$13.1 billion foreign-aid bill remains deadlocked, but the Senate last night approved revisions that add \$3.5 billion for the International Monetary Fund and offer a new compromise on the contentious issue of U.S.-backed population-planning programs overseas. House conservatives want much stricter antiabortion curbs in return for their votes for the fast-track trade measure. Even last night, the administration was pursuing some compromise along these lines, according to GOP Whip Tom DeLay of Texas. Rep.

Angered by the White House tactics, Wisconsin Rep. David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations panel, began offering amendments to cut programs in the Commerce and State Departments. The administration compounded its woes by agreeing to exclude top Democrats from sensitive talks on issues such as the census. Last night, the White House paid a price as Democrats objected to the language on the census compromise.

As much as fast-track is a fight between Clinton "New Democrats" and old laborites, the spending bills showed

the gap between the party's congressional and presidential wings. Adding to the tensions was a running feud provoked by Mr. Clinton's line-item vetoes this fall. Amid the bargaining, the House joined the Senate in voting 352-64 to override the president's cuts from a military-construction bill. The roll call, which came as the Senate Appropriations Committee was meeting across the Capitol Saturday, prompted Sen. Robert Byrd (D., W. Va.) to slam his fist on a table and declare: "Make way for Liberty."

The following summarizes the major spending items as adopted by Congress or agreed to by negotiators over the weekend:

(excerpt)

EDUCATION: Like nothing else, this department symbolizes how much has changed since the GOP "revolution" in the last Congress. Spending will grow to \$32.5 billion, a \$3.5 billion increase over 1997 and 40% more than the House had proposed just two years ago when Republicans hoped to abolish the department.

Pell Grants for low-income college students will increase \$1.42 billion, or 24%. Republicans also added \$693 million to last year's budget to help local school districts pay for mandated programs for students with disabilities. Together with community-service programs, the president won a total of \$110 million to begin his new "America Reads" literacy initiative; bilingual and immigrant education — an early target for the GOP — will receive \$354 million, a third more than last year. ■

15. The Wall Street Journal

11/10/97 Page B1

Education: The Best Route to a Top College May Involve a Detour

By Joseph Pereira

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

Disappointed when her applications to Yale University, Dartmouth College and other selective schools were rejected,

Carrie Jenks postponed college and headed south.

After a year's sabbatical in Mexico and the West Indies — spent sleeping on the beach, learning how to cook in the

jungle and studying whales and dolphins — Ms. Jenks sent out some new applications. Today she is a junior majoring in environmental science at Harvard University.

2. Weekend Edition - Sunday (NPR)

11/09/97 Section: News; Domestic;

Testing Agreement

By Liane Hansen, Washington, DC

LIANE HANSEN, HOST: This past Wednesday, President Clinton and Republican Representative Bill Goodling from Pennsylvania reached a tentative agreement over national standardized tests.

The president wants to test fourth grade reading and eighth grade math because parents have no other way of knowing their child's abilities. Congressman Goodling agreed to examine already-existing tests to see if they might be retooled. He also had argued that many states already were developing their own tests.

This debate stretches back to June of this year, when the Department of Education released figures which showed U.S. students near the top in science and above international average in math. Much is riding on the eventual outcome, including millions of dollars in the manufacture of educational materials.

Joining us to discuss is Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Welcome back.

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON, DEAN, ANNEBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA: Thank you.

HANSEN: First please, elaborate on these figures that are at the heart of the debate.

JAMIESON: The report that was issued this last week, which is the National Education Goals Report, is comparing where a state is now to where a state has been, and the news is basically good.

We're seeing, across 33 indicators, some substantial improvements across the states, some states much more so than others, but there isn't a state that didn't show some improvement in some area. What's the relevance of that to this last week's discussion about national voluntary testing in fourth-graders?

HANSEN: Mm-hmm.

JAMIESON: If we set a goal and we monitor it systematically, the likelihood that we're going to see progress in that area is going to increase. But I think it raises the question: what aren't we focusing on?

HANSEN: When announcements of

various figures were made, it seems like there — I mean, there was some good news. Wasn't a lot of coverage.

JAMIESON: I was very surprised in June, that when the — the international scores were released, the Third International Math and Science Study, in the past, One and Two, had not been particularly good for the United States.

The third study, as you indicated when you opened, showed that our young people, this is fourth graders, were only topped by one country in the area of science, out of 25 countries in the world, and that seven did better in math, but that we were showing math improvements.

And you'd think that, with all the discussion about the decline of U.S. schools, and all the concerns, about, particularly public education, that people would have stopped the presses to say, we have good news. But instead, in the rush of the week's news, the good news got lost.

And so what's interesting is, now we have two different studies, this last week and the study in June, both of which show good news in math, good news in science. But in looking at the good news we shouldn't ignore the bad news.

We didn't see change this last week in reading and we saw a drop in 12th graders' reading ability. And the other two things that were really worrisome in this last week's report, and they too were underplayed, the dropout rate, where we haven't seen an improvement, yet most people aren't aware that we only have 86 percent of our high school students completing high school.

We have a 14 percent dropout rate, which means we have about a half-a-million kids who are kind of falling through the cracks. And when you drop out of high school, all sorts of other predictors come to place that suggest that your future has become more bleak.

But secondly, we also saw increase in reported drug use among freshman in high school, and it was a big jump, not a small jump. And we also saw a figure that, I think, one ought to be alarmed about.

We saw one-third of those in the survey saying that someone had offered to sell them drugs at school.

HANSEN: You've given us a lot to digest — a full basket of good news; a full basket of bad news. What do the politicians do with these numbers? Do they go through like a buffet and pick some from column A and some from column B?

JAMIESON: Actually, there's a larger debate that is going on right now, and it's very interesting, because it's not focused on these specifics. The debate is focused on whether or not the federal government should be the one to determine what this national voluntary test says.

And, that's a standard Republican versus Democratic discussion: what's the federal role? The second debate is also an important debate, but not at the level of the numbers. This is about how you would reach these goals, and you would set them.

The second part of this focuses on what's called school choice. And in the 1996 election, there was a lot of public confusion. One of the things that the public actually learned less about, as the election progressed, was where Clinton and Dole stood on school vouchers.

Dole favored providing a voucher that a parent could take to a school, public or private, that would be worth a certain dollar amount. Dole phrased this as "school choice."

Clinton came out in one of the debates favoring school choice, thereby blurring the issue, but his choice was among public school options, where Dole was — Dole was talking about public or private options. So in the process, the public became very confused about what is a very important national question: should we turn over to parents a portion of the available revenue and let them use it to move into — for example, a parochial school — move into a private school?

Or alternatively, should we create incentives for them to move within alternative public schools? Or, should we just say: you want to be in a public school, it's the public school you kid is assigned to, and that's too bad?

Increasingly, we're moving into the second model.

HANSEN: As we follow the debate over national tests, whether the government should be in total control,

whether or not vouchers will be given, the whole debate about education — what assumptions should we question? And then, what we should listen for?

JAMIESON: When one hears a voucher proposal, the first thing one wants to ask is: what's the dollar amount of the voucher, and where is it coming from? If this is money being taken out of the public school budget, it is a different proposal than if the money is addition to the public school budget.

One ought to ask, secondly, what will that dollar amount buy? Will it in fact buy you — and this was the rhetoric of the '96 campaign — the same kind of education that the Gore — the Gore

children and then Chelsea Clinton were able to get in private schools in Washington.

Well, a \$1,500 voucher doesn't buy you into a \$12,000 tuition into a private school. Third, what are the terms under which a voucher proposal is going to be enacted? Is there going to be a requirement that those schools taking vouchers are open to all children who come with a voucher, or are those schools able to select some children over others?

And also, the word to beware is "choice." Because when people hear "choice" now, ordinarily, you're accustomed to thinking of it as abortion

rights rhetoric. But when someone says they're "pro-choice," that's usually the liberal.

Well here, when you say you're "pro-choice" in the school debate, you're the conservative. And so, when someone says "choice," I'd put an asterisk on that word and say, "I'm gonna make a quick inference

here about who I'm hearing from or what I'm hearing. I want to know the specifics.

HANSEN: Kathleen Hall Jamieson is dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Kathleen.

JAMIESON: You're welcome.■

3. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

11/08/97Section: NATIONAL NEWS; Page A;07

Civil rights lawyer leads race talks

Advisory board competing for Clinton's ear

By Julia Malone

WASHINGTON STAFF

Washington —As a young child, Judith Winston was blissfully ignorant of the color line until she moved to her first racially integrated school in Philadelphia.

There she made new friends, who assumed that the fair-skinned Judith must be white. That is, until her brown-skinned mother arrived at school one day. Once her classmates discovered Judith was black, some of her erstwhile friends fell away, leaving her hurt and puzzled.

"My parents couldn't explain to me what this was all about," Winston recalled.

That experience became a springboard for Winston, now a civil rights lawyer, who at 53 has spent her career challenging discrimination in race as well as gender.

Now she is taking on her most daunting job, as behind-the-scenes director of President Clinton's race initiative, a project launched last June with expansive promises about bringing the nation together for a yearlong "conversation on race."

Nearly five months later, the project has \$4.9 million and a staff of 25 geared up and ready to go, but the national conversation is barely audible. And race has been crowded out of a presidential agenda that is crammed with other concerns, such as a stand-off with Iraq,

foreign trade legislation, and politicking for the off-year elections.

Clinton has promised a national town hall-style meeting Dec. 3 to highlight racial reconciliation. But with the date fast approaching, the White House is still haggling over the location —expected to be in a college town in the Midwest or in Oklahoma. Clinton canceled a final site-selection meeting set for Friday.

"The president does have a lot on his plate," Winston said, acknowledging that, as a result, the initiative has difficulty making a splash in the news media. Winston is herself traveling coast-to-coast, speaking to groups and trying to spur local dialogues on race. Today she will visit Atlanta to speak to the Southern Regional Council, a group that has been working on racial reconciliation in the South for 78 years.

"We are surrogates for the president," Winston said of her travels and outreach efforts by the seven members of the president's race advisory board, chaired by renowned historian John Hope Franklin.

The initiative has become a clearinghouse of information, offering suggestions for ways to foster better race relations.

On Thursday the race project launched an Internet site (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica>) that lists eight "promising practices." Among them are an effort in

Cleveland to uncover housing discrimination, a program to ease tension in schools in Volusia County, Fla., and an interracial youth program in Boston.

Later this month, the race advisory board will meet at the University of Maryland to highlight student diversity at colleges —just as states such as California and Texas are ending racial preferences for student admission.

Winston expects no fireworks at that meeting, since the initiative's board unanimously backs "affirmative-action" methods to boost minority enrollments.

In fact, critics of the race initiative have complained that's the problem with the "conversation," so far —that it's been chiefly with people who already agree with each other.

Winston conceded the problem. "The challenge, of course, is to get people who are not members of the choir around the table to talk about these issues," she said. "People who don't believe that race is a problem are not likely to be interested in talking about it."

In response, the administration has begun putting out feelers to conservatives and Republicans to try to engage them in the race dialogue. But Maria Echaveste, the White House director of public liaison, said aides were still puzzling over how best to get such a conversation started.

As the months tick away, will the \$4.9 million initiative touch hearts and minds

12. Education Daily

November 6, 1997

WHITE HOUSE, CONGRESS NEAR DEAL ON ASSESSMENTS

Republicans and the White House may announce a compromise on President Clinton's voluntary testing plan as early as today, a move that could clear the way for passage of a stalled education funding bill.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee—the tests' main opponent—yesterday called a news briefing to announce a breakthrough on the sticky measure, then abruptly canceled it.

"My meeting with President Clinton [Wednesday] morning was very productive, and I believe we are very close to reaching an agreement," Goodling said in a statement. But "we haven't been able to close on a number of details."

Clinton wants pilot assessments by next year for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math, with full-fledged testing to begin in 1999.

Goodling wants the entire testing plan dumped.

Goodling's office wouldn't offer details of the deal, but Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said the compromise would let the National Academy of Sciences explore whether existing state or commercial assessments can be adjusted to yield individual, standards-based results, in keeping with Clinton's original proposal.

The deal also would ban pilot testing of the exams until the study is complete, according to Bingaman, the leading Senate proponent of Clinton's initiative.

Reflecting the Senate's position, the National Assessment Governing Board would be allowed to continue developing a national test during the eight-month study period, which would push back administration of the test to 2000.

The House voted 295-125 to ban development of the national tests (ED,

Sept. 18).

Congress wouldn't have to give approval for the tests to be administered after the study is completed. Congressional approval—which essentially would give Goodling the power to stop the testing plan—was part of an aborted compromise that House appropriators crafted last week (ED, Oct. 31).

At a noon news conference on trade issues yesterday, Clinton said. "Just because we've reached an agreement in principle, we've got to turn it into language. I'm very hopeful."

The deal could pave the way for both chambers to take up the fiscal 1998 education spending bill, H.R. 2264. Although House and Senate conferees agreed on program-by-program spending levels last week, the testing quagmire has prevented the two chambers from voting on the bill. — Lauren Lazarovici

13. Chronicle of Higher Education - Academe Today

November 7, 1997

Colleges Would Have to Report Hate Crime on Their Campuses Under Senator's Bill

By KIT LIVELY
WASHINGTON

Prospective college students would be able to judge the level of campus civility along with more-traditional qualities, like academics and public safety, under a legislative proposal announced Thursday

by a U.S. Senator.

Senator Robert Torricelli, a New Jersey Democrat, said at a press conference that he planned to introduce legislation by the end of this week that would require colleges to report the number of hate crimes that occurred on

their campuses each year.

The bill would expand the existing federal law that requires all colleges that receive federal student aid to publish annual reports containing crime statistics and describing safety policies and programs. Currently, the colleges must

11. LRP Publications

Nov. 6, 1997

Clinton Blinks in Testing Standoff

An agreement between President Clinton and the leading congressional opponent of his plan for a national test may clear the way for possible final passage this week of a bill appropriating funds for the Department of Education and other agencies. Clinton apparently agreed to modify his demands for his national-testing proposal.

The agreement still had to be sold to the Republican leadership of both houses late Wednesday.

Several other agreements have fallen apart at the last minute recently, threatening a delay in the congressional effort to adjourn the current session.

Until Clinton's White House meeting with Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, Congress was considering another continuing resolution, this one lasting until Nov. 21.

The latest agreement would extend by one year (from 1999 to 2000) the ban on implementation of a national test on reading and mathematics that the administration wants in order to give parents and teachers a chance to match the performance of K-12 students in one state with those of another and with similar students in other countries.

Clinton apparently also agreed to drop an effort to have a new national test drafted and to rely instead on tests already being used by states. But even those tests would be voluntary on the part of the states.

Goodling, who bristled openly when the Republican leadership accepted a House-Senate conference compromise on the testing issue last week without giving him final approval as he said was promised, may have had trouble selling the agreement with Clinton to the

leadership. He canceled a news conference he had announced directly after the White House meeting and provided no explanation.

In a statement earlier, Goodling called his meeting with Clinton "very productive, and I believe we are very close to reaching an agreement. We agree with my idea of using existing state-administered tests as the best way to assess our children's academic performance."

Goodling acknowledged that he and other White House and House leadership officials involved in the matter have not been able to reach an agreement on several details, but was optimistic about resolving them today.

Clinton told reporters he was concerned that there be a reading and mathematics test that would be able to measure "some sort of clearly accepted

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standard of excellence that all of our children would be expected to meet." His agreement with Goodling, he said, still leaves the possibility that students' performances "in reading and math can actually be measured and be made meaningful in terms of what every child in America should know."

Clinton was believed to be willing to take less than he had hoped to gain from

a confrontation with Congress because it could be seen as a trade-off he wanted from Congress in international trade legislation.

The agreement they reached calls for the National Academy of Sciences to study whether existing tests and commercial tests that are available can be adapted to serve as a national test. The study would be due by late spring. If

none of the tests are determined to be adaptable as a national test, the administration would be free to continue with its own work on a national test.

That provision could spell trouble in gaining congressional acceptance, however, and was believed to be the sticking point on Wednesday, delaying approval by the leadership.■

12. Education Daily

Clinton, House GOP Leaders Push for 'Fast Track' Support

By John E. Yang and John F. Harris
Washington Post Staff Writer

On the eve of a showdown vote over trade, President Clinton sprinted to round up support yesterday through a combination of public pleading and private lobbying carried out in concert with House Republican leaders, who themselves were scrambling to deliver the votes they had earlier promised.

"I think it's a close call," Clinton said in an appearance in the White House briefing room, which aides said he made at the request of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). "Obviously I'm here to pull out all the stops."

Privately, some administration officials were more dire in their assessments, saying the last full day of

lobbying had left them anxious and even pessimistic about Clinton's prospects. Clinton is seeking authority to negotiate free trade pacts on a "fast track" basis, which means Congress must vote up or down without changes.

Clinton's prospects hinged in large measure on a bazaar of bargaining over issues as varied as national school testing and the 2000 census. House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) said the GOP pledge of delivering 150 votes was within reach — if agreements could be found on other issues and Democrats could get 70 votes.

But Democratic supporters said that 45 to 55 votes was more realistic. In the end, passage may hinge on whether the Republicans can, and will, come up with additional votes.

Meanwhile, the Senate version of the bill, which seemed assured of passage, ran into a surprise glitch when Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.) won voice-vote approval, with no Democrats present, of an amendment that would bar the administration from imposing its clean-air standards for four years. Democrats complained they were caught off guard and warned that the amendment could kill the bill. But Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) said he would ask Inhofe to reopen the issue today, and Democrats planned efforts to scuttle the amendment.

Clinton yesterday acknowledged that he had not done as much as he should in building public support by explaining the bill's environmental and labor protections. But he also strongly implied

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that much of his problem was the political fear many in his own party have about crossing organized labor.

"You know we have a lot of opposition, and I think you all know where it's coming from," Clinton said, appearing beside former presidents George Bush, Jimmy Carter and Gerald R. Ford at the dedication of the Bush presidential library in Texas. "I wish we could have a secret vote in the Congress, we'd pass it three or four to one."

On his way to and from Texas, aides said, Clinton made about 30 calls to wavering members. Last night at the White House, he was scheduled to meet with about two dozen Democrats. The schedule called for three one-on-one sessions with individual members, and a meeting with a larger group of moderate or self-described "New Democrats."

That Clinton should still be pleading for support from this wing of his party — the one that historically is far more enthusiastic about free trade — was a sign of his peril, officials said.

History suggests things may not be as bad as they look for Clinton. On previous

trade votes, predictions of defeat were unfounded as support came together in the closing hours. Clinton acknowledged that yesterday, when he said he knew of no reason to postpone a vote: "We find that the deadline concentrates our attention markedly."

Some Democrats suggest that GOP leaders set the target for Democratic votes unreasonably high to either lay the groundwork to blame the president's party for defeat or to increase bargaining leverage with Clinton on other matters.

GOP leaders deny that. "This is not about politics," said DeLay, the man in charge of rounding up GOP votes. "This is about passage of fast track."

"If the president can deliver his [votes], we'll deliver ours and it's done," Gingrich said. "Seventy would be helpful." And if that goal cannot be met? "It's harder," he said.

House Republicans have used the bill as leverage with the administration on a variety of issues that have stalled completion of four spending bills for the fiscal year that began six weeks ago.

Lawmakers have also used the opportunity to get the administration's attention on other matters, most of them dealing with trade and the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement.

U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky has virtually moved into the Capitol over the past few days, meeting with lawmakers to try to work through complaints about the impact of imports on their home-state products — fruits and vegetables in Florida, wheat in the Midwest and wine in California. John Hilley, the White House congressional lobbyist, has met with lawmakers seeking assurances that Clinton will not use the line-item veto on favorite projects or that previously vetoed projects will be funded in the future.

Gingrich and DeLay have been hearing their members' requests for things such as action on long-stalled legislation. The leaders have also been wielding some sticks, threatening GOP lawmakers with denial of committee assignments or places on official congressional trips. ■

8. Los Angeles Times

• 11/07/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-1

2000 Politics Democrats Gathering

4. Washington Times

November 7, 1997

Both sides claim win in testing tiff

GOP touts deal; Democrats fire back

By John Godfrey

The Washington Times

Both sides are claiming victory in the spat over national student testing. Republican leaders say a new deal in the works lets them put the brakes on President Clinton's plan for voluntary testing of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. But testing advocates say a new deal has not shut them out.

"This agreement stops the president from diverting critical money from schools to the Washington bureaucrats," Rep. Tom DeLay, Texas Republican, said after the new accord was announced.

But a press release from the office of Sen. Jeff Bingaman, New Mexico Democrat, proclaims: "Plan Allows National Test to Be Developed and Used."

The near-deal, which is holding up passage of an \$80 billion spending bill for the Education, Labor and Health and Human Services departments, is just one of many issues that must be hammered

out as lawmakers rush to wrap up what they hope will be the last few days of this year's congressional session.

Under the testing agreement, the American Institute of Research and its subcontractors would not be allowed to implement or try out the tests it is developing.

Instead, the National Academy of Sciences would conduct a study due June 15, 1998, on if an equivalency scale can be developed to compare available standardized tests and state assessments.

Whether that is feasible remains to be seen. Some testing experts say it will be difficult, if not impossible, to cobble together the widely used commercial tests with a common link to provide a means of comparing individual student achievement against national and international benchmarks. Others say it can be done.

Other details are being worked out.

Rep. Bill Goodling, Pennsylvania Republican and the deal's chief architect, says no money can be spent on

implementing or testing the exams through Sept. 30, 1998, the end of the current fiscal year. Even then, his committee would have to sign off on such an expenditure.

But Mr. Bingaman said the moratorium on field tests and implementation is until Sept. 1. After that, the Department of Education would get the green light on national testing unless Congress passed and the president signed legislation preventing it from going ahead.

Congressional negotiators are trying to work out such kinks on many spending bills. But they say neither side is giving much ground.

"We are farther now than we were 24 hours ago," Rep. David R. Obey told reporters outside the House chamber yesterday. "Every time we get to the end of a session you will have all kinds of breast beating, tub-thumping and people who believe their own B.S.," the Wisconsin Democrat said. ■

5. The Washington Post

11/07/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A23

New Executive Director for DNC

By Al Kamen

Washington Post Staff Writer

...The Democratic National Committee, facing some rocky times these days, has picked Janet V. Green, chief of staff for the Education

Department's "America Reads Challenge" program, to be executive director. Green, who worked at the DNC in 1986 as head of the direct mail operation, has been at AmeriCorps and worked on the 1996 national convention.

Maureen Garde, former executive director of the Massachusetts Democratic Party who joined the DNC in 1994, moves up to be deputy executive director. ■

6. Christian Science Monitor

November 7, 1997

States Woo Seniors With Savvy Sales Pitches

Marilyn Gardner

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — The courtship is on.

As the ranks of retirees grow, so do efforts by states and cities to woo them as new residents. With increasing sophistication, state agencies are using national advertising, glossy brochures,

videos, and Web sites to put their best image forward, hoping to attract older migrants.

"For a long time, the choice was. 'Well, I'm going to retire and go to

President Clinton apparently giving way on national reading and math tests for children

DAN RATHER: On a hotly contested issue on his domestic agenda -- national reading and math tests for school children -- President Clinton apparently is giving way to the Republican-led Congress, at least for now. CBS's Wyatt Andrews has that story.

WYATT ANDREWS: The same president who said only immediate national tests in the basic skills could find where students are slipping, today gave in to Republican demands for a delay and further study. While the Republicans crowed, "That kills national tests," the White House called it a postponement.

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON I am very hopeful this will be a huge thing, long-term for American education.

ANDREWS: But that was a clear retreat from what had been a hard line. Just two weeks ago, Mr. Clinton threatened to veto part of the U.S. budget if Congress blocked the tests.

CLINTON If there's any attempt in

Congress to kill this effort at national standards and voluntary testing, I will have to veto it.

ANDREWS: What are these tests and what is the problem? The idea is for fourth-grade students to take a national reading test and for eighth-graders to take a national math test. Here is an example: Fourth graders would read a passage about Arabella and Anita, two spiders who went to space. A question: Why did the Skylab crew take the spiders into space? Why exactly was a test like this threatening the United States budget? Because, according to Republicans, states do enough testing now. Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri says, "Any federal test erodes local control of what gets taught."

SENATOR JOHN ASHCROFT: I think it would be unwise to take this decision to Washington D.C. and put it in the bureaucracy, instead of letting moms and dads and local school boards guide what happens in the local schools.

ANDREWS: Senator Ashcroft, and more than 30 other senators, also say the eight-grade math test is full of what they call "fuzzy math." Here is one example: Which of the following is true about 87-percent of ten? Notice the student is asked not for the answer, but to estimate. Is it between nine and 10? Is it less than nine? The Secretary of Education Richard Riley calls those objections nonsense. He insists the whole point of a national test is to make it tough.

RICHARD RILEY, Secretary of Education: It will not be fuzzy in any sense of the word. It will be a high-challenging, high standards test and it is not, in any way, in any description whatsoever, dumbing down.

ANDREWS: Despite the delay, the administration still sees national tests as the only way to expose students who are getting good grades, but not much education. Wyatt Andrews, CBS News Washington. ■

included indications that Republicans want to leave the door open to challenge the tests again.

Negotiators are still haggling over exactly when field tests or pilot tests of the plan could be conducted. The White

reading test for fourth-graders and a math test for eighth-graders.

Clinton wanted tests ready by 1999. But that date was pushed back when negotiators agreed this week to halt field testing and pilot testing while the

testing, says press secretary Julie Green.

To date, seven states and 15 urban school districts have volunteered to participate in national testing. ■

2. Associated Press

11-07 3:39a

Agreement on national tests still being hammered out

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - A preliminary agreement between President Clinton and House Republicans would allow national reading and math tests to go forward, but only after a study of how useful state-sponsored tests are.

The national tests would also be given in the year 2000, one year later than Clinton had wanted.

The outlines of an agreement were disclosed Wednesday after a White House meeting between Clinton and Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the lead House negotiator on education matters. But haggling over details prevented a formal announcement Wednesday.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., acknowledged the compromise was all but final Thursday.

"Despite the firestorm of controversy that erupted over this issue on Capitol Hill," Bingaman said, "the vast majority of Americans always thought this was a good idea. Why should we fumble around in the dark trying to guess what's wrong with our education system when we can simply turn on a light and see?"

The agreement would let Clinton move forward with the top item on his educational agenda, announced early this year in his State of the Union speech. It would also let Congress finish work on an \$80.2 billion spending bill that includes increases for several education programs, medical research and Head Start.

"We believe ... that we at least have an agreement in principle about how our students can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards and

be measured for doing that," Clinton said.

The agreement calls for an independent study into whether results from tests developed by states and commercial publishers can be compared under a uniform standard of achievement.

The study, by the National Academy of Sciences, would also determine whether those tests are as rigorous as federally sponsored tests given to a sampling of students to measure trends.

In the meantime, the government could continue developing its own tests. It would be barred, however, from conducting field trials. Opponents argued the trials would amount to national acceptance of the tests.

If the six-month study finds the existing tests cannot be adapted, the government-developed tests would be

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given.

Bingaman said Americans shouldn't get their hopes up too much about the quality of the tests.

"The data is not very promising on whether these tests are tough enough, or whether scores could be compared between different tests," he said. "That's why we must proceed simultaneously with the development of a national test."

Goodling had opposed the national tests, arguing they duplicate existing measures that have identified which students and schools have troubles. The millions of dollars spent on testing should be spent on training teachers and

other activities, he says.

"We've basically gotten all the information we need," said Goodling, chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee. "We know that we have problems, and we know where the problems are. Ours has to be an effort to try to solve those problems."

The testing proposal met fierce opposition in the House and had a growing core of opponents in the Senate.

But key conservatives, who argued that national tests would lead to a national curriculum written by a national school board, had a mixed reaction.

"Basically this stops national testing

dead in the water for this year," said Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who had led a rebellion against a previous agreement.

The agreement "may represent progress" said Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., but he wants to read the fine print. "Senators should not pack their bags for recess yet," he said. "I do not intend to sacrifice the next generation's education for a few days more of rest."

Part of the agreement puts control of the test development in the National Assessment Governing Board, a bipartisan group created by Congress. The board would become even more bipartisan. ■

3. CBS Evening News

Nov. 5, 1997

President Clinton apparently giving way on national reading and math tests for children

NATIONAL

1. USA Today

November 7, 1997

Deal reached on education testing

By Mary Beth Marklein
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON - National tests could be administered to fourth-graders and eighth-graders as early as 2000 under an agreement reached Thursday by the White House and House Republicans. As expected, the negotiators agreed to review existing state assessments and commercially available standardized tests to determine whether a new test is even necessary.

If a scale can be developed to compare results of tests already used by states, "It could be there wouldn't be any additional need for a national test," says Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa.

But Thursday's announcements included indications that Republicans want to leave the door open to challenge the tests again.

Negotiators are still haggling over exactly when field tests or pilot tests of the plan could be conducted. The White

House says field tests could begin next Sept. 1. But House leaders want pilots pushed back to Oct. 1 next year, the start of the federal government's 1999 fiscal year. Before that, no congressional authorization would be required to pilot or roll out the national tests.

Once field tests are conducted, "you will have invested so much money that you're going to look pretty silly" if you then shelve the tests, Goodling says. "You've lost the battle."

Goodling also said President Clinton's proposal could be revisited during committee hearings next spring.

Goodling, chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee, is a chief opponent of Clinton's call for a national reading test for fourth-graders and a math test for eighth-graders.

Clinton wanted tests ready by 1999. But that date was pushed back when negotiators agreed this week to halt field testing and pilot testing while the

National Academy of Sciences studies tests already in use and report its findings. Goodling said the study also would examine whether existing tests are technically reliable and free of biases.

The agreement reached Thursday also allows the independent National Assessment Governing Board to continue to develop a national test.

That's "critical," says Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., who supports Clinton's proposal. "Current data suggests we shouldn't get our hopes up about the quality of these (existing) tests, or the ease with which we can mesh them into a national framework."

Meanwhile, the Department of Education will continue to encourage states and cities to support national testing, says press secretary Julie Green.

To date, seven states and 15 urban school districts have volunteered to participate in national testing. ■

2. Associated Press

11-07 3:39a

Agreement on national tests still being hammered out

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

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Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., acknowledged the compromise was all but final Thursday.

"Despite the firestorm of controversy that erupted over this issue on Capitol Hill," Bingaman said, "the vast majority of Americans always thought this was a good idea. Why should we fumble around in the dark trying to guess what's wrong with our education system when we can simply turn on a light and see?"

The agreement would let Clinton move forward with the top item on his educational agenda, announced early this year in his State of the Union speech. It would also let Congress finish work on an \$80.2 billion spending bill that includes increases for several education programs, medical research and Head Start.

"We believe ... that we at least have an agreement in principle about how our students can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards and

be measured for doing that," Clinton said.

The agreement calls for an independent study into whether results from tests developed by states and commercial publishers can be compared under a uniform standard of achievement.

The study, by the National Academy of Sciences, would also determine whether those tests are as rigorous as federally sponsored tests given to a sampling of students to measure trends.

In the meantime, the government could continue developing its own tests. It would be barred, however, from conducting field trials. Opponents argued the trials would amount to national acceptance of the tests.

If the six-month study finds the existing tests cannot be adapted, the government-developed tests would be

1. Associated Press

11-05 5:41p

Administration, House Republicans agree on testing

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Standardized reading and math tests will be given to American schoolchildren under a tentative agreement reached Wednesday by President Clinton and congressional Republicans. But the tests may not be the ones Clinton wanted.

Clinton agreed with House Republican leaders on a compromise that would delay test availability until 2000. But he cautioned that more work would be needed to make the deal final. And the chief House negotiator, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said a number of details remained to be worked out.

Clinton said the agreement should accomplish his goal of ensuring that fourth-graders are tested in reading and eighth-graders in math using identifiable national standards.

"My concern was to have some sort of clearly accepted standard of excellence that all our children would be expected to meet in reading and math," Clinton told reporters after meeting at the White House with Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Under the agreement, the government may continue limited development of the voluntary national tests it wanted to give starting in 1999. However, no field trials of the new tests would be allowed.

Instead, the independent National Academy of Sciences would conduct a study to determine whether existing state tests and widely used commercial tests can be adapted and compared for the same

purpose.

Clinton said that should ease Goodling's concern that the tests would needlessly duplicate existing measures that have identified which students and schools have troubles. The millions of dollars spent on testing should be spent on training teachers and other activities, he says.

"We've basically gotten all the information we need," Goodling said. "We know that we have problems, and we know where the problems are. Ours has to be an effort to try to solve those problems."

The administration says there are no assurances that state standards are as rigorous as the proposed national ones. Also, many of the existing commercial tests rate students against a moving average score instead of a fixed standard.

The study should take six months. It would have to be complete before the administration could implement its tests if existing ones cannot be adapted. But no congressional authority would be needed.

The testing proposal, the lead item on Clinton's education agenda, met fierce opposition in the House and had a growing core of opponents in the Senate.

But key conservatives, who argued that national tests would lead to a national curriculum written by a national school board, had a mixed reaction.

"Basically this stops national testing dead in the water for this year," said Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who had led a rebellion against a previous agreement.

The agreement "may represent progress" said Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., but he wants to read the fine print.

"Senators should not pack their bags for recess yet," he said. "I do not intend to sacrifice the next generation's education for a few days more of rest."

The black and Hispanic caucuses in the House opposed the tests on grounds they could be used to discriminate. Goodling said the issue of bias would be addressed in the National Academy of Sciences review of individual tests.

