

42. The Washington Post

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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 Ordovensky

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 Ordovensky, 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 provide 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. ■

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

14

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 training 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

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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. ■

summer vacation extinct. Planning alone can require months of meetings. And deans complain of a shortage of top professors to teach and design the courses. "The real competition is for faculty," says Glen L. Urban, dean of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management. As a result, profs have more leverage than ever before to choose the programs they want to be associated with. "You can't get the faculty to take on a dull project,"

together would make someone want to throw up," says Albert A. Vicere, director of the Institute for the Study of Organizational Effectiveness at Pennsylvania State University's Smeal B-School. "Now, you're seeing a lot more openness." Columbia, for example, asked Kellogg to help it run a program for Deloitte & Touche's partners because the volume was too great. Exec ed director Ethan Hanabury says about half of Columbia's \$12.7 million in exec ed

executive education at Casanovi Kozak. "We're looking at cutting the number of schools we use."

Come a downturn, the trend may well accelerate. "The strong will thrive," says Michigan's White. "The weak will die." The pressure has forced schools to do what they've preached, but seldom practiced: listen to the customer. It's a lesson they might have learned in B-school.

By Jennifer Reingold in New York ■

TRADE

16. Education Daily

October 14, 1997

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Congress isn't in session this week, and House-Senate negotiators will likely meet Oct. 21 to finish a compromise education spending bill. Conferees are moving away from a Senate proposal to provide most K-12 funding through block grants to localities, but they haven't decided whether to halt funding for the president's national testing plan. A temporary law is funding education programs at fiscal 1997 levels until Oct. 23.

Recent or Upcoming Action ...

Fiscal 1998 Appropriations/National Tests H.R. 2264: Would boost the Education Department's budget from nearly \$32.8 billion in fiscal 1997 to about \$35.8 billion this year, based on updated estimates for mandatory spending on programs such as student loans. It would increase spending on Title I and special education, set aside \$205 million for comprehensive school reform, level-fund Safe and Drug-Free Schools grants, and cut Goals 2000 funding from \$491 million to \$387 million (ED, Sept.

11). It also would provide \$100 million for charter schools and \$435 million for state formula grants for school technology. The bill would set aside \$260 million for a childhood literacy program in fiscal 1999, if it is authorized by April 1. No money could be spent on President Clinton's national testing program, and State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG) would be eliminated. S. 1061.

Would send about \$13.4 billion in Title I, Goals 2000, bilingual and technology education funding to school districts as block grants, under a \$35.5 billion ED budget (ED, Sept. 12). Special education state grants for school-age children would get a substantial boost, to \$3.95 billion. SSIG would be cut to \$35 million. A reconstituted National Assessment Governing Board would oversee Clinton's voluntary tests. Both bills would raise the maximum Pell Grant to \$3,000.

Last action: During negotiations last Tuesday, conferees indicated the Senate block grant plan for most K-12 funding won't be part of the final bill. In a

203-202 vote Thursday, the House approved \$7 million for private school vouchers in Washington, D.C., this year as part of H.R. 2607, its spending bill for the nation's capital (ED, Oct. 10). But the Senate shot down the voucher plan in S. 1156, its version of the D.C. appropriations bill. Conferees have yet to be appointed to smooth out differences between the two D.C. spending bills.

Next action: The education funding conference committee will likely meet Oct. 21, when it will have only two days before a stop-gap funding measure expires (ED, Oct. 6).

Clinton says he will veto legislation that would create block grants or halt his testing initiative.

Omnibus Education S. 1: The GOP bill would allow states to use existing Title VI block grant funds for public and private school choice, would raise special education funding starting with a \$1 billion hike this year, and would authorize a school choice demonstration program for low-income families (ED, Jan. 23).

S. 12: The Democrats' bill would

require the federal government to pay up to half of the interest on school construction bonds and authorize \$1.75 billion for reading programs and \$1.8 billion for school technology.

Last action: The House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee held a hearing Oct. 2 in Muskegon Heights, Mich., as part of its "Education at a Crossroads" series, which has examined school reform and federal education policy (ED, Oct. 3).

Next action: The House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will hold another "Crossroads" hearing, the 13th such hearing this year, on Oct. 20 in Lewisberry, Pa.

Education Tax Breaks H.R. 2646, S. 1133: Would allow parents tax-free withdrawals from education savings accounts for expenses including private K-12 tuition, transportation, tutoring and computers (ED, Aug. 4).

Last action: The House Ways and Means Committee passed H.R. 2646 on Thursday, 19-17.

Next action: No further action is scheduled in either chamber.

Vocational Education H.R. 1853: Would allot school districts at least 90 percent of the basic state grant under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, up from 75 percent, and shave the state set-asides to 2 percent for administration and 8 percent for leadership. It also would lower the minimum school district grant to \$10,000 (ED, July 24). **S. 1186:** Would maintain separate funding and administration for vocational, job training and adult education programs, but would let states submit one plan for all three programs and would reward state coordination among programs with incentive grants. Grant minimums and formulas for distributing Perkins state grants would remain

unchanged.

Last action: The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee passed S. 1186 last month (ED, Sept. 25). It will try to address educators' concerns regarding states filing a single plan for vocational and job training before the full Senate votes. The House passed its bill in July.

Next action: The Senate may vote on S. 1186 by late October.

Charter Schools H.R. 2616: Would channel federal charter school funds to states that allow schools the most freedom to innovate, thus encouraging states to loosen their charter school regulations. The bill also would order the Education Department to improve its delivery of federal funds to charter schools.

Last action: The House Education and the Workforce committee passed it, 24-8, on Thursday (ED, Oct. 10).

Next action: The bill could come up for a House floor vote by the end of the month.

Property Taxes S. 1149: Would ensure that property taxes, which often provide most local education revenues, are paid by bankruptcy estates and corporate debtors. The bill would prohibit bankruptcy courts from devaluing property during legal proceedings under most circumstances, and would ensure property tax liens have the same legal standing as other bankruptcy expenses.

Last action: The Senate Judiciary Committee passed S. 1149 by voice vote on Oct. 9.

Next action: No action is scheduled.

Just Introduced ...

Teacher Training S. 1261: Would award \$5,000 scholarships to undergraduates and graduate students, as

part of a \$250 million teacher training project over four years.

Last action: Introduced Oct. 7 by Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn.; referred to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Next action: No action is scheduled.