Part of the agreement puts control of the test development in the National Assessment Governing Board, a bipartisan group created by Congress.

Senate Democrats were cautious but supportive. Many of the elements were proposed by Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., an administration ally on testing. Bingaman said the deal should satisfy everyone as long as the study is not used to delay or obstruct the voluntary tests.

"If all sides stick to this compromise, it will be a tremendous victory for parents, teachers, students and all those who care about the quality of education in this country," he said.

An agreement, if accepted on the Hill, removes the only obstacle to passing an \$80.2 billion spending bill for the Education, Labor and Health and Human Services departments.

More than a month late, the bill includes spending increases for medical research, education aid, including Pell Grants for college students and Head Start.

Clinton was eager to deal, Republican aides said, as he tried to get support for legislation that would enhance his power to negotiate free-trade agreements. ■

4. Associated Press

11-06 8:35a

Agreement on national tests still being hammered out

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - A preliminary agreement between President Clinton and House Republicans would allow national reading and math tests to go forward, but only after a study of how useful state-sponsored tests are.

The national tests would also be given in the year 2000, one year later than Clinton had wanted.

The outlines of an agreement were disclosed Wednesday after a White House meeting between Clinton and Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the lead House negotiator on education matters. But haggling over details prevented a formal announcement, which could come today.

The agreement would let Clinton move forward with the top item on his educational agenda, announced early this year in his State of the Union speech. It would also let Congress finish work on an \$80.2 billion spending bill that includes increases for several education programs, medical research and Head Start.

"We believe ... that we at least have an agreement in principle about how our students can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards and be measured for doing that," Clinton said.

The agreement calls for an independent study into whether results from tests developed by states and commercial publishers can be compared under a uniform standard of achievement.

The study, by the National Academy of Sciences, would also determine whether those tests are as rigorous as federally sponsored tests given to a sampling of students to measure trends.

In the meantime, the government could continue developing its own tests. It would be barred, however, from conducting field trials. Opponents argued the trials would amount to national acceptance of the tests.

If the six-month study finds the existing tests cannot be adapted, the government-developed tests would be given.

"The data is not very promising on whether these tests are tough enough, or whether scores could be compared between different tests," said Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., a national testing advocate. "That's why we must proceed simultaneously with the development of a national test."

Goodling had opposed the national tests, arguing they duplicate existing measures that have identified which students and schools have troubles. The millions of dollars spent on testing should

be spent on training teachers and other activities, he says.

"We've basically gotten all the information we need," said Goodling, chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee. "We know that we have problems, and we know where the problems are. Ours has to be an effort to try to solve those problems."

The testing proposal met fierce opposition in the House and had a growing core of opponents in the Senate.

But key conservatives, who argued that national tests would lead to a national curriculum written by a national school board, had a mixed reaction.

"Basically this stops national testing dead in the water for this year," said Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who had led a rebellion against a previous agreement.

The agreement "may represent progress" said Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., but he wants to read the fine print. "Senators should not pack their bags for recess yet," he said. "I do not intend to sacrifice the next generation's education for a few days more of rest."

Part of the agreement puts control of the test development in the National Assessment Governing Board, a bipartisan group created by Congress. The board would become even more bipartisan. ■

Compromise Reached on Testing Plan

White House, Hill Leaders Close to Resolving Other Budget Issues

By Eric Pianin and Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writers

The White House and congressional leaders yesterday broke a prolonged deadlock over President Clinton's proposal for national school testing and appeared close to deals on a handful of other remaining issues — raising prospects that Congress will adjourn this weekend for the remainder of the year.

Disputes over school testing, the use of statistical sampling in conducting the 2000 census, abortion funding for international planning programs and a Republican plan to grant school vouchers to District of Columbia parents have derailed final action on four remaining spending bills for the

fiscal year that began Oct. 1. For the most part, the emerging deals involve interim measures that put off sharper confrontations until next year or beyond.

The compromises reflect Congress's eagerness to finish its business for the year and the White House's need to ensure staunch GOP support for its effort to win a crucial trade vote Friday.

"We're not passing 'fast track' in a legislative vacuum," said House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), referring to Clinton's request for enhanced negotiating authority on trade agreements. "The reality of the legislative process puts us in certainly a better negotiating position. The administration is moving more to us than we are to them."

Prospects for adjournment abruptly gathered steam yesterday, after Clinton and Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, reached a tentative compromise at the White House over school testing — one that would enable both sides to claim a partial victory.

Goodling said both sides were "very close" last night to finalizing details. Under the latest plan, Republicans would allow the Clinton administration to keep developing a national test — they had previously wanted all work on it stopped — but won concessions on when and how such a test could be administered to students.

Clinton wanted the tests to begin in

1999; that may not happen now until 2000, and it may not be the kind of test the president has envisioned.

That core issue now will not be resolved apparently until the National Academy of Sciences, a nonpartisan group, studies whether the tests that many states use to judge student performance can be linked into a rough national standard for subjects such as reading and math. The academy's study must be completed by June.

Clinton said he believes the compromise will preserve his primary goal in calling for national testing. "My concern was to have some sort of clearly accepted standard of excellence that all our children would be expected to meet in reading and math," he told reporters after meeting with Goodling.

The national school testing idea is controversial because it would enlarge the federal government's role in schools, a move many conservatives view with alarm. Clinton's proposal also has been criticized by black and Hispanic members in Congress who fear the tests will stigmatize poor minority students who attend schools without the resources to prepare for them. The controversy has held up passage of the \$280 billion Labor-Health and Human

Services-Education appropriations bill, the largest single domestic spending measure.

Meanwhile, Republican congressional leaders and aides said they were close to a compromise over the conduct of the census, a politically charged issue that could have a profound impact on the future political makeup of the House.

Republicans have opposed the administration's planned use of statistical sampling to supplement traditional face-to-face head counts, fearing that it could be manipulated to produce more House districts dominated by racial minorities, who tend to vote for Democrats. As part of the emerging compromise, the government could pursue a dual track — doing some limited sampling along with the traditional techniques — with a final decision on nationwide sampling put off until March 1999. This would give Republicans time to challenge the constitutionality of sampling in court.

House and Senate Republicans and Democrats continue to struggle to resolve their differences over international family planning funding — a perennial controversy in passing the foreign operations spending bill. But House Republicans have acknowledged defeat in

their effort to enact school vouchers this year. They tacked the plan onto the D.C. appropriations bill, but Clinton has vowed to veto the bill. Once that happens, Republicans say, they will strip the voucher plan from the bill and send it back to the White House for the president's signature.

Passage of the D.C. spending bill was further complicated by differences over a proposal that would forestall deportation of Central Americans who fled to the United States to avoid persecution at home. The administration is seeking to alter the measure to include Haitians.

Also yesterday, Republicans picked up a vote for fast track when Rep. Vito Fossella (R-N.Y.) was sworn in, less than 24 hours after he won a special election in New York.

Asked his position on fast track, Fossella sounded inclined to vote for it. "Conceptually, I support the idea, but I haven't seen the legislation yet," he said in an interview. But Rep. John Linder (Ga.), head of the GOP House campaign committee, said, "I don't know if he'd have been sworn in if he was a 'no' on fast track."

writers John E. Yang and Helen Dewar contributed to this report. ■

6. USA Today

November 6, 1997

Deal may keep national school tests alive Comprise would save Clinton plan but delay it

By Tamara Henry
and Bill Nichols
USA TODAY

Washington - The White House and congressional Republicans were close to a compromise Wednesday that would salvage, but delay, President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

The deal, on one of Clinton's most prized domestic proposals of this congressional session, would allow the federal government to move ahead with developing national tests.

But the tests would be delayed until at least 2000. And the National Academy of Sciences would conduct a study to determine whether existing state tests and widely used commercial tests can be adapted and compared for the same purpose.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., who met with President Clinton throughout the day Wednesday, said he and Clinton "agree ... using existing state-administered tests (is) the best way to assess our children's academic performance.

Goodling said "a number of details" had to be worked out, but that the plan could be announced today.

At the White House, Clinton told reporters, "We at least have an agreement in principle about how our students can master the basics and achieve higher academic standards...without undermining the efforts that are now going on in states."

Clinton's initial proposal drew heated opposition both from conservatives who saw the tests as federal intrusions on the tradition of local control of education, and from black and Hispanic leaders worried that the tests would discriminate against racial and ethnic minorities.

Details of the tentative agreement show that:

- o Development of the tests would be done by an independent board, not the U.S. Department of Education as originally planned.

- o For six months, the independent National Academy of Sciences would study the available state and commercial tests to see if they have rigorous standards contained in existing federal exams now given to a national sample of students.

The academy also would decide which existing tests could be compared to yield results based on a uniform, national standard.

- o During the academy study, there would be a prohibition on any national tests. But administration of the tests. But administration of the tests would be allowed once the academy study is completed.■

9. The Wall Street Journal

11/06/97

National Testing Fight Shifts to Raising Medical Research, Education Funding

By David Rogers

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — President Clinton and congressional Republicans each took a step back from their fight over national testing of schoolchildren and agreed to work together toward enactment of a \$268 billion bill promising landmark funding increases for medical research and education.

Mr. Clinton met yesterday morning with House Education Committee Chairman William Goodling (R., Pa.), and the two sides later described an agreement "in principle" that would put off the most-contentious issues until next year. The practical result is that the president could have to delay any full-scale testing until 2000, but in turn, the GOP relaxed the restrictions put on the development of exams in the interim.

Republicans won the promise of a National Academy of Sciences study of alternative means to measure the math and reading progress nationally of public-school students. But once this study is completed, possibly as early as June, the administration expects to be free next fall to begin pilot-testing the proposed exams it wants.

The arrangement gives each side a face-saving way to back away from the veto confrontation. But unless some resolution is reached in the interim, the White House and GOP could be back in

the same fight next summer, when Congress will be debating another cycle of spending bills to fund the Education Department through 1999.

This timetable is clearly part of Mr. Goodling's thinking, but at this stage, both the GOP leadership and White House are eager to put the issue aside. Mr. Clinton can't afford to be at open war with House Republicans, when he needs their support for a fast-track trade authority bill due to come to a vote tomorrow. And Speaker Newt Gingrich (R., Ga.) is just as eager to clear the way to send his restless conservatives home for the year.

The underlying \$268 billion bill, covering the departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, has been a major roadblock until now. But if the testing agreement survives, the White House said last night that it is "fair to assume" Mr. Clinton would drop his veto threat and sign the measure into law.

On a second front, House-Senate negotiators hope to reach an agreement today on a \$31 billion-plus budget for the departments of Commerce, Justice and State. The Legal Services Corp. is expected to survive with funding near its current \$283 million level, and within the Commerce Department, tentative agreements provide about \$192 million for industry-government partnerships under the president's advanced-technology program.

Negotiators said last night they have also agreed to deny an amendment sought by NextWave Telecom Inc. to ease the terms under which it is obliged to pay \$4.2 billion for wireless communications licenses it won in a government auction last year.

The San Diego-based company had wanted payments of all interest and principal deferred for five years, after which it will have five years to pay all of its debt. The measure would have also applied to other wireless carriers that bid a total of \$10.2 billion in last year's so-called C-block auction.

Some bidders have said they now can't pay for the licenses, which would be used to provide a new type of cellular-phone service. But this argument has gotten little sympathy from major competitors such as Sprint Corp. and BellSouth Corp., and negotiators were leery of jumping into such a fight at this stage in the legislative process.

The same bill funds the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and in a second business-related fight, high-tech employers from California and New England were expected to win rule changes to help foreign-born workers whose legal status is jeopardized by delays in the processing of permanent visas.

Bryan Gruley contributed to this article. ■

Latest Testing Compromise Appears Doomed

By David J. Hoff
Washington

After eight days of intense negotiations, President Clinton's national testing proposal last week was no closer to being launched—or discarded.

Last week, House and Senate leaders brokered a deal acceptable to enough Democrats to lead them to believe they could push it through Congress and send it to Mr. Clinton. But, by Friday morning, opposition by conservative Republicans grew so intense that the House GOP met to discuss an alternative written by testing's most outspoken foe, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa.

Neither the original compromise nor the last-minute Republican plan, however, is likely to gain the support of the Clinton administration or its Democratic supporters in the Senate.

In the end, the plan to administer tests to 4th graders in reading and 8th graders in mathematics remains in limbo until at least the end of this week. The Nov. 7 deadline for finishing work on testing and the education budget, however, may be pushed back again.

"Both sides want to be guaranteed a win," Rep. David R. Obey, D-Wis., said last Thursday morning. The administration wants the assurance that testing will start in the spring of 1999 while conservatives want it killed with no hope of resurrection.

No Movement

At the end of last week, neither side appeared willing to budge.

Throughout the week, GOP leaders met with the senior members of the House and Senate appropriations committees to broker a testing deal. The appropriators are at the center of the debate because both chambers added testing amendments to annual spending bills for education and other social programs.

The House bill would ban all work on

the testing program, but the Senate legislation would allow test development to continue under the supervision of the National Assessment Governing Board, an existing independent, nonpartisan panel.

The House amendment drew 295 supporters, including many urban liberals, and the Senate's attracted 42 Republicans and 45 Democrats. But 37 of those Senate Republicans have since retreated from their vote and now say they support the House amendment.

The first testing compromise unveiled last week, which Mr. Obey helped negotiate, would have let the assessment board develop the tests, but would have prohibited it from administering them to students without explicit authorization from Congress.

The deal proved to be unacceptable to hard-liners on both sides.

Conservatives objected because the plan would delay a definitive decision on the testing plan's fate for at least a year and allow \$16 million to be spent on the effort in the meantime.

"This becomes more of an issue of when, rather than asking the question whether there will be national testing," Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., said at the House-Senate committee meeting where the compromise was unveiled. "This is like telling them to ... lock and load, just don't fire until we say so."

The administration said it wants the issue resolved so it won't have to come back and lobby Congress, especially when Mr. Goodling, the chairman of the House education committee, is leading the campaign against the tests.

"We can't accept a provision that creates such an obvious hurdle," said Lawrence Haas, a spokesman for the president's Office of Management and Budget.

By last Thursday afternoon, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., had recruited 34

Senate Democrats to oppose the compromise. That group, which supports Mr. Clinton's position, would be enough to block an override of a presidential veto of the bill.

Playing to the Middle

The crafters of the original compromise had hoped to rely on moderates to support them to ensure the plan within underlying spending bill could work its way through Congress and present President Clinton with the decision of whether to sign it.

"We're taking the middle road here," Rep. Robert L. Livingston, R-La., the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said at the Oct. 30 session where conferees approved the annual bill to pay for education, labor, and welfare programs. "I hope the middle road is sufficient to get the votes to pass both houses of Congress."

They also hoped that their generosity toward some of the president's favorite education programs would encourage him to support the overall bill, despite his reservations about testing.

But GOP opposition to the testing language grew so intense that by Friday morning Republicans met to consider an alternative.

The new plan, backed by Mr. Goodling, would ban test development unless three-fourths of the nation's governors signed letters saying they wanted the federal government to proceed. So far, only seven states have promised to participate in Mr. Clinton's testing plan.

Mr. Goodling's plan also would require the National Academy of Sciences to review all existing commercial tests to determine if they could create "an equivalency scale" to compare students' scores on them. While that may have satisfied some of testing's GOP critics, it only strengthened Sen. Bingaman's resolve.

"That's totally unacceptable," said Ken Berlack, a spokesman for the New Mexico Democrat. "This shouldn't be something that's conditional."

The administration sounded skeptical but declined to comment directly on Mr. Goodling's latest proposal.

"Our priority remains the same: to be able to go forward with testing now," said Julie Green, the press secretary for Secretary of Education Richard W.

Riley.

Testing aside, the spending bill has much of what President Clinton wants from it. It abandons a proposal by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., that would convert most K-12 programs into a block grant—a provision strongly opposed by Mr. Clinton and congressional Democrats.

The bill also includes \$210 million for Mr. Clinton's initiative to improve reading

instruction for young children.

Special education spending would rise \$739 million, to \$4.5 billion, for the budget year that began Oct. 1, and impact-aid grants would jump \$78 million, to \$808 million.

But Title I program grants for districts with high proportions of needy students, would stay at \$7.4 billion, their fiscal 1997 level. ■

13. Baltimore Sun

November 5, 1997

Tests should not be only focus

Standards: President Clinton's proposal for national reading and math evaluations misses the need for schools' improvement.

By Mike Bowler
SUN STAFF

A DEBATE OVER President Clinton's proposed voluntary national testing in reading and math is holding up an \$80 million appropriations bill in Congress.

What's behind it is this: Conservatives in Congress and academia are worried that national testing, even if it is voluntary, would lead eventually to a federal school board that could impose a national curriculum on 15,000 school districts.

Clinton and his Education Department are well along in planning for the tests of reading in the fourth grade and of math in the eighth. So far, there's no indication that anyone wants to impose a federal curriculum, but

no one has attempted a national testing program before, and nerves are frayed.

What the conservatives fear is the spread of "foolish ideas," in the words of former National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman Lynne V. Cheney. She's talking about "whole-language" reading instruction and its first cousin in mathematics.

The conservatives call the math version "fuzzy math" or "whole math." They say it substitutes "feel-good math" for the "basics." Whole math appears to

have taken root in California, not coincidentally the same garden where whole language flourished in the early '90s.

Whole language is a philosophy more than it is a program, holding that reading is only a part of what students need to know to be proficient in the language arts.

The problem is the failure to distinguish between curriculum and standards. It's through the curriculum — what is taught and how it's taught — that students learn and grow to meet (or not to meet) standards.

In the "Reading by 9" series in The Sun, reporters found a wide variety of curricula, even within

the same school, and the nation has only patchwork standards. But standards can be established and tested on a state and national basis. All but die-hard conservatives recognize this, and some have been saying it all along — even lobbying for it.

One of these is Christopher T. Cross, former president of Maryland's State Board of Education and president of the Council for Basic Education. Cross and state school Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick were the first state-level education leaders in the nation to endorse Clinton's call for national testing.

"My support for the proposal is based on the very simple premise that parents and taxpayers have a right to know how their children and schools are doing when compared with the nation as a whole," says Cross.

Cross says it's reasonable and possible to insulate the policy-makers on national testing from partisan politics. He also says it's reasonable and possible for Congress to be involved with the decision to create voluntary national tests.

He may be naive on both counts.

A congressional compromise on the matter fell apart late last week. Forged by the House-Senate appropriations conference committee, the pact would have allowed the Clinton administration to continue developing the tests and field-testing them. But it would have given Congress the right to review the tests and decide whether to permit them to be administered.

One thing is certain: No test ever improved a school on its own. The Clinton proposal, loaded as it is with partisan politics, should be allowed to fly if boosting achievement in reading and math is its only goal.

Testing business creates minor industry

Testing is big business. Millions of

dollars have been committed to the national tests that might never get off the ground, and a minor industry of consultants, contractors and subcontractors has sprouted, much of it inside the Washington Beltway.

Several former Maryland state testing officials are involved. Paul Williams, Gary Phillips, Steven Ferrara and Mary Crovo Clark all held major jobs in the state Department of Education in the '80s

and early '90s, and all are in key assessment jobs at the federal level.

Cross' Council for Basic Education also has a contract to coordinate the national advisory committee for the testing program.

Latin Day conference attracts 1,300 students

More than 1,300 Maryland students attended the annual Latin Day conference yesterday at the University of Maryland,

College Park.

Because it was Election Day — at least in some parts of Maryland and the nation — the conferees discussed Julius Caesar as politician.

Judith Hallett, chairwoman of College Park's classics department, said Latin lives and thrives. It has the third-highest enrollment among languages in Maryland high schools, Hallett said. ■

14. Baltimore Sun

November 5, 1997

Court aids student loan prosecutions

Prosecutors need only prove knowledge of misuse

door voucher.

The House voted 228-191 against H.E.L.P. Scholarships, which would have let states use Title VI federal funds for vouchers to low-income parents in poverty areas. Currently, states use the

Also being debated late Tuesday was charter-school legislation, which sets up a formula for distributing \$100 million to help create the innovative public schools that are free from many state and federal regulations.

schools.

Also unresolved is Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. ■

6. The Wall Street Journal

11/05/97 Page A1

'Standards' Math Is Creating a Big Division In Education Circles

It Favors Strategic Thinking, And a Good Guess Is OK, But Critics Call It Fuzzy

By June Kronholz
Staff Reporter
of The Wall Street Journal

Would it be so awful if schoolchildren didn't learn long division?

Why teach square roots if calculators can compute them in an instant?

Should math teachers give students points for trying?

What in the world are the math uses of the characters and / ?

More to the point, what is going on in math class, and why has something as arcane as conic sections — the geometry of curves and circles — turned into a rancorous political issue?

Eight years ago, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the association of grade-school math teachers, published a list of standards aimed at raising the math skills of U.S. schoolchildren. "The standards are 50 statements saying what we think kids ought to learn," says Thomas Romberg, a math professor at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and chairman of the standards panel.

That sounds straightforward enough. But while Americans are united in dismay over the quality of schools, they are divided over how to fix them, and standards-based math has become a symbol to its opponents of all that is wrong with U.S. education: undisciplined, dumbed down and — the ultimate insult — fuzzy. It allows for a fair amount of "bumbling to an answer," says Michael McKeown, a San Diego molecular biologist and father of three high-school-age kids.

It is also swamping some school districts in acrimony. Traditionalists accuse standards proponents of plots to ruin education; proponents label traditionalists "math Nazis."

"I don't understand the meanness," says Kate Dubost, a high-school teacher of standards math in Atascadero, Calif., where the superintendent and curriculum director took early retirement over a standards uproar. "We're talking about math."

The math council's standards propose, among other things, that students learn to work in teams, become comfortable with calculators and computers, explain their answers, learn mapping and graphing, probability and statistics, and spend more time solving multistep problems. Something has to be cut to make room for all this, so the standards suggest that elementary teachers devote less time to activities such as work sheets, long division and rote practice, while high-school teachers reduce emphasis on such things as conic sections, two-column proofs and paper-and-pencil trigonometry solutions.

Yet, in an economy increasingly dependent on high technology, and where millions of people can't make a dollar's change, how and what is taught in math class isn't an idle debate. The computer revolution has sparked an explosion in math discovery, and with that explosion, vast new uses for math-stock-market derivatives, airline scheduling, production planning and pricing.

At the same time, factories are asking

for more brain and less brawn. "The people on the assembly line at Ford and Corning Glass are having to manage their own processes, and that requires mathematical thinking," says Lynn Steen, a math professor at St. Olufs College in St. Olufs, Minn.

But the math of the past stressed memorizing formulas over solving problems and was geared toward college-bound students instead of being something everyone needs to get a job, says Margaret Cozzens, who is director of school math and science programs at the National Science Foundation. "Kids were left by the wayside because they weren't good at memorization."

The math council says it circulated 30,000 copies of the draft standards before they were published. There wasn't a peep. State school boards began adopting the standards; publishers wrote new texts and workbooks to meet the standards. Perhaps half the U.S. high schools and 10% of the elementary schools now teach the standards math, Mr. Steen says.

Critics of the standards — math professors, teachers and parents; the same sort of people who favor the standards — say it took them until the new math books worked their way into the curriculum before they concluded the standards didn't add up. In Atascadero, Madalyn McDaniel, a mother of two who always liked math herself, took up residence in Kate Dubost's standards-based sophomore-math class during a section on the Pythagorean theorem. "There was no emphasis on

right answers," she says. "In an effort to improve self-esteem, everyone's solution was discussed and valued equally."

Mrs. McDaniel became such a vocal irritant that the school passed new rules monitoring parental visits. Undeterred, she formed a parents' committee that forced Atascadero to reintroduce traditional math — and split the central California community in the process. Babette DeCou, a standards proponent with three children in Atascadero schools, says math traditionalists even accused her of taking money from a publisher to promote standards math. "There was a lot of 'you people,' as in 'you people got us into a horrible mess,'" she says with a sigh.

Opponents of standards math complain that the new books promote a "guess-and-check" approach to answers (make a guess, see if it is right, make another guess, getting any closer?) instead of pencil-and-paper solutions. They charge that teachers overdo teamwork, and as a result, weak or lazy students slide by on a strong student's performance. "When I was in school, we called that cheating," Mrs. McDaniel says.

Standards opponents contend the new teaching makes children dependent on manipulatives, which are piles of blocks or toys that they separate into groups, instead of learning to add and subtract on paper or in their heads. They are angered that some publishers issue only workbooks or sheaves of papers to elementary-school youngsters. "There ought to be a book that a kid takes home that explains how to do things," says Paul Clopton, a San Diego statistician and father of two school-age children. And they are irate over a teaching philosophy called constructivism that says children learn better if they construct something on their own — use a string to measure a circle and "discover" that the circumference is 3.14 times greater than the diameter, for example — rather than hearing it from a teacher. That is time-consuming, and worse, says Frank Allen, a Chicago math teacher for 46 years and a former president of the math council, "every generation begins not where the other left off; it starts all over again."

But nothing outrages opponents of standards math so much as something that often isn't there: the multiplication table. Eric Robinson, a math professor at Ithaca College in Ithaca, N.Y., is reviewing standards-based math books

for the National Science Foundation and pauses when asked if they reprint the multiplication table. No, he allows, but then he adds quickly: "Partly I want to deny it and partly I want to celebrate it." Children learn multiplication by practice, not memory, he says; they learn math strategies ("What's the best way to get to the answer?") instead of algorithms.

In MathLand, a math series produced by Creative Publications, a unit of Tribune Co., fourth graders are taught 12×13 this way: Imagine "seeing" 12 groups of 10, then add on $12 + 12 + 12$. That's one of "several strategies" to get the answer, says Dennis Estrada, MathLand's math consultant; the multiplication that adults were taught (actually, an algorithm in which you multiply 12 by 3, move one column to the left, multiply 12 by 1, add the two sums) is another strategy, he says.

The missing multiplication table, and the idea that an algorithm is just another strategy, mystifies parents raised on reciting $6 \times 6 = 36$. (The highly regarded Everyday Mathematics series, developed at the University of Chicago and published by Everyday Learning Corp., also a unit of Tribune, prints a variation of the multiplication table, but substitutes "x" with "*" and uses "/" for division since computer keyboards don't have the traditional division icon.)

But it appalls such math teachers as the University of Wisconsin's Richard Askey, who see it as evidence of education lite. "Technical skills are downplayed in favor of calculators and computers, and proof is a dirty word," he says in exasperation. Gayle Cloud, a Riverside, Calif., mother of six, compares it to "digging a garden with your hands: There are no tools."

The math-standards handbook probably doesn't help matters. In phrases that beg to be parodied, the math council talks of the need for children to "gain mathematical power," and suggests that "to decorate a ceramic pot with a regular pattern is doing mathematics." Everyday Mathematics, which says it is used in 75,000 classrooms, assigns card and dice games as occasional homework, and sprinkles its workbooks with stray facts like, "The average lifespan of a goldfish is about 14 years." That's getting children to think about numbers, says Steve Mico, the director of development.

MathLand, which is widely used in California and in the Department of Defense overseas schools, has even sixth graders use piles of toys to figure

fractions, and asks fourth graders this question: "Which is greater, one-half of a pear or one-third of an orange?" (The answer, which Mr. Estrada says encourages conceptual thinking, is: "It depends on how big they were before you cut them.")

Critics of the standards dubbed them fuzzy math, or whole math — a reference to whole-language reading, an idea that children can learn words by seeing them in use rather than by sounding them out (which has created a controversy in its own right). Or, even more disparaging, the new-new math, a shot at new math, the 1960s attempt at math overhaul that failed dismally. "There are no such things as those things," says a spokesman for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Still, the names have stuck.

With feelings mounting, a group of San Diego parents last year formed a group called Mathematically Correct and put up a World Wide Web site to spread their displeasure over the standards and the new math books. Some editorial pages also took up the cry, but it was President Clinton who turned the math standards into a political issue earlier this year by proposing a national math test for eighth graders. The idea roiled conservatives, who see education as a purely local matter and view national testing as a foot-in-the-door to a national curriculum.

But even many people who favor national testing are opposed to the Clinton test because, as it was proposed by the president, it would conform to the math council's standards — including letting students use calculators and giving them credit for trying, even for giving the wrong answer, even for writing "I don't know." At any rate, the test remains mired in Congress: The Senate has endorsed it, the House is opposed.

Meanwhile, the math council seems dismayed that its admonitions to study three-dimensional geometry and explore "relationships . . . among whole numbers, fractions, decimals, integers and rational numbers" should have entered the public discourse. "We've put out recommendations for years, and no one's ever listened," says Mary Lindquist, who teaches math education at Columbus State University in Columbus, Ga.

Council members insist the standards are misunderstood; indeed, the standards don't mention constructivism or guess-and-check, and they don't abolish the multiplication table. "The council

never intended that students shouldn't have to know basic facts," says John Dossey, a math professor at Illinois State University in Normal, and president of the council when the standards were written. Overenthusiastic teachers simply took the standards too far, he says, and traditionalist opponents exaggerated the facts. Still, the math council will revise the standards next summer as part of a review it says it had planned all along.

But California, epicenter of the world's math-based computer industry — and not coincidentally, of opposition to the standards — isn't waiting. Five years after writing the math standards into its state math program, California is writing them out. The state's new program, which must be approved by the legislature, requires that students have a textbook with an index, discourages the use of calculators, and toughens work on basic skills so that first graders will be expected to add and subtract two-digit numbers.

Nevertheless, there are avid supporters of standards math — including Brenda Hammond's 25 second graders at William Tyler Page Elementary in Montgomery County, Md., outside Washington. Mrs. Hammond, who has a doctorate in education and has been teaching for 32 years, studied the standards at summer school on a grant from the National Science Foundation. So on a recent morning, when she introduces her class to fractions, she throws out the old book in favor of the new standards.

The class is pretty typical of American schoolchildren these days: A Sikh boy with a hair knot sits next to a Muslim girl in a veil; three children are Spanish-speaking, one is deaf; a third of them come from families poor enough to qualify them for subsidized lunches. Mrs. Hammond calls the children together on a shag rug and poses a complicated problem about sharing a cake with her fellow teachers, four of whom each want

one-eighth of the cake, and one who wants one quarter. "Will there be any left for me?" she asks as she dispatches the children to tables.

For the next hour, she has them cut colored paper in halves, quarters and eighths; overlay them, and compare sizes. "Which is bigger?" she asks, as the class comes to terms with the idea that while 8 is larger than 4, one-fourth is larger than one-eighth. "Prove it to me," she says, when hands shoot up in answer. "Tell me why you think so. Show me why one-half is less than three-quarters."

With lunchtime approaching, Mrs. Hammond again poses the question about the cake. First, a girl in turquoise tights inches her hand up, then a boy with a sticker pasted to his forehead waggles his arm. Finally, an excited buzz spreads across the room and the students declare: "You still have one-quarter left!"

The class files out to the cafeteria, leaving Mrs. Hammond glowing. "This is exciting," she says. "This is math." ■

7. The Washington Times

November 5, 1997

Schooling U.S. children seen on priority level with defense

Educator seeks child-development focus, teacher screening

By Carol Innerst, page A2

One of the nation's foremost black education reformers wishes the government would prepare for education in the same way it prepares for war.

"Education is your national offense, especially when tied to the economy, in the same way the military is your national defense," argues Dr. James P. Comer, associate dean of the Yale School of Medicine and professor of child psychiatry at Yale Child Study Center.

"The same way they closed medical schools that were a Child Study Center.

"You can't leave it up to chance that some schools and some children will make it and others won't," he says. "The government needs to make certain everybody gets a high quality education."

It is government's responsibility to make sure all public schools have staff prepared to do the job, he says, through its licensure of teachers and institutions inferior, the government ought to close all schools of education that are inferior.

If that creates a shortage (of teachers), that's good. It means they will need to recruit and prepare good people to teach, "he says. "Some people should teach, and some should sell used cars. Schools of education shouldn't take everybody. They should counsel some people out of teaching and into another career before they hurt students.

This is a routine practice in college-level arts programs and is much needed in teacher education programs, he says. If teacher candidates don't have it, they should be told, and above all schools of education, "shouldn't take people who don't like children," he says.

"They've got to select the right people, then give them the experience they need to do the job. We ask teachers to do what we never trained them to do. Many schools of education offer one reading course, yet what teachers do in the first three years of schooling is mostly socialization and reading. Twenty-five percent of teachers never had a child-

development course."

"Schools of education ought to be called schools of child development and education," Dr. Comer says. "When you focus on child development, everything else you do in school can make sense from that base. Whoever stated large high schools didn't know child development. Whoever talks about having children go from class to class in second grade doesn't understand child development."

Dr. Comer is intrigued by a Danish school model that features a single class teacher for children ages 7 to 16, but concedes that aspects of what works in a highly centralized and homogeneous school system wouldn't necessarily work with America's decentralized system and diverse school populations.

Instead he favors creating an "education extension service" to implement reforms. It would be patterned after the Agricultural Extension Service - a federal, regional and state

1. Associated Press

11-05 11:07a

Tentative agreement reached national testing

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton and the chairman of the House committee in charge of education reached a compromise today on national reading and math tests.

The tentative agreement, if accepted on Capitol Hill, would enable Congress to pass a long overdue, \$80.2 billion spending bill that increases support for schools, medical research and Head Start.

Clinton says voluntary, standardized tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are needed because parents have no other way of knowing how their children and schools are doing in the key subjects.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said that under the agreement, an attempt would be made to see if existing tests can be adjusted to give the same kind of individual, standards-based results that Clinton wants.

"We hope to go in that direction," Goodling said outside the White House, where he had met briefly with Clinton. The White House had no immediate comment.

Goodling also said he won a ban on pilot testing of the fourth-grade reading and math tests being developed for the Education Department. He argued that that would be the same as accepting the tests.

Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, said he would withhold more details until later.

Goodling has opposed the tests on grounds that people already know which schools and children are doing poorly, and that states are developing standards-based tests on their own.

"I have 295 people on the Hill who have been solidly behind our efforts," he said. "I owe it to them to review all of this to make sure they're all on board."

Clinton says the voluntary, standardized tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are needed because parents have no other way of knowing how their children and schools are doing in the key subjects.

Goodling has opposed the tests on grounds that people already know which schools and children are doing poorly, and that states are developing standards-based tests on their own.

Opposition to the tests with widespread. Conservatives fear they will lead to more federal control of education and the black and Hispanic caucuses in the House contend they will be used to discriminate against minorities.

Last week, House and Senate negotiators found a bipartisan compromise on the tests but the deal pleased neither opponents, including Goodling, nor the White House, whose Senate allies promised a filibuster.

The agreement would have allowed the administration to develop and give the tests on a trial basis, but would have required Congress to pass a separate bill before the tests could be administered widely in 1999, as planned.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston said late Tuesday he believed any new agreement will resemble the one negotiators settled on last week. "It's a little different, but I'm not sure exactly how," said Livingston, R-La.

Earlier Tuesday, the House rejected on a 228-191 vote a proposal that would use federal school aid to help poor children attend private or religious

schools - key item on the Republican education agenda.

Democrats called the bill an assault on public education and said only a few people would benefit.

Supporters argued that the bill would provide poor people the same choice that wealthier Americans have when they send their children to private school or move to affluent suburbs. The competition, they contended, would improve public education.

Meanwhile, the Senate blocked a GOP bill to give tax breaks to parents who save money for their children's education, including private school tuition.

Senate backers of the "A-plus Education Savings Account" fell four votes short of the 60 needed to force a debate and vote on the bill. It was the second unsuccessful attempt in less than a week. Supporter said they will wait until next year to try again.

The defeats left another avenue this week for Republicans and their few Democratic allies to gain support for federal tuition aid: a spending bill for the District of Columbia.

An amendment may be added to the Senate bill to include money for 2,000 children to get up to \$3,200 in tuition aid each. The House has already passed such a measure.

But Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R-N.C., chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee for the District of Columbia, said Tuesday that if Clinton vetoes the entire bill over vouchers, he would probably get a new bill without such a provision.

"There'd be no point in sending him back the same thing," Faircloth said. ■

the drop in California's reading scores had less to do with the change in instruction than with the growing number of students for whom English is a second language.

"The real story in California is that the state is still doing a bad job of educating minority kids," says Kenneth Goodman, a University of Arizona education professor widely known among educators as the father of whole language in America.

But many California teachers say whole language is the culprit. Even children of college graduates, they note, performed poorly on the 1994 national reading test.

"Our problem with whole language

the declining reading test scores of children in New Zealand, where whole language bloomed. New Zealand children, once the world's best readers, have slipped to sixth place, behind the United States, according to the latest international survey.

Despite this, Joseph found that the state education establishment still resisted a return to phonics.

To overcome it, she called on contacts from her days in the state superintendent's office and began organizing dissatisfied parents and teachers. She gained the support of California's most conservative legislators, agreeing to work with them on phonics as long as they promised not to try to

the state's more than 1,000 school districts sometimes still divert funds for teacher training in phonics to whole-language programs.

So Joseph pursues her crusade from her ranch-style home, her phone and fax machine ringing constantly. This summer, the liberal Democrat was appointed by the Republican governor to the state school board.

"I'd much rather spend time outside in my garden and with my grandchildren, but there's no time for that," Joseph says.

"There are too many children who aren't learning to read — and too many educators who aren't doing what they know is right to fix it."■

COMMENTARY

83. Roll Call

November 3, 1997

Both Parties Pander To Their Extremists On Education Policy

By Morton M. Kondracke

Republicans carry an albatross marked "extremism" that's only getting heavier as the party — pressured by its right wing — moves to kill President Clinton's plan for national education testing.

Clinton and his fellow Democrats deserve as much or more public opprobrium for their opposition to all forms of private school choice, but they have the political advantage of not bearing the extremism albatross.

Ideally, Republicans and Democrats should unite on a plan that would permit both testing and experiments in school choice.

Both parties could reap political rewards by passing measures that would improve the quality of the nation's schools.

Instead, however, the parties are stuck in ideological ruts, with moderates on both sides forced to bend to the demands

of hard-liners.

The conflict could lead Clinton to veto the entire \$277 billion Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, which would be an extreme act but one that he'd probably get away with politically.

(I confess to a conflict of interest here. The Labor-HHS bill contains a significant increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health and Parkinson's disease research specifically, which I'm personally interested in and which might be eliminated if the bill is vetoed.)

Among Republicans, education policy is so divisive that it momentarily re-ignited calls for the head of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga) until he repudiated a perfectly reasonable compromise on the testing issue.

Ironically, national testing is a Republican idea first advanced by

President Bush's Education Secretary, Lamar Alexander, as a means of giving parents objective measures to use in holding their schools accountable.

Alexander's America 2000 plan might have created up to 15 national tests for fourth, eighth, and 12th graders in English, math, history, geography, and science, which states would have been free to administer to their students.

Democrats so adamantly opposed national testing, however, that the plan went nowhere until Clinton revived the idea this year and made it the keystone of his education policy.

Clinton plans just two national tests, for reading in the fourth grade and math in the eighth, but now it's the Republicans who are going to war over it.

Rep. William Goodling (R-Pa), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, represents one

strain of GOP opposition, not too different from that of the Democrats in 1991.

A former school superintendent, he echoes the education establishment — including the teachers unions — in opposing more testing when the resources could be used to upgrade classroom teaching.

Advocates of national testing argue, however, that no reliable national measure of student achievement exists and that private tests used by various states are not comparable.

Yet another strain of GOP opposition, taken up with a vengeance by hard-line conservatives, is based on the fear that national testing will lead to a national curriculum "dictated" by the Department of Education.

Proponents of the tests reply that math and reading standards ought to be uniformly high across the country, but to make sure the federal government isn't "dictating" anything, authority over the tests has been vested in an independent board.

Conservatives are still opposed,

however, and so is Goodling, who has the added incentive, according to colleagues, of wanting to ward off a Republican primary challenge in Pennsylvania.

Rep. David Obey (D-Wis), ranking member on the House Appropriations Committee, came up with a reasonable compromise that would let the Administration go ahead with test planning but give Goodling the power to stop its implementation, and the deal seemed to have the blessing of House and Senate GOP leaders last week. Obey said that if Clinton vetoed the deal, he'd lead an override effort.

The deal fell apart, however, when Goodling and hard-line conservatives opposed it and GOP leaders walked away from it, causing House Appropriations Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La) to storm out of a leadership meeting and leading other Republicans to call for Gingrich's scalp for even considering a deal.

On the Democratic side, meanwhile, liberals oppose public school choice — "charter schools" — so much that their

leading Democratic advocate, Rep. Tim Roemer (Ind), was denied floor time to argue for them.

And three GOP proposals to encourage private school choice — one through the tax system, another by the states, and a third in the District of Columbia — face near-total Democratic opposition and presidential vetoes, despite the fact that many poor children are forced to attend unsafe and failing public schools.

Polls indicate that the public is divided on both national testing and private school choice. Forty-nine percent support testing, according to the NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, and 47 percent oppose it. Forty-five percent favor giving parents vouchers to pay for private schools and 50 percent oppose it, although minority parents overwhelmingly support vouchers.

Polls indicate huge support, though, for quality education. But instead of giving it to the public, both parties are pandering to their extremes. In this equation, Republicans will suffer, but so will schoolchildren.■

84. Seattle Times

November 3, 1997

The Issaquah pole-burning and other teenage madness

by James Vesely

Seattle Times editorial writer

THE ferocity of the reaction to the Issaquah story pole burning suggests that intolerance is acceptable if it's directed at a politically incorrect act.

Did a group of Issaquah High School athletes deliberately despoil a totemic symbol of Native Americans and the long, prehistoric heritage of the Snoqualmie tribe in what is now Issaquah?

Naw.

For those not following the dramas of Eastside life, the fact are these: Before a game against rival Sammamish High, and their team, the Totems, some members of the Issaquah High football team stole a carved pole titled "Man-Who-Eats-Lots-Of-Fish" from a park and burned it as part of a pep rally.

That's a despicable act of vandalism, as the students have affirmed. But is it more than that, the surfacing of racism in the form of a hate crime? I can't believe that. Those who suggest that hate against

other people is below the surface of this want us to believe that we live in an inherently racist society and this is more proof.

I buy the argument that racism lives and can be found easily, but I don't think it's there slumbering in us like a bad virus, waiting to infect a high-school prank.

One woman who called me about the incident said the reaction to the high-school football team was way overboard. "They've spit on my son," she said, "and thrown things at the car and he's not even one of the players that did this." She blamed the media and canceled her subscription to The Times.

We are in such a tangle over the totems of our lives that it's easy to see how the burning of a story pole becomes symbolic of something else. The Issaquah High School football team is called the Indians — just like those in Cleveland. The Cleveland Indians have such a cartoonish figure of a Native American as their symbol, The Times has

refused to portray it, since it slovenly depicts a race of people. The Sammamish High team is the Totems, a name that is a bit less on the edge but you have to admit, it does appropriate a symbol of a high artistic tradition to a game of aggression.

So far, in the dispute that has swirled around Issaquah High, the reaction to an act of vandalism that rates somewhere in the middle on the scale of high-school pranks has been public bashing.

About 100 people showed up at the Issaquah School Board meeting 10 days ago to vent about this, including objecting to the very idea that the team should be called the Indians at all. Seven members of the team face possible felony charges, which sounds appropriate to stealing from the park but not to the crime of hate, which I think requires an adult to master.

The kids were bashed pretty badly and worse, accused of something far more insidious than destruction of property. The media has been bashed for making

LATEST NATIONAL TEST PLAN WOULD LEAN ON STATES

Faced with opposition from conservatives, House Republicans are trying to craft yet another compromise on voluntary national testing, a controversial issue delaying action on fiscal 1998 education funding.

A new compromise by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the main foe of President Clinton's testing plan, would allow development of the tests to go forward if, by next September, 75 percent of governors agree. So far, only seven states have signed up for the exams for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

Goodling's new proposal also would require congressional approval before they could be administered, and mandate a study by the National Academy of Sciences on the possibility of comparing

scores on existing state and national tests in a standard way.

A more test-friendly plan approved Thursday by House and Senate appropriations negotiators would allow development of the test to continue, but would also require Congress's okay before they could be given to students. That proposal, however, appeared to be unraveling in the face of opposition from House conservatives and GOP leadership.

"I find it hard to believe that with 295 votes in the House against the development of national tests—a veto proof margin—we would be afraid to stand up for our principles," said Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a vocal conservative critic of the assessments.

A Goodling spokesman warned that

the new proposal was "a moving target," and was constantly evolving—as it was all last week.

Senate Democrats say they have the votes to filibuster the spending bill if it doesn't include testing, and uphold an expected presidential veto if Clinton rejects a bill.

Before the Thursday vote, Goodling wondered, "would the president veto billions of dollars for breast cancer and AIDS research over testing?" Congress's inability to craft something that could pass both the House and Senate and get Clinton's signature is holding up a vote on H.R. 2264, fiscal 1998 funding for not only education, but labor and health programs as well.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Human

Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, threatened on Thursday to back a stopgap spending bill that wouldn't include funding increases if Congress and the president did not compromise on testing.

Congress has already passed a

stop-gap plan to keep funding flowing at fiscal 1997 levels until Nov. 7—more than a month after the start of the new fiscal year.

House and Senate negotiators Thursday agreed on a healthy \$3.4

billion increase to education programs that Congress funds every year (ED, Oct. 31). No further action has been scheduled on the bill until agreement can be reached on testing. —Laureen Lazarovici■

4. Associated Press

Nov. 1, 1997

Lott Opposes National School Tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — Parents seeking the best education for their children want qualified teachers and the chance to pick the best available schools, and Republican lawmakers are eager to help, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott said today.

Lott, delivering the weekly GOP radio address, also criticized the top item on President Clinton's education agenda — national math and reading tests.

Lott, R-Miss., said he and most other parents "do not want agents of the federal government devising those tests, making all students take them, or passing judgments on the results."

"That's why congressional Republicans are resisting President Clinton's plan for national testing. We need to know how the students are learning. We do not need the educational

equivalent of an IRS for the classroom," Lott said.

Clinton has pushed a plan for voluntary national testing for students — reading for fourth-graders, math for eighth-graders. The Senate approved a plan that provides for an independent board to operate the voluntary program.

The House, however, voted against funding Education Department efforts to develop the test.

As congressional negotiators and the White House try to work out a compromise, the battle threatens a 1998 appropriations bill that provides increases for medical research, including AIDS and breast cancer, college student aid, other school aid and Head Start.

Clinton says the tests are needed so parents can see how their children and

schools are doing in two core subjects at two critical times, against a fixed standard. Opponents argue that such tests would lead to a national curriculum and a loss of local control over education.

Lott said Republicans do favor a form of testing: "The very first step in improving our schools is to make sure teachers are qualified to teach."

One way to accomplish that is giving parents the right to pick the schools their children attend, he said. "We want to apply to education the same forces of competition and quality that operate in every other part of the economy."

One such proposal would provide up to \$3,200 in tuition for 2,000 low-income students in the District of Columbia to attend non-public schools. Clinton has threatened a veto. ■

5. The Washington Post

11/02/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A03

Houston's Vote on Affirmative Action May Set National Precedent, Observers Say

By Sue Anne Pressley
Washington Post Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Houston could become the first U.S. city to cast aside its affirmative action program — a decision that has supporters on both sides of the complex issue eagerly watching what happens here.

The ballot question in the nation's fourth-largest city is the first since voters in California decided last year to eliminate race and gender preferences in state contracts, employment and school admissions. That law is being appealed to the Supreme Court. If successful here, other cities and states may be encouraged to launch their own voter initiatives to challenge such programs, according to national organizations involved in the issue.

But many predict the Houston case will be very close. Led by powerful

outgoing Mayor Bob Lanier, defenders of the 13-year-old city program are working hard to convince voters that the set-asides are needed to remedy past discrimination and to create a level playing field for businesses competing for city contracts.

However, Ed Blum, a Houston businessman and activist who is leading the fight to eliminate the program, said "the old way" is "unfair, unsensible, and doesn't achieve what it was designed to achieve."

"The premise of the current affirmative action program in Houston is that all women and all minorities are disadvantaged and need special remedial help to compete and that everyone else is somehow privileged," said Blum, whose group collected 20,000 signatures on a petition to force the initiative. "It is a program that continues to enrich a small

handful of well-connected political insiders who year after year garner millions of dollars of contracts. We believe the government should offer a helping hand based on need and disadvantage."

So far, the issue has seemed to create more excitement outside Houston than in it, where a mayoral campaign also is underway. According to a recent poll by the Houston Chronicle and KHOU-TV, 29 percent of voters want to eliminate the program, while 56 percent want to retain or expand it, with the rest undecided. The three leading mayoral candidates have said they favor keeping the program, but with some changes.

Since 1984, Houston's affirmative action policy has required businesses with city contracts to give 20 percent of the work to women and minorities. In fiscal 1997, about 21 percent of the \$1

NATIONAL TEST DEVELOPMENT BACK ON TRACK—BUT BARELY

House and Senate negotiators late yesterday agreed to a compromise on President Clinton's voluntary national testing plan, but it did not appear to break the logjam over the issue.

The deal, brokered by Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, would let the tests be developed by an independent bipartisan board, but would require future congressional approval before they could actually be administered.

It would also require a study on comparing existing tests and state assessments, which could allow national comparisons of student achievement without a new test.

"This is a true attempt to find middle ground," Obey said at a meeting of House-Senate conferees on fiscal 1998 education funding. Congress's policy-making committees would decide whether to let the test go forward.

But Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the leading

testing foe, said it wasn't good enough. "This lets the president do exactly what he wants to do": develop and pilot test the exams for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

"Mr. Goodling should not snatch defeat from the mouth of victory," said an annoyed Rep. Bill Livingston, R-La., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Even though 295 House members voted to ban development of the tests, it was unclear whether a majority would oppose the entire bill—which funds

Appropriations Conferees Resolve Testing, Grant Issues; Filibuster Threatened

House and Senate conferees completed their compromise work late Thursday on an appropriations bill for the Department of Education and other departments that saves a dozen programs that the Senate had earmarked for inclusion in an unrestricted block grant to states. The compromise also will allow

development of a national K-12 testing program.

Although the testing language does not allow the tests to begin before 1999, during which time Congress could act to kill it, the provision led Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., to threaten to filibuster the conference agreement when it reaches

the floor of the Senate, likely next week.

But Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., head of the Senate conferees, told a reporter he doubted Ashcroft would carry through with the threat, "based on his good sense." Conservative Republicans in the House also railed against the conference work on testing and vowed to fight

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against it, although they do not have the options senators have.

Specter had threatened an impasse over a conference agreement earlier when he refused to back down to House demands to deny the Clinton administration the ability to develop a needle-exchange program to reduce the spread of AIDS among drug users. But he reneged as the evening grew longer, clearing the way for an agreement on the government's largest spending bill.

Other senators and House members, including the GOP leadership, who were not among the conferees voiced strong dissent with the work of the conferees. Besides threatening a filibuster over the testing issue, Ashcroft also released a letter signed by 36 colleagues calling on conferees to support the House ban on the planned test.

Ashcroft would need 41 senators to sustain a filibuster beyond a three-day limit. A group of conservative House members vowed to try to defeat the conference compromise on the House floor. The administration wants to develop the tests so educators could have a nationwide comparison on school performance.

The testing issue had held up movement on a compromise for several

weeks. Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., offered a compromise in which the administration would be able to continue developing a national test but would not be allowed to disseminate the tests unless Congress approves legislation specifically allowing the tests. Conferees accepted Obey's compromise.

Nonconferee Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce committee that would have write that legislation, told reporters the Obey compromise was not a compromise at all. The administration did not expect to begin the testing before 1999, he said, and the appropriations bill at issue only covers spending through next September. He and others said that if the test is developed and tested in some pilot states it would be very hard to kill.

Items resolved by the conferees include agreements to accept:

A Senate provision appropriating \$1.5 million for the Individuals, with Disabilities Education Act to support a "Readline" program to disseminate research conducted by the National Institutes of Health concerning effective teaching strategies and early diagnosis of an intervention for children with reading disabilities.

A Senate provision earmarking \$30 million to a competitive-grant program for consortia that would be established to train new and current teachers, administrators and other educators in using advanced technology and integrate it into teaching methods that improve instruction.

Senate language assuring that no state can receive less funding for education for the disadvantaged in fiscal year 1998 than it did in fiscal 1997. The department would have been required to use a blend of 1990 and 1994 child poverty data to increase funding for some states and reduce it for others.

A compromise between the House offer of \$100 million for charter schools and the Senate's \$51 million appropriation, ending up with \$80 million.

Funding compromises adding up to \$4.6 billion for special-education programs, nearly midway between the Senate's \$5 billion and the House's \$4.4 billion.

A Senate provision keeping alive the literacy program under the vocational and adult education section, at \$4.7 million, and providing just over \$1 billion for vocational and education state grants. ■

House Republicans battle among selves over testing

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - A feud among House Republicans has blocked agreement over what to do about national reading and math tests sought by President Clinton.

House and Senate negotiators trying to push through an \$80.2 billion spending bill had settled on a deal Thursday.

But the bipartisan agreement within the House and Senate Appropriations committees was greeted with scorn and anger by conservatives who said Republican leaders gave Clinton too

much.

The White House disagreed, calling the deal unacceptable because it only allows the tests to be developed and given on a limited, trial basis. They could not be given without further approval by Congress. Senate Democratic allies promised a filibuster.

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But House Republican leaders were more concerned about the rebels in their own party's ranks and forced the appropriators to reopen their bill, which provides money for the Education, Labor and Health and Human Services departments for the year that started Oct. 1.

House Republicans called an emergency meeting this morning to figure out what to do next.

Capitol Hill sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said House Speaker Newt Gingrich reprimanded Rep. Bob Livingston, R-La., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, over his handling of the issue.

A House Republican aide said the GOP leadership had never agreed to the testing compromise.

House negotiators were eager to finish work on the overdue spending bill and were less committed to the fight over national testing. They had to work with their counterparts from the Senate, which has agreed to testing if it is controlled by a congressionally created board instead of by the Education Department.

The young conservatives revolted,

joined by a senior member, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee.

"Once again, our leadership is running from a fight with the president," said Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a freshman conservative who persuaded the leaders to reopen the spending bill. The rebels said leaders were afraid of being blamed for shutting down the government if Clinton vetoes the bill.

House opposition to the tests had been solid, with 295 members voting last month to block federal spending for them.

Goodling considers the tests to be a waste of money, because people already know which students and schools are doing poorly. Other opponents say the tests duplicate existing ones and could lead to a "national school board" dictating a national curriculum.

Clinton says the standardized tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are necessary because none of the existing widely given commercial tests has built-in standards.

Livingston said Goodling should have been happy that his committee would

have final say over the tests.

But Goodling said he would have gotten jurisdiction too late to do any good.

Millions of dollars would have been spent and the tests would be available, he said. There is no limit, Goodling said, to how many states would get the tests under a pilot program.

"That so-called compromise then allows the piloting and field testing of the test in 1998, which is exactly what the administration planned to do without congressional approval," he said.

"They didn't need us now, and they wouldn't need us then," he said.

Before the dispute over testing erupted, negotiators had agreed on another difficult issue: needle exchanges to protect users of illegal drugs against AIDS.

The agreement would prohibit the Health and Human Services Department from supporting such exchanges until March 31, 1998. The House had originally passed an outright ban.

The moratorium would allow time for the writers of anti-drug legislation to deal with the issue. ■

5. The Washington Post

10/31/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A14

Affirmative Action Controversy May Block Justice Dept. Civil Rights Nominee

By Roberto Suro
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton's nomination of Bill Lann Lee to head the Justice

Department has advised Republicans on the committee that he is dissatisfied with Lee's position on affirmative action.

The Utah Republican said he wants assurances that the administration will not take any further steps to challenge

up-by-the-bootstraps life story. But they expressed reservations over his long track record of bringing up innovative civil rights lawsuits.

Opponents of Lee have focused not on any of his major accomplishments

Deal on National Testing Crumbles Under Pressure

Proposal Sharply Criticized by Conservatives

By Eric Pianin

Washington Post Staff Writer

A compromise over national school testing negotiated by House and Senate leaders and appropriators crumbled yesterday after encountering powerful resistance from conservative Republicans and other critics of testing.

The proposal, drafted by Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.) and blessed by House and Senate GOP leaders Wednesday evening, sought to end a prolonged impasse by allowing the Clinton administration to proceed with its plans to develop national educational tests for reading and math, while giving Congress final say over whether the tests will actually be administered.

But the plan drew sharp criticism from the White House almost immediately and sparked an uproar yesterday among House conservatives who charged House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and other leaders with selling them out on an important issue in a rush to resolve the dispute and avert a showdown with the administration.

"This is, I think, the low point in the leadership," declared Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), a leader of a group of conservative House members who participated in a failed effort to unseat Gingrich as speaker this summer. "This was a winning case [for opponents] and the 'lawyer' dropped the ball, and after a while you have to change the 'lawyer.'"

Gingrich, House Republican Conference Chairman John A. Boehner (Ohio) and other House GOP leaders almost immediately began to distance themselves from the compromise plan

and signaled during a leadership meeting that the compromise language was subject to change before the House and Senate vote on the final version of the spending legislation — probably some time next week.

"This isn't over till it's over," said Christina Martin, Gingrich's press secretary. "This language is still to be worked out in conference and this may evolve more."

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.), stunned by the turnabout and Gingrich's criticism of his handling of the issue, stormed out of the leadership meeting and slammed the door. The turmoil forced leaders to reopen negotiations and call an emergency meeting of House Republicans today.

President Clinton has made national testing a top priority of his second term, but many Republicans and some Democrats are deeply suspicious of a plan that would give the federal government a larger role in shaping the curriculum of local schools.

The House has voted overwhelmingly to block spending for development of a national test for reading and math, but a Senate-passed measure would permit the tests to be developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent, bipartisan agency.

Livingston, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Obey and others argued yesterday during a meeting of conferees that the compromise they were offering was the last best hope for resolving the dispute this year and passing the underlying \$269 billion

labor-health-education spending bill.

But Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and a leading opponent of national testing, dismissed the compromise as a "slap in the face" to the 295 House members who oppose national testing.

Other matters holding up spending bills this year appeared headed toward resolution. The administration and Republican leaders were coming closer to making a deal on how the 2000 census would be conducted. Both sides have been at odds over whether to allow sampling techniques in the decennial census, as opposed to the traditional method of attempting to visit each household. Under a tentative deal the Commerce Department would have funding to develop sampling techniques, and to carry out a "dress rehearsal" of the 2000 census during 1998.

Republicans appeared to be pursuing a veto strategy on the measure containing the federal government's payment to the District of Columbia but planned to quickly send the bill back to the White House without a school voucher provision opposed by the administration.

That would leave only the perennial question of funding international family planning programs in the foreign aid bill. While Livingston hoped for a deal that would allow the bill to be signed into law, officials were also preparing for a veto. In that case, the expectation is that the bill would go back without the provision.

Staff writer John E. Yang contributed to this report. ■

4. Associated Press

10-31 2:09a

House Republicans battle among selves over testing

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - A feud among House Republicans has blocked agreement over what to do about national reading and math tests sought by President Clinton.

House and Senate negotiators trying to push through an \$80.2 billion spending bill had settled on a deal Thursday.

But the bipartisan agreement within the House and Senate Appropriations committees was greeted with scorn and anger by conservatives who said Republican leaders gave Clinton too

much.

The White House disagreed, calling the deal unacceptable because it only allows the tests to be developed and given on a limited, trial basis. They could not be given without further approval by Congress. Senate Democratic allies promised a filibuster.

1. USA Today

October 31, 1997

WASHINGTON SCHOOL TESTS

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said a proposed congressional compromise to delay but not to kill President Clinton's plans to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math is unacceptable.

Opponents of the voluntary national tests also are unhappy with the compromise, which would allow an independent panel to continue to develop the testing standards. The dispute is

holding up passage of a spending bill for the Department of Education.

Written by Paul Leavitt with staff and wire reports. ■

2. The New York Times

10/31/97; Edition: 1Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 25, Column 2

Deal on National Test Faces Opposition From All Sides

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30 — A late-night agreement on President Clinton's national testing proposal has threatened to upend Congress's largest spending bill of the session as criticism of the compromise mounted today among unlikely allies: conservatives, liberal Democrats and the White House.

The reaction angered members of the negotiating committee, who called this year's negotiation process one of the most contentious ever. And it prompted Representative David R. Obey, the senior Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, who helped put together the agreement on testing, to say he would support an override of a Presidential veto so that national testing would be eliminated altogether.

Late today, the Clinton Administration indicated again that it would veto the \$277 billion spending bill for Labor and Health and Human Services, saying the measure hampers the President's plan for national math and reading tests.

"The compromise announced tonight remains unacceptable," said Lawrence J. Haas, a White House spokesman.

The compromise reached on Wednesday night would provide the money to develop the national reading and math exams, permit field testing and allow state officials to voluntarily adopt the tests. It would allocate \$16 million to the National Assessment Governing

Board to develop the tests. But it would be up to the Education Committees in the House and Senate to evaluate the tests and decide whether they should be fully implemented.

Conservatives want to defeat the testing provision outright, saying there is no need for more national testing. A motion to kill the compromise testing provision failed today at the conference meeting.

Although the bill stands a greater chance of surviving in the Senate, a battle is expected. Senator John Ashcroft, Republican of Missouri, said that 37 senators opposed testing and that he would filibuster the bill when it arrived on the floor.

If the bill clears both chambers and the President vetoes it, Senator Jeff Bingaman, Democrat of New Mexico, said there were enough votes in the Senate to sustain the veto, insuring that the compromise bill would not become law.

But the testing debate must still play out in the House, where members of the appropriations subcommittee said they would try to sway conservatives and liberals alike to pass the bill.

"This is the best deal that we are going to get for all concerned," said Representative Robert L. Livingston, the Louisiana Republican who heads the Appropriations Committee.

Remarking on the level of ingratitude over the hard-fought compromise, Mr.

Obey said this year's negotiations on the two bills were the "the most acrimonious, the most frustrating and, at times, ineptly handled" since Congress decided support for the Nicaraguan guerrillas who were fighting their country's leftist Sandinista government.

"This is an honest middle-of-the-road approach," Mr. Obey said, holding up the angry faxes he had received from members. "If the White House thinks this is such a great, great political issue, you will have it to debate in an election year. I'm sorry baby, we can't do better than that."

Senator Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania Republican who is chairman of the labor subcommittee, said it was obvious that the agreement was a good one if liberals, conservatives and the Administration all objected.

But Mr. Specter cautioned that he would go to bat for the bill if the President vetoed it.

In the House, conservatives, joined by Representative William Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who heads the Education Committee, accused the Republican leadership of betraying them once again.

Mr. Goodling, who had sponsored a bill opposing national testing, said he had been promised he would have the final say on the national testing provision but was cut out of the decision-making on Wednesday. ■

positive-sounding terms "Orwellian." But is using the word "voucher" any fairer? Yes, says Bass.

" 'Scholarship' sounds good because it sounds like they're giving you something from the bottom of their hearts," Bass said. "But a voucher is taking money away from something. It means abandoning the public schools."

Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, says that too often polls use the word "voucher" to load the dice.

"Vouchers are negative and do poll

gained up phrase," she said. "The word 'opportunity' is fabricated."

Where did the bias against the word "voucher" come from?

In '93, California voters considered Proposition 174, a ballot initiative that would have given California parents \$2,600 a year to send students to the school of their choice.

School choice foes, mostly teachers' unions, spent some \$25 million to defeat the measure. And much of that money was spent on focus groups and survey research to find a pejorative label for the policy.

Pollsters say asking a question that doesn't relate to respondents will poll negatively. And that can be critical in polling on education.

School choice is offered not as an alternative but a means of improvement. Yet most anti-voucher pollsters like to put the voucher question in the context that a vote for choice is a vote against public education.

"The debate is: 'Should poor parents have a choice?' " Allen said. "It's not a choice between vouchers and public education." ■

15. Chicago Tribune

10/29/97; Edition: NORTH SPORTS FINAL; N; Section: METRO CHICAGO; Page 3

CLINTONS PRAISE EFFORT IN EDUCATION

By Bonnie Miller Rubin,
Tribune Staff Writer.

At two separate stops Tuesday, President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton lauded the Chicago public schools, praising the system's efforts to improve test scores and raise academic standards.

The president's only stop of the day, following his arrival Monday night for a 50th birthday party for Hillary at the Chicago Cultural Center, was at Mayer School, 2250 N. Clifton Ave. There he hailed school reform initiatives and cited "high expectations, higher standards and accountability" as the way back to respectability.

"You've strengthened curriculum, renovated buildings, expanded pre-school education, kept schools open longer and in the summertime to give children who need it extra help," said Clinton, according to wire reports.

Clinton was joined at the school by Mayor Richard M. Daley and U.S. Rep.

Rod Blagojevich before he returned to Washington.

Clinton added that he will direct the U.S. Department of Education to implement similar programs elsewhere in the country.

Meanwhile, the First Lady, winding up her second day in Chicago, also focused on learning at the annual College Board National Forum, attended by 2,000 educators at the Chicago Marriott Downtown.

Commending her as "an advocate for children throughout her career," College Board President Donald Stewart awarded the First Lady the organization's Medal for Distinguished Service. Last year's recipient was Bill Cosby.

She used the occasion to campaign for establishing national standards in education, one of the president's pet projects. Conceding that this is a controversial topic, she recommended that standards be voluntary and "instructive not punitive."

Chicago Public Schools Supt. Paul Vallas, who shared the dais with the First Lady, delivered a mammoth birthday card on behalf of the students and said he was "1,000 percent" behind her push for national standards.

Earlier in the day, Hillary Clinton appeared on the "Oprah" show, where she talked about life since Chelsea went off to college, which included a few wistful stops in her daughter's empty room—where she has run into the president.

However, this passage has also brought "a burst of energy . . . where you can think about your calling, your passion." She said she has not looked ahead to life after the White House, but plans to use her three remaining years of her husband's term to work to improve the welfare of children.

Oprah Winfrey gave the First Lady a leather-bound edition of every book read by "Oprah's Book Club," Winfrey's effort to renew interest in reading. ■

Appropriations committee, described the latest compromise as a "reasonable agreement" but added that "I expect there will be unhappiness in both camps."

An administration spokesman said later that the new approach was unacceptable because it would enable Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), the chairman of the House Education and the

permit the tests to be used by the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent, bipartisan agency.

Goodling floated another plan last week that, while barring the administration from developing a national test, would allow the National Academy of Sciences and other groups to

control over most federal elementary and secondary aid programs for one year was scrapped; and the House joined the Senate in supporting repeal a \$50 billion tax break for the tobacco industry that was part of the balanced budget legislation. ■

5. Associated Press

10-30 8:34a

House, Senate negotiators may have deal on testing

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Congressional negotiators, anxious to wrap up an overdue spending bill for three departments, were heading toward an agreement that would allow work to continue on national reading and math tests sought by President Clinton.