National Tests S. 1263: Would permanently give oversight of a planned volunteer national testing program to a reconfigured National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), mirroring the Senate's compromise in the pending fiscal 1998 education funding bill on President Clinton's testing plan (ED, Sept. 12).

Last action: Introduced Oct. 7 by Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M.; referred to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (ED, Oct. 10).

Next action: No action is scheduled.

Literacy Improvement H.R. 2614: The GOP alternative to President Clinton's \$260 million America Reads program would authorize competitive training grants for teachers in research-based reading instruction; authorize grants to families to hire reading tutors if their children are still having trouble after several years of schooling; and encourage phonics in federally funded literacy programs. It would authorize \$260 million in competitive grants to states over three years, to be distributed to school districts in low-income neighborhoods.

Last action: Introduced Oct. 6 by Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa. The House Education and the Workforce Committee was to take up the bill Thursday, but Goodling, its chairman, is refusing to allow action on the bill until Congress bars Clinton's voluntary testing initiative (ED, Oct. 10).

Next action: No action is scheduled.
— Laureen Lazarovici, Jonathan Fox ■

17. Education Daily

October 14, 1997

NEWS BRIEF

*** Treasury Plans Briefings On Postsecondary Tax Breaks.**

Treasury Department officials will meet with the higher education community later this month to discuss

The Education Department and Treasury are still unclear how much data will be required from postsecondary schools to verify the amount of tuition paid by each student claiming the

The meetings are intended to gather information from the higher education community on how best to collect data.

Colleges and universities have tuition payment information and Social Security

D.C. voucher plan guts rights, Riley says

By Tamara Henry
USA TODAY, page D6

Education Secretary Richard Riley, long a vocal opponent of school vouchers, is upset by efforts of "school choice allies" to weaken basic civil rights in a bill that gives low-income students in the nation's capital tax money to attend private schools.

Riley was reacting to a memorandum from Clint Bolick, litigation director with the Institute for Justice, that outlines how he "argued strongly against" federal civil rights regulations, including Title IX (gender) and disability provisions in the

Washington, D.C. voucher bill. "We are pleased to report that the final bill contains only a general antidiscrimination requirement, and expressly provides that schools are not 'recipients of federal funds,'" Bolick said in the Sept. 22 memo.

The legislation, passed by one vote in the House last week, would provide 2,000 poor children with as much as 3,200 each to pay tuition at private and parochial schools. The Senate recently fell two votes short of the 60 needed to stop a filibuster on the issue by Sen.

Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. Kennedy says vouchers would weaken public schools.

Meanwhile, President Clinton has threatened to veto.

"I am stunned that anyone would willingly boast" of gutting "some of the most fundamental civil rights laws of this land," says Riley.

Bailiwick says, "The bottom line, of course, is choice. Parents can select highly regulated public schools or more personalized private schools." ■

2. USA Today
October 14, 1997

National test plan stalls funding bill

By Tamara Henry
USA TODAY, page D6

Washington — Moving toward a showdown with the White House, Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., is holding up action on President Clinton's much-touted reading initiative until the president drops his bid for voluntary national tests for U.S. students.

Clinton has threatened to veto a bill that would fund the departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services unless it includes a plan to test all fourth-graders in math by March 1999. The House eliminated the tests from its version of the bill, while the Senate kept them. Now members are locked in negotiations over which version of the bill to accept.

Meanwhile, funding for the federal agencies within the scope of the bill stops Oct. 23, and a veto could force a partial

government shutdown.

Goodling says he was ready for the Committee on Education and the Workforce, which he chairs, to review the new reading program proposal and prepare it for House debate. The initiative would fund tutors and training to meet Clinton's goal of having every child become a successful reader by the end of third grade.

However, Goodling stopped action "because of the administration's continued attempts to forge ahead with federal testing despite the objections of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"A confrontation that stops funding for the programs contained in this bill would be counterproductive and damaging to the faith the American people have placed in us," says Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S-C.

Education Secretary Richard Riley

called himself "disappointed" by Goodling's action. "Reading is a bipartisan issue. We think it is important to help children read well and independently. We can do that by raising standards for all children and giving them the extra help they need to become a better reader.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., has threatened to filibuster the budget bill if it returns to the Senate without language permitting development of the tests. He says he has secured a commitment from 42 of his Democratic colleagues to help.

Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., says he now has signatures from 35 of his colleagues to vote against national testing, compared with three weeks ago when only 13 senators voted against it.

"The more people learn about testing, the less they like it," Ashcroft says. ■

Why Standards Matter

It's a Question of Moral Wrongs and Civil Rights

By Bob Chase, President, National Education Association

If we want tougher academic standards for America's public schools, then we need a more tough-minded answer to the question "Why?" Pundits who argue that higher standards are essential to global competitiveness miss the point. It's not the economy, stupid. It's a moral question. It's a matter of basic civil rights.

Think about it. The U.S. already boasts far and away the most competitive economy in the world. And hundreds of public school districts — most of them in affluent suburbs — are already performing at world-class levels. Last year, for example, eighth graders in a consortium of 20 school districts in suburban Chicago took the Third International Mathematics and Science Study test. If those 20 districts had been a separate country, the test results would have placed them second in the world (behind Singapore) in science and among the top five nations in math.

So the issue isn't whether Johnny can compete academically with Johann, Yoko, and Yuri. Of course he can. The real issue is whether kids in inner-city and rural schools will be challenged and *enabled* to achieve at the same high levels as their best suburban counterparts. And I stress that word "enabled," because it is a sham to challenge underprivileged kids to meet higher standards unless we are willing to provide the resources and interventions that will help them to succeed.

The most pernicious inequality is not necessarily in funding, but rather in academic expectations, goals, and requirements — in a word, standards. Schools without even minimal standards — schools that pass kids who can't read or compute — flunk a basic moral test.

Indeed, E.D. Hirsch of the

University of Virginia correctly characterizes the struggle for higher school standards as "the new civil rights frontier." Which gives rise to a disturbing historical parallel: In

*"Schools that pass kids
who can't read or compute
flunk a basic moral test."*

the 1950s and 1960s, prominent elected officials literally stood in the schoolhouse door to deny the civil rights of minority children. They did so in the name of "states' rights." Similarly today, some elected officials are engaged in a new massive resistance. They steadfastly reject all efforts to create voluntary nationwide academic standards as a federal intrusion onto the traditional turf of states and localities.

In recent months, however, this wall of resistance has shown cracks. Frustrated by failing school districts, the same governors who give lip service to local control are imposing statewide academic standards and, in some cases, taking over management of local schools and school districts.