But both the White House and opponents of the standardized tests were unhappy with the deal that appeared to be emerging between Democrats and

Republicans trying to push the compromise bill.

The negotiators from the House and Senate Appropriations committees planned to sit down today to wrap up the \$80 billion spending bill for the Education, Labor and Health and Human Services departments. The bill covers spending for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1.

Under the proposal, the White House could continue developing the tests, and even conduct field trials, but could not give them to students until Congress

passes separate legislation permitting their use.

Clinton wants the voluntary tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math to be given in the spring of 1999.

The tests would give individual scores based on standards approved by the National Assessment Governing Board, an existing independent body created by Congress. The tests would cut through differences in schools and states to let parents know how their children, schools and teachers are performing in the two critical subjects.

8

A compromise is necessary because the House passed a spending bill that forbids spending any money on the tests. The Education Department had already awarded a \$13 million contract to begin developing them.

The Senate passed a bill, supported by the administration, that would let the tests go forward, but only under the direction of the assessment governing board, which would be modified to become more politically balanced and impartial.

Clinton has threatened to veto any bill that would prevent the administration from going forward with the tests.

A spokesman for the White House Office of Management and Budget said Wednesday that the proposed deal appeared to sabotage Clinton's testing proposal.

"Presuming we understand this provision correctly, we don't understand how it can be acceptable," said OMB spokesman Lawrence Haas. "We simply can't accept a provision that could in effect prevent the administration from moving forward on national testing."

A chief opponent of national tests, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., also criticized the arrangement and questioned whether it could survive.

Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, said late Wednesday he had received no word from House leaders that they supported the proposed compromise.

"There's no way anyone had indicated this was an agreement," he said, although he acknowledged it had wide support among negotiators. The proposal came from Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the top

Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

Goodling backed an arrangement he worked out last week among Republicans that would force an end to the existing contract and commission a study of adapting existing, commercial tests that many states already use.

Students who take those tests, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, receive scores that measure them against a national average rather than a fixed standard.

Goodling considers the proposed tests wasteful and unnecessary. Some conservatives say the tests also threaten local control of education. And minority groups feel the results will be used to brand children who come from impoverished, struggling schools. ■

6. The Washington Post

10/30/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A10

House Sets Trade Authority Vote for Nov. 7

4. The Washington Post

10/30/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A20

Hill Negotiators Compromise on Plan for National Student Tests

By Eric Pianin
Washington Post Staff Writer

House and Senate negotiators tentatively agreed last night to a compromise that would allow the Clinton administration to go forward with its plans to develop national educational tests for reading and math, while still leaving room for the program to be blocked down the road.

The proposal emerged from a closed-door meeting of House and Senate GOP and Democratic appropriations leaders who are seeking to end a deadlock over testing and several other issues that has delayed passage of the \$269 billion labor, health, human services and education spending bill.

"We have to sell it to our respective [parties] and we hope we can pass the bill without a veto," House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.) told reporters after the meeting. Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.), the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations committee, described the latest compromise as a "reasonable agreement" but added that "I expect there will be unhappiness in both camps."

An administration spokesman said later that the new approach was unacceptable because it would enable Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), the chairman of the House Education and the

Workforce Committee and an ardent opponent of national testing, to block the use of the test next year. Under the deal, the administration could go forward with efforts to develop the test, but it could not be implemented nationally until Congress took separate action to allow it.

"We simply cannot accept a provision that effectively could prevent the administration from moving ahead on national testing," said Lawrence Haas, a spokesman for the Office of Management and Budget.

President Clinton has made national testing a top priority of his second term, but Republican leaders in Congress — and even many Democrats representing Hispanic and black constituents — are deeply suspicious of a plan that gives the federal government a larger role in education.

The House-passed version of the spending bill would bar the administration from developing the test, while the Senate-passed measure would permit the tests to be developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent, bipartisan agency.

Goodling floated another plan last week that, while barring the administration from developing a national test, would allow the National Academy of Sciences and other groups to

develop a new measure of student performance based on the test scores of commercially available standardized tests.

Under the plan unveiled by conferees yesterday, the National Assessment Governing Board would be permitted to develop and "field test" a reading and math test, and state officials could voluntarily adopt the test if they so choose. But it would be up to the House and Senate education committees to determine whether the tests were adequate and should be administered to students.

The full Labor-HHS appropriations conference committee will consider the proposal today.

Among other tentative agreements struck at yesterday's meeting: The House abandoned efforts to ban federal funds from being used to establish a needle exchange program for users of illegal drugs, but more restrictions will be imposed; a Senate block grant proposal giving local school districts complete control over most federal elementary and secondary aid programs for one year was scrapped; and the House joined the Senate in supporting repeal a \$50 billion tax break for the tobacco industry that was part of the balanced budget legislation. ■

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3. The Wall Street Journal

10/30/97

Student-Testing Compromise Proposes Letting Congress Decide the Timing

By David Rogers

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — House-Senate negotiators endorsed a compromise that would permit the continued development of national math and reading exams sought by President Clinton but would delay actual testing until authorized by Congress.

A final agreement was put off until today, but the proposal won the tacit backing of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R., Ga.) and the Appropriations Committee leadership yesterday, despite attacks from the left and right.

Conservatives reacted angrily last night, denouncing the deal as a "sellout" by the GOP. The White House was cool as well. But a centrist bloc from both parties appears determined to press ahead to expedite passage of a \$270 billion spending bill for the Departments of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services. "It's a middle ground," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R., La.). "This approach is the best we can get."

The measure, the largest of the 13 spending bills for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, faces a certain veto as amended by the House to block all activity regarding the testing initiative. The proposed compromise still falls short of Mr. Clinton's demands but is less severe and gives the administration time to make its case for going ahead with the exams, now slated for the spring of 1999.

The Education Department has said it needs about \$31 million to develop the tests, which would cost another \$96 million to administer. The goal is to test an estimated eight million fourth- and eighth-graders in the nation's public schools, and Mr. Clinton has argued this effort is central to his larger education initiatives.

Despite the fury surrounding the issue, the dollars are modest when compared with the larger spending bill, and Mr. Clinton's own allies have grown impatient with the lack of give on both sides.

"We are having a theological debate about smoke," said Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations panel and a central figure in the talks yesterday. Until the tests are developed, Congress can't adequately assess the whole enterprise, Mr. Obey said, and given the opposition, the president needs time to address complaints from conservatives as well as black and Hispanic lawmakers in his own party.

Mr. Clinton must also be mindful of concessions he has already won. In contrast with the last Congress, labor regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration would enjoy more money — not less. Pell Grants to help low-income college students are expected to grow by at least \$1.3 billion, and negotiators last night said they would give the White House the new authority it wants to target more of the money to students above the age of 24 who more often live independently from their parents than younger students.

While the president would get less than his budget request, negotiators have included at least \$500 million for his Goals 2000 and America Reads education initiatives. And there is a tentative agreement to provide another \$145 million for a businessbacked reform plan to encourage experiments in new models of education for local schools.

The stepped-up negotiations reflect the increasing pressure on the leadership to complete action on spending bills before Congress goes home next month. Last night, the Senate approved and sent

to the White House a \$49.7 billion measure funding the Agriculture Department and Food and Drug Administration. Also, in recent days, agreement has been reached on the outlines of a \$13.1 billion foreign-aid budget as well.

Nonetheless, the process has opened real divisions among House Republicans — a lack of unity that contrasts starkly with the early days of the GOP revolution in the last Congress. Education Committee Chairman William Goodling (R., Pa.), a strong critic of testing, bitterly denounced the proposed compromise last night, and Rep. Ernest Istook (R., Okla.) warned that the "base of the Republican majority is being eroded bit by bit."

A second source of division is the smaller but still contentious, \$31 billion-plus budget for the Departments of Justice, Commerce and State. As talks have dragged on, the bill has become caught in an emotional fight within the GOP over the rights of an estimated one million immigrants in the U.S. awaiting their permanent visas.

Under a provision enacted in 1994, immigrants in this position are able to collect their permanent visas — as their papers come due — regardless of the fact that they may be in this country illegally. Critics charge that the system undercuts tougher penalties enacted in the last Congress. But lawmakers already have voted twice this fall to extend the law in hopes of striking a compromise.

The new deadline is Nov. 7, and among the options would be to grandfather in those people who are already in the U.S. under the current law. On a 268-153 roll call, the House yesterday signaled its opposition to an immediate cutoff next month, but there is still strong sentiment against a permanent extension of the current law. ■

Sens. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga., and Robert Torricelli, D-N.J., wrote the bill to allow middle-class families to save \$2,500 per year, per child, with after-tax dollars earning interest tax-free. Corporations or non-profit groups could set up these A-Plus Accounts for poor children. The savings can be used for education-related costs, including tutoring, uniforms and tuition.

How helpful is the tax-free interest? A USA TODAY analysis found that, while interest for all families is the same, greater tax breaks go to those in higher brackets. Saving \$2,500 a year for five years in an account earning 7.5% interest

savings, about \$974.

Only couples with income less than \$160,000 and singles with incomes less than \$110,000 may participate. Also, after 2002, the yearly savings cap drops to \$500.

Sandy Baum, economics professor at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., applauds the effort to encourage saving but is concerned that the income cutoff is too high and that the accounts "subsidize families already sending kids to private schools."

Carole Shields, president of People for the American Way Action Fund, a civil rights advocacy group, questions whether

Coverdell says taxpayers' savings will be \$2.6 billion in five years.

"I think we got too many in this town who think 15 bucks is not much money," Coverdell says. "When you see some mother trying to take a second job to get her child in a better environment or to buy a computer . . . you give her another vehicle to help with this thing."

Congress is ignoring veto threats and complaints that the measure is bad education policy and bad tax policy. The House passed the bill a week ago.

By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY, page D1 ■

2. The New York Times

10/30/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 26, Column 5

Plan to Delay School-Test Vote

By JERRY GRAY

WASHINGTON, Oct. 29 — House and Senate negotiators agreed today to a compromise that would postpone for a year a vote on whether the Clinton Administration can test students nationwide in reading and math. In the interim, they agreed to allow the Administration to proceed with its plan to develop such tests in the next year.

Under the bipartisan proposal, the Federal Department of Education would be allowed to continue its effort to run pilot programs by 1999 of a voluntary test of fourth graders in reading and a test for eighth graders in math. But before the plan could be instituted nationwide, Congress would

have to give its approval.

In a separate action today, the House also decided to vote next week on legislation sought by Mr. Clinton that would restore his authority to negotiate trade agreements, a proposal that many Democrats bitterly oppose. On education testing, the agreement left both sides lukewarm.

"Obviously we would continue to oppose any provision that would effectively prevent educational testing and standards to go forward," said Barry Toiv, a White House spokesman, "and this may be designed to do just that."

Opposition to national testing is especially strong in the House, and today's agreement angered some

representatives.

"This is a slap in the face to two-thirds of the House of Representatives," said Representative William F. Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who heads the House Education Committee. "And as far as I am concerned, there is no compromise."

The compromise plan is to be formally debated on Thursday in a House-Senate conference committee.

The House, by a vote of 295 to 125 on Sept. 16, approved an amendment offered by Mr. Goodling that would prevent development and administration of the national testing program. But in the Senate, members voted to approve the plan. ■

...at a junior college in Milton; and Christina, a senior at Boston College. "It costs us about \$70,000 a year now," Ellen says, "and by the time Jackie graduates we will have spent at least \$300,000."

The two have pensions, but their combined income is much less than they expected to have at what normally would be about the midpoint of their careers. "We had paid off the mortgage on our house but have had to remortgage and are spending down our savings," Ellen says.

...tighten our belts," she says. "I'd like to travel some, get new clothes, and buy a bedroom set, but we just can't afford it."

Tuition and room and board are not always the only major expense of a college education. Visiting with the children adds to the expense as well.

Timothy Robinson of Boston, a retired publishing executive, knows this well. Robinson's youngest son, 22-year-old Peter, is a senior at Reed College in Portland, Ore., where tuition

Robinson and wife March usually visit their son only once a year and he comes home just a few times.

In lieu of face-to-face contact, the Robinsons say, they have at least one long telephone conversation with Peter about once a week. Long-distance calls from Boston to Oregon are also expensive, but Robinson has found a solution. "I have an 800 number," he says. "That's a lot cheaper than being called collect." ■

59. Washington Times

October 29, 1997

Maryland a precursor of National education test?

By Marian Kester Coombs

SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Despite years of opposition and congressional rejection, national testing — and just behind it, a national curriculum — seems to be the plan that will not die.

For concerned parents who have been clamoring for standardized, measurable accountability in public education, the Clinton administration's determination to fund the development of a \$90 million national testing program and national standards is reminiscent of the adage "Be careful what you wish for, because you just may get your wish."

Rep. Bill Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican leading House opposition to the Clinton proposals, wants federal education funds to go directly to the states for discretionary use, and cautions, "Given what happened with the federally funded U.S. history standards project, a dismal initiative that generated political correctness rather than history, we don't need to engage in any effort that could lead to a national curriculum."

Jay Diskey, communications director for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, continues, "We're frankly puzzled why a program that started out encouraging the states to adopt more rigorous standards for high school graduation has now turned into a crusade for national testing. If testing were the answer to our education problems, we'd have solved them by

now."

By some estimates, one-tenth of U.S. students' classroom time is already devoted to tests.

Federal education officials have been attempting for several years to implement "voluntary" national standards in the nation's schools. They argue that national standards have enabled Japan and Germany, among others, to excel on international surveys of student proficiency, and that such standards will also help eliminate the enduring inequalities in performance among local school districts in the U.S.

Nationalizers like Marc Tucker of the National Center on Education and the Economy further believe that "job matching" — using the schools to produce workers for the existing and future labor markets — is also a legitimate function of public education.

The Goals 2000 Act, initiated by the Bush administration but finalized by President Clinton, dangles federal funds before states that adopt its standards but withholds them from states that decline.

Virginia under George Allen has so far declined — and instead adopted tough state Standards of Learning which many educators hail as a model of specific content goals rather than vague pedagogical "philosophy."

Parents may read Virginia's Standards on the Internet at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/go/Sols/home.html>.

In Maryland, however, what national testing could look like in practice may

already have been pioneered. A test remarkably similar to the guidelines of Goals 2000 has been administered to the state's third-, fifth- and eighth-graders since 1992.

Janet Greenip is representative of opposition voices across the country who are raising the alarm about the radical new direction in which public schools seem to be headed.

Mrs. Greenip, a Republican member from District 33 to the Maryland House of Delegates, is a former math teacher and tutor elected in 1994 on a program of school reform. Among her prime targets is the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), a statewide battery of tests that became law after a 1989 bill introduced in the Maryland legislature by the U.S. Department of Education.

"The MSPAP is like an internal audit" of the schools' ability to effect "attitudinal" changes in their student bodies, says Mrs. Greenip. "Attitudes are the goal, not knowledge... Do you know who the experts are who certified this test? Something called the Psychometric Council..."

"A company called Measurement, Inc. are the ones who manage the tests. The school system sends to them a listing of the children in the various schools. I don't know what other information is on this database — however, based on this listing, Measurement, Inc. sends back to the school, shrink wrapped, each individual child's packet of tasks, in a

stack with the rest of their group...

"When the test is over, the packets are sent back, and Measurement, Inc. takes the children's names off the booklets and recodes them somehow. And then they shuffle them all up and send them back here for the teachers to grade them. Then they send them back and reshuffle them again and record the results. I find that fascinating."

The possibility that some kind of psychological profile may be being developed during this involved procedure "is an accusation I have heard," adds Mrs. Greenip.

In fact, Concerned Women for America and the Eagle Forum, among others, have charged that national testing may have more to do with training children to serve in the global work force than developing their individual talents. Phyllis Schlafly predicts the database that emerges will amount to a "labor market information system, into which school personnel would scan all information about every schoolchild and his family, identified by the child's Social Security number: academic, medical, mental, psychological, behavioral and interrogations by counselors."

Janet Greenip notes that the Maryland Business Roundtable is one of the MSPAP's biggest boosters. "It seems that's what some of these manufacturers really want: someone who mindlessly

does what they're told to do... Big companies need a labor force they can manipulate. But it goes way beyond the labor force; it really impacts on citizenship."

Review of one "task" fifth-graders are to perform for the MSPAP, called "Child Labor," reveals such questions as "Why should children today respect the children who worked long ago in the U.S. mills?", "What are the effects of (the author's) words or phrases on your own reactions to child labor?", and "Circle the word below which is closest to how you felt after reading 'Mill Children': Angry/Confused/Fortunate/Sad/Hopeful."

"Worker's Web," a task given third-graders, asks the student to show how a list of "Community Workers" depends upon each other. "Many important workers are not included on your Community Workers' Web. If you could add one more worker to your worksheet, which one would you add?"

Another third-grade task asks children to survey which families in the class recycle and then to "Write an article for the school newspaper to persuade students to save resources by recycling."

Similar questions appear to test for degree of conformity, attitudes toward work and authority, and proficiency as a "consumer."

These particular "tasks" were released publicly to a limited extent. The contents of the MSPAP test as a rule, however, are kept strictly under wraps: All those who come into contact with it must sign confidentiality agreements.

One problematic feature of the MSPAP is that, despite having been given for five years now, and despite the fact that teachers more and more "teach to the test," Maryland school performance has shown no pattern of consistent improvement, and in fact remains "Less than Satisfactory" overall.

The difficulty with this grading curve is that, by law, a school district which fails to attain an overall "Satisfactory" level after a certain period is threatened with takeover by the state. How state control can improve what local control could not — and just what it is that must be "improved" — is not made clear.

Meanwhile, points out Janet Greenip, the "accountability" that parents were demanding was to themselves and to their children, not to the government: "How is this supposed to be feedback to parents? Parents aren't getting the information they really want. They want to know, Is my child reading? Is my child doing math?"

And once the test becomes a national one, the threatened takeover may be federal, not state. ■

60. Washington Times

October 29, 1997

Inside the Beltway

Political tidbits and other shenanigans from around the nation's capital

By John McCaslin

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

John as guest

God in the curriculum?

That's the subject of this special newspaper edition of "One on One," as the Fort Myers, Fla., school board has voted to adopt a Bible curriculum. The Bible, in other words, taught as history. The Scriptures all true. The resurrection of Jesus — fact.

Such a Christianity-based curriculum is taught in parts of 21 other states. The Fort Myers ruling, however, has reignited the controversy surrounding the

separation of church and state.

Question: What are the ramifications of keeping the Bible out of schools and putting the Bible back into schools? Who better to ask than a former Roman Catholic priest, John McLaughlin?

"Good luck," he replies.

"I have no problem with it," Mr. McLaughlin continues. "I think it's a good idea."

But the priest-turned-television talk-show-host cautions against Bible instruction becoming indoctrination.

"I would be against teaching it as literally true in all instances," he says.

"The reason is that in theological circles it is accepted that a measure of [the Bible] is interpretation, especially symbolic interpretation.

"Even fundamentalists themselves will acknowledge the symbolism of when God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh — it is not taken literally in those circles," he says.

Mr. McLaughlin suggests introducing other religious documents into school curriculums as well. He cites the Koran, for one, the sacred book that the Muslims believe was revealed to Mohammed by Allah. . . . ■

Armed with this training, the cadets spend four days a week at Beaverbrook and three other elementary schools and work with kids, one high schooler each with two kindergarten, first- or second-grade pupils, for just 10 minutes at a time. Then the high schoolers switch to a second set of young children with the shrill of a coach's whistle.

When the older students and their young charges got together on a typical day early last spring, the scene was reminiscent of lunch time at any cafeteria: noisy children chatting

school year, isn't planning on teaching but said what he got out of it was "helping someone learn to read. That's the most important thing a person can do."

Everybody wins

In a study when the program was piloted four years ago, Beaverbrook kids scored significantly higher than students at another school without the program in areas of word decoding, word recognition and reading comprehension, Boucugnani-Whitehead says.

Marian Dunn, Jackson Road

gains last through the school years with other reading assistance.

But for now, Gerry Wright, interim superintendent last year in the Griffin-Spalding district, sees the program as a "win-win-win" situation.

"The children win because they're learning to read. The cadets win because they have the satisfaction of helping. For the system, it's just fantastic. The children are helped, and anything that helps the children helps us."

By Dennis Kelly, USA TODAY, page D5■

18. USA Today

October 29, 1997

Nationally, many pupils' skills below 'basic' level

How well do American children read? That question has been open to interpretation - some say misinterpretation - for some time.

A point of contention has been one of the reading studies conducted for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an ongoing check of academic abilities in the country that tests a cross sample of U.S. students in areas of math, science, social studies and language. NAEP scores are rated on a zero to 500 scale, but some time ago the governing board for NAEP decided not just to report score averages for the country but also to set standards for

performance that it considered below basic, basic, proficient or advanced.

A 1992 NAEP study in reading found that 40% of U.S. students couldn't reach the basic level, and that became translated to mean that 40% of U.S. youngsters don't know how to read, says Jack Pikulski, professor of education at the University of Delaware and president of the International Reading Association.

Saying that 40% of American children can't read is "absolutely not the case," Pikulski says. "One thing that happened with NAEP is that it set challenging standards. So it's not anything approaching illiteracy."

Within that 40% is a very broad range of students, some of whom can't read at all, but others who can read but who may not be able to do comparisons or draw inferences from what they read, he says.

"The important thing is that within that 40% is a wide range of reading ability that isn't captured by the basic level," he says.

"I don't think we're in a crisis," he says. "I don't think we're seeing a decline in reading achievement. But we still have far too many children who don't learn how to read, and in that sense I am concerned."■

became so heated that the committee disbanded, unable to agree on what should be included or excluded from the classes.

Most educators agree knowledge of the Bible is essential for any literate

person. But the difficulty is finding a way to teach about the Bible without short-changing or offending religious views of the book.

Mr. Haynes says one answer is to teach the Bible as literature, not history.

"If you take the literary approach you can teach the stories of the Bible and achieve biblical literacy without getting too deeply into the theological conflict over what is historical and what is not historical," he says. ■

16. USA Today

October 29, 1997

CAPITAL ROUNDUP (excerpt)

NATIONAL TESTS

President Clinton, seeking support for voluntary national reading and math tests, urged schools to stop promoting students unless they pass tests in the 3rd, 6th, 8th and 9th grades. Speaking at Oscar Mayer Elementary School in Chicago, Clinton said "social promotion"

harms children. "People used to say that asking a child to repeat a grade was too high a price to pay for learning because of the damage to self-esteem," Clinton said. "We are not punishing children by making sure they know what they need to

know." Opponents of national standardized tests say they divert money from classrooms and are another unwarranted federal intrusion into local schools. ■

17. USA Today

October 29, 1997

High schoolers help get kids on track to read

GRIFFIN, Ga. - When high school students get together with elementary kids in the cafeteria at Beaverbrook Elementary School here, the menu is a bit of alphabet soup. Only the alphabet consists of plastic letters, and the nourishment goes right to their heads.

On this particular day, Latesa Parker has come over from nearby Griffin High School to sit down with Kasey Rivers and Brandon Neesmith. Parker has them put the word sound an on the table. Now she asks them to spell can.

Each one grabs a c. Then an m when she asks them to spell man, a pl for plan, an sp for span. Parker feeds them encouragement each time they get a word right.

"Sometimes they'll hear big words not even on my list and they know how to spell them," says Parker, who volunteered almost daily with these first-graders last school year when she was a senior at Griffin.

Administrators from the Griffin-Spalding County School System here, about 40 miles south of Atlanta, get pretty excited when they witness this interaction between high school students and the kindergarten, first- and second-graders in the Preventing Early Reading Failure Program.

The skills may look simple, but the

concepts behind them have anything but simple names - "phonemic awareness" and "phonological recoding." As the Griffin-Spalding educators point out, these are abilities that are "preliminary" to learning things like phonics - the basic ability to decode words based on their sounds.

They also have studies to show that the reading skills of children taught in this home-grown program are moving well ahead of children who aren't. Districts from around the state have been calling to find out how it works.

To those who started the program, it also looks like the kind of initiative that President Clinton is seeking as he pursues his goal of turning all children into successful readers by the time they finish third grade.

"It's exactly what he's talking about," says Lynda Boucugnani-Whitehead, Griffin-Spalding's director of psychological services. "The thing that's most important is that it's so cost effective."

Phonemic awareness

Jack Pikulski, professor of education at the University of Delaware and president of the International Reading Association, says programs like Griffin-Spalding's address a skill that is a precursor to all reading by tackling

phonemic awareness - the ability to recognize all the sounds that a word contains.

The skills seem simple, and most children pick them up through early exposure to language and books. But an estimated 15% to 20% of children nationally lack phonemic awareness, and if those troubles aren't caught by third grade, a child can suffer for years, Pikulski says.

The educators in Griffin-Spalding had troubles of their own in schools like Beaverbrook, where a relatively high poverty rate (53% of kids receive free or reduced price lunches) meant that as many as a fourth of the first-graders were considered nonreaders.

Based on research in the field, Boucugnani-Whitehead and school psychologist Bill Allen put together this "totally home-grown program" that costs virtually nothing because it makes use of high school students in the Teacher Cadet program. The cadets are honor students who have enrolled in the Introduction to Education course. They're trained by school psychologist Janice Kilburn to follow scripted exercises to build word skills for the youngest schoolchildren.

The script tries to build on phonemic awareness with three skills: "Sound

13. Baltimore Sun

October 29, 1997

Clinton continues push for national testing standards

He asks schools to stop promoting youths who can't make the grade

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — President Clinton sought anew yesterday to build support for national testing standards, urging more school districts to promote children on the basis of academics rather than for social reasons.

In a speech at Oscar Mayer Elementary School, the president said Chicago has been able to turn failing schools around in part because of its decision to stop advancing children from grade to grade based on their social development.

"People used to say that asking a child to repeat a grade was too high a price to pay for learning because of the damage to self-esteem," Clinton said. "We are not punishing children by making sure they know what they need to know."

He urged critics to consider the consequences of pushing children through school without adequately measuring skills.

"Think about the thousands of Americans who are sitting in GED [general educational development]

classes today, struggling in literacy programs, standing in unemployment lines, who can tell you there is nothing more damaging to self-esteem than wanting a job and not being able to get one," Clinton said.

"If we adults send our children the right messages now, their self-esteem will not be harmed by an expression of love and hope for their future that prevents that sort of problem for them later on."

Clinton praised reforms begun by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who took control of the school system two years ago. Daley abolished the practice of promoting children for social reasons and required that students meet academic standards at certain grade levels.

"What is working in Chicago must blow like a wind of change into every city and every school in America," Clinton said. "Ending social promotion does not put children down. It gives us a chance to lift all children up. All of our children can succeed, and they deserve a chance to do it — even, if all else fails,

repeating a grade."

Clinton announced that he has directed the Department of Education to distribute guidelines on what is working in other cities, including San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York.

He said the department also would help local districts get better access to existing federal programs and resources, such as charter schools or his "America Reads" volunteer tutoring program, "to transform schools that are not performing into world-class learning centers."

The president is at odds with Congress over what will go into the fiscal 1998 spending bill covering Education Department programs.

Clinton is advocating voluntary national tests for reading and math, and a program that allows college work-study students to tutor children in reading. Republicans in Congress have rejected the tutoring program and have approved bills that would allow using federal spending or tax breaks to pay for school vouchers. ■

14. The New York Times

10/29/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section B; Metropolitan Desk; Page 11, Column 2 Category: Trade

Trust Suit Reinstated Against College's Curbs on Fraternities

By KAREN W. ARENSON

In a novel case that could affect colleges trying to close fraternity houses, a Federal appeals court has reinstated an antitrust action charging Hamilton College with monopolizing the market for student housing in Clinton, N.Y., by requiring all students to live on campus.

Because of concerns that fraternity social activities were giving the college an unfavorable reputation that was driving away potential students, particularly women, Hamilton College required fraternity members two years ago to live on campus and to use campus buildings for social functions. The measures effectively shut down the

sprawling mansions that served for decades as fraternity houses in Clinton, a central New York village east of Syracuse.

Represented by a Washington antitrust law firm, several fraternities sued. A Federal judge in Syracuse, Rosemary S. Pooler, dismissed the case last year, saying the fraternities failed to establish that the issue was one of trade or commerce and finding that the court did not have jurisdiction. But this month, a three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled in Albany that the Federal District Court should hear the case.

"If they find against the college, that might embolden those who don't believe there should be any restrictions on

fraternities," said Neil Grabois, president of nearby Colgate University. Just a few years ago, Colgate prohibited hazing and ruled that only juniors and seniors could live in fraternity houses.

Fraternities have played a central role at Hamilton. Before 1978, about two-thirds of the students belonged to fraternities. But that year, the college became coed, and by the mid-1990's, fraternity membership shrank to about one-third of students.

Still, college officials worried about fraternities' influence. Seeking to attract better students and more women, they decided to upgrade college residential life and de-emphasize fraternities. "We wanted to reaffirm the intellectual tone on campus and felt the fraternity system

\$21,359,599
113%
College of William & Mary
Williamsburg
\$9,972,785
\$21,145,779
112%
MARYLAND
University of Maryland
College Park
\$25,592,715
\$83,074,728
225%

Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore
\$16,240,783
\$38,863,591
139%
University of Maryland Professional
Schools
Baltimore
\$16,463,398
\$31,092,465
89%
Towson University
Towson

\$6,214,193
\$27,172,309
337%

NOTE: Numbers represent all commitments of federally guaranteed loans, including those ultimately canceled by the lender or student. Cancellations typically represent about 10 percent of each school's total commitment.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, Sallie Mae. Local data compiled by Jo Craven. ■

11. Philadelphia Inquirer

October 29, 1997

Clinton backs school tests for promotion

Congress is divided on testing. The President also urged local officials to seize control of failing schools.

By Ronald Brownstein
LOS ANGELES TIMES

CHICAGO — President Clinton yesterday firmly called on all public schools to end the "social promotion" of poorly performing students, even as his conflict with Congress over voluntary national education standards neared a turning point.

Clinton endorsed a pioneering program under which Chicago has tested tens of thousands of students for promotion and held back unprecedented numbers who failed to meet academic standards.

At the same time, Clinton directed the Education Department to help other school districts replicate another cornerstone of the Chicago reform: aggressive intervention by local school officials to seize control of failing schools.

"I want what is happening in Chicago to happen all over America," he said at an elementary school here. "I challenge every school district to adopt high standards, to abolish social promotion, to move aggressively to help students make the grade through tutoring and summer schools, and to hold schools accountable for results."

His embrace of the Chicago reforms sharpened the lines in a dispute over education standards that has set him against both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans.

From one side, congressional Republicans are saying Clinton's call for voluntary national tests in reading and

math would undermine local control of education.

House-Senate conferees due to begin meeting today on the principal education spending bill are expected eventually to approve language that would bar the Education Department from developing those tests.

Late last week, some House Republicans floated an alternative that would fund the National Academy of Sciences, as well as groups representing the governors and state legislatures, to develop a system for comparing the results of tests already used in the states.

But amid continued resistance from conservatives to the entire national testing idea, Republicans haven't reached agreement on that proposal. In any case, White House officials say that alternative is unworkable and would prompt a Clinton veto of the massive spending bill for the Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services Departments. "It's unacceptable: done, period," said one senior White House aide.

However, Clinton's remarks yesterday appeared aimed less at conservative than liberal complaints. The trend toward greater use of testing has sharply divided Democrats. Proponents argue that by increasing expectations, tougher tests will encourage better performance from all students and ensure they graduate with sufficient skills to enter the workforce.

But many liberals and civil rights groups fear that more testing will

stigmatize and disadvantage low-income and minority students, particularly those in the most troubled schools. Those sentiments led almost all black and Latino legislators to oppose Clinton's national test proposal when the House voted to kill the exams last month.

Using some of his strongest language yet, Clinton yesterday rejected the left's arguments against more testing. "Ending social promotion does not put children down," he said. "It gives us a chance to lift all children up. We are not punishing children by making sure they know what they need to know and that when they move from grade to grade it means something."

Chicago is at the forefront of efforts to impose higher academic standards through increased testing. Under a 1995 reform plan that gave Mayor Richard Daley control over the school system, the city now requires students in the third, sixth, eighth and ninth grades to pass math and reading tests for promotion. Students who fail the tests must attend summer school.

Chicago also has increased intervention in schools with large numbers of poorly performing students. More than one-fifth of the city's 557 schools are under formal probation, which triggers increased oversight, and Chicago Schools Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas has "reconstituted" seven of the most troubled schools, requiring all principals, teachers and even janitors to reapply for their jobs. ■

he called the school and told the disappointed students he would be back.

"We took him at his word when he said he'd come back," Hukill said. "It's a good lesson for children to learn, that when you make a promise, you keep it."

All of the fifth-graders who graduated last spring have been invited back to the school. About 1,500 chairs will be set up

on the playground for the ceremony.

Clinton was scheduled to arrive at 11:20 a.m. and stay for 30 minutes.

At 1:45 p.m. Friday, Clinton is scheduled to visit Pratt & Whitney, where he will tour the aircraft engine plant and discuss foreign trade policies. Later, Clinton is scheduled to go to a

private, \$10,000-per-couple fund-raiser in Boca Raton to support the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

On Saturday, he will attend a \$50,000-a-couple retreat on education, children's health, economic growth and foreign policy at the Ritz Carlton on Amelia Island, north of Jacksonville. ■

9. Baltimore Sun

October 29, 1997

Clinton continues push for national testing standards

He asks schools to stop promoting youths who can't make the grade

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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"Think about the thousands of Americans who are sitting in GED [general educational development]

classes today, struggling in literacy programs, standing in unemployment lines, who can tell you there is nothing more damaging to self-esteem than wanting a job and not being able to get one," Clinton said.

"If we adults send our children the right messages now, their self-esteem will not be harmed by an expression of love and hope for their future that prevents that sort of problem for them later on."

Clinton praised reforms begun by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who took control of the school system two years ago. Daley abolished the practice of promoting children for social reasons and required that students meet academic standards at certain grade levels.

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Clinton announced that he has directed the Department of Education to distribute guidelines on what is working in other cities, including San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York.

He said the department also would help local districts get better access to existing federal programs and resources, such as charter schools or his "America Reads" volunteer tutoring program, "to transform schools that are not performing into world-class learning centers."

The president is at odds with Congress over what will go into the fiscal 1998 spending bill covering Education Department programs.

Clinton is advocating voluntary national tests for reading and math, and a program that allows college work-study students to tutor children in reading. Republicans in Congress have rejected the tutoring program and have approved bills that would allow using federal spending or tax breaks to pay for school vouchers. ■

10. The Washington Post

10/29/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A01

Loan Abuses by Some Trade Schools Leave Taxpayers With Big Bill

By Charles R. Babcock
Washington Post Staff Writer

Every month, when Cynthia Reeder,

of Capitol Heights, writes a check to pay another installment on her \$7,400 in student loans, she chides herself for not being a little smarter in pursuing her education.

"I didn't get what I paid for," complained Reeder, 26, who will be repaying the money she borrowed five years ago until at least 2005. "I was naive."

ever, researchers said. More young people smoked last year than at any time in the 10 years of the survey.

Among high schoolers, 20 percent

said they were daily smokers, and half said they had smoked cigarettes in the past year, up 2 percent from the year

before. Smoking among junior high students remained steady, the report said. ■

7. The Washington Post

10/29/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A06

Clinton Praises Revived Chicago Schools as Examples for Nation

By Peter Baker
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton called on the nation's schools today to abolish "the destructive practice" of promoting students who have not learned enough and issued a directive intended to help districts improve failing schools or shut them down.

Visiting a local school, Clinton held up the revival of the long-troubled Chicago school system as a model for the nation, saying the keys to such a turnaround are high standards and accountability.

"Ending social promotion does not put children down," he told parents, teachers and students at Oscar Mayer Elementary School. "It gives us a chance to lift all children up. We are not punishing children by making sure they know what they need to know and that when they move from grade to grade it means something."

Passing students simply to make them feel good, Clinton added, is shortsighted. "I care a lot about the self esteem of the American people," he said. "But . . . there is nothing more damaging to self esteem than wanting a job and not being able to get one."

Clinton was in Chicago after flying in the night before to help Hillary Rodham Clinton celebrate her 50th birthday in her hometown. Before heading back to Washington, he thanked Mayor Richard M. Daley (D) for the first lady's daylong festivities by drawing a spotlight to Chicago school reform efforts.

The event also served as another prod to Congress to approve his plan to set up voluntary national education standards that would test all fourth-graders in reading and all eighth-graders in mathematics. House Republicans want to ban such tests on grounds they are redundant and a federal intrusion on local education authority. The issue is in the hands of a joint congressional conference committee that will meet Wednesday. Even if Clinton persuades Congress to go along, he still must win over skeptical state and local leaders who largely have been uninterested in signing up for the program. Just seven states and 15 major cities, including Chicago, have agreed to adopt the Clinton standards.

The directive Clinton signed today orders the Education Department to produce within 90 days new guidelines on effective strategies for fixing low-performing schools and inform cities and states how to tap federal resources

for help. Such a move could be interpreted by conservatives as another attempt to insert the federal government where it does not belong, into the decision-making of troubled school districts. White House officials said the guidelines would resemble similar documents the administration has prepared offering help to local districts in setting policies on school uniforms, truancy prevention and school prayer.

"The Education Department can provide a valuable service to districts in showing what models are working," said Bruce Reed, the president's chief domestic policy adviser. "These are not federal regulations. These are suggested reforms." A fact sheet distributed by the White House suggested that one such reform would be to "close down failing schools" but did not elaborate on when or how that should be done. Several districts across the nation have resorted to closing bad schools, building new staffs and curricula and reopening them.

"The point is not to shut them down and throw away the key," Reed said. "The point is to force failing schools to turn themselves around. . . . We want to encourage school districts to take drastic action." ■

8. The Miami Herald

October 29, 1997

School gets a makeup day with Clinton

JUPITER — (AP) — As he promised, President Clinton will visit Lighthouse Elementary School, the place he had hoped to see last March before a torn knee tendon ruined his plans.

Even though school was supposed to be closed Friday for a teacher planning

day, buses will pick up the 1,200 students at their regular times to see their special visitor.

"It will be a voluntary school day, but we expect to have 100 percent attendance," said principal Una Hukill, who spent Monday making plans with

White House and Secret Service staff.

Just hours before Clinton intended to visit the school in March, he stumbled at the nearby home of golfer Greg Norman, tearing a knee tendon.

As he waited for Air Force One to take him back to Washington for surgery.

computer-scanning equipment.

That means data on an estimated 1.2 million forms may have to be entered by hand, but ED says it doesn't expect any processing delays.

"Institutions can distribute these forms with the assurance that they will present no processing problem for students and no delay for students," said William Ryan, director of ED's Training and Program Information Division, in an electronic notice to the higher education community.

says.

A department spokeswoman said Friday that the private contractor overseeing the project is expected to adjust the scanning equipment so it can read the information.

ED uses a combination of computer scanning and manual key punching to record the data from the applications. It will continue to use the same methods on this year's forms, but may have to manually process the FAFSAs that were

in 1996 when computer glitches and federal furloughs led to a backup of nearly 1 million FAFSAs (ED, March 4, 1996).

ED is encouraging students to file their applications electronically through its Internet site at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>, or by downloading FAFSA Express software from <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/express.html>. — Rebecca S. Weiner■

17. Education Daily

October 28, 1997

ED GIVES THUMBS DOWN TO GOP DEAL ON TESTS

The fate of President Clinton's voluntary national testing plan remained in limbo yesterday as a congressional proposal was rejected by the administration.

Capital Hill sources yesterday stressed that GOP leaders have yet to agree on a compromise on one of Congress's thorniest issues: how and whether to implement Clinton's plan for a voluntary test to gauge reading and math progress.

Existing Test Eyed

Some news accounts, however, have said Republican congressional leaders agreed late Friday to scrap the Clinton plan and study whether an existing, commercially available test could be adapted as a national assessment of student progress in reading and math.

The study would be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Governors' Association and the

National Conference of State Legislatures.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, told the Washington Post that the plan, which he floated, got a "fairly good response" from some senators and "it is as far as we can possibly go in the House."

Goodling was not available for comment yesterday and his spokesman wouldn't confirm that such a deal was even offered.

As part of its version of the fiscal 1998 education funding bill, the House voted to ban ED from further developing the exams for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. The Senate-passed spending bill, however, would allow the tests to go forward under the auspices of a reconfigured National Assessment Governing Board (ED, Oct.

10).

White House: No Go

Even if Republicans in Congress did okay that compromise, the Clinton administration would not.

"That's not something that would be acceptable to us," said Education Department spokesman David Frank.

The national testing plank is the main education issue holding up the fiscal 1998 spending bill—now three weeks overdue—which also funds labor and health programs. Clinton signed a stop-gap funding bill that will keep government agencies, including ED, running until Nov. 7.

House and Senate negotiators are scheduled to meet late tomorrow to continue hammering out an agreement not only on testing but on funding levels for major ED programs.

Appropriations committee sources

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said negotiators have agreed on funding levels, but wouldn't disclose them. — Laureen Lazarovici■

18. Education Daily

October 28, 1997

NO TITLE IX SCHOOL LIABILITY FOR HARASSMENT, COURT SAYS

students to tutor children in reading. Republicans in Congress have rejected the tutoring program, and have approved bills that would allow using federal spending or tax breaks to pay for school vouchers.

The president was in Chicago for 50th birthday celebrations for first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, a Chicago native. Because today's speech was considered part of his presidential duties, the cost of the trip was borne by taxpayers.

Mrs. Clinton also was talking about education today, before the College Board's national forum. She was receiving the group's Medal for Distinguished Service to Education.

Clinton paused Monday night to talk about the first time he visited Chicago with his future wife in the 1970s. He said he remembered two aspects of the visit: the tour of the city that Hillary Diane Rodham gave him, and the hard time he got from her father, Hugh Rodham.

"Her father would not come outside to say hello to me, which I thought showed good judgment on his part," the president joked during a birthday fete for Mrs. Clinton at the Chicago Cultural Center, the fourth party thrown for her in as many days.

Mrs. Clinton, however, said her father was "very strict and very hard on other people, particularly boys," but was

not as unaccepting of Clinton as he seemed in the 1970s, when his daughter came home with "this boy from Arkansas" in tow.

"My father did not know what to make of him," the first lady said earlier Monday, as she reminisced outside the suburban Park Ridge house where she grew up.

But the future president cranked up the charisma, and "my father was totally charmed within three days by Bill Clinton," the first lady said. "We sat on the front porch and people started streaming in to get to know him and get to meet him."

By Sonya Ross ■

12. Tulsa World

October 28, 1997

Istook's Testing Proposal Draws GOP Ire

By Jim Myers

World Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A proposal by U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook, whose staunch support of GOP ideas appeared beyond question, is drawing fire from other House conservatives, including fellow Oklahoma Republican Rep. Tom Coburn.

Coburn and others fear that Istook's compromise language on national testing is yet the latest example of the House caving in on a controversial issue.

"No national testing! No compromise!" urges their flier. "Do not forsake the children of today, the leaders of tomorrow!" What has sparked such strong language is President Clinton's proposal to create a uniform test for measuring reading and math skills. The Senate already has staked out a compromise position by voting to allow the national testing proposal to move forward but under supervision of an independent board. Republicans in the House, however, want nothing of the Clinton proposal. With key support from Democrats, the GOP-led House approved language by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, killing

funding for Clinton's proposal. Goodling's provisions were attached to an \$80 billion spending bill for education, labor and health programs. That bill is now in a House-Senate conference on which Istook serves. As only a "fallback" position, Istook has come up with language that would kill funding for developing the test, which is Goodling's position, but also would allow states already doing such testing to pay for it with federal funds. Istook's language would also allow local control of the testing program, while Clinton's program calls for federal control. Istook and Coburn were unavailable for comment on the matter. Istook's aide Kristy Khachigian said the congressman also has been frustrated with the House's history of caving in to the Senate on controversial issues. Khachigian said Istook still supports the Goodling position. "He hasn't put anything on the table that does not include the Goodling language," she said. Apparently that is not good enough for Coburn and the others. In addition to the flier to House members, they have taken their opposition to his compromise public, hoping to build pressure on Istook and the other conferees to stand firm. Jay

Diskey, a Goodling aide, would not comment on Istook's proposal, citing the ongoing conference. Goodling, in past statements, has indicated that he is looking for a compromise. He views the Clinton plan as a "folly" and waste of money. Jason Whiting, an aide to Rep. John Shadegg, R-Ariz., who is spearheading the effort against Istook's approach, said it is viewed as a "first step" toward implementing national testing. Stakes are high. Clinton has vowed to veto the spending bill if it comes to him with the Goodling language. Senate Republicans so far have had no stomach for such showdowns. Meanwhile, Clinton and other Democrats have tried to use the Goodling approach as proof that the Republicans are more than willing to walk away from public education. Khachigian said Istook views his proposal as a "sugar and pill" approach that would give the president enough of a reason to sign the bill even with the Goodling language attached. She would not say whether those criticizing Istook's compromise misunderstood his motives. "He is proposing a solution," Khachigian said. ■

refused to back down on his plans to restructure an education system that he says costs too much to run and has allowed academic standards to slide. "There's enough money being wasted that we still should be able to find some

to work.

Teachers said they had gone on strike reluctantly. "I'm very gentle and mild-mannered and law-abiding, but I will stand here for as long as it takes," said Rose Mais, a special education

south of Toronto. Robin DiMarco kept her two grade-school children home.

"Initially I was annoyed because it is an illegal strike," she said. "But I don't think the government should have total control in the classroom." ■

6. The New York Times

10/28/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 18, Column 1

Clinton Moves to Help Improve Schools That Perform Poorly

By JOHN M. BRODER

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27 — President Clinton will order the **Department of Education** to help cities and states find ways to deal with failing schools, using existing programs to improve them or, as a last resort, shutting them down, Administration officials said today.

White House aides said Mr. Clinton planned to announce the edict on Tuesday at a school in Chicago, which has taken tough measures against schools that fail to meet the city's academic standards.

The President will also highlight Chicago's policy against social promotions, in which students are advanced from one grade level to the next without regard to whether they have mastered class material. The city is holding back as many as a third of its ninth graders because they cannot meet standards for advancing to high school.

Mr. Clinton's words and actions come against a backdrop of a battle with Congress over his effort to set nationwide standards for math and reading performance. The President is

threatening to veto the appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education unless it provides financing of his proposal for voluntary testing of fourth and eighth graders as a way of identifying underperforming school districts.

The directive to the Department of Education will give officials there 90 days to draw up voluntary guidelines that assist communities in identifying substandard schools and recommend steps to improve them.

"We have to get more serious about school accountability," said a White House education policy adviser who insisted on anonymity. "None of the things we're trying to do at the Federal level will work if we don't hold schools accountable for results."

The Administration is committing no new money to the failing-schools initiative. Nor does the Federal Government have the power to interfere in a local school district's decisions on personnel, curriculum or facilities.

But a draft of the directive says the Department of Education will use

existing resources to "help and encourage more states and cities to develop sound, comprehensive approaches to turn around low-performing schools and help students in them get a better education."

It notes that current Federal programs can be used to pay for tutoring, after-school programs, summer instruction and supplemental teacher training.

"Together, these initiatives can help local school districts turn failing schools into successful schools," the draft directive says.

The Presidential order draws on Chicago as a model. The city's school system, now under the authority of a chief executive appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, intervenes forcefully when it identifies a low-achieving school.

The intermediate steps range from putting a school on probation to replacing the principal. If those measures fail to improve a school's performance, the city has the authority to close it down and send students to other schools. ■

to create tax-free savings accounts for education. Opponents claim that this legislation would threaten public schools. In reality, however, it does nothing more than help parents give their children a leg up.

The legislation, passed last week by the House, would allow parents to put as much as \$2,500 a year, per child, into savings accounts. These funds could be withdrawn for education-related expenses, including tuition, tutoring, home computers, S.A.T. preparation, transportation costs and school books and supplies.

Opponents claim that this modest proposal is an attempt to destroy the public school system. But these accounts are intended to assist children in public schools as well as those in private schools.

the way from kindergarten to college. Parents may also use their savings to pay for tutoring expenses. For parents struggling with new technology (and having a hard time with children's homework) or who are working two jobs (and who may have little time to help their children), this kind of tax relief is important.

As children grow older, parents could use their savings to pay for S.A.T. review courses, which have become increasingly expensive. Once a child is in college, the account could be used to pay for expenses like tuition and books.

Those who argue that 'savings accounts would shift scarce Federal dollars from public schools to private schools are being disingenuous. This plan does not call for any less money to

for private school tuition. But by giving parents such a choice we are encouraging the public school system to improve itself. Money is continuously poured into the education system's coffers, and it still hasn't been able to produce the quality product that we expect — an educated work force.

The tax-free savings accounts won't fix the nation's education system, but they give parents an easy way to augment their children's education.

It is my firm belief that these accounts, coupled with real reform and choice in the public school system, will help prepare American students for global competition.

About the Author: Floyd H. Flake, a Democrat, is a United States Representative from Queens. ■

48. New York Newsday

10-26-97

The president wants to test the reading and math skills of 4th and 8th graders nationwide

Patrick G. Halpin. Patrick G. Halpin is co-executive director of the Institute for Community Development, a not-for-profit organization providing academic programs and counseling for underachieving public school students.

LESS THAN a generation ago, a strong back and a willingness to work were adequate qualifications for a job on an automobile assembly line. For the men and women who build the cars we drive today, a college education and mastery of computer chip-driven robotics is the minimal standard. Most well paying jobs require the abstract reasoning, mathematical and problem solving skills that once were exclusively associated with the best trained and educated in our society.

For the school children who will raise their families, earn their livings and lead

our country in the 21st Century, the question awaiting a national consensus is: What standard will be minimal for them? The debate that is roaring over national education standards and their inevitable companion - national testing - threatens to obscure the promise we must keep to all children: the unequivocal assurance that we provide each and every student with the tools needed to perform to the best of their ability. We need look no further than the pages of this newspaper for the disturbing evidence that we simply are not doing the job.

President Bill Clinton has proposed that all states adopt a national set of education standards. He also proposes that states voluntarily participate in a national reading test for graders as well as a national mathematics exam for graders. These tests would show how

well all American students are doing based on the same standard and the same test. I submit that without acting upon the information these exams provide, they are nothing more than add-ons to the alphabet soup of tests (CAT, MAT, SAT, ACT, PEP, ESPET, PET, etc.) our kids are already taking. As teachers know, test what you teach and teach what you test, but what you do with the results makes all the difference - especially to kids at risk.

For those students at risk of turning off and dropping out, for those who are not making the grade, for those whose learning style may not fit the mold, and for those whose own expectations for success are defied by society's low expectations of them, what must be done is clear. It must be done before another test is devised or administered. For these

students to have a chance to meet and exceed the highest educational standards and to become productive contributors to society - we must commit our educational system to critical, positive change in the way we school our children.

The kind of change I am talking about is already taking place in several school districts throughout New York State. The Board of Regents has established future graduation requirements that challenge districts to help every child achieve not a minimum standard, but individual mastery. Schools like Hempstead's Alverta B. Schultz Middle School and the Satellite III Academy in Brooklyn have implemented validated programs that give students more time in school (a longer school day and year), plus the academic and counseling support they need to meet high standards. This has worked so well that the commissioner of education removed Hempstead's middle school from the State's SURR list (Schools Under Registration Review).

In this and other districts where these programs (called COMET and STAR) are working, every student graduates from high school and 96 percent go on to college. There's no reason that can't be duplicated if we invest the needed time, resources and imagination. We must ensure all children that if and when a national test measures how well they meet national standards, none of them will be left behind. That is a far more sensible, long-range approach than simply instituting another round of tests for our students to take.

OTHER VOICES

I am in favor of national standardized tests for fourth and eighth-graders. My concern is whether the results of a national test will ever assist with the improvement of instruction. Provided that we receive the results and analysis in a timely manner, we could make adjustments in our curriculum and instruction. This [proposal] is

educationally sound and is needed to inform our staff, students and parents about how our students measure up against national standards.

- *Nathaniel Clay, superintendent of Hempstead Public Schools*

I see nothing wrong with the use of standardized testing as an indicator of our nation's progress in education. But based on observations of my own school district, I do not believe that our nation is ready to benefit from the insight that such an index might provide. If districts are not willing to separate students based on need, allowing some to move faster or slower than the average pupil through the various scholastic curricula, then the valuable data collected from such testing will go to waste. Schools are responsible for students of varying intellectual ability, and any information that allows them to separate such students, as standardized testing has the potential to do, will help all of the students learn more.

- *Scott Shechtman, a senior at Great Neck North High School and editor of the Guide Post, a student newspaper*

My real concern is that the president made a speech that is strong on policy and short on details. Who is the federal government going to bring together from across the country to determine what the federal standards should be? Federal funding in general to elementary and secondary schools over the years has declined. If there's no funding along with these new requirements, then the local property taxpayer is going to have to do it. We'd like to spend more time working on staff development programs improving instruction. If we constantly test our kids, when are we going to do these other things? It's like speaking against motherhood to say that kids shouldn't be able to perform at a certain level. But I'm not sure that the way to make that happen is to test them again.

- *Howard Koenig, superintendent of Central Islip Schools*

On the Island you become very jaded about testing - you expect the kids in the majority of school districts to do very well. Yet there are kids who may be falling through the cracks. If we could assess where the problems lie, then we could begin to make education a priority in our country. I'm in favor of some form of testing but I don't know if you could apply the same standard nationwide. No child should come out of a high school in the United States reading at a fourth-grade level.

- *Ginger Lieberman, president of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Board of Education*

Compared to the rest of the world we're behind in reading comprehension and math. In fourth grade, students are reading to learn rather than learning to read. If we're still working on teaching them how to decode [words], then they're going to fall behind. When students leave third grade, they should be fluent. I think there should be a standardized reading test in third grade. Kids who fail should be retained. [National testing] would be a good thing if those students who needed help or were at risk received some kind of services along the way.

- *Lynne Camacho, fourth-grade teacher at John M. Marshall Elementary School in East Hampton*

We would have to see how this national testing reflected what we believe is important in teaching mathematics. We have moved away from computation to some degree - it's still important - but the Regents now requires students taking the ninth-grade test to have calculators. Our state's schools have moved more toward problem-solving and applications. Eighth-grade is a good point to test kids. I would hope that we embrace it and see what other states think is important so we could learn from that.

- *Joseph Quartararo, kindergarten through 12th-grade math coordinator for the Northport-East Northport school district*

17. Education Daily

October 27, 1997 Category: Trade

NO COMPROMISE IN SIGHT ON NATIONAL TESTS, BUDGET

As congressional leaders tried to broker a deal on national tests behind closed doors Friday, both supporters and opponents dug in their heels, indicating that the issue was nowhere near resolution.

Although Congress aims to adjourn in early November, "We are willing to stay here until Christmas," declared Rep. Steve Largent, R-Okla., at a news conference called by conservative House Republicans opposed to President

Clinton's plan to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

"That's okay with me," shot back Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., at a dueling news conference with Democratic supporters of the tests in the Senate.

"We don't intend to allow a few folks on Capitol Hill to say this program will never see the light of day," added Sen.

Byron Dorgan, D-N.D.

The Associated Press reported late Friday that GOP leaders have agreed to

block the tests, but House sources were not available to confirm the information.

The House's version of the fiscal 1998 education funding bill, H.R. 2264, would ban further development of the assessments, while the Senate bill, S. 1061, would let them go forward under a reconfigured national governing board (ED, Oct. 10).

Testing opponents in the House stress that the test ban passed with a veto-proof 295-125 majority, while testing backers

in the Senate have enough support to filibuster any compromise that blocks the plan.

The rivals traded barbs over who would be to blame for a potential government shutdown. The spending bill already is nearly a month overdue.

"The House conferees should stand

firm," said Rep. Tom Coburn, R-Okla. "We should say no to the president and no to the Senate."

And in a speech Friday on improving teacher certification, Clinton repeated his pledge to veto any education spending bill that bars movement on the national tests.

House and Senate conferees are to meet again tomorrow on the spending bill.

Besides settling the testing controversy, they also have to compromise on spending levels for major Education Department programs (ED, Oct. 9). —Laureen Lazarovici

18. Education Daily

October 27, 1997 Category: Trade

ED LETS PARENTS, STUDENTS CONTEST IDEA GRADUATION

High school graduation is one of the proudest moments in a parent's life.

It also is a "change in placement" under new special education regulations proposed by the Education Department last week (ED, Oct. 22).

The rules aimed at carrying out revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would deem graduation a change of placement requiring prior written notice to the parents and, when proper, the disabled student. That's because graduating ends the student's eligibility for a free, appropriate public education (FAPE).

Awarding placebo documents, like certificates of attendance, would not terminate the disabled student's right to FAPE, the rule adds.

Furthermore, ED's proposed regulations say a reevaluation would be required before graduation "since graduation changes the student's eligibility status."

What's Going On? Advocates for schools are asking about ED's proposal to let parents contest graduation, a rule that appears to have no corresponding authority in the law.

"That simply won't hold up," predicted Bruce Hunter, lobbyist for the

general counsel to the National School Boards Association, said she has "never seen anything like that" in IDEA itself.

Overriding Parental Concerns There are two main concerns that families have regarding graduation, said Patti Smith, executive director of the National Parent Network on Disabilities, who stressed that she has not seen the specific provision.

First, a disabled child should be able to participate in graduation ceremonies but not lose the right to additional years of schooling, such as vocational training, if needed, she said. Second, a parent should have the right to contest a school's

6. USA Today

October 27, 1997

School testing may survive congressional ax

By Tamara Henry
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON - Congress on Tuesday is expected to kill President Clinton's proposal to develop voluntary national tests for reading and math. But that political fight, educators say, will only accelerate, not hamper, efforts to raise state standards.

Congressional leaders appeared close to a compromise Friday when Rep. William F. Goodling, R-Pa., offered an alternative: use a consortium of national groups to develop a new measure based on various commercial standardized tests.

Clinton, however, wants federal

testing for all fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. He has threatened to veto anything less.

The testing proposal is part of the bill setting the budget for the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. The House eliminated the tests from its bill, but the Senate kept it. Goodling's alternative, apparently supported by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott R-Miss., will be debated Tuesday as House and Senate negotiators seek a compromise.

"When the smoke clears, we are going to have some sort of testing system," predicts Richard Long of the

International Reading Association. He says this will "put a mirror up to" parents who tell Gallup Polls they are satisfied with their own children's schools but denigrate all others. It will also challenge schools' claims "to have high standards" and be doing a good job when their test results are not compared with those in other states.

With national testing, says American Federation of Teachers president Sandra Feldman, "I think the states will start competing with each other for the highest standards, and that's good." ■

7. Baltimore Sun

October 25, 1997

Congress rejects Clinton's testing plan for students

House, Senate GOP eye another method to survey progress on reading, math

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — House and Senate Republican leaders agreed yesterday to block President Clinton's national education tests but agreed to study an alternative way for children to learn how they are doing in reading and math.

However, Clinton said he would veto any bill that stops his testing plan and accused the Republicans of wanting the government to "walk away" from public schooling.

The GOP decision to block his testing plan could further escalate the battle between Clinton and Republicans over education. But the Republicans' agreement to study an alternative could offer a way out.

The measure is included in an \$80 billion spending bill for the Education, Labor and Health and Human Services departments.

"If there's any attempt in Congress to kill this effort at national standards and voluntary testing, I will have to veto it," Clinton told teachers visiting the White House.

Republicans, he said, "are ready to raise the white flag and abandon public schools."

Sparring between the White House and Congress over education has intensified. House Republicans have passed bills that would use direct federal spending or tax breaks to pay for private and public schools. And they have rejected his call for an army of volunteer reading tutors.

Under the testing agreement, the current spending bill would force the **Education Department** to cancel its \$13 million contract to develop the tests, scheduled to start in 1999.

Instead, the National Academy of Sciences, National Governors' Association and National Conference of State Legislatures would study whether existing commercial tests that are widely given could be adapted to give students an idea of whether they are meeting basic levels of achievement in those two core subjects.

Those tests, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, now rate students against a moving average, not a fixed standard that

the administration wants.

The administration wants tests based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is given to a sampling of students to track their progress.

The study would have to be finished by March 31, 1998.

A Senate leadership aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the agreement should satisfy the administration's desire for a uniform measure of children's achievement, so they can know how they are doing no matter where they live. However, the aide said GOP leaders had not discussed their agreement with the White House.

"This is what we think we can do, and fairly meets the administration's concerns and is not a political in-your-face," the aide said.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Newt Gingrich said the agreement was not final.

The Senate aide said opponents were worried that the tests would be used to create a national curriculum. ■

Governors' Association and the National Conference on State Legislatures to develop a new measure of student performance next year based on the test scores of commercially available standardized tests.

Goodling, the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and a leading critic of national testing, said his proposal received a "fairly good response" from Senate members, including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), adding that "it is as far as we can possibly go in the House."

month to stop the tests from even being developed as part of a \$269 billion labor, health, human services and education spending bill for fiscal 1998.

But the Senate has approved a modified version of Clinton's plan that would shift the management of the tests away from the Education Department to an independent, bipartisan board. House and Senate conferees are scheduled to meet Tuesday to try to resolve their differences.

Clinton has made national testing a

He wants fourth-graders to take a test in reading, and eighth-graders to take one in math. The testing proposal is voluntary for states. So far, seven have pledged to use the tests.

But many Republican lawmakers say the tests would lead to excessive federal control over school curriculum. "A one-size-fits-all test will necessarily steal from parents, teachers and students the ability to control their curriculum . . . because what is tested is what is taught," said Rep. John Shadegg (R-Ariz.).■

5. The Kansas City Star

10/25/97; Edition: METROPOLITAN; Section: NATIONAL/WORLD; Page A1

Education vouchers, Clinton goals clash

Who should control education: Parents or federal government?

By JAMES KUHNHENN

Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON - Not so long ago, Virginia Walden says, her son William was headed for a perilous life in the streets of northeast Washington. "He was bound and determined to become a hoodlum," she says.

Today, thanks to a family friend who rounded up enough money for tuition, 15-year-old William Walden is in a parochial school, running track, studying his schoolbooks, staying out of trouble.

And Virginia Walden, a 46-year-old unemployed single mother and unabashed Democrat, is busy agitating for a Republican plan that will give 2,000 other needy District of Columbia children the same chance as her son.

Priced at \$7 million, the pilot program would offer \$3,200 scholarships or vouchers at taxpayer expense so even

families with incomes at nearly twice the poverty level could send their children to private or religious schools.

But the voucher plan is in a tug of war with another education initiative - President Clinton's proposal for a national exam to measure math and reading competency.

The struggle epitomizes the current debate over school reform: Should the federal government expand its role in public education or should parents be given more choices for their children?

The national tests are the first step toward establishing the president's vision of national education standards, a controversial goal that critics say would lead to a national curriculum.

At the same time, a Washington-based voucher plan could turn the capital into a high-profile experiment in public subsidies for private schools, the reform

of choice for many conservatives.

For the past week, the Clinton administration and Democratic congressional allies have mounted an assault on the voucher proposal while promoting the national test plan. The president has threatened to veto the District of Columbia spending bill if it contains money for vouchers.

In the U.S. Senate, meanwhile, Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri is leading a Republican offensive against the national tests. With Congress facing a Nov. 7 deadline for passing all spending bills, Ashcroft has promised to filibuster the appropriation for labor, health and human services and education if it contains money for the test plan.

On Friday, it appeared that congressional leaders had agreed to take the money out - a move that could trigger a presidential veto.

Away from the halls of Congress, some, like Virginia Walden, wonder what all the fuss is about.

"My thing is let's do both," she said as she sat in the dining room of her neat but spare brick duplex. "Let's do the vouchers. Let's bring the test scores up. Let's fix the schools."

Foes of both approaches

Others, such as the school superintendents represented by the American Association of School Administrators, would prefer to do neither.

"Superintendents in general do not believe another test will give us much that is new or helpful," said Bruce Hunter, the association's chief lobbyist. And school vouchers, he said, "are a terrible public policy mistake."

Voucher critics, which also include teachers unions, the National Parent Teacher Association and the NAACP, say that at best vouchers won't help low-income children and at worst will racially and economically isolate students and undermine public education.

In the Washington metropolitan area, 84 private schools charge less than \$3,400 a year in tuition, according to the independent Washington Scholarship Fund.

But National Education Association President Bob Chase argues that no voucher system guarantees children their choice of schools. And the National PTA wonders who will transport children who can't afford their way to a school.

The voucher idea, though, has adherents throughout the country, particularly among Christian conservatives. It also has found support among some poor parents in inner cities where public schools are physically crumbling and educationally adrift.

It's easy to understand the anxieties of low-income Washington families. District of Columbia schools were forced to open three weeks late this fall because of construction and maintenance flaws. And just this week children had to sit bundled up in unheated classroom as school officials acknowledged they might have to shut down 46 of the city's 144 schools to install new boilers.

Sen. Sam Brownback, chairman of the Senate subcommittee that oversees the District of Columbia and a leading voucher advocate, said he ultimately

wants a voucher system that would give all needy Washington families a choice between private and public schools. The current plan only covers a few of the 78,000 students in the D.C. district.

"We're convinced the only way to improve the public school system is to increase competition," the Kansas Republican said.

Brownback, whose ally in the voucher program is Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, dismisses warnings that the District of Columbia voucher plan is "the camel's nose under the tent" that will lead to a national voucher program. "I don't support the federal government starting models throughout the country," he said.

While states have the right to create their own voucher programs, Washington schools are uniquely positioned for a federal program because the school district is financed exclusively with federal money.

While voucher advocates such as Brownback insist they support public schools and are not interested in privatizing education, other conservatives and libertarians hope vouchers are the first step toward getting government - including states - out of the business of educating children.

"Vouchers bring us a considerable distance toward our goal of a complete separation of school and state," Joseph Bast, president of the Heartland Institute, and David Harmer, an architect of California's 1993 educational choice initiative effort, wrote in a policy analysis for the libertarian Cato Institute. Test of public education

Clinton's national test proposal is the antithesis of such a view.

On Friday, Clinton renewed his call for the fourth-grade reading and eight-grade math exams and said he would veto any attempt in Congress to kill them.

"Through voluntary national standards, parents and teachers can make sure that all their children in all of our schools get the skills they need," Clinton said in a speech to the centrist Democratic Leadership Council.

Advocates say national standards and testing will give public education accountability that will let parents and taxpayers measure how well their schools are using public money.

"When the test is given, there are going to be a lot of just disappointed and concerned people," Education Secretary Richard Riley said Monday. "That's when the system reacts to the test, and the parents say: 'Wait a minute, my child is in the fourth grade and can hardly read.' Then the school district and the school, and all, come together."