The scandal in American public education is not just the social promotion of failing students but, in effect, the social promotion of entire school districts. In the absence of objective standards for measuring their performance, badly mismanaged and underperforming districts are allowed to slide by. Likewise, some politicians and school administrators — as well as, yes, some teachers and their local unions — are allowed to skirt accountability.

The tragic upshot is that, in an era of unprecedented *de jure* civil rights, millions of young people are being denied the fundamental



enabling right to a quality public education. And this is why high academic standards for all American children is arguably the most urgent civil rights issue of our day.

But let us be realists. We will never achieve significantly higher standards within those public school systems that are fundamentally broken and dysfunctional. If we want higher academic standards, then we must first create high-performance public education systems. And I believe that the new union we are building at NEA — with a sharp new emphasis on school quality and teacher professionalism — can play a big role in this transformation.

For decades, teacher unions have been adept at protecting their members from dysfunctional school systems. Today, however, we must challenge and change those systems — both for our members' sake and for the sake of the children.

We must insist on schools that give every child the enabling civil right of a quality public education. After all, our rights as Americans may indeed be "inalienable" and "self-evident," but — as a practical reality — they can be fully realized only by well-educated citizens.

Crew should have taken their money. A privately funded inequity is preferable to

a publicly funded inequity. What's more, impoverished schools get special federal

help to keep class sizes down. Crew did a good thing badly. ■

70. Portland (Maine) Press Herald

October 10, 1997

Unum chief's ideas can aid our schools

Ask job applicants for transcripts, give parents time off and require national testing.

There are 51 million future high school graduates in America's public schools, and they're not all receiving a good education.

Even Maine, which ranks high on national tests, falls short of doing as well as it should with K-12 education. James F. Orr III, chairman and chief executive of Unum Corp., drew this picture starkly before the Chamber of Commerce of the Greater Portland Region on Thursday.

Though Maine ranked first in the nation in math testing, Orr noted that only 27 percent of the Maine students registered as proficient or better. Maine is leading a very slow pack.

The enormity of the education challenge can be intimidating. With so many students in need of so much more in the classroom, students, educators, business leaders and parents can easily

grow frustrated.

However, during his talk Orr set out three simple things his colleagues in the business world could do to help. We strongly endorse them.

Ask all recently graduated job candidates for their transcripts. In what Orr and other business leaders hope will become a trend, companies are starting to take note of grades. Unum, which has always sought the grades of recent college graduates, now will seek transcripts from applicants who recently finished their education in high school.

Give employees with school-age children time off to meet with teachers. Orr suggests this could be either paid or unpaid and need not be more than a day or two a year. Such a policy at Unum costs the company less than accommodating jury duty, he said.

Back voluntary comprehensive national testing. These tests will provide a more detailed portrait of student performance than any test currently being done. They will allow schools to compare their performance with other schools across the nation and around the world. They should lead to efforts to improve that performance.

Orr's company has taken its commitment to education even further. It has family-friendly policies for employees, training for its workers and a program aimed at helping students make the transition to the working world.

Orr's comments Thursday, however, suggest that a business doesn't need the resources of Unum to make a difference. All Maine companies can adopt Orr's recommendations and help improve our education system. ■

71. Dallas Morning News

October 10, 1997

Dallas schools

Trustees should look for a strong interim leader

10/10/97

Dallas school trustees face multifarious challenges as they start searching for a superintendent to lead the 160,000-student district:

Trustees want to find someone who can restore stability to a school district left fractured by corruption charges. Someone who can heal raw racial wounds. Someone who can provide a better education for thousands of children who are underachieving.

That's a tall order.

Rather than call for a miracle worker to "save" public education, trustees would be smart to set short- and long-term goals.

* FOR THE SHORT TERM: Some trustees would like to bring on board a

seasoned business executive who could address the most pressing management problems facing the Dallas schools.

That's a prudent idea. A veteran administrator, experienced in turning around troubled businesses, could take on the widespread financial and personnel crises outlined in the corruption probe.

Such an interim chief could overhaul the current process and restore fiscal responsibility to the district. Former Dallas Mayor Jack Evans was instrumental in bringing credibility to Dallas Area Rapid Transit when he served briefly as the agency's chief executive officer.

With an interim superintendent serving no more than 18 months, board

members and civic leaders could then focus on rebuilding community support.

* FOR THE LONG TERM: Trustees should set priorities for their next superintendent. What specific goals do they want accomplished? What programs should be strengthened?

The school board also should consider how duties would be divided between the district's next leader and the administrative staff. The superintendent may need to focus on broad education concerns and community outreach. That would leave little time for day-to-day operations.

School trustees should decide whether a team approach is needed at the top - a superintendent much like a college president who can communicate with

47. Los Angeles Times

* 10/10/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-1

Some Good News for L.A. on Advanced Tests

The number of high school students taking the national exams, which can grant college credit, rose, as did scores.

By DOUG SMITH TIMES
EDUCATION WRITER

Los Angeles school officials announced Thursday that the number of students taking Advanced Placement exams rose 11.6% this year, continuing a decade-long trend, while scores increased slightly.

The results gave school officials a welcomed chance to boast, coming days after the release of disappointing scores on the Stanford Nine standardized test. The district ranked in the bottom third nationally on that examination.

TD

"I am very delighted to see these test scores," said school board President Julie Korenstein at a news conference to release the Advanced Placement results.

In addition to the increase in students taking the exams—which are offered in a variety of subjects and can be used to gain college credits while still in high school—the number of tests taken rose at the same rate. The increases indicate that more students are tackling tougher course work, said Janice Gams, spokeswoman for the College Board, the nonprofit organization that administers the tests.

Expansion of Advanced Placement courses, college preparatory classes that prepare students for the exams, was one of the 21 goals in the contract of Los Angeles Unified School District Supt. Ruben Zacarias.

Although the exams whose results were announced Thursday were taken

before he assumed the district's top job in July, Zacarias said he was excited by the outcome.

Bob Collins, director of instruction for the district's high schools, called the 16,506 exams taken this year "remarkable for an urban school district."

"We are expanding this AP program at a rate that is explosive," he said.

More students have taken the exams in the Los Angeles district each year since 1986. Scores, however, dipped two years ago from a mean of 2.94 to 2.8. A score above 3 qualifies a student for college credit.

The district's mean score of 2.85 this year represented the second consecutive increase. Districtwide, 16.9% of students scored 5, which signifies that they are "extremely well qualified" in college level work, and 16.4% scored 4, making them "well qualified." Both groups were up slightly from the 16% scoring at each of those levels last year.