But the testing idea is on bumpy ground. Conservatives such as Ashcroft say it will inevitably lead to a national curriculum that will give parents less, not more, control over their children's education.

Ashcroft has been on something of a crusade against the Clinton plan, launching into an hour and 45 minute Senate floor speech on the subject Wednesday and delivering a scathing appraisal of testing before the conservative Heritage Foundation on Thursday.

"Once federal tests are in place, every teacher will start teaching the test," he said. "Children will know what federal bureaucrats want them to know. Federalized testing is a Trojan horse; hidden inside is national control of curriculum and teaching methods."

Advocates dismiss such fears as exaggerations. They maintain that voluntary testing in two skill areas such as math and reading do not constitute a national curriculum.

But Clinton also has liberal critics who say national tests and standards will have a disproportionately negative effect on poor or minority students. Educators in school districts with large Hispanic populations also have complained about initial plans to administer the reading test only in English.

In the Senate, Ashcroft has obtained 35 signatures from fellow senators backing his stance against testing. All of them are Republican.

At the Walden household, however, those debates are academic. "I don't care about the politics," Walden said.

Hunter, the lobbyist for the association of school administrators, says the partisanship displayed on vouchers and testing reflects the desire by Democrats and Republicans to be the party of education.

"It's good for both parties because it draws money and passion," he said. "But at its core, it's not a party issue." ■

7. Associated Press

10-24 11:17a

Clinton accuses Republicans of neglecting education

WASHINGTON (AP) - Defending his plans for the nation's schools, President Clinton suggested today that congressional Republicans want the government to "do next to nothing in education."

His speech to educators on the South Lawn highlighted the administration's push to persuade teachers to seek additional certifications and become "master teachers."

It was the latest in a series of White House events to counter Republican

attacks on Clinton's education package, which includes literacy training, establishing uniform tests for measuring reading and math skills and linking more schools to the Internet.

Republicans have blocked the literacy proposal until the dispute over the national tests is resolved. They say the tests are unnecessary, the money could be better spent and testing should be controlled by local school officials.

"It is a choice between those who look at the challenge of public education and throw up their hands and those who, like

you, try to role up their sleeves," Clinton told an audience that included certified master teachers.

In a veiled reference to GOP proposals for vouchers that could be used for public and private school tuition, Clinton said, "There is no quick fix. There is no single proposal that will magically give all our children the education that they need."

"There are those who say that the federal government should do next to nothing in education," Clinton said. ■

8. The Washington Post

10/24/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A16

President Announces Child-Care Initiatives *Scholarship, Wage Plan Proposed at Conference*

By Barbara Vobejda

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton yesterday proposed a \$300 million program of scholarships to improve the training and raise the wages of day-care workers and promised to unveil early next year a broader plan to improve child care across the country.

The proposal was among several offered by the president at a day-long White House conference on child care, where numerous experts described a system suffering from poor quality, high costs and a lack of accessible care, particularly for infants and school-age children.

"Too often, child care is unaffordable, inaccessible and sometimes even unsafe," Clinton said. "Even for those who can afford it, sometimes good care is hard to find."

The conference, which brought together state and federal officials, business leaders and child-care advocates, is the first high-profile effort to find solutions to a problem affecting millions of American families.

Several national studies have documented that most of the care provided in centers and in providers' homes is mediocre or even poor quality. Experts attribute that to several factors, including lack of training and low pay among workers, which leads to high

turnover rates.

At the same time, the cost of child care presents an enormous financial burden to many families and federal-state subsidies are reaching only about one-tenth of those who are eligible.

Advocates have argued that only a major investment by government or the private sector can address the fundamental problem — parents simply cannot afford to pay the cost of high-quality care.

But the president and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has played a leading role in the administration's efforts to focus on child care, suggested that a large-scale federal program was not the answer. Instead, they explored solutions that relied more on public-private partnerships and efforts by businesses to help make child care more available to their workers.

In addition to the scholarship program, the president proposed legislation that would make it easier to conduct background checks on child-care providers, announced the formation of a group of business leaders to spur private investment in child care and said volunteers in the Corporation for National Service would help improve after-school care programs.

Clinton said he would unveil in his State of the Union speech in January a more comprehensive plan to improve

access, affordability and safety of child care.

Aides said the administration would consider increasing federal funding to states to help low-income parents pay for care. Also, the White House will look at expanding the dependent care tax credit, which allows some families to claim a credit on their income tax for child-care expenses up to a certain level.

Bruce Reed, the president's domestic policy adviser, also cited the possibility of creating a tax benefit to encourage businesses to help provide child care.

The scholarship proposal, which will be included in the president's budget package next year, would provide at least \$250 million in federal funds over five years.

State, local or private sources would contribute one dollar for every four federal dollars they received, bringing the total to about \$300 million. The money would be used by states to design programs to help providers earn credits toward an early-childhood education credential, certificate or college degree. A portion of the scholarship fund would go to increase wages or pay a bonus when workers complete their course work.

The proposal is modeled on a North Carolina program known as TEACH, which was designed not only to improve the training of providers but to reduce

8. The Washington Times

10/21/97; Edition: 2; Section: A; THE DUMBING DOWN OF AMERICA; Page A1

Which solution for schools? Educators agree change is needed, to repair system

BY Carol Innerst

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

There have been "reforms" aplenty in American public schools over the past 15 years. But the only thing that reformers agree on today is that more change is needed - to fix what is widely perceived to be a "dumbed-down" educational system.

You can pick from any number of proffered solutions:

School-choice programs.

State takeovers.

New teaching practices.

Improved teacher training.

Higher academic standards.

National achievement standards.

All have been tried or adopted at one time or another, in various guises, and in different places. Some work in some places; some don't work anywhere. But the public agitation for change and improvement continues to build even as the "solutions" proliferate.

Listen:

"A necessary part of the solution is a return to content," says E.D. Hirsch Jr., University of Virginia professor and author of the best seller "Cultural Literacy."

"We also need teachers to teach reading to everybody by first grade - none of this pious 'by third grade' stuff," adds Mr. Hirsch, founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation and developer of the "core knowledge curriculum."

The Hirsch curriculum, which rejects the faddism so prevalent in education today, has been adopted by Maryland's Calvert County for grades K-8 systemwide and in other pioneering school districts.

"We're phasing it into the middle schools - the first in the nation to do so," says Superintendent of Schools William J. Moloney.

Core Knowledge provides a guideline

for what students should know in each grade and in each subject area: mathematics, language arts, American and world history, geography, science and fine arts. It lists specific topics to cover in each grade, and teachers can build on the knowledge base from the previous year with little repetition and no gaps.

Detractors say the content is too difficult for young students, but the sequential, building-block curriculum is spreading across the country. It appeals to parents who believe most schools have abandoned the transmission of knowledge and facts to teach vague "skills."

Early evidence shows an improvement in Calvert's test scores, but it's too soon after only two years to show a direct correlation to the curriculum, Mr. Moloney says.

Other education reformers argue for better-educated teachers, higher standards, more accountability and choice.

"Put highly educated teachers in every classroom," says Diane Ravitch, education historian and senior research fellow at New York University. "That's a big reform, and it has never happened."

A July report from the Department of Education said 36 percent of teachers in public schools are teaching a subject in which they have neither a college major nor a minor.

"People with no background are teaching about something they know nothing about," notes Miss Ravitch, a former assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration.

"Many things need to change, but the first thing is that educators as well as parents need a clear understanding that the role of a teacher is authoritative . . ." she adds. "When you have declining standards for teachers, declining

standards for students follow as inevitably as night follows day."

Says Chris Greeson, a mother in North Carolina: "The standard should be that students ought to be able to do 12th-grade work in 12th grade. Now eighth-grade work is acceptable to graduate from high school in North Carolina. My daughter graduated with eight kids who couldn't read their diploma."

As she sees it, schools have become so fearful of crushing a child's self-esteem that they lower standards to help them succeed.

"My mother taught high school 32 years, and in her last years of teaching she couldn't flunk anybody," Mrs. Greeson recalls.

"We need higher standards," agrees William J. Bennett, co-director of Empower America and education secretary in the Reagan administration. "We need teeth in those standards, and accountability. People are going to have to meet them or they do not graduate or get a diploma."

Mr. Bennett criticizes a Clinton administration effort to assess educational progress through national testing, adding that he is considering developing his own test to spur higher school standards.

"If tests are set to the norm, the entire country can be going down the tubes because there are no objective standards," Mr. Bennett argues. "I would like to have a voluntary test with standards that individuals, schools, districts and states could buy. Then publicize it so people get furious about low performance."

He calls colleges and universities "the major culprits" because they have lowered their admission standards."

"So when good teachers say to students that if they don't do well they won't be able to go to college, the

colleges and universities make a mockery of it because 90 percent of them accept anybody."

Chester E. Finn Jr., senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and assistant secretary of education in the Reagan administration, insists: "There must be two-directional accountability for schools - upward to a chartering authority or public bodies that set standards and administer tests with consequences attached to tests; and downward to customers and to a choice mechanism so nobody gets trapped against his will in a bad school."

Mr. Finn notes that ideas that lead to dumping down are pervasive in the education establishment and have ideological and philosophical roots. Exposing those bad ideas helps, he says, and so does giving people alternatives such as charter schools that are not obliged to adopt these fads.

Government vouchers and school choice for low-income children will force failing inner-city public schools to shape up, according to Annette "Polly" Williams, a black Democratic Wisconsin state legislator who helped push through the state's school choice program - the first in the country that included private schools.

The program, though still facing court battles, has been operating for seven years for about 1,600 of Milwaukee's

poorest children.

Mrs. Williams stresses that she supports school choice only for low-income families, to give them the same options available to families who can afford to pay private school tuition or to move to a neighborhood with quality public schools.

"At most, 10 to 15 percent of families will opt out of public schools," she says. "The overwhelming majority of low-income families will still be in public schools."

Even so, the fact that the choice approach allows some families to abandon public schools was "terrifying" to the public school bureaucracy, she says.

"But instead of changing the product to make it better, they are using force to try to stop parents, using lawsuits to stop children from leaving."

"The unions have a stranglehold on {elementary and secondary} public education based on their need to keep teachers employed, whether they are bad teachers or not. The unions have got to wake up and smell the coffee."

There are other issues that need to be addressed in improving the quality of education, says Mrs. Williams.

One is that the teachers and administrators in urban systems currently don't expect poor, minority children to learn and feel it's a waste of resources to

throw money at them. Educators also don't respect the children because they don't have money or influence, she says.

"That's why we try to empower low-income families with our choice program. People will get more respect when they have some money."

The \$4,300 average voucher that the state gives to poor Milwaukee children participating in the school choice program "buys respect," according to Mrs. Williams.

Competition among schools and in the classroom would restore educational rigor, according to Julianne Dillenburg, an activist with a Pittsburgh-based parents' group, the Commonwealth Education Organization.

To foster competition among schools, "give people vouchers," get back to the basics, get away from all the cooperative learning, and let individuals compete, Mrs. Dillenburg urges.

She says competition has even been removed from gym classes.

"Now we have co-ed gym and they play 'self-esteem softball.' At least that's what the kids call it. They have to stay at bat until they get a hit."

The approach often backfires. One embarrassed nonathletic girl confided that her self-esteem erodes and she prays to hear "three strikes, you're out" as she stands at bat while more than a dozen balls whiz past.

9. The Washington Times

October 22, 1997

Private schools have space if vouchers pass **GOP plan could fill 2,000 seats in area**

By Susan Ferrechio
 The Washington Times

At Bridges Academy, a private school on Georgia Avenue, NW, students perform two years ahead of other children their age in reading and math.

Classes are small, with no more than 15 students per teacher, enrollment is open to anyone, and there's room to admit as many as 50 more children into the school.

Under a voucher plan being considered in Congress, those new students could transfer from the troubled D.C. public school system, where test scores and student performance are among the worst in the nation.

Education experts estimate that more than 4,000 seats are available in private

school classrooms in the District and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

If Congress passes the D.C. Educational Opportunities Scholarship Act, those seats could be filled with up to 2,000 public school students from the city's poorest families.

The voucher provision, included in the House version of the District's fiscal 1998 budget, was approved by that chamber two weeks ago. A House-Senate conference will have to reconcile the differences between the two bills: The Senate version does not include the voucher plan.

Under the proposal, parents whose incomes are at or near the poverty level would be eligible for \$3,200 scholarships - or vouchers - to help pay for tuition,

books, and other costs of a private education for their children.

Yearly tuition is \$4,100 at Bridges Academy, which serves 150 children from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

Principal Lillette Green-Campbell said she has received many calls from parents who would be eligible for the scholarships and want to send their children to Bridges, even though they would have to come up with \$900 on their own to cover tuition in addition to the cost of books, uniforms and transportation.

"Parents who want an alternative for their children will find a way to make up the difference," she said. "You'd be surprised what an effort people will make

NATIONAL

1. Associated Press

10-21 4:57p

GOP test opposition threatens literacy program

By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton aimed today to keep his youth literacy drive from being shot down by Republican opposition to his proposal for testing school children in reading and math.

Surrounded by dozens of college presidents at the White House, Clinton sat with Victoria Adeniji, a second grader pupil here, to read "The Carrot Seed." Her confident rendering was proof, Clinton said, that his literacy effort should be funded by Congress.

"We have to first plant the seed and then we have to tell the doubters it will grow," the president said.

Dubbed "America Reads," Clinton's program would employ hundreds of thousands of college students as volunteer tutors to make sure all students can read on their own by the time they are fourth-graders.

"It is so important for Congress to

fund America Reads," Clinton said today. "It would be a shame if we did not reach the full goal."

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, has held up any work on the literacy proposal until the dispute over the national tests is resolved.

Education Secretary Richard Riley said Monday that killing or delaying the reading program would be a serious mistake.

"We have thousands of energetic college students signed up to be reading tutors and ready to go, and we're excited about that," Riley said.

He added: "I'm concerned that the House is starting to get stuck in the usual partisan rut and (is) losing sight of what is really important in education. I think it's a sad day when a reading initiative - a reading initiative - becomes a political pawn because some members of Congress do not support the president's call for voluntary national tests in

reading and math."

The Clinton proposal calls for voluntary testing of fourth-graders in reading skills and eighth-graders in math.

Today's event was one of several Clinton was holding this week to push his education agenda. On Monday, Riley released an Education Department report that said early exposure to serious math, algebra and geometry opens the gate to college for large numbers of students, including minorities and those from low-income families.

Riley said the core of Clinton's ambitious education agenda was "making sure that all of our children have mastered the basics once and for all."

"My biggest concern is that Congress is fiddling at the margins and not focusing on these essential and central issues that define American education," he said. "The president wants some action and I think the American people want to see some movement as well." ■

2. Associated Press

10-21 4:03p

Tests show science knowledge falls in high school

By ROBERT GREENE
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Four out of 10 high school seniors don't know basic science that should be taught at their grade level, according to a 1996 test that required students to do small-scale experiments and give written, reasoned answers.

Fourth-graders and eighth-graders performed somewhat better at their grade level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the results of which were announced Tuesday. But only 3 percent of the youngsters in all three grades scored at an advanced level.

A third or more of the students, depending on the grade, showed just partial mastery of the subject. That was defined as basic knowledge. Less than a third were ranked as proficient, or having the competency to deal with challenging

subject matter.

The standards were defined by the National Assessment Governing Board, a 26-member panel set up by Congress to oversee national tests of progress in key subjects. The independent panel of educators, elected officials and others takes advice from teachers and scientists on how high or low to set the standards.

But the results cannot be compared with the previous NAEP tests because the 1996 version added new kinds of questions beyond multiple choice and for the first time said what children ought to know in different grades. Previous tests judged progress against a norm - a moving target based on average performances.

But there is still a pattern that can be drawn from the earlier tests and tests that make international comparisons, the board chairman said. NAEP scores have been rising since 1982.

"Most students have a grasp of basic factual knowledge and procedures," said Mark D. Musick, who is also president of the Southern Regional Education Board. "But a disturbing proportion are below that basic level. And the proportion who are proficient for their grade, which requires clear evidence of being able to analyze, apply and write, is fairly small."

He described the science to be expected of 12th-graders as "fairly modest and reasonable." Yet 43 percent of the 12th-graders scored below basic and only 21 percent reached the proficient level.

A 12th-grader with a basic score answered how to distinguish unmarked samples of salt water and fresh water other than by taste or smell. The basic answer would be to let the water "dry up." A proficient student answered in more detail, saying how the salt would be collected: by putting a string in the jars

15. TIME

October 27, 1997

HOW TO SAVE OUR SCHOOLS *STANDARDS: THE STATES GO THEIR OWN WAYS*

By JAMES COLLINS

President Clinton thought he had a winner in his back-to-school-season campaign to create national academic standards. But his effort has not fared too well. The voluntary tests he proposed met with strong criticism from conservatives, who argued that they would bring too much federal control over education, and the proposal is now languishing in a congressional committee. In a sense, though, the fate of Clinton's initiative may be largely

irrelevant because the question of standards is being vigorously addressed by the states themselves.

Inspired in part by an education summit that took place in May last year, 44 states are revising their standards, and five more are writing them for the first time (Iowa is the lone holdout). The term standards in this case refers to something quite specific: official, written guidelines that define what a state expects its public school students to know and be able to do. Some states have set standards for

every grade; others measure students' progress over periods of several years.

The argument for academic standards is simple: as in any other endeavor, the people engaged in education need clear goals and a way to determine whether those goals have been met. "When you put rigorous standards in place," says Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, "it helps parents, teachers and students to know what the expectations are, and it helps measure whether students are

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meeting those expectations. This is a method of knowing whether children are learning what they need to be learning at a certain age."

In order for standards to improve schools, say proponents, three conditions must be met: the standards themselves must be explicit; students must be tested on whether they have met them; and finally, schools and students alike must be held accountable when they fall short of expectations. Among the states, however, the quality of standards varies widely: some are so vague that they can hardly be considered standards at all, while others are highly specific. The

accompanying map shows which states so far, in the view of the AFT, have written strong standards and which have not. Most states assess their students' achievements with tests, but using the results to actually improve quality is often difficult. Only a few states impose sanctions on underperforming schools and students. One place accountability has been established is Virginia, where last month Governor George Allen announced that any school with a pass rate of less than 70% will lose its accreditation.

Clinton may get the national standards he wants without even trying. Patty

Sullivan, director of education legislation at the National Governors' Association, reports, "Every state that begins working on standards calls and says, 'Which are the states with the best standards? Can you send a copy to us?'" The end result, Sullivan predicts, will be that "you'll find they aren't that different" from state to state. When all 49 of these states are finished developing their standards, the country may end up eating its cake and having it too: de facto national standards created by the individual states.

—Reported by Chandrani Ghosh/Washington■

16. TIME

October 27, 1997

HOW TO SAVE OUR SCHOOLS *THEY'LL VOUCH FOR THAT*

Inner-city blacks are beginning to join the Republican cry for vouchers to pay private-school tuition. For the poor, vouchers are a lifeboat. For the G.O.P., they are a wedge issue

By RICHARD LACAYO

Jim Lester is crazy about his granddaughter La-Kia, 10. "She's such a little lady," he crows. That's why he was so upset last year when she started

La-Kia at St. Thomas Aquinas. "You should see her in her crisp uniform," he says with the satisfaction you might expect from a man who may have saved his own flesh and blood. "Just a little

It's because of their potential appeal to black voters that vouchers, which are largely a Republican cause, may grow from a small-scale educational experiment to a sizable political issue. Of

7. Associated Press

10-21 2:17a

GOP test opposition threatens literacy program

By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton is trying to keep his youth literacy drive from being shot down in a Republican campaign against his proposal for testing school children in reading and math.

Dubbed "America Reads," Clinton's literacy effort would employ hundreds of thousands of college students as volunteer tutors to make sure all students can read on their own by the time they are fourth-graders.

Clinton called dozens of college presidents who have endorsed the program to the East Room of the White House today to hear him make the case.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, has held up any work on the

literacy proposal until the dispute over the national tests is resolved.

Education Secretary Richard Riley said Monday that killing or delaying the reading program would be a serious mistake.

"We have thousands of energetic college students signed up to be reading tutors and ready to go, and we're excited about that," Riley said.

He added: "I'm concerned that the House is starting to get stuck in the usual partisan rut and (is) losing sight of what is really important in education. I think it's a sad day when a reading initiative - a reading initiative - becomes a political pawn because some members of Congress do not support the president's call for voluntary national tests in reading and math."

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reading skills and eighth-graders in math.

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Riley said the core of Clinton's ambitious education agenda was "making sure that all of our children have mastered the basics once and for all."

"My biggest concern is that Congress is fiddling at the margins and not focusing on these essential and central issues that define American education," he said. "The president wants some action and I think the American people want to see some movement as well." ■

8. USA Today

10/15/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: NEWS; Page 06A

Calif. measure would end most bilingual classes

By Maria Puente

When Elva Chacon's son started kindergarten in Anaheim, Calif., he was placed in a class with other children who spoke Spanish and a teacher who taught mostly in Spanish.

Five years later, he still couldn't speak English well.

When Chacon's daughter started kindergarten, Chacon insisted she be placed in English-only classes. Now, her son is 17 and struggles with English, but her 15-year-old daughter is fluent in English and gets straight A's.

"I can teach them Spanish at home but they go to school to learn English," says Chacon, a Mexican immigrant housekeeper whose children were born in California.

Spanish at home, English in school — that sums up the thinking behind "English for the Children," a controversial ballot initiative that would mandate English-only in the public schools of California, the state that has the nation's largest number of schoolchildren who can't speak English.

Some of the strongest supporters of

the initiative are Hispanic parents like Elva Chacon who believe their children will never master English any other way.

The initiative, which supporters hope to place on the June 1998 ballot, would virtually abolish what educators call "bilingual education." Under that teaching method, non-English-speaking children initially are taught mostly in their primary language, usually Spanish, while gradually being taught more and more in English over a period of years.

"We've got kids who still barely speak English"

Educators all over the nation are watching what happens in California. Of the nation's 46.4 million public schoolchildren, about 3.2 million students speak little or no English — double the number in 1986-87. Most of these students are in states with large immigrant populations, including Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

Defenders of bilingual education say this approach allows children to keep current with other academic subjects in Spanish while also becoming fluent in English — thus becoming "bilingual."

Although the goal is to move students to English fluency quickly, that hasn't happened in California. Each year, only 6% of students who started out speaking only Spanish are judged fluent enough to move to classes where all instruction is in English. And it costs California taxpayers \$319 million a year to educate about 410,000 schoolchildren in bilingual classrooms.

In California, one in five of the state's 5.3 million schoolchildren speak a language other than English, most often Spanish. About 34% of those children are in bilingual classes; the rest are in English-only classes or in classes where Spanish is spoken occasionally.

"Bilingual education is the single most crazy, Alice-in-Wonderland public policy in California," says Ron Unz, a millionaire software developer with Republican gubernatorial ambitions who is sponsoring the initiative. "It works great in theory, but it doesn't work in practice. We've got kids who still barely speak English after years in bilingual classes."

The "English-only" initiative says:

5. Washington Times

October 21, 1997

White House campaigns for education agenda

By Paul Bedard

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The White House opened a weeklong assault yesterday on House Republican efforts to stall its broad education agenda that Education Secretary Richard W. Riley vowed would "shake up something" but not local school curriculums.

"I'm concerned that the House is starting to get stuck in the usual partisan rut and losing sight of what is really important in education," Mr. Riley said in a slap at GOP efforts to kill President Clinton's plans for national math and reading tests and Republican plans to push vouchers to let parents of public-school students shift their children to private schools.

In the White House gun sights:

A proposal to give 2,000 poor D.C. children publicly funded vouchers to attend private — and presumably better — or religious schools. An amendment before the House this week to let parents save money to pay for private kindergarten through 12th grade without paying taxes on interest earned on those savings. A House Republican drive to kill funding for Mr. Clinton's national testing plan.

"I call upon Congress to end the delays. Our children are counting on us," Mr. Clinton said.

Republicans said they would not back down, but the White House said it planned to move ahead with its assault.

Mr. Riley led the charge yesterday by releasing a report showing that students who take tough math, algebra, geometry and science courses are more likely to attend college.

The report, "Mathematics Equals Opportunity," offers evidence that the choice of subjects determines access to college.

"These courses demand discipline,

they demand hard work and they demand responsibility," Mr. Riley said. "They make a powerful difference in terms of going to college."

Mr. Riley appeared with students from Prince George's County, which has joined the so-called "Equity 2000" initiative to get more students interested in algebra.

Later this week, Mr. Clinton and other members of his administration plan to meet with education leaders to push their agenda, and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who recently has become more outspoken, plans to host a child care conference Thursday that will focus partly on public education.

Mr. Riley used the new education report to bash GOP voucher plans and renew the administration's call for national tests for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math students.

For example, he claimed that a student's choice of and grades in tough courses are more important for college acceptance than attending a private or public grade or high school.

He rejected claims by parents and lawmakers that private-school education is better — the basis for the GOP push for public funding of private-school vouchers such as those backed for some 2,000 District students.

"The idea of giving someone a ticket out of the school solves no problems whatsoever. It is a nonsolution to major problems," Mr. Riley said. "Vouchers would in no way solve any of the problems in the Washington schools."

Administration officials said they would veto legislation that includes vouchers or a proposal by Sen. Paul Coverdell, Georgia Republican, to give parents a chance to save money in tax-free accounts for private schooling in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Mr. Riley also said a plan to provide vouchers in the District would be met

with a veto.

"We know what to do to improve schools. We could take that same \$7 million that they propose to come in and pay for vouchers for 2,000 children and impact in a very significant way probably as many as 40,000 children," Mr. Riley said.

The new education report also drew attention to Mr. Clinton's testing program, opposed by Republicans who believe the money should be spent improving the nation's schools and who fear the plan will lead to federal interference in state and local school curriculums.

Mr. Clinton has vowed to veto the appropriations bill for the Education and Labor departments if it does not include funding for the tests.

Mr. Riley said national tests will help show how far American students are behind foreign children in math and language subjects.

He said the administration has no hidden agenda for the test results, but the president does want to shock schools with poor test results into taking measures to improve.

"It will shake up something. And we want something shook up. That's what we want to do because if they're not reading then something needs to happen. But we don't get into curriculum. I want to make that clear, and I'll get 7,000 letters. We don't get into curriculum; we simply propose to measure basic skills, what they can do, and not how they learned it," he vowed.

Instead of being controversial, Mr. Riley suggested that the country will embrace national tests as a chance to show their support for education.

"We think it's going to catch on, and we think the people in this country are going to almost look at it as a patriotic thing, to get involved in getting this country to read well, getting this country

6. The Christian Science Monitor

October 21, 1997

2. The Washington Post

10/21/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A08

Clinton Presses Education Initiatives on Testing, Literacy Tutors

By Peter Baker

Washington Post Staff Writer

Back in town after a week-long foreign trip, President Clinton turned his attention yesterday to domestic matters and opened a week of intense lobbying to rescue his education initiatives held up by Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

The administration is orchestrating a series of White House events this week designed to put pressure on Congress to approve Clinton's proposal for new national tests in reading and mathematics

as well as his program to improve student literacy by recruiting 1 million volunteer tutors.

"I call upon Congress to end the delays," Clinton said in a statement yesterday. "Our children are counting on us."

The testing plan in particular has run into fierce opposition among GOP lawmakers, who complain it would duplicate standardized tests already given to students and amount to an unwarranted federal intrusion into local authority over education. Some liberal

Democrats are also wary because, they say, poor schools that lack resources to prepare students would be at a disadvantage. The literacy project has generated less vocal criticism but has been bottled up in a House committee by Republicans looking for leverage in the battle over the testing plan.

The White House counterattack began yesterday as Education Secretary Richard W. Riley released a report on the benefits of algebra, which he portrayed as evidence of the need for the Clinton tests because they would

6

enforce higher math standards.

The blitz will continue today when Clinton announces that 800 universities have agreed to participate in his "America Reads" literacy project by supplying work-study students as tutors. Friday, Clinton will welcome hundreds of teachers to the White House to highlight his plan to increase national certification of instructors. Other administration luminaries from Riley to Vice President Gore will pitch in with events of their own, including one intended to undercut a GOP plan to allow tax-free withdrawals from Individual Retirement Accounts to pay for private school tuition.

"This is a very busy week for the administration when it comes to

education and that's the way it should be," Riley said. "Congress is fiddling at the margins and not focusing on these essential and central issues that define American education."

Republicans have their own agenda to demonstrate their commitment to improving the nation's schools, including legislation promoting charter schools, which Clinton supports. The House Education and the Workforce Committee plans to mark up a measure Wednesday that would earmark \$260 million for more training of reading teachers as an alternative to Clinton's reading program.

"We're trying to show that the old tired federal programs from Washington haven't worked and we're not going to

get caught doing the same old thing," said committee Chairman William F. Goodling (R-Pa.).

Clinton's testing plan would measure fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. The proposal is mired in a conference committee; the House has voted to ban such tests from being used, while the Senate approved a modified version of Clinton's plan.

The study released by Riley yesterday concluded that students who study algebra and geometry in eighth and ninth grade are far likelier to go to college than those who do not. Eighty-three percent of those who take advanced math enroll in college, compared with 36 percent of those who do not. ■

3. San Diego Union-Tribune

October 21, 1997

Math classes lead way to college, study says

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — The Clinton Administration yesterday released a study indicating that math is a barometer of educational success, saying that students who do not take algebra and geometry are far less likely to go to college than students who do.

Education Secretary Richard Riley

designed to keep President Clinton's proposal for national reading and math tests alive in Congress.

Titled "Mathematics Equals Opportunity," the study found that 83 percent of students who take introductory algebra and geometry courses go on to college, compared with 36 percent of

dead-end general math courses that lead them to nowhere," said Riley.

Riley sought to use the study to defend Clinton's proposal to test reading in fourth grade and math in eighth grade, saying: "You can't improve something you can't measure."

20. Education Daily

October 20, 1997

NATIONAL TEST DOUBTS LINGER AMONG URBAN EDUCATORS

DETROIT — President Clinton's education adviser said last week the White House will stand firm on its insistence on national voluntary testing — even while urban school leaders pelted him with the same nagging concerns bedeviling the proposal since its inception.

"We are quite confident that if we wind up in a battle with Congress, the public is supportive and we will prevail," said Mike Cohen, the White House education adviser, at a Council of the Great City Schools conference here last week.

The White House is still negotiating with Congress on the tests, but Cohen wouldn't discuss any specific points of compromise.

Tell Me Why

City school leaders last week still voiced concerns about costs of scoring the tests, their potential to erode local control in curriculum decisions, and their overlap

with state and district tests.

"You will really have to clarify why we are using this," said Barbara Coleman, a school board member from El Paso, Texas, one of the 15 cities that has already signed up to administer the exams (ED, Sept. 26).

Later in the discussion, Cohen hinted that states and districts could get rid of some of their obsolete tests — in effect, making room for the national test.

"People will have to look at the array of tests, look at what they measure, and see whether they need to give all of them," he said. "You can put all your tests on the table and look at them."

Some participants were dubious about whether the test would lead to more funding for education — as they would hope — particularly for low-income districts. "There's no guarantee," Cohen admitted. Ten years ago, states raised taxes to help schools,

and the test could be a tool political leaders could use to convince voters more funds are needed, he said.

But when Becky Montgomery, a St. Paul, Minn., school board member, pleaded with the administration to talk more specifically about the sometimes expensive remedies that would be needed to help schools — such as money for building repairs — Cohen said that it was more useful to have Clinton talk about the general need for more investment.

The House voted to ban further development of the tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, while the Senate would let the tests go forward under the auspices of an independent, bipartisan board. House-Senate negotiators are trying to work out their differences on the tests, one of several issues delaying resolution of a fiscal 1998 education spending bill (ED, Oct. 10). — Laureen Lazarovici

21. Chronicle of Higher Education

October 20, 1997

Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Sallie Mae Appeal

By STEPHEN BURD

The Student Loan Marketing Association will continue to have to pay a special fee to the government when it acquires new federal student loans.

The Supreme Court last week refused to hear arguments by Sallie Mae, as the association is known, that the fee, which amounts to 0.3 per cent of all new loans acquired, represents an unconstitutional taking of its property by the federal government.

Congress imposed the fee on Sallie Mae in 1993, in a budget bill, as part of an effort to find savings in federal student-loan programs. Proponents of the

fee said it could help offset the billions of dollars that the government repays lenders for defaulted loans.

Sallie Mae complained that the fee did not apply to any other purchaser of student loans, to any other participant in the Education Department's guaranteed-student-loan program, or to any other government-sponsored enterprises.

The association contended that it had been wrongfully "singled out" by the Secretary of Education, in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

The Education Department has maintained that Sallie Mae has been amply compensated for the burden of the fee because, as a government-sponsored enterprise, it has been exempt from state and local taxes.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit had sided with the Education Department in an opinion it delivered in January.

Sallie Mae will have to continue paying the fee over the next 10 years, as it becomes a private company. At that point, it will no longer have to pay.

report from Congress's watchdog agency zeros in on scores of anti-drug initiatives.

While the **Safe and Drug-Free Schools program** is the most broad and well known such program, a total of 70 federal programs were authorized to provide either substance abuse-prevention or violence-prevention services or both to youths in fiscal 1995, the General Accounting Office says in a Oct. 10 report.

The Education and the Health and Human Services departments administer 34 of the programs, and the remaining programs are spread among 10 agencies, GAO says. The report formalizes statistics released by GAO at a House Oversight and Investigations

well as difficulty for those trying to access the most appropriate services and funding sources," GAO's director of education and employment issues said at the hearing (ED, June 25).

In a written response, ED disputed GAO's charge of possible overlap. "The discussion of the numerous federal programs to reduce or eliminate youth drug use treats the topic too generally," a spokesman said.

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools program is one of President Clinton's favorites. Subcommittee Chairman Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., and other House Republicans want to roll that money into new state block grants. Also, a new

Oct. 14).

Responding to allegations of fraud by critics in communities with Safe and Drug Free Schools programs, GAO said that while it appeared most of the funding is spent properly, it would be difficult to do a full accounting since the program encompasses so many areas.

"Safe and Drug-Free Schools: Balancing Accountability With State and Local Flexibility" is free from U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050, Washington, DC 20013, (202)512-6000. Cite no. GAO/HEHS-98-3. It's on the Internet at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/newtitle.htm>. —Jonathan Fox■

19. Education Daily

October 20, 1997

PANEL AIMS TO PERSONALIZE NATIONAL TEST RESULTS

DETROIT — The developer of voluntary national tests would like to send students individually tailored letters about their scores, describing their strengths and weaknesses and proposing strategies for improvement, by using direct mail advertising techniques.

Parents and teachers also would get letters under the plan Archie LaPointe, director of the consortium the Education Department formed to develop the exams, told the Council of the Great City Schools at its conference here Thursday.

The letters to teachers would give

them information on where their fourth-graders placed in reading, or eighth-graders in math.

And because the new tests would be linked to other exams, the letters could compare students to others across the United States who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and to students in 41 countries who took the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

Reaching The Home

The letters to parents would suggest questions they should ask their children's teachers, and home-based strategies to

improve their children's achievement, such as cutting their television time.

"A lot of parents are sometimes afraid to talk to teachers," LaPointe said at a panel discussion of national tests.

As far as he knows, LaPointe says this level of personal detail does not now occur with other tests and is the result of brainstorming among the test developers.

Development of the tests has been suspended, but if it does go forward, LaPointe plans to craft the letters with the help of focus groups. — Lauren Lazarovici■

13. The Christian Science Monitor

October 20, 1997

One County Gets Serious About Tests

Christina Nifong

Staff writer

of The Christian Science Monitor

SMITHFIELD, N.C. — To Keith Beamon, the answer seemed simple enough. If you want to raise test scores, make students more accountable for their performance. And how best to make them accountable? Advance them for scoring well and hold them back when they test poorly.

But after a year of parent protests that led to a federal lawsuit, Mr. Beamon and other Johnston County school officials no longer see their new policy as such a straightforward solution.

Despite students' rising scores under the year-old system, the plan requiring students to pass an exam before they can be promoted to the next grade faces powerful opposition.

Parents claim the schools are abandoning their neediest students by failing them. School officials counter that they are merely identifying pupils who require special instruction and then providing it for them.

"Our view of retention is different from some parents' views of retention," says Beamon, who oversees the county's testing policy. "We feel that after taking [all the steps of the policy] into account, if the child still fails, that child needs some extra time and extra attention."

The tug of war has pushed this quiet farming community into the midst of a fractious national debate over end-of-grade testing. School systems from Texas to Massachusetts - as well as President Clinton - are calling for stricter curriculum standards and regular testing in response to concerns about poor student performance.

Johnston County is one of the first school systems to link tests with promotion - and it offers an early look at the many questions that arise when schools fail students who don't pass end-of-grade tests. Can one test measure a student's performance? What services are offered to students who fail? Does this system put minority and special-education students at a disadvantage? Does failing a student do more damage than good by lowering his or her self-esteem?

"We're seeing the attention really go down to the student, because they were left out of the equation of accountability before," says Kathy Christie of the Education Commission of the States in Denver. "As a result, we're seeing the Chicagos and the Johnston Counties pop up," she says, referring to exam policies in both places.

The Johnston County policy is laid out like this: Students whose performances appear to be lagging get remedial training - from in-school tutoring to extra instruction on Saturdays. If they are still struggling midway through the year, parents are notified that their child may be held back.

At the end of the school year, third-graders and up take reading and math exams. They must score within a range the state has set as a passing grade. If students do not pass, their teachers can appeal their cases. In addition, students receive extra remediation and can take the test again. If they fail a second time, they can attend summer school and take the test a third time. If they fail that test, they are held back.

Last year, 9 percent of Johnston County's 18,000 students were retained - most of them elementary and middle-school pupils. The year before the policy was adopted, 2 percent of the students were not promoted.

In many ways, the county has done what it set out to do: improve its schools' performance compared with other North Carolina systems. Last year, the state recognized 20 out of 23 Johnston County schools for achieving above-average improvement in their students' work. At those schools, teachers were rewarded with \$1,000 bonuses.

"This was unbelievable," Beamon says. "We're not a system that's used to being recognized for excellence in our schools." Johnston County, 25 miles southeast of Raleigh, is now ranked among the top districts in North Carolina in terms of improved student performance.

But numbers don't tell the whole story. The policy has also alienated parents, who first formed a group to protest the new policy and then sued the district in federal court, saying the policy

is unfair and discriminates against minority and special-ed students.

"Our take is, put the policy on hold, get the teachers on track, and make sure the test measures what it's supposed to measure," says Karen Price, a mother of three who founded Educate Our Children in response to the county's testing plan. "The county's making the rules up as they go. Everything's been handled haphazardly."

She tells of children who earned A's, B's, and C's in school, failed the test by 2 points (well within its margin of error), and were not promoted. Teachers, she says, were not told in time what they needed to present on a child's behalf to appeal a failure. She claims the appeals process itself was biased: In some schools, teachers appealed test scores, while in others, no appeals were filed. One child was promoted only to arrive at school in the fall and have administrators tell her she would have to repeat a grade.

Ms. Price says the most important part of the policy - remediation the child is supposed to get before taking the test - was inadequate or nonexistent last year.

"Just because something's written down doesn't mean it's being followed," she says. "I'm not against making children and parents accountable, but ... you have to make sure the children are receiving what they need."

One difficulty is that services offered to children vary from school to school because the district allows each school to implement the policy in its own way.

School administrators recognize that few new resources were allocated for the extra work expected from teachers. And they admit to snags in the program last year. "It was not perfect," Beamon says. "We had to go back and redo some of the appeals. But we're getting it worked out."

Even with the difficulties of a first-year program, though, the teachers and the principal at Wilson's Mills elementary school in Johnston County say the results were positive. Now that end-of-year exams count for something, teachers say students take their classes more seriously.

"It puts high expectations in the forefront," says principal Phyllis Mitchell. The policy has enabled the

school to work more closely with its underachievers, as well. "Some of our greatest gains were made with children with the greatest difficulties," she says.

Throughout the months of controversy, the satisfaction from better results has kept Beamon holding on, he says. "The stress has paid off by the kids learning like they never have before," he says, with a weary smile.

TEST QUESTIONS FOR JOHNSTON COUNTY, N.C.

Examples of the kinds of questions used to test reading comprehension and

math.

For fourth-graders

* Essay: 'Imitating Nature'

Can you think of other uses of Velcro that were not mentioned in this passage? List your uses and explain how Velcro would be useful for each one.

* Sartorial math

Joey has a red shirt, a yellow shirt and a blue shirt. He also has a pair of shorts in each of the three colors. How many different outfits can he make? Show how you got the answer.

For eighth-graders

* Essay: 'Futureworld: Robots'

Explain how Asimov uses the example of the first Industrial Revolution to answer possible objections to his vision for another "industrial revolution."

* Decimals

Compare 0.36 to 0.36. Which decimal is larger? Use fractions with like denominators to prove that your answer is true.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction■

14. Associated Press

10-18 3:05p

Tough issues on plate as Congress tries to finish spending bills

By JIM ABRAMS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - In the closing weeks of their 1997 session, Congress returns to work this week to wrestle with spending bills. It's not money that's in dispute so much as the perennial social issues - particularly abortion and education.

Already weeks into the new fiscal year that started Oct. 1, President Clinton has signed into law only five of the 13 spending bills that must be passed every year to run the government. Two more have cleared Congress, and six remain in various states of progress or deadlock.

Compared to recent years, that's a pretty good record. The low came two years ago, as the Republican Congress and the Clinton White House clashed so vigorously over spending priorities that the government shut down twice.

"It's a much smoother year," said Rep. Bob Livingston, R-La., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "It's attributable primarily to the budget deal, but it's also a little bit the result of our learning curve." A blueprint worked out this year establishes broad spending priorities over the next five years to balance the federal budget.

"We obviously have some thorny issues ahead of us, but we are trying to work cooperatively, and that's a far cry from the warlike atmosphere we had in 1995 and 1996," said Larry Haas, spokesman for the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Before this fiscal year began,

Congress and the White House readily agreed to a stopgap measure to keep federal operations going through Oct. 23, when lawmakers were to have finished the spending bills. Returning from its Columbus Day recess, Congress is ready to extend the deadline.

Livingston said they are on track to finish their work and recess for the year Nov. 7.

But presidential veto threats loom over four bills.

Undoubtedly the biggest dispute is over language in the House-passed bill on foreign aid, which bars U.S. money from international family planning groups that provide or promote abortions.

Livingston said in a floor speech that while he supports the ban, the Senate's opposition and a presidential veto would bring the bill down. "This is a futile exercise which offers no solution, only continued stalemate," he said.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., the measure's chief sponsor, said unlike earlier years GOP leaders, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Majority Leader Dick Armey, are "100 percent in support of what we are doing." He added: "We are absolutely standing fast."

A \$31 billion bill to fund the Commerce, Justice and State departments also is in trouble. The problem centers on Census Bureau plans to use sampling techniques in the 2000 census, which House Republicans strongly oppose. They fear it could lead to a bigger count in minority areas and result in redrawn legislative districts that could help

Democrats.

The bill also is stymied by a House measure requiring the government to reimburse citizens' legal costs in unwarranted criminal prosecutions. Yet another problem is Senate language carving up the West's huge 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. The administration opposes both.

One of the biggest bills, \$80 billion for labor, health and education programs, faces big problems over House attempts to kill Clinton's national student testing proposal. A Senate plan to give most of the Education Department's budget to states in the form of block grants appears likely to die in the House-Senate conference, but other problems persist, such as cuts in Clinton's Goals 2000 school reform program.

The \$4.8 billion District of Columbia bill is one of the smallest but faces a large hurdle over House efforts to subsidize poor kids who want to leave public schools for private or parochial schools. The administration strongly opposes the idea, as well as other provisions such as one that caps medical malpractice lawsuits.

Compromises, generally to the administration's advantage, have been worked out in several normally sticky areas. The AmeriCorps national service program and the National Endowment for the Arts, programs that some Republicans would love to kill, are getting most of their requested money. Clinton's cops-in-the-streets program, which past GOP congresses tried to cut, is being funded fully, and House

Brinksmanship Over National Tests Could Prompt Washington Shutdowns

Gail Russell Chaddock
Staff writer
of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON — Education was almost an issue lawmakers could agree on - for example, that kids deserved a good education and that some public schools weren't providing it.

Both Republican and Democratic administrations proposed a national test to help get a handle on the problem. The public backs the idea. It won't cost much. It's voluntary.

But as Congress returns from a week-long recess this week, President Clinton's national test proposal could prove the legislative flashpoint.

"No one anticipated such an uproar over this issue," says Paul Anir of the conservative lobby group Empower America.

"Under the Bush administration, the Republicans were for it and the Democrats shot it down. Now, a Democratic president is for it, and the Republicans are shooting it down," he says.

The Senate approved a revised version of the Clinton test plan with a lopsided 87-13 vote. The House voted to block the tests, 295-195. A conference committee continues a search for a compromise.

Meanwhile, House Republicans threaten to bottle up other education bills in committee if the testing plan is not

dropped. Senate Democrats threaten a filibuster if it is. Clinton promises to veto any bill that does not include national tests.

With appropriation deadlines looming, a presidential veto could shut down the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

"The president has made clear that he'll veto any bill that does not allow him to go forward with the national tests," says Mike Cohen, the president's special adviser on education. "It would be a shame if the Republicans tried to shut down a big chunk of government over a voluntary test of basic skills. I'd like to see them explain that."

The stakes in this debate are high, and analysts on both sides say that the testing flap could set the terms of the 1998 election.

"Both sides are playing chicken and it's not clear who wins in a crash. Clinton has been masterfully good at putting the onus on Congress for being against education," says Chester Finn, an Education department official in the Reagan administration.

Whatever the outcome, education is replacing "tax rage" as a way for governors to stake out a national reputation - or to win office. Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, chairman of the Democratic Governors' Association, is urging Democratic hopefuls to focus

their campaigns on the classroom.

"Every time they [Republicans] talk about race, abortion, gay rights, the Confederate flag, or guns, we will talk about education, education, education, and health care," he told reporters at a Monitor breakfast last week.

But Republicans insist that they have their own positive agenda for education. On Oct. 17, House Republican leaders announced a schedule of votes for their "Republican Agenda for the American Learner." These include: education IRAs for K-12 expenses, \$100 million a year for innovative charter schools, and K-12 scholarships for low-income students.

"We want to take our ideas for expanded parental choice beyond the Beltway and create the kind of competitive environment that will improve standards in schools," says Terry Holt, a spokesman for the House Republican Conference.

"Education is now one of the dominant points of debate in the country. Across America, parents, teachers, and local officials are in hand-to-hand combat over who controls the education agenda in their community," he says.

Republicans say that national tests are just another example of federal bureaucrats trying to set standards for communities as diverse as New York and Peoria.

In the last two weeks, Senate

Republicans have rallied opposition to the Clinton testing plan. Sen. John Ashcroft (R) of Missouri has signed on 34 senators who say they will oppose including national tests in the final appropriations bill.

"Our support has gone from 13 to 34 in about a week and a half," says a Republican staff member.

The White House and Education Department officials insist that this is a fight they can win. "There may be political momentum inside the Beltway

against tests, but the public still favors testing. Parents want to know how their kids are doing," says Education Department spokeswoman Susan Frost.

Some 79 percent of Americans support national tests, according to a recent Wall Street Journal/ NBC News poll.

The Education Department is also trying to win the support of the Hispanic Caucus, the Black Caucus, and civil rights groups, who have opposed national tests because they will stigmatize

minority students. White House officials admit that such efforts are making little headway.

"Tests such as President Clinton is proposing reinforce the notion that there are kids who don't learn and that dead-end programs are OK for them. These kids are disproportionately poor and recent immigrants," says Monty Neill, associate director of the Cambridge, Mass.-based National Center for Fair and Open Testing. ■

7. The Washington Post

10/19/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A08

In Attempt to Stop National Testing, GOP Halts Work on President's Reading Plan

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

The campaign that congressional Republicans are leading against President Clinton's plan to give students national tests is jeopardizing another priority on his education agenda, the \$2.7 billion he wants to spend helping children learn to read.

In a move that has infuriated the White House, Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, has halted legislative work on Clinton's reading plan in an attempt to gain more leverage to stop national testing.

Clinton has vowed to veto any bill that delays or abolishes the tests, which have not yet been created but will be voluntary for states to adopt. The House voted last month to ban the tests from ever being used. The Senate has approved a modified version of Clinton's plan. The two sides will meet soon to resolve their differences on the subject, which is also dividing educators nationwide.

Until now, Clinton's reading plan had not been part of that contentious debate.

The president had even won general support for the idea from Republican leaders in the budget agreement he reached with Congress earlier this year. Clinton wants to devote much of the reading initiative to training an army of 1 million volunteer tutors, including college work-study students and AmeriCorps members, who would work with schools to help children become efficient readers by the time they start fourth grade.

But many Republicans are skeptical of that idea. Instead, they want to use much of the money to train teachers better in reading. A compromise had been in the

works.

Not now. Goodling says he is angry that Clinton is still forging ahead with plans to develop the national tests despite the adamant objections of Republicans and many Democrats in the House. The White House, meanwhile, is upset that he has taken a separate education initiative hostage for what they call purely political reasons.

"There's no positive agenda there," said Michael Cohen, a White House education policy aide. "All of it is to stop whatever we're trying to do."

Clinton proposed his reading plan in response to growing evidence that the nation's students, especially those from poor communities, are having a hard time mastering the vital subject. Even as student scores in math and science appear to be inching upward across the country, recent results in reading suggest stagnation or slight decline.

That's a central reason why Clinton also wants students to begin taking rigorous national tests in reading while they are in fourth grade. He contends the tests would set a higher standard for what students should learn and thus compel schools to work harder. Clinton also wants eighth-graders to take a national test in math.

Both tests would be unprecedented for schools, which rely now on state or local exams to assess what students know. The educators and business leaders who support Clinton's idea say those tests are often too weak.

But congressional opposition to national testing remains strong. Many conservative Republicans insist the plan will give the federal government a dangerously large role in schools, and many liberal Democrats worry it could stigmatize poor students who are stuck in schools without the resources to prepare

for the tests.

Goodling, for example, has not budged from his stance that the tests should be scrapped, even though Clinton has vowed to veto a huge, \$286 billion appropriations bill moving through Congress if his tests are not part of the package.

Earlier this month, Goodling, who was once a school superintendent in Pennsylvania, called national tests "huge folly."

"Americans should not be misled into thinking that more testing will lead to better students," he said. "The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and will not do anything but increase federal involvement in our schools."

Another ardent critic of the tests, Sen. John D. Ashcroft (R-Mo.), is trying to rally more of his colleagues against the tests by likening them to Clinton's disastrous attempt to overhaul the nation's health care system during his first term. "The more people learn about testing, the less they like it," Ashcroft said recently.

When the issue last came up for a vote in the Senate, 87 of the 100 lawmakers there supported the tests, as long as they would be managed by an independent board — not the Education Department. The White House has been battling to preserve that margin, which appears to be shrinking. Ashcroft has persuaded 35 senators to sign a letter saying that they support the ban on national testing approved by the House.

Goodling's decision to suspend work on Clinton's reading initiative poses yet another serious threat to the president's education agenda, and it has apparently caught his aides by surprise. "It makes no sense," Cohen said. "Reading was one of the issues where both sides were working pretty well to combine their interests." ■

Students with a grasp of higher level math achieve regardless of family income or public or private schooling, says Education Secretary Richard Riley.

Riley will release the "white paper" at a White House ceremony Monday. He'll stress that math may be a great equalizer.

The proportion of students who take algebra I and geometry who head to college:

83% of all students.

71% of low-income.

27% of low-income students, 60% of high-income and 44% of middle-income.

Students headed for the workforce with a solid math background earned, on average, 38% more per hour than peers without it.

Yet while algebra is the "gateway" to advanced math and science in high school, most students do not take it in middle school, Riley says.

He cites a 1996 report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress

The release of the findings comes as the administration gears up for tough education battles. At issue are different House and Senate bills on voluntary national tests, allowing poor students to use tax-supported vouchers to attend private schools and creating "Education IRAs" to pay for private and parochial schools.

By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY, page A1

2. Baltimore Sun

Sunday, October 19

Clinton insists on national testing

Education-related events expected to focus debate

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BARILOCHE, Argentina —

Anticipating a vigorous debate this week over how best to improve America's public schools, President Clinton again criticized Republican plans for federal subsidies to allow pupils to attend private schools and demanded national testing to set universal academic standards.

Rep. Bill Goodling, a Pennsylvania Republican who is a leading opponent of national tests and one of Clinton's staunchest critics on education in Congress, countered yesterday that the president's proposals lack common sense

and ignore local and state authority over schools.

In his weekly radio address, Clinton repeated his position that the voucher idea would rob public schools of much-needed tax dollars.

"Some people think we should give students vouchers to pay for private schools if they don't think public schools are good enough," Clinton said. "They say the competition will even make the public schools better."

"I think it's wrong. Too many of our public schools are underfunded already."

Clinton's remarks, recorded as he

neared the end of a weeklong trip to South America, preceded a series of education-related White House events this week, covering college preparation, reading and teacher certification.

The president plans to inject himself into the education debate in the Republican-controlled Congress by arguing for national testing standards.

"We must set national standards of academic achievement, and then have voluntary tests starting with fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math to measure them," Clinton said.■

71. The Wall Street Journal

10/17/97

Aside: Newark's Last Hope

Thirty years after being trashed by its own citizens, Newark is about to find out if it has a chance of getting a future. Bleak place that it is, with a sizzling crime rate and a school system so dysfunctional it was taken over by the state, Newark just built itself a performing arts center called NJPAC. And not just some concrete box in the Lincoln Center tradition of aggressive blandeur, but a handsome, inviting,

nicely detailed (if dissonantly named) brick structure by architect Barton Myers. Backed by a mix of public and private funding to the tune of \$180 million, NJPAC's centerpiece is the 2,750-seat Prudential Hall named after its biggest corporate donor and opening tomorrow with a concert featuring the New Jersey Symphony and international divette Kathleen Battle, among other celebs. Obviously Pru, headquartered in

Newark, hopes the center will provide the area with the kind of uplift previously noted not only in New York, but in Buffalo, Baltimore and other cities, where the arts have stanchied the wounds of urban renewal and debilitating social policies. We wish Newark well, but unless there's a huge political change as well — from city hall to the city's schools — it will take more than one building to sustain a turnaround.■

72. The Dallas Morning News

October 17, 1997

Student testing

Without skills, high school diploma is worthless

Texans have said they want a high school diploma to mean something in this state. They don't want it to be a longevity reward for sitting through a dozen years of classes.

That's why the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test was established in 1984. The test is a way to ensure that young people don't leave high school without some fundamental skills needed to survive in the Texas workplace. That's why all students in this state have to pass the test before they get their diplomas.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund doesn't see it that way. The organization filed suit in San Antonio Tuesday, claiming that the test discriminates against thousands of minority students.

It is unfair to force students to take a basic skills test after teachers have

already assessed their work and given them passing grades for 12 years, said Al Kauffman, the organization's legal counsel. His organization wants the courts to overturn the law that established the testing requirement.

The complaints are similar to ones the NAACP made to the U.S. Education Department this summer. But after reviewing the complaint, Education Department officials concluded the TAAS test is not discriminatory. And rightly so. Handling of the tests could hardly be more fair.

All students have a half dozen opportunities to pass the test before graduation. Even if they complete their high school work without passing, they have a chance to take the test again after they have left school.

Hispanic students have made

impressive strides in the test over the last three years, according to Texas Education Commissioner Mike Moses. The number of Hispanics passing all three sections of the test has increased by 17 percent since 1994. And the number of African-Americans passing increased by 19 percent during the same period.

Commissioner Moses said the test is constantly being revised and updated to make certain there is no bias in the questions. The improving test results certainly confirm that point.

If public education is to get better in Texas, there must be an accountability system. That's why the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test must be retained as a requirement for graduation. Anything less would be a step backward.■

73. Los Angeles Times

* 10/17/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Orange County Focus Desk; Page B-2

School Panel to Consider Instruction Guidelines

By MIMI KO CRUZ

A school committee will consider whether a policy or guidelines are needed on how many minutes should be spent teaching basic subjects in Fullerton School District elementary schools.

District Trustee Kim Guth proposed

drafting a policy that would require teachers to spend a minimum number of minutes per day teaching reading and language arts.

Some parents opposed the proposal, saying rigid guidelines might prevent field trips, arts activities and the creative

methods used by teachers to integrate subjects, such as giving a math lesson while students are studying music.

Guth's board colleagues said curriculum guidelines already are in place for teachers to follow. But they agreed to let the curriculum steering

the last election.

Najdek said that the two new board members, elected in May, were sympathetic to the teachers' union.

Board member John Ramacciatto, identified as the swing vote on the board, said yesterday that he was not sure what needed to be done. "My opinion is that it

should be reformed. How to go about it is a little difficult. We're waiting to get a ruling."■

29. San Diego Union-Tribune

October 17, 1997

More math urged at 8th-grade level

By Sharon L. Jones
STAFF WRITER

America's middle-school mathematics courses are intellectual wastelands, an expert said yesterday as he urged educators to join a national effort to have all eighth-graders study algebra and geometry.

According to an international study of mathematics and science, students around the world generally are introduced to eight new topics between fifth and eighth grade, said researcher William Schmidt.

In the United States, however, students study generally the same things they studied in elementary school, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, he said.

No wonder they grow bored and lose motivation to take advanced mathematics classes, said Schmidt.

"We simply have a conception of basic that is static, flat, dormant at the fourth-grade level," said Schmidt, while speaking at a conference organized by the U.S. Department of Education.

About 1,600 people have registered to participate in the 1997 Regional Conference on Improving America's Schools, which runs through tomorrow at the Town and Country Convention Center in Mission Valley.

The conference is titled "A call to action: Working together for equity and excellence." It is being broadcast on the World Wide Web at the following address: <http://www.iaswebcast.org/>.

Yesterday's opening session featured a roundtable discussion of five assistant secretaries of education.

In videotaped remarks, President Clinton stressed the importance of setting voluntary national standards of academic excellence and national tests to measure whether students are meeting the standards.

"Our children will grow according to the expectations we have of them, so let's all work together to raise those expectations, to strengthen and improve all our schools, and to help all our children reap the promise of the 21st century," Clinton said.

Clinton wants national tests to measure students' reading skills at the end of fourth grade and to measure their math skills at the end of eighth grade.

House Republicans say such a test would duplicate the work of existing standardized tests.

In a session on standards and accountability, Gerald Tirozzi, assistant secretary in the office of elementary and secondary education, said testing is key to holding the nation's schools accountable for student performance.

He said a school accountability system starts with academic standards that define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Instructional materials and teacher training should support those standards, and tests should measure whether students are meeting the standards, he said.

Tirozzi said educators agree that

students should be able to read for comprehension by the end of fourth grade and perform algebraic equations by the end of eighth grade. Students who haven't mastered these skills at these grade levels generally never catch up to their peers and attend college at much lower rates, he said.

Tirozzi said many educators are uncomfortable with the idea of holding schools accountable for student performance, but the public is frustrated by the lack of accountability.

If educators don't respond by making themselves accountable, there will be more retired military officers running school systems, educational vouchers for private education, and privatization of schools, he said.

"People are looking for different ways to improve our schools," he said.

In a session on mathematics, Schmidt explained the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. U.S. students scored about the international average in fourth grade, but below the international average in eighth grade.

American eighth-graders outperformed only seven countries in mathematics.

Schmidt said the United States must radically change the way it is teaching mathematics, or it won't have a work force that is able to compete.

"This global society isn't rhetoric anymore; it's reality," he said.■

NATIONAL

1. Forbes

October 20, 1997

American schoolkids score relatively well through fourth grade. Why do they lag so badly in subsequent years?

Claiming credit where no credit is due

By Peter Brimelow

BILL CLINTON GOT A LOT OF PUBLICITY this summer when he claimed credit for American fourth-graders' second-place ranking in science, as measured by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The previous year, American eighth-graders came in seventeenth.

"There are a lot of people who never believed that U.S. children would score in the top two in the world on any of these tests," Mr. Clinton reportedly said. "Now they know they were wrong."

Bunk, says Barbara Lerner of Chicago-based Lerner Associates, public policy consultants. American fourth-graders have always done about this well on international tests, Lerner points out. Where they do badly is where it really matters—as 17-year-olds—at the end of the K-12 educational process.

"Older students resist," Lerner says. And American educators apparently don't want to oppress them. Somewhere between the fourth grade and graduation, American students tend to fall behind.

According to NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress U.S. 17-year-olds score about the same or slightly below the levels of knowledge in science, math and reading achieved nearly 30 years ago. Recently, scores have basically been moving sideways.

The NAEP scores do represent a rebound from the 1970s, when achievement levels were falling sharply—a dark episode in American education history that has been called "The Great Decline."

"But NAEP only began gathering data when the decline was well under way," says Lerner. "So today's 17-year-olds are still probably below the levels of the early 1960s."

Minority scores in some areas have actually rebounded better than white scores. But they still lag significantly. And there have been some recent retreats.

The lack of real progress comes in spite of the huge sums that the educational establishment has been extracting from the American taxpayer. The U.S. spends a higher proportion of

its GDP on K-12 education than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average and many industrialized countries (see chart, upper left). (We threw in Korea because it and Japan tied for first place in the recent TIMSS study.)

And because the U.S. economy is so much larger, this translates into a massive excess of per-pupil spending. Conversely, Korea's per-pupil spending is at a strikingly low level.

To some extent, higher per-pupil spending is inevitable in the industrialized world because higher living standards bid up higher labor costs. But most industries compensate with higher productivity.

And it's not just the amount of U.S. education spending but the distribution that is extraordinary (see chart, lower left). For example, the Germans spend almost as much per pupil on early childhood and secondary education. But neither they nor the Koreans put anything like the same resources into college students. Do Americans go to college to learn what Germans and Koreans are taught earlier? ■

2. Associated Press

October 17, 1997

Schools liable for rape of girl, N.Y. court says

ALBANY, N.Y. - A girl who was separated from her class during a field trip was improperly supervised, and the New York City schools can be held liable for her rape later that day, the state's top court ruled yesterday.

In a unanimous decision, the seven-member Court of Appeals reversed a lower court ruling by saying the sixth-grader's teacher, and by extension

the city's Board of Education, had created the circumstances in which something could happen to the girl.

A trial court jury had awarded the girl \$3 million.

The girl was raped June 3, 1988, when she was left behind near a Brooklyn park where a drug awareness fair was held. According to court papers, the teacher could not find her, but merely notified her mother that she was missing - failing

to notify school officials.

The girl, meanwhile, started walking home and met two acquaintances, junior high schoolers who raped her, according to court records from their later guilty pleas.

"We're gratified by the decision," said Brian Isaac, the young woman's attorney. "When a school board takes a student to an outing and leaves her at an outing, that's negligence, and it's something for

60. Boston Globe

October 16, 1997

Flunking the test in Boston

A school superintendent's prediction that at least half of his system's students will not meet state requirements for graduation in the year 2003 should be enough to set off a five-year convulsion. Not likely in Boston, however, where parental acceptance of academic failure is still sky high.

Boston's school superintendent, Thomas Payzant, issued the above forecast this week along with an unprecedented analysis of student performance on the Stanford 9 Achievement Test. Though soft-spoken, Payzant cannot be accused of trying to lull the citizenry. Two years ago he jettisoned an easier standardized test in favor of the rigorous Stanford 9. He knew that initial results would be poor. But it was an honest attempt both to raise

academic expectations and heighten the sense of urgency around academic achievement, particularly at the high school level.

The report's "cohort analysis" is especially disturbing. School officials now have sufficient data to measure individual student improvement from year to year on the Stanford test. Approximately two-thirds of Boston students did not increase their performance level by grade in the multiple-choice test for reading and mathematics between 1996 and 1997. There was less improvement in mathematics than in reading.

Given current starting points, "a normal year of progress won't be sufficient to prepare students to meet the standards," warns Payzant. That argues

for a widening of extended-day offerings and summer academic programs for the thousands of students who score in the "below proficient" category on the test. For their part, teachers must put more classroom emphasis on thinking skills, probability, and vocabulary, where failure rates on the Stanford exam are especially high.

This dense but important document, which provides precise information on performance levels of specific schools, will be an effective management tool if principals and teachers avoid defensiveness and use the data to improve practices. The report is a major accomplishment - one that calls for a citywide commitment from parents and students as well as teachers and administrators. ■

61. Seattle Times

October 16, 1997

McCaw's generous gift is all about teamwork

THE name of the new reading program endowed by Craig McCaw's \$1 million gift to Seattle Public Schools says as much about its genesis as about its purpose.

Team Read will pair students from three Seattle high schools with youngsters at four elementary schools in special need of help with reading skills. The tutoring program will focus on the first three grades, when the seeds of a successful educational career are planted.

Students from Rainier Beach, Garfield and Sealth high schools will be hired as tutors to help children at Rainier View, Dunlap, Leschi and High Point elementaries.

McCaw, who made billions in telecommunications, teamed up with the district's charitable foundation, Alliance for Education, to determine where the need was greatest.

He asked what his money might do, listened to the advice, and settled on the

fundamental tool of learning. Team Read was created with no strings, no namesakes.

Another part of the story ought to be told.

McCaw has a particular empathy with students who struggle in school. He needed extra tutoring to help him with his own reading problems from dyslexia.

McCaw is a powerful role model for kids and other givers. ■

62. New York Post

October 16, 1997

DEMOCRATS & THE SCHOOLS

"The city needs a Democratic mayor."
- Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger.

The last time New York City had a Democratic mayor, the public schools were even worse than they appeared - as bad as that was.

Today, there are bright spots in the

system - even faint reason for hope. But, by and large, nothing has materially improved - and there's no reason to believe that the Democratic Party or its mayoral standard-bearer is remotely capable of setting things straight at 110 Livingston St.

Ruth Messinger has indeed attempted

to make the schools a focal point of her campaign - and notes correctly that without functioning schools New York City's prospects in the next millennium are dismal.

But when Messinger talks about schools she talks mostly about money - which misses the mark by a wide margin.

Unlike many academics who are running around yelling that the sky was falling, UT law Professor Lino Graglia said that minority students should "enroll in the best educational institution for which they meet the ordinary admission criteria." He also did not buy the argument that statistical disparities in ethnic representation are proof of discrimination.

Graglia pointed out that different ethnic groups put different emphasis on

and kind of education have been the rule - not the exception.

Even when all the groups have had the same access to education, not all have seized the opportunity to the same degree or put the same effort into it.