Still, the district's scores were below the statewide and national means, both slightly above 3.

However, Gams said the fact that more students took the tests without lowering the mean score is a sign that the college preparation work is being mastered.

Statewide, 15 high schools were among the top 50 nationally that administered the most Advanced Placement exams—700 or more. All but two of the 15 were public campuses, and

all had above-average pass rates on the rigorous tests, according to Wade Curry, who directs the Advanced Placement program for the New York-based College Board.

In Los Angeles County, the schools whose students took the most Advanced Placement tests overall were Arcadia High, Beverly Hills High, Whitney High in Cerritos, Harvard-Westlake in North Hollywood, Long Beach Polytechnic High, North Hollywood High and Palos Verdes Peninsula High.

In Orange County, the honors list includes University High in Irvine, Sunny Hills High in Fullerton and Fountain Valley High.

Clovis West High School in the Fresno area, La Jolla High and Torrey Pines High in San Diego County, and Lowell High and St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco round out the list.

North Hollywood High, a perennial Advanced Placement leader that includes a magnet school for highly gifted students, topped all Los Angeles campuses in the number of exams taken, at 1,244.

Much more dramatic increases occurred at several schools with historically low levels of participation. Dorsey High in the Crenshaw district increased from 42 exams taken to 82 and Eagle Rock High from 111 to 204.

Times staff writer Hector Tobar and education writer Elaine Woo contributed to this story. ■

48. The Washington Post

10/10/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A03

A Hard Lesson in School Economics

N.Y. Parents' Bid to Pay Teacher's Salary Triggers Debate on Aid Equity

By Blaine Harden and Valerie Strauss
Washington Post Staff Writers

Call it the Greenwich Village rule of education equity.

As noisily codified in New York City this month, the rule says that activist

middle-class parents — sometimes calling themselves "guerrilla moms" — can raise money to prop up, enrich and improve their children's public schools. They can lease copy machines, buy football uniforms and fix the roofs.

But they can't hire teachers.

The rule, which two weeks ago stopped Greenwich Village parents from paying the salary of a fourth-grade teacher whom their children were about to lose, governs virtually all big public

40. Providence Journal-Bulletin

October 8, 1997

Educators focus on issues key to better test scores

Concentrating on early-childhood education, math education and elementary-school class sizes are three issues seen as vital to improved national standing.

By ELLIOT KRIEGER

Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

The RAND Corporation report, which documents the vast gap between investment and performance in Rhode Island schools, offers no solution to bring the student test scores in the state up to at least the national norm.

But those who have studied the report, including a group of about 20 political leaders and state officials who spent a week in St. Louis in August discussing the implications of the report's findings, have begun to focus on a few issues that might need immediate attention.

None in itself, according to the author of the report, David W. Grissmer, would substantially lift Rhode Island's student test scores. But each, over time, could help the state improve its national standing.

The key issues under discussion at the moment are:

Early-childhood education.

Mathematics education.

Elementary-school class size.

Early-childhood education

"I found it very sobering to look at the data on our state compared with other states," says Christine C. Ferguson, director of the Department of Human Services, who was part of the state's delegation to the Danforth Foundation Policymakers' Institute in St. Louis. "The one thing I found particularly interesting, and maybe it's because I'm so interested in child-care issues, was that we had many fewer kids going to preschool."

The RAND report, once it demonstrated the state's low test scores, examined a number of factors that might account for those scores.

Rhode Island ranked high on all the charts — average class size, school size, teacher salaries and per-pupil expenditure, for example. But the state ranked third from the bottom on "proportion of children in

pre-kindergarten."

Ferguson notes that "with all of the data now coming out on brain development [that shows] most of it occurring up to age 6," there's no excuse for our failure to educate children from the earliest age.

She cites several programs her department has put in place — notably guaranteed day care and health insurance for all low-income families — as the foundation for good early-childhood education.

"I think that school is only part of the equation," Ferguson says. "Other factors about families and kids, after-school and before-school programs, are sometimes as important as what happens in school."

Rep. Paul V. Sherlock, D-Warwick, another member of the state's delegation to St. Louis, agrees with Ferguson that pre-kindergarten programs may be a big part of the explanation for the state's poor test scores.

He praises the work the state has done regarding social services for young children. But he believes more must be done to prepare the very young for school.

"The reality is," Sherlock says, "we're doing a better job at other kinds of readiness for school, such as nutrition and health care, but not the cognitive readiness."

He believes that many children begin school before they are ready to learn, and then they are promoted year after year, whether or not they are ready to move on to the next grade.

"A lot of our specialized programs should go into early education, so that our kids don't flunk," Sherlock says.

Mathematics

Though he doesn't dispute the findings of the RAND report, Peter McWalters, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education, points out one peculiarity within the data that form the basis for the state rankings:

Though most of the other states tend

to score about the same on all the tests, Rhode Island scores poorly (next to last, in fact) on the four mathematics tests. But the scores are much higher on the two reading tests — 32nd out of 40 states in 1992, rising to 10th out of 38 in 1994.

"I'd say the only reason that's there is because of policy decisions on literacy," McWalters says.

He points to a program that began before his tenure in office, the literacy set-asides, which became law as part of the Rhode Island Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act of 1987.

The law requires that all districts screen children entering the school system, and that they focus on instruction in literacy from kindergarten through the third grade.

To ensure that each district carries out its literacy goals, the state sets aside 3 percent of all school aid for each district (more than \$14 million in the current fiscal year) for literacy programs.

Over the past decade, McWalters argues, the state's focus on literacy has produced results, as evidenced by the relatively strong, and improving, reading test scores.

"If you're closing the gaps," McWalters says, "it is going to be as a result of a coordinated state policy with resources and focus."

As to mathematics, he says, "we're just starting down that road," by introducing a new statewide test that focuses on problem-solving and written responses (rather than multiple-choice questions) and by establishing statewide standards (approved in March by the Board of Regents).

Teachers, parents and students who met earlier this year with reporters from the Journal-Bulletin and Channel 10 (WJAR) to express their views for the Teaching Matters project all spoke of the need for higher academic standards. Teachers in particular called for more rigorous tests to ensure that students

meet the established standards.

The results of the statewide tests in mathematics, so far, have been disheartening, however: only 17 percent of the students in the state meet the regents' standard.