No one with the slightest regard for facts can deny that this is true in the United States today. Even black and white liberals have expressed dismay that black children who try to do well in

the fog of emotions and lies?

Graglia belongs on the U.S. Supreme Court. He would be an enormous improvement over most of the people who are on that court today.

It is the students' loss that they cannot conceive that anyone can honestly differ with them, and it is the country's loss that Graglia's wisdom cannot be applied where it is most needed. ■

56. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

10/13/97; Edition: FIVE STAR LIFT; Section: EDITORIAL; Page 07B

THE VALUE OF TESTING

By Mona Charen
Creators Syndicate, Inc.

The University of California may drop the Scholastic Assessment Test as an admission requirement now that the elimination of preferential treatment has caused a marked drop in the number of black and Hispanic students accepted.

"How can we be effectively training the leaders of tomorrow when so many in this state are being denied access to a high-quality education?" Eugene Garcia, dean of the University of California Berkeley School of Education and chairman of the Latino Eligibility Task Force, told The Washington Post.

Who is being denied access? What California has done by outlawing preferences is ensure that all applicants will be judged by the same standards. Well-qualified blacks, Hispanics and others will continue to enjoy "access" to the finest schools.

Or is the concept of excellence itself on trial? After all, if the University of California eschews the SAT because blacks and others do not perform as well as whites (Asians score better than whites, but they are never counted as "minorities"), they will be dropping a valuable predictor of college success.

SATs cannot measure your chances of happiness. They certainly cannot measure your innate worth as a human being. But survey after survey has found them to be quite accurate predictors of how well students will perform in college.

Now that affirmative action in all its forms is on the defensive, the leading voices of liberalism are rising to its defense. On the front page of The New York Times on Oct. 8 was a story headlined "Study of Doctors Sees Little Effect of Affirmative Action on Careers." The referenced study followed the careers of doctors trained at the

University of California at Davis, between 1968 and 1987, and purports to show little or no difference in graduation rates, completion of residency programs or honors received between those who were admitted "with special consideration" and those who were not.

But there were some details of the study that cast the story's headline into doubt. It seems that only 53.5 percent of the group admitted under special consideration were granted a racial preference, the rest being admitted for other things, like a record of community service or previous careers in teaching or nursing.

Moreover, it's impossible to know how much of a role affirmative action continued to play in the further careers of the doctors admitted to UC Davis. Perhaps they benefited from preferences in residency programs as well?

But even if the study were to be taken at face value, it leaves this question for

defenders of affirmative action: Why should medical schools have standards at all? If low-scoring blacks go on to have identical medical careers to blacks and whites admitted with high scores, why insist upon high scores for anyone? Why don't we just choose our future doctors on the basis of their looks instead of their grades and scores?

Or perhaps a more revolutionary idea: How about doing everything possible to raise the scores of more black applicants?

There are, of course, some black applicants to colleges and professional schools who would be admitted to the finest schools in the absence of racial

quotas. But for the great majority of black high school graduates, that is not the case. As Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom relate in their comprehensive book on race relations, "Black and White in America," the gap in black/white school performance is now growing (after shrinking for many years).

There are many causes for this decline in black literacy and numeration, but money isn't one of them. As the Thernstroms note, despite widespread belief to the contrary, there is little difference in per-pupil spending between inner-city and suburban schools. But in the past decade, black student

performance has gotten worse. No one is sure why, but certainly, low standards, Afrocentrism, and increasing disorder, fear and crime must be playing a role.

According to a recent survey by Stanford political scientist Terry Moe, school choice is favored by 79 percent of the inner-city poor. And in those cities where school choice, either publicly or privately funded, has been tried, the results have been impressive. Scores and teacher satisfaction rates are up; dropout rates are down. Doesn't it make more sense to try school choice than to ditch the SATs? ■

57. Sacramento Bee

October 16, 1997

42. The Washington Post

10/16/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Loudoun Extra; Page V11

Plan for New School Tests Sparks Teachers' Rebuke

State Standards Worry Superintendent

By Jennifer Ordonez
Washington Post Staff Writer

Fauquier County School Superintendent Tony Lease is concerned that some of his schools may fall short of the state's academic-excellence mandate, in which school accreditation is based on testing in specific subjects for all students.

"I sure am worried. In some of our schools, we have a low socioeconomic situation and parents who are not working with kids in the home. It's our job to bring that up," said Lease, who has been superintendent since 1989.

"Many colleges require accreditation [from high schools], and if an elementary is not accredited, it would say to parents, 'This school has problems.' It would be an unbelievable public relations nightmare for us."

So Lease and Associate Superintendent Rebecca Sutherland have come up with a safety net intended to prevent that from happening: a local academic-excellence plan. Presented to the county School Board in September, the plan calls for early, locally developed standardized testing and greater teacher accountability for student scores.

But Lease's plan worries Susan Webster, a third-grade teacher at M.M. Pierce Elementary School and president of the Fauquier Education Association. At Monday night's School Board meeting, Webster and several other educators spoke out against it.

They said the plan's more stringent requirements and increased testing will provide a one-dimensional and incomplete measure of what students have learned.

And they argued that the plan would

place unfair blame on teachers for problems that are the responsibility of the entire school system.

"Our association is not entirely opposed to this document. . . . We do, however, believe that there is currently, and has always been, accountability on the part of educational professionals in Fauquier," Webster said to applause from fellow teachers.

"We also have difficulty with the concept of accountability tied only to standardized tests," she said. "Since we are a school system, accountability should begin with the central office and the School Board, not just the teachers and the school principals, as the document suggests."

Webster said she believes there is a political agenda behind the state plan.

Further testing at the local level, she said, might be used as a superficial way to quantify public schools' performances, in an effort to win support for charter schools and vouchers that could be used to send children to private schools.

Some teachers complained that Lease had not consulted teachers and principals before making the plan public.

"The first anybody heard about this was in the newspaper," said Rhonda Hendricks, a teacher at Marshall Middle School and chairman of its Building Leadership team, who said the plan's emphasis on standardized testing promotes "one-size-fits-all education."

"This is primarily an issue of respect. . . . The attitudes here constitute a lack of respect," Hendricks said.

But Lease told the board Monday night that the plan still is only "conceptual" and that teachers' input would be welcome. The aim of the local

plan is primarily to ensure accreditation, he said.

Under the new state plan, which will be phased in beginning this spring, third-graders will be required to take achievement tests in specific subjects, in addition to broad standardized testing now offered. High school students will be required to pass 11 "end-of-course examinations" before receiving a diploma. To be accredited, a school must achieve a 70 percent pass rate in testing.

Lease said no school should be caught off guard when state testing begins. In his program, first- and second-grade students would begin taking locally authored tests this spring.

"You can't wait until third grade to test the kids. By then, they've lost the foundation," said Lease, who initially called for a 75 pass rate on the local tests but reduced that to 70 percent after teachers complained that his expectations were unrealistic.

Students who do not pass the local tests, Lease said, would be required to go to summer school or participate in a remediation program, which has not been designed.

If 70 percent of students at a public school failed to pass the local tests, the school would be required to develop an improvement plan.

After meeting with concerned educators last week, Lease said his initial plan to implement local testing in three years was hasty. His new projection is five to seven years.

Educators also expressed concern about how the plan will be paid for. Lease has estimated that it will cost \$150,000 in its first year.

The School Board is scheduled to vote

on the academic excellence plan at next month's meeting.

In other business Monday night, the

schools' budget office presented its revised funding formula for 1999 to the School Board, but cautioned that a

shortfall in the county's budget may cut into teacher salaries. ■

43. Los Angeles Times

* 10/16/97; Edition: Valley Edition; Section: Metro; Zones Desk; Page B-3

21. Boston Globe

October 16, 1997

In test scores, question mark on the future

By Beth Daley
Globe Staff

More than 70 percent of Boston public school students who answered open-ended questions in last spring's rigorous achievement test showed at least a basic knowledge of reading and all five grades scored above national averages, results released yesterday showed.

But detailed analyses of the multiple-choice part of the Stanford 9 tests over the last two years show a continued threat to School Department goals to have 10th-grade students take a state mandated test in 2001 and pass it as a prerequisite for graduation. Yesterday's results indicated that at least half of those students would fail.

Two-thirds of students didn't move up in performance level in math and reading between the two years. In math, a total of 20 percent of students got lower scores and only 13 percent got higher scores. In reading, a total of 18 percent got lower scores and 16 percent improved.

Gaps in achievement between white students and some minorities remain dramatic. Black and Hispanic elementary school students were twice as likely to be at the lowest level of performance in reading compared to whites and Asians, a gap that increased to three times as likely in middle and high schools. In math, at each school level, about twice as many black and Hispanic students scored at the lowest level compared to whites and Asians.

In the Stanford 9 tests, which began in Boston two years ago, students can score in four performance levels: 1 is less than basic knowledge, 2 is basic knowledge, 3 is proficiency, and 4 is advanced.

Calling a detailed school-by-school

breakdown a "significant management tool," School Superintendent Thomas Payzant pledged to use the report to promote change this year in the district's 125 schools.

The report identifies schools and their particular strengths and weaknesses in test scores from 1996 and 1997. Principals have received copies of the reports and school officials are meeting over coming weeks to determine how teachers will use the information, deputy superintendent Janice Jackson said at a School Committee meeting last night.

The nine open-ended reading questions given to Boston students last spring are designed to measure the same skills as the multiple-choice test and use the same performance levels. At least 73 percent of Boston students in each grade tested scored at Level 2 or higher on the open-ended questions. Measured on a percentile basis, with 50 as the national median, students in each grade ranked on average from the 51 percentile to the 64 percentile. Normally, students do worse on open-ended questions, school officials said.

"The open-ended test scores are a small but important victory," said Payzant. He attributed the scores in part to new reading and literacy standards implemented last year. Last spring was the first time students took the open-ended test questions. Students in grades 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 took the open-ended test. Students in grades 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 took the multiple-choice test in 1996 and 1997.

But those results, and middle school test score gains, are a small blip on a generally discouraging achievement scorecard.

Noting that many 10th-graders will probably not reach level 2 by the time they graduate, Payzant said, "a normal year of progress is not going to be sufficient."

To begin making dramatic changes in the high schools, where some 79 percent of students in grade 11 scored in level one in math last spring, a restructuring task force will begin meeting tomorrow.

By far, the lack of students moving from one performance level to a higher one is the most disturbing news, along with racial and ethnic gaps. At the elementary school level, 24 percent of blacks and Hispanics scored at the lowest level in reading while 11 percent of whites and Asians did. At the middle school level, 20 percent of blacks and 29 percent of Hispanics scored at that level while 7 percent of whites and 17 percent of Asians did. At the high school level, 42 percent of blacks and 47 percent of Hispanics scored at the lowest level while 13 percent of whites and 32 percent of Asians did.

In math, 83 percent of black and Hispanic high school students scored in the lowest level, compared to 43 percent of whites and 41 percent of Asians.

School Department officials, parents, and outside officials praised the open-ended question results, but repeated that more needs to be done to improve students' achievement. "Nobody expects the system to turn around in a year or two," said Mary Ellen Smith, of Critical Friends, a school reform group. "But I believe that nothing is really going to change until we do something about teacher and principal performance. There has to be a better way to reward good performance." ■

we're going to do this new thing." Somewhere in the middle probably addresses the maximum number of learners in the best way.

EDWARDS All this has to do with scores, doesn't it, math scores?

ROGALIN Yes. I think the real merit

we teach mathematics, the nature of our diverse society versus, say, Japan where it's a more homogenous society, but it's interesting to note that fourth graders in the U.S. did better and the eighth graders did worse. So then you start looking to

debatable; you've got to look at the test, you've got to look at the societal issues. It's very complex.

EDWARDS Roger Rogalin is president of the school division of McGraw-Hill.■

8. USA Weekend

October 10-12, 1997

Putting students to the test

Should students have to pass math and reading exams to be promoted? Chicago's tough school chief, Paul Vallas, has rocked the once-troubled system with a bold new lesson plan: If kids don't learn, they don't pass.

By Pat Ordozensky

He gives schools a chance to raise test scores, and if they don't, he shuts them down and reopens them — minus half the faculty. He dropped the mandatory school-starting age from 7 to 5, and routed out nepotism from hiring practices. He launched a rigorous after-school tutoring program for kids who needed it.

But of all the drastic changes wrought by Paul Vallas, chief executive officer of Chicago's public schools, none sends shock waves through American education like his crusade against two little words:

Social promotion.

And no wonder. In education-ese, "social promotion" means passing students on to the next grade just for putting in classroom time, regardless of what they have or haven't learned. In Chicago, ending the decades-old practice has resulted in the following: Nearly half of all eighth-graders weren't allowed to graduate last June; 40,949 underachieving students in kindergarten through 12th grade were ordered to

attend summer school; and this fall, 23,100 students who didn't make the cut after summer school were flunked and forced to repeat a grade. Radical therapy for what school chief Vallas, a former Chicago city budget director known for his bottom-line bluntness, calls "a cancer that has eaten away at the quality of education."

"People who embrace social promotion should be sued for educational malpractice," he asserts.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of his overhaul, the high-energy Vallas has galvanized a sluggish school system. Mayor Richard Daley gave Vallas, 44, total authority over Chicago's schools two years ago, naming him the system's first-ever CEO.

While some question the money man's credentials for running the USA's third-largest school system, others see him as a hard-working Mr. Fix-It. Often, he'll dash home for dinner with his wife, Sharon, an ex-cop, and their three young boys, then head back to the office and work till 11 p.m.

"Paul Vallas has created an image in

Chicago that school means something much more than it did a few years ago," says Edward Klunk, principal at Amundsen High on the city's North Side. "Private elementary school principals are calling me to get their kids enrolled. They ignored us before."

In countless classrooms nationwide, social promotion remains what critics see as education's dirty little secret: a largely unpublicized, widely used practice that sweeps students onward even when their knowledge lags behind. When Americans decry a "crisis in education," they're talking about a complex problem that no one policy can resolve. But increasingly, social promotion is singled out as a major factor. President Clinton has urged states to demand "no more social promotions, no more free passes. If you want people to learn, learning has to mean something."

Odds are the words "social promotion" are not written in your local school policy manual. But the process is "rampant," says a new study of 85 school districts by the American Federation of Teachers, because so many schools do

have explicit policies against retaining students in the same grade, and that makes social promotion inevitable.

Examples: In Orange County, Fla. (Orlando), students may be retained just once in elementary school. Houston allows retention once in primary grades and once in middle school. New Orleans and other large districts have similar restrictions.

Those policies send "a clear message to promote socially," says Sandra Feldman, AFT president. "We oppose it. It has a bad effect on all students, not just those promoted improperly."

Former U.S. Education secretary Lamar Alexander agrees. "Passing a child from grade to grade is no favor. It's [like] sending a soldier into battle unarmed. The chances of failure are enormous."

New York University educator Diane Ravitch decries the domino effect of social promotion on school quality. Students who can't keep up eventually drop out, she says, and standards and expectations drop for all students. "The end result is that 30 percent of the kids entering college need remediation." And the ripples continue: Graduates are unprepared to compete in today's increasingly technical, highly competitive workplace.

A growing clamor for higher standards and better schools — including Clinton's call for national standardized testing of fourth- and eighth-graders — is prompting school systems across the country to toughen up:

This year, Denver sent 2,359 students to mandatory summer school because their test scores were not high enough to pass.

Almost a third of Cincinnati eighth-graders are repeating the '96-97 school year because of low scores.

In Florida, at the state's urging, most school systems have stiffened graduation standards to require a C average for a diploma.

Such groundbreaking reforms inevitably spark court tests. In Johnston County, N.C., 14 parents sued school officials who used test scores to hold students back, while in Howard County, Md., an eighth-grader's parents sued to force a school to retain their son, arguing he had not learned enough to advance.

A few years ago, Chicago's public schools were considered among the nation's worst. Now, the 425,000-student system is a laboratory for bold, controversial solutions. Today in Chicago, standards for promotion are uniform, firm and clear: In third, sixth, eighth and ninth grades, students must pass reading and math tests or repeat the same grade. Kids who don't pass must go to summer school for intensive instruction in smaller-than-usual classes. At summer's end, they're tested again; if they still don't pass, it's another year in the same grade.

The Chicago Teachers Union, often a sharp critic of school leaders, backs the policy: "There are no social promotions in life," says union head Thomas Reese.

Test scores decide the fates of not just students, but also principals, teachers, even whole schools.

Schools where scores are too low go on probation. A team of administrators is sent in to turn things around, but if a school doesn't improve fast, it is "reconstituted" — shut down and reopened as a new school, whose former staff must reapply for their jobs. Seven schools have met that fate; 30-50 percent of the faculty at those schools were not rehired.

Vallas' dramatic reforms have ignited passionate criticism. U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush, a Democrat who represents part of Chicago's South Side, dismisses Vallas as "a very shrewd used-car salesman." Rush calls the new promotion rule "Draconian" and worries that "the effect of being a bad test-taker rests more profoundly on urban and, particularly, minority students than on other students. The jury is still

out on whether this is anything other than just headline-grabbing."

Critics also say a student's fate should not rest on a single set of scores. The author of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (used in Chicago), H.B. Hoover at the University of Iowa, says, "Any judgment made with one test as the ultimate criterion is not the best thing to do." Gary Marx of the American Association of School Administrators concurs, saying it is "dangerous to limit a person's future based upon a few [test score] numbers."

Other education experts say research proves retained students do not do as well in later grades. And in Chicago, two students interviewed for this article claim they passed the tests after summer school and were admitted to high school mainly because they had extra time to take the tests — something school officials say is against policy.

So far, results of Vallas' reforms have been swift and dramatic. Last spring, in the four grades where test scores are required for promotion, 38,689 (28 percent) didn't make it. After intense summer classes in their weak subjects, 16,828 of those scored high enough to move to the next grade. The rest, except 1,021 "too-old" eighth-graders, are repeating third, sixth, eighth or ninth grade. Eighth-graders 15 or older were sent to transition centers where they get concentrated instruction, in hopes of making them academically ready for high school next fall.

Insists Vallas, borrowing a metaphor from his friend Jesse Jackson, "You do not lower the basketball hoop to 9 1/2 feet" to make slam-dunking simpler. So why, he asks, "should we lower the academic hoop? ... All these kids can learn. If you raise the bar, they'll jump higher. That's the way it is."

Pat Ordozensky, a free-lance writer based in Sarasota, Fla., specializes in education issues. Associate Editor Patricia Edmonds contributed to this story. ■

GOP Plays Hardball To Block National Tests

By David J. Hoff
Washington

The two sides in the national testing debate spent more time and energy last week fighting each other than seeking a compromise.

In the Senate, Republicans rallied to the campaign by Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., to stop President Clinton's testing plan on any terms. That essentially was the position adopted by the House last month, a few days after the Senate voted to allow the new tests to proceed but to put their development in the hands of an independent review panel. Both votes were by large, bipartisan majorities.

Thirty-five GOP senators now say they will try to block any testing initiative that might be included in a House-Senate compromise.

"The more senators know about this

proposal, the more they understand we need to follow the House," Sen. Ashcroft said at a news conference last Thursday.

In the House the same day, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the leader of the testing opponents, exercised his power as the chairman of the education committee to stop work on a literacy bill. The move was intended to "make a statement" of his commitment to stopping the assessment, he said.

Mr. Goodling's move drew an immediate rebuke from the Clinton administration, which had won a promise from Republicans to approve a \$260 million reading program this year.

"Trying to stop the voluntary national tests and the reading initiative is hardly the right way to help any child become a better reader," Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said in a statement.

A High-Level Dare

Later that day, Mr. Goodling and several of his supporters dared the president to veto a spending bill that halts testing but also pays for school programs, cancer research, and other politically popular federal efforts.

"I would love to see him tell the American people ... all the things in the bill will go down the tubes because he has this ill-conceived notion," Mr. Goodling said at the same news conference where Sen. Ashcroft spoke.

Amid the rancor, some discussion of a compromise emerged, but none of the talk was significant enough to signal a deal on the horizon.

On Sept. 11, with the administration's blessing, the Senate voted 88-12 to give the National Assessment Governing Board full authority over the

development of Mr. Clinton's proposed voluntary new tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. The vote later changed to 87-13. The next week, the House voted 295-125 to deny the Education Department the authority to spend any money on the tests.

Both amendments are attached to a bill appropriating money for the departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services for fiscal 1998, which began Oct. 1.

The Education Department has ordered its contractors to stop work on the test until Congress settles the issue. ("Riley Delays National Tests' Development," Oct. 1, 1997.)

At a bicameral conference committee meeting called early last week to discuss House and Senate differences on testing and funding issues, Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., suggested that Congress appropriate money so test publishers could revise existing tests to give the national comparisons Mr. Clinton wants. "Perhaps a middle ground might be ... allowing a modest amount of money for the use of tests that are valid already," Mr. Gorton said Oct. 7.

Skeptical Review

House Republicans at the meeting

indicated that they might be interested in that approach. But the Education Department's No. 2 official sounded skeptical in an interview. To win Mr. Clinton over, a deal would need to create tests assessing students' achievement as compared against the standards set in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the existing federally sponsored testing program, said Marshall S. Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education. It also would need to promise to release test questions to the public after students take them, which would require new tests to be written every year.

"The test the president is advocating will do a lot of things other tests don't do," Mr. Smith said in an interview.

Mr. Goodling, for his part, offered a slight concession: "Cancel the contract [with test publishers to write the test] and we can deliberate next year," when Congress is due to reauthorize NAEP, he told reporters after the Oct. 9 news conference.

That deal is unlikely to get the administration's backing because Mr. Clinton wants assessments ready for the spring of 1999. Contractors need to do a year of field and pilot testing first.

The issue must be settled by Oct. 23, unless Congress and Mr. Clinton extend a measure temporarily funding programs for which final fiscal 1998 appropriations bills have not been approved.

House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said last week that Congress may push the deadline back two more weeks.

With Congress out of session this week, another extension appears inevitable.

Reading Duel

While testing was the main point of contention last week, Mr. Goodling and the administration were at odds over the reading bill as well. A bill Mr. Goodling prepared for his committee to consider included tutorial-assistance grants for struggling elementary school students.

"It's close to vouchers, and it's impossible to administer," Mr. Smith said. "It's not necessary" to have grants for tutoring for the reading program to work, he said.

But Mr. Goodling maintained that Democrats would support his bill. "It's pretty tough to walk away from those type of programs for people who need it the most," he said. ■

education, training, encouragement of other non-discriminatory programs."

The group, including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Sen.

Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., and Sen.

intended to remedy past discrimination (ED, Aug. 13, 1996).

The senators argue that when Congress applied Title VII to schools in

the school district's use of affirmative action to promote diversity as an "educational tool" to teach tolerance (ED, Oct. 1). — Dave Boyer■

12. Education Daily

October 15, 1997

CLINTON'S LINE-ITEM VETO PEN COULD BLOT VOUCHERS, NOT TESTS

President Clinton's new line-item veto could help him get out of one nettlesome education controversy—but would offer little or no help with two others.

Responding to an inquiry from Education Daily, the White House Office of Management and Budget confirmed that Clinton could theoretically use his line-item veto power to excise a \$7 million appropriation for private school vouchers in the House version of the fiscal 1998 District of Columbia funding bill (ED, Oct. 10).

However, OMB spokesman Lawrence Haas emphasized that the president hasn't

made any decisions on how to proceed with the bill, especially since the Senate hasn't even passed its version yet, which likely won't include vouchers. After the Senate votes, the two chambers must compromise.

Clinton couldn't use his line-item veto to wriggle out of the controversy over his voluntary national testing plan for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

The House's fiscal 1998 education funding bill, H.R. 2264, would ban all further funding for development of the exams.

But since the ban is a policy issue and

not a funding issue, it is not subject to the line-item veto, OMB and Congress-watchers agree.

House and Senate negotiators are still ironing out differences between their versions of education spending bills. The Senate version, S. 1061, would turn over the test development to a reconfigured bipartisan board.

Clinton could use the line-item veto to get rid of a plan by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., to fund \$13 billion in K-12 programs through block grants to school districts. But if the president did that, he might effectively stop funding of those programs—including Title I, Goals 2000

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and Safe and Drug-Free Schools—for one year, according to a federal budget source.

Making this scenario even more unlikely is Gorton's tacit admission last week that his proposal is unlikely to pass (ED, Oct. 9).

Earlier this year, Congress gave the

president the power to veto funding for specific programs without having to veto an entire bill (ED, Jan. 7). So far, Clinton has wielded his line-item veto pen only on some minor provisions of the tax bill and on military construction.

Negotiations on education funding are expected to continue when Congress

returns next week. A stop-gap funding bill that expires Oct. 23 has kept government agencies running since the start of fiscal 1998 at the beginning of this month. Congress will likely pass another short-term measure when it returns. —Laureen Lazarovici■

13. Education Daily

October 15, 1997

HANDFUL OF STATE REFORMS HELD UP AS MODELS

With virtually all states working on education standards, assessments and accountability, a federally funded research center has developed criteria to measure how well states coordinate those efforts.

None of the five states examined by the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (NCITE) meet all the

reasonable in terms of difficulty; linked to assessments; and free of directives to instructors about how teach.

The Virginia State Board of Education first proposed standards in June 1995 and approved amended versions in July that require students to take standards of learning (SOL) tests after grades three, five and eight. The SOL tests will be a key factor in grade promotion and

good idea.

New York: The Tests

New York is phasing out its two-tier assessment system, which dates back to 1867, allowing seniors to take a competency exam or a more challenging Board of Regents test.

Last year, the state started to phase out the competency exams, deeming the lesser tests too easy, especially in math

human resources. The school places a strong emphasis on private property rights and our proud heritage of a free economy," she said in a letter to supporters. "Each year, the Robertson school graduates a new group of leaders to support the advances the pro-family movement has made and to realize our future victories."

Those goals have alarmed representatives of liberal groups. "They're establishing a beachhead here in Washington," said Matthew Freeman, senior vice president of the nonprofit People for the American Way, which focuses on constitutional freedoms.

University professor and expert on the religious right, said he is troubled by the school's narrow agenda, when the point of graduate education is to teach people to research ideas and arrive at their own conclusions. "I just find it a little bit striking that everybody who gets recruited to teach for them has to have a certain ideological perspective," he said.

American University political scientist Mark J. Rozell called the expansion a "smart, sophisticated move" that reflects Robertson's understanding that his movement, to grow, must have a presence at the center of politics and

critics say. "They're committed to turning out students who have conservative moral values," but not all students and faculty take a conservative hard line on every issue, Murray said.

Murray, who lives near Boston, lost a Democratic primary bid in 1996 to run for the seat vacated by Rep. Gerry Studds (D-Mass.).

School officials plan to lease space downtown and hope to enroll about 100 students. An Oct. 28 scholarship fund-raiser in Washington will feature Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition. ■

44. The Washington Post

10/14/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Metro; Page B01

A Mixed Report Card on Student Testing

Being Head of the Class Raises Concerns in Howard County

By Katherine Shaver
Washington Post Staff Writer

For seven straight years, Howard County has ranked first on the Maryland Department of Education's annual "report card" on school districts, based largely on the superior testing performance of schoolchildren in the central Maryland suburb.

Those top scores are Howard County's pride and joy. Published every fall, they are touted frequently by school board members, real estate agents and politicians, and by many parents who say the school system's state test scores attracted them to Howard County over other Washington suburbs.

TD But some Howard parents and teachers have begun to question whether their bragging rights have come at a price. Those top scores, critics say, may reflect the fact that some Howard schools are spending too much valuable class and homework time — up to one month of the nine-month school year — simply preparing students for a week-long series of standardized tests.

"The truth is, they live and die for these test scores," said Mimi Owens, of Columbia, who believes her

seventh-grade daughter spent too much time preparing for the tests two years ago. "Everything is tied to how well those kids do."

Concern over whether the push to excel on exams is shortchanging children comes at a time when politicians across the country, from President Clinton to members of Congress, are calling for more standardized tests as a way to hold schools accountable for their students' learning.

Every school district in the Washington area is paying more attention to the testing performance of its students, in part because the stakes are high. In Virginia, where new standardized tests will be given next spring, schools eventually could lose accreditation if they do not reach at least a 70 percent passing rate. For the first time in the District, children who fail new standardized tests in reading may be held back.

Some Virginia teachers have criticized the state's forthcoming tests as too fact-based, saying they worry they will be forced to turn from creative teaching to more rote memorization.

"It's a tremendous amount of pressure

coming from administrators saying, 'These students have got to pass, they have to pass,' " said Meg Gruber, president of the Prince William Education Association. "How do you ensure someone passes a certain test? You drill and drill and drill what you know is supposed to be on that test."

In Maryland, the state's Department of Education uses test scores from third-, fifth- and eighth-graders, among other criteria, to grade each school system on a statewide "report card" as part of its Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). Schools with the most improved test results are rewarded with thousands of dollars in extra state funding. Those with dwindling scores can become candidates for state takeover. The state is now considering making end-of-course standardized tests a graduation requirement for high school students.

"People are so concerned about how their schools will score, they've gotten away from some of the fun and creative things teachers used to do with children," said Janette Bell, president of the Prince George's County Educators' Association. " . . . People talk about weeks and weeks

of either preparing for the MSPAP test or doing pre-test kinds of things."

Even school districts like Howard's that produce relatively high scores still have not met all the standards set by the state, forcing educators to continue pushing students to do better. Maryland wants 70 percent of all schoolchildren to pass the state tests by the turn of the century. In Howard, 57 percent of all students have reached that point, tops in a state where just 41 percent of all students are passing.

Tom Spriesterbach, of Ellicott City, said he worries that teachers are prepping his third-grade son for the higher-level thinking skills required to do well on state tests before making sure he has a firm grasp of the basics.

"I see it when [he] brings work home," said Spriesterbach, 36, an engineer. "It doesn't seem like they're teaching them the curriculum as much as the skills to get through the MSPAP."

Howard School Superintendent Michael E. Hickey said his teachers should prepare students "a week or two" before the test by teaching basic test-taking skills, such as how to follow directions carefully. That way, he said, scores aren't artificially low simply because children got confused or frightened by the test format.

Beyond that, Hickey said, he actually likes to hear that his teachers "teach to the test." They should, he said, all year long.

The state designed the MSPAP to assess more than which facts students have learned. It measures whether they can work alone and in groups to apply what they know to solve real-life problems. And that, Hickey said, is a valuable skill for teachers to teach.

Ellen Hennessy, a fifth-grade teacher at Lisbon Elementary in Howard, said teachers face "a lot of pressure" for their students to perform. But, she said, colleagues who complain about having to spend too much time preparing students may simply dislike the new teaching methods the test requires.

Before the Maryland testing began, she said, her students might have read a textbook and answered questions at the end of the chapter. Last year, keeping the format of test questions in mind, she had her class read articles about a proposed rating system for television shows. Students were then assigned to write a letter to the president or a member of Congress arguing why they agreed or disagreed with the proposal.

Some of her colleagues may call that kind of lesson "preparing for the test." Hennessy calls it better teaching.

But many Howard teachers disagree. Some eighth-grade teachers said they lose eight days to one month a year preparing and testing students, according to interviews conducted by a panel of parents that examined Howard middle schools two years ago.

A Howard teachers union survey found in February that about 60 percent of teachers said they spent too much time on standardized tests. In another survey, by the parents panel, 60 percent of teachers said the state scores did not provide a "good indication" of their students' performances.

Twenty-five percent of Howard middle school parents, the survey said, agreed that too much time was spent preparing for testing. Also, members of the parents panel who sat in on Howard middle school classes said that preparation didn't always lead to improved teaching.

"Kids were being sat down in class and told, 'This is the kind of question being asked on the test, this is how you need to answer,'" said Sheri Fanaroff, of Ellicott City, who served on the parents panel and whose sixth-grade son took the MSPAP last year. "That to me is not the same as teaching a child the general principles of math and science."

Owens, the Columbia parent, said she believes that her daughter Julia spent too much class time preparing for the Maryland assessment tests two years ago as a fifth-grader. Julia, 11, said it initially "felt like a waste of time." One month

before the test, Julia said, teachers told her class when giving certain assignments, "Here's the MSPAP writing prompt. This is the exact kind of thing you'll find on the test."

When testing week came, she said, "we knew exactly what to do."

In Prince George's, where schools are trying to bolster some of the lowest test scores in Maryland, anticipation of the MSPAP drives everything from the curriculum to classroom decor.

Charlene Ivy, principal of Apple Grove Elementary in Fort Washington, said her staff builds a theme around the state test and decorates classrooms and hallways to motivate students. Last year, the staff chose the theme "Home of the MSPAP Stars," laminated stars with the names of each of the 300 test-takers and rolled out the carpet of stars before students headed to their classrooms to take the test.

"You create the theme, and everybody buys into it," Ivy said. "It keeps us pumped up."

Howard school officials say the debate over test preparations may boil down to better public relations among principals, teachers and parents. Teachers trying to make class work seem relevant to students may be telling them, "You need to know this for the MSPAP," when it's really part of the regular curriculum, said Leslie Wilson, testing supervisor for Howard schools.

And parents need to understand how Maryland's spring tests differ from the fill-in-the-bubble tests they took in school, Wilson said. Meanwhile, Ron Peiffer, spokesman for the Maryland Department of Education, said some schools give parents the wrong message by teaching an "MSPAP Word of the Day" or holding pre-test pep rallies during class time.

"We're trying to help principals understand they don't need to focus on MSPAP the event," he said, "but rather on good instruction every day."

Staff writer Lisa Frazier contributed to this report. ■