"The dilemma I'm having now," McWalters says, "was that the literacy program was bold, it had the set-asides, but we're doing the math with no resources."

Class size

As the RAND report noted, Rhode Island is an anomaly because of its low scores and high per-pupil spending.

For many states with low test scores — California being the example cited — the report suggests that the scores may be low because the classes may be too big. The remedy: hire more teachers to reduce class size.

But Rhode Island ranks well on class size — 6th best, in fact.

Some who have looked at the data believe, however, that the state's low class size masks some inequities.

"Class size varies from community to community," says Marcia B. Reback, president of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers. "In Providence, it's 26, not to exceed 29 at an one time. In other communities, in the primary grades the class sizes are as low as 22."

Where there's the greatest need, she says, there's the fewest resources, and the largest classes.

In particular, she notes, Rhode Island's average class size may be a skewed figure, not accurately reflecting class sizes in the elementary schools.

"There is very hard research data that shows that in the primary grades small class size makes a significant difference in the achievement of the students," Reback says. "That's where investments ought to be made in order for us to begin to see differences in the scores."

The 1997 report from Education Week and the Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts: A Report Card on the Condition of Public Education in the 50 States," supports Reback's contention about class size. Class size in our elementary schools is better than the national average, but still only 20th among the states.

On another ranking — how many students teachers see each day — Rhode Island ranks about 40th, which indicates that our high-school teachers may see relatively few students in each class, but they meet lots of classes.

"Sometimes the reporting on class size can be deceptive," says Paula M. Evans, director of professional development at the Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform. "Look at the discrepancy between special-education and higher-level AP [advanced placement] classes."

A roster of small, seminar-like upper-level classes can allow a school or

a district to boast of a low average class size — even while its elementary-school classes may be well above the average.

"For the most part, when I go into classrooms in this state and in others, I see classes bigger than they should be," Evans says.

As a consultant to schools around the nation, Evans advocates not only smaller class sizes but more time off for teachers so that they can work on planning and collaboration.

"I think that we have an entrenched view of teachers' roles," she says. "We think that teachers must be with kids 95 percent of the time during the day, and we pay for that in the end; because that means teachers don't keep up in their discipline areas, they aren't allowed to have time to plan cooperatively, they don't get into each other's classrooms."

But smaller classes and more time off from teaching would mean hiring more teachers — spending even more on our schools. Could that really happen?

"I'm not banking on that at all," Evans says. "I think we're shameful in this country about the amount of money we spend on public education. We're terribly undertaxed, and I know I'm in the minority on this. I'm not terribly optimistic, but I do think it's possible to make changes in programs and schedules within the schools so that teachers face fewer kids and they have time to work together." ■

41. Hartford Courant

October 10, 1997

Taking Steps To Protect Youngest Riders

By RICK GREEN

It is a parent's nightmare: In the busy coming and going of a school day, a child gets lost.

Four times in the state since the school year began, a young child has been left on a school bus. No child has been injured, but the incidents have panicked parents and educators, and bus companies and schools are scrutinizing the procedures used for looking after the youngest bus-riding children.

"No parent should ever have to experience this trauma," said Terry Woolard of Middletown. His 3-year-old son was placed on the wrong school bus Tuesday afternoon, then left on the bus after the driver finished the route. "I'd

just like to see them secure the safety of these children."

Besides Middletown, children in New Haven, West Haven and South Windsor have been left on school buses this year. Educators and bus company operators say drivers have to start paying closer attention to children. This is particularly true for younger children, who are staying in school longer because of all-day kindergarten and preschool programs and are more likely to fall asleep on a school bus.

State Motor Vehicles Commissioner Jose O. Salinas on Thursday promised a crackdown to force bus companies to check that no children are left on school buses.

"I am going to be conducting surprise inspections to take a look at whether drivers in fact do their checks," said Salinas. He said DMV inspectors in unmarked cars and wearing civilian clothes will be following buses to make sure drivers check to see that all children are off the bus at the end of a route.

"I don't think I can stand by and let incidents like this continue to happen," said Salinas, who Thursday wrote all bus operators in the state about the matter.

Bus drivers say driving a school bus can be difficult, and watching small children even harder.

"The little ones, they tend to tire very easily. It is a full day of school and they get on the bus and they are pooped and

21. Seattle Times

October 10, 1997

Minority test scores 'devastating'

by Jolayne Houtz

Seattle Times staff reporter

Educators and politicians used words like "sobering" and "appalling" last month to describe statewide results from the demanding new test fourth-graders took last spring.

Now there's a new report that Washington's top educator calls "devastating."

Just 5 percent of Washington's African American and Latino fourth-graders who took the test met the standard in math. Native-American students fared only slightly better at 7 percent.

And results on the reading, writing and listening sections of the test were also dramatically below the performance of white and Asian-American students. Only about one in five Latino and Native-American students met the standard in reading and writing, for example.

The new scores are "devastating to me," said Terry Bergeson, the state superintendent of public instruction. "We need to look very honestly at this information and target what is wrong."

Many leaders in minority communities sounded more resigned than outraged. And general reaction followed predictable political lines, with many educators calling for more money and lawmakers responding that educators should learn to spend what they have more effectively.

Others say the next step is to remake Bergeson's education agency, to train teachers better, and to hold more meetings and forums exploring educational issues. A few suggest the standards are too high.

But some already have begun searching for programs that work in boosting academic performance.

The state Commission on African-American Affairs is hosting a conference later this month that will focus on programs shown to help black students in school.

"We cannot go into the 21st century with this kind of gap," said Tony Orange, the commission's executive director. "We have no choice but to run faster and do more."

Bergeson said her goal is to have in hand by January a list of schools with good test scores linked to proven academic programs before state lawmakers convene their next legislative session.

Legislator: No more money

Educators shouldn't count on seeing any more money out of that session, said Rep. Peggy Johnson, R-Shelton, who heads the House Education Committee.

There has been no accountability in education spending, Johnson said, and that's evident in these scores. "Throwing more money at things we're already doing that aren't working is not going to change anything."

She's telling superintendents to look for high-achieving schools "and just copy them. It doesn't cost any more money. It's just a little ingenuity and creativity."

That's not as easy as it sounds.

In many districts, testing administrators are being pushed by their superintendents, school boards and principals to identify schools that did well and the reasons why.

But it's an inexact science, and little real proof is available. The task is made more difficult because this is a new test, and testing experts don't fully understand all the variables that affect scores.

One of those variables is family income. Most people who have analyzed test scores conclude they say more about the effects of poverty on learning than they do about race.

There is a strong correlation between family income and test scores - well-off children tend to do well in school, and those from poor families tend to do poorly. Minority children disproportionately come from poor families.

Despite that clear link, the state uses race rather than socio-economic status to break out its test scores.

Funding equity is key

The scores are further proof the state needs to address the issue of funding equity in the schools, some educators say.

"What you find is middle-class Indian kids do well in school, as do middle-class African-American and Latino kids," said Andy Lawson, principal at Seattle's

American Indian Heritage School.

His school, with 70 percent of its sixth- to 12th-grade students living in poverty, doesn't offer math beyond geometry, doesn't offer physics and chemistry, and doesn't have access to the Internet, he said.

"The resources go where the political power is, not where they're needed," Lawson said. "When this country comes to grips with issues of power and the distribution of resources, then we'll raise test scores across the board."

There are special programs and some federal and state money aimed at students who are poor or who have language barriers, but educators say they've never been enough to make much of a dent in the needs those students have.

Others say the poor scores confirm the need for better teacher training, better teaching methods and more participation by parents, the community and businesses in the schools. Most of those things, they say, take money.

"Someone is going to say, 'It's always more money, more money,'" said Seattle school Superintendent John Stanford. But with just 5 percent to 7 percent of most students of color meeting the math standard, "That calls for major intervention - after-school programs, summer school, Saturday academies." Those are costly programs the state should help pay for, Stanford argues.

"I can't afford to have my students down there. I need to figure this out - what tools, what techniques need to change to get them over the bar?" he asked. "What's this state going to look like to have its growing minority population not achieving?"

Reading should be focus

One thing many educators agree on: The new test highlights the need to focus on reading early.

The math test, for example, wasn't just an assessment of how well students could add or divide, but emphasized how well they could use language to describe the steps involved in reaching their answers.

That likely hurt the test performance of students just learning English. One possible solution would be an earlier focus on oral language for students learning English as a second language.

Another potential answer some educators point to is at Ridge View elementary in Kennewick, where about 20 percent of the students are Latino and 25 percent come from low-income homes.

The school scored significantly above the state average in all areas, notably in math, with more than half of its students meeting the standard compared to 21.5 percent statewide.

Principal Ted Mansfield attributes the school's success in part to its use of a "core curriculum" created by educator E.D. Hirsch Jr. that emphasizes all students learning the same common foundation of basic knowledge.

No 'silver bullet' program

But Bergeson noted a few schools in Western Washington that also use the "core curriculum" did not seem to get better test scores because of it.

That highlights the danger for schools in latching onto programs as a "silver bullet" to boost test scores when there

may be other, more subtle factors at work.

Bergeson's vision is to turn her office into a sort of research-and-development agency whose key mission is to find out what works and then "scale up" the programs and methods that can be shown to boost academic achievement.

The state office's role has been mostly bureaucratic, doling out dollars and collecting reams of paperwork from school districts about how the money is spent.

Later this month, Bergeson is pulling together a group of people to study the test scores and what they say about what works and what doesn't in Washington schools. That group will include teachers, people who scored the fourth-grade exams and the company that helped to develop the new test.

She'll also ask the state Legislature to approve \$14 million to pay for extra academic programs for low-income students. She's pushing the development

of an "Indian education package" with reading and language-development materials culturally appropriate for Native-American students.

The gap in test results between minority and white students isn't new, nor is it unique to the new test.

For example, in Seattle, which has significant minority-student populations, white high-school students scored in the 60th percentile in math on the standardized ITBS test last year. African Americans were in the 39th percentile, Latinos in the 45th, Native Americans the 52nd and Asian Americans the 56th.

Bergeson will attend the African-American education summit Oct. 25, where that disparity is certain to be a key topic of conversation.

And she'll be meeting with Latino leaders about education issues affecting Hispanic children later this fall.

"We need to speed this process up," she said. "Teachers want help, so this is the teachable moment." ■

22. Indianapolis Star

October 10, 1997

New direction for IPS may not be on horizon

Zendejas announced her resignation as IPS chief Reaction to the announcement A Q&A about the search for a successor

By John R. O'Neill / The Indianapolis Star/News

INDIANAPOLIS (Wed. Oct. 8, 1997) — Just because the Indianapolis Public School Board is looking for a new superintendent doesn't mean it's looking for a new direction.

Several board members interviewed Wednesday think Esperanza Zendejas has put many crucial reforms in place during her time as superintendent, and they want her successor to stay the course.

Zendejas announced Tuesday that she will resign at the end of the school year.

"We're on the path of accountability and student achievement. The radical changes have been made," said Michael W. Rodman, vice president of the board.

"The district needs stability," said secretary Mary E. Busch. "Anyone who comes in, I hope, would give those initiatives time to work before drastic changes are made."

But their opinions aren't held by all board members.

Donald Payton thinks the board must continue to consider drastic changes or face drastic action from the General Assembly.

"Unless we make some very, very bold reform measures," he said, "there are people who will make those decisions for us."

Anna Parker is convinced the school system is headed in the wrong direction.

"I have never seen morale this low," she said. But she offers no specifics on what she'd rather do, saying it would be futile because her opinion is in the minority on the board.

Board member Hazel Stewart declined to comment.

The board could meet as early as next week to begin planning its search for a new superintendent, said board President Julie P. Scott.

Another possibility is setting up a

management team in place of a single superintendent.

"I'm going to consider everything," Payton said.

The superintendent search could include candidates from inside the system as well as applicants from throughout the country.

Names of some insiders already have been popping up — such as Duncan Pat Pritchett, IPS assistant superintendent for facilities management.

Also mentioned are June Rimmer and Charles Kent. Rimmer is assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; Kent is human resources director.

Rimmer and Kent would not talk about whether they'd be interested in the job. Pritchett could not be reached for comment.

Several board members said they'd prefer not to appoint an interim superintendent. It would be better, they

industries need, and offering scholarships to encourage students to go on to a higher education.

The Heidenhain Corp., a 100-employee manufacturer of precision measuring devices in suburban Chicago, is an example of how the national office envisions company involvement.

In addition to bringing students into its plants each week to observe and ask questions, company officials advise school-based business and social studies

classes in which students create mock corporations, including personnel policies, budgets, product design and development, and marketing strategies.

But some education and business advocates say businesses aren't doing enough.

Most employers have "shown little interest in the nitty-gritty mechanics of how a [school-to-work] transition program should operate, particularly in the work-based learning components,"

Donald Clark, president of the National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation in Buffalo, N.Y., wrote in a recent issue of his group's bimonthly newsletter.

He added that school-to-work partnerships function more like project advisory committees without broad support from top company officers, which is needed to ensure firms' continued involvement. —Matthew Dembicki■

11. Education Daily

October 10, 1997

GOP HEATS UP WAR OVER NATIONAL TESTS

Congressional Republicans say President Clinton could shoulder the blame for shutting down the federal government if he vetoes the funding bill for education, labor and health programs over the issue of national tests.

"If we can't get out and say this [possible shutdown] is about the most foolish thing, then perhaps we don't belong in the majority," Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and leader of the anti-testing movement in the House, said at a news conference yesterday.

During the government shutdown two years ago, the electorate mainly held the Republican Congress — not the president — responsible.

H.R. 2264, the House version of the fiscal 1998 education funding bill, would halt development of the tests. The Senate version, S. 1061, would turn development of the exams over to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

Compromising by adopting the Senate's language is not an option, Goodling reiterated, making clear that he will not back down.

"It is obvious to me that if I move on

testing it will be impossible, in my estimation, for the [House] speaker and majority leader to gain the support necessary to pass your conference report and lead the party," Goodling wrote to Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., chairman of the House education funding subcommittee.

"I have concluded that the House amendment on national testing should be sustained in conference." The testing controversy is a main issue holding up a House-Senate compromise over fiscal 1998 education funding.

Thirty-five senators now support the House position on halting the exams, said Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo. Two weeks ago, 27 senators signed a letter to that effect.

At the same time, 43 Democrats have said they would support a filibuster against any compromise education funding bill that banned the tests.

Ashcroft was angry that ED continues to promote the voluntary tests, pointing to a memo the department sent to chief state school officers saying that the tests could be used to assess Title I students, as required by the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. "The national tests ... can be an important resource to states," said a Sept. 16 memo signed by Gerald

Tirozzi, ED's assistant secretary of elementary and secondary education. In addition, the Republicans said ED is planning to begin a pilot test of its math exam for eighth-graders next month. But an ED spokesman said that can't happen until NAGB approves the questions, and that can't happen until Congress passes the Senate plan.

If Test, No Reading

Goodling also said he would hold a planned children's literacy bill hostage until the testing controversy was resolved.

"Because I am not sure how the testing situation will play out, I am not going to give the president any literacy program," he said at the opening of a committee meeting where the GOP's alternative to Clinton's America Reads program was scheduled to be taken up.

The panel did pass a charter school bill, however, as scheduled.

"I want to make sure if we get into a literacy proposal, we won't lose \$100 million to a national test," Goodling said at the news conference later in the day.

ED spokesman David Frank said, "Stopping the reading initiative and tests is hardly the way to create better readers." —Laureen Lazarovici■

State OKs Standardized Tests for Kids

Fast-track plan has first exams next spring

Nanette Asimov, Greg Lucas
Chronicle Staff Writers
Sacramento

Before school lets out in June, parents of kids in California's public schools can expect to learn how well their children have mastered basic math and reading skills under an ambitious statewide testing plan signed yesterday by Governor Pete Wilson.

"Our most precious product is educated children, yet we have no quality control. This will provide the basis for comparison and accountability," Wilson said at a Capitol news conference before signing the bill.

California last tested students across the state in 1994, when the ill-fated California Learning Assessment System — the CLAS test — was administered for the second and final time.

The new multiple-choice, machine-scored test will be taken by pupils next spring. Results will be disclosed by the end of the school year.

The new legislation also calls for a second test to be developed that, like CLAS, will require students to submit actual writing samples and show their understanding of literature passages and how they arrived at math answers. This test could be ready by spring 1999.

Meanwhile, all students in grades 2 to 11 will be tested this spring on reading, writing and math skills. In grades 9 to 11, they will also be tested in science and history.

Unlike the CLAS test, scores will be made available by individual student. Results will also be scored by grade level, school, district and county. Statewide results will be tabulated and can be used to compare California to other states using the same test.

California is one of only eight states with no statewide achievement test, a situation many educators find frustrating because there is no way of measuring

how well students and schools are doing — or to see which academic programs are succeeding.

Many school districts already use their own achievement tests to gauge pupils' progress. The state will pay for the costs of administering those tests this year — at \$5 a pupil — but will require students to also take the state test.

Wilson and the Democratic majority Legislature tussled over what form the test should take. Originally, Wilson wanted the test to be given only in English. But the GOP governor bowed to Democrats' insistence that it was unfair to test pupils with limited English in English. Wilson agreed that the first time the test is given, everyone must take it in English but that the same test be given to English learners in their primary language — assuming that a test is available in that language. The GOP governor said he knew only of tests in English and Spanish. Nearly 100 different languages are spoken in California schools.

To meet the fast-track time line set by Wilson, state schools chief Delaine Eastin will recommend a suitable test to the state Board of Education by the end of this month.

Eastin is expected to base her selection not on which test is most popular among school districts, but which test most closely matches a landmark set of proposed academic standards in reading, writing and mathematics that is now pending before the Board of Education.

The standards are the state's first set of precise guidelines for teachers, which are intended to help all students learn approximately the same thing at the same time in each grade.

Eastin and other educators across the state, including the California Teachers Association, have long argued that the board should first adopt standards, and

only then pick a test so that the test could match the standards. That way, children would be tested on what they have learned.

Wilson rejected that idea.

At its November 14 meeting, the Board of Education, whose members are appointed by Wilson, will select the test — before the new academic standards are adopted. But the legislation signed by Wilson yesterday requires that any new test be altered to match new standards, which means that by spring of 1999 the state test would change yet again.

Sources say that among the more than 50 possible tests the state can choose from, four tests are leading contenders: Terra Nova, the California Achievement Test, the SAT9, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Terra Nova is the latest edition of the old workhorse, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), and is used by 80 percent of school districts, including San Francisco, Oakland, and Palo Alto.

"No matter which one is picked, someone will be screwed," said Pat Anderson, testing director for the San Francisco schools. Anderson echoed the sentiments in many school districts around the state that are anxious to find out which test the board will choose because many districts have already bought a test for next spring.

Even though the state will pay for next year's costs of administering a local test that is different from the board's selection, that offers only modest help for some school districts. Mount Diablo schools, for example, last year spent nearly \$100,000 on a new test called CASE, which had been expected to last four or five years.

"Basically, the test booklets we have in storage would be useless," said Joe Marsich, a research specialist in Contra Costa's 33,000-student district.

"But we haven't ordered new scoring

43. The Washington Post

10/08/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Prince William Extra; Page V01

with classmates — even one who just looks older — is more likely to be a troubled teen.

The lead researcher, Dr. Robert Byrd of the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, found that 12 percent of children who were held back displayed extreme behavior problems, compared with 7 percent of children whose ages were normal for their grade.

"We need to concentrate our efforts on getting kids ready to enter school at the age that they're supposed to," Byrd said.

Doctors already knew that adolescents who are older than most of their classmates are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use drugs, engage in risky sexual behavior, think about suicide and be violent. But they haven't known whether the problems were linked to delayed school entry or failing a grade or both.

Children who had been retained while going through school had an even higher risk: 19 percent displayed extreme behavior problems, the study found.

Problems included cheating or telling

lies; displaying a strong temper losing it easily; having sudden changes in mood; feeling or complaining that no one loves him or her, and crying a lot.

Children were considered to have extreme problems if they displayed such behaviors more often than 90 percent of other children their age.

The study looked at a national sample of 9,079 children ages 7 to 17 years old in 1988. About 26 percent were a year or more older than normal for their grade. Almost half of those had been delayed starters. ■

7. USA Today

October 7, 1997

Educators question testing emphasis

In Chicago, where the school system last year began requiring that all students in grades 3, 6, 8 and 9 pass a standardized test to advance to the next grade, Madeleine Maraldi is beginning to feel the children's pain.

"These kids could be drowned by tests," says Maraldi, principal at Washington Irving School.

She and many other teachers and principals fear the nation's growing preoccupation with testing is affecting the classroom in a way that legislators and policymakers may never have intended. With the stakes higher now because of the demands for improved performance by U.S. schools, educators rue the class time spent gearing students up for the tests, the way results can be misconstrued by the media and the anxiety generated among students.

With Congress nearing a decision on President Clinton's call for voluntary national tests, perhaps this week, some educators are saying enough's enough.

"Don't test us to death," Maraldi says.

A USA TODAY/Gallup Poll released Monday shows that 68% of 872 adults nationwide favor Clinton's proposal, though just over half of all respondents also say the test would either make little difference to or worsen the quality of education in local public schools. The poll's margin of error is four percentage points.

In Congress, critics of Clinton's plan complain that kids already take too many tests — anywhere from three to nine a year, say researchers at Boston College's Center for the Study of Testing. Between

state-mandated assessments, district-run programs, tests for special education students and college admission exams, they found, teachers give somewhere between 140 million and 400 million standardized tests annually, the kind that make you fill in the bubble with a No. 2 pencil.

Congress has split on Clinton's proposal. The Senate OK'd the idea as long as tests are overseen by a non-partisan board, not the U.S. Department of Education. The House rejected the tests by voting to kill funds for their development. Tuesday, the congressional conference committee that will decide the fate of the proposal starts meeting.

The most vociferous opponents in Washington insist states and local districts are best suited to determining standards and assessing student performance. Yet some educators offer a counter solution: Develop a national test and get rid of the rest.

"There has to be some agreement on what is worth knowing, for crying out loud," says Barbara Sizemore, dean of the school of education at DePaul University, Chicago. "When we determine that, we devise the test, give it to children of the United States and say, 'This is the test.'"

That would no doubt be a daunting proposition because of the strong American tradition of state and local control of schools.

But fewer tests would certainly free up time in the classroom, one of the main gripes of Beth Schnell, who supervises

new teachers in the Cincinnati public school district. Testing "totally blows almost a whole month," she says. That puts other projects on hold, and it wears kids out, she says.

Indeed, the emotional drain, especially for younger children, can be heavy, especially if kids feel pressured to excel.

"First-graders were crying and getting stomachaches and having nightmares," says University of South Carolina education professor Robert Bowman, whose work with elementary school guidance counselors prompted him to develop a program to help motivate kids and help them cope with test anxiety.

In a recent report on state-mandated testing, the National Center for Fair & Open Tests in Cambridge, Mass., found that the amount of testing hasn't changed much in 10 years. Still, says FairTest's Monty Neill, "It's been too much for decades."

The larger issue, critics of testing agree, is that the higher and higher stakes attached to student performance is forcing teachers to spend more time preparing students.

"I didn't really realize how much time I was going to put into testing," says Anna Messer, 24, of Bradley Elementary School, Columbia, S.C.

In 33 states today, schools must report test scores, and in some places, student performance can determine whether a school gets funding, a teacher receives merit pay or a principal returns the following year, says a FairTest analysis. Assessments also play a role in school accreditation in 11 states. Finally,

students in 17 states must pass a battery of standardized tests to graduate; five more states plan to require the same.

FairTest says 15 states, including South Carolina and nine other Southern states, need to overhaul their systems. Only Vermont needed no improvement.

Achievement tests are supposed to help ensure that students are graduating with skills they need to succeed. But research - not to mention classroom experience - shows that existing tests aren't the only or best measure of competency. "We all know that achievement and progress can be made in many ways," says Diane James, principal of Carver Elementary School, Columbia, S.C.

Others say tests have a valid role. "If we don't use tests, how are we supposed to evaluate what we do?" says Nancy Verigood, curriculum resource teacher at Mill Creek Elementary School in Columbia, S.C.

Achievement testing, which has been around since the 1920s, hasn't always created such debates. But testing began to increase during the 1960s, with the civil rights movement's push to improve education for disadvantaged students. Declining SAT scores from 1963 to 1977 and the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, further bolstered education reform.

Test results, it seems, "were not only a worthy source of evidence in diagnosing the ills of the nation's schools, but also were part of the prescription," says Boston College education and public policy professor George Madaus.

Some people say it's about time teachers and principals are held accountable. "We continued to give them

promotions and raises as children became less and less competent," Sizemore says.

But others say testing has become more of a bullying tactic than a tool. "I can remember when the tests were given for teachers to see what the children were capable of doing," says Margaret Glenn, a 39-year teaching veteran who coordinates the curricula at Bradley Elementary. Now, teachers and students are both suspects if cheating is suspected. If average scores improve too much, "somebody might investigate to see how you got there," she says.

Questionable classroom practices only complicate matters. Some Arizona teachers admitted to coaching students, offering prizes to high scorers or even sending poor performers on field trips during testing time in a 1989-1990 confidential survey.

"They're not happy about it, but they want to keep their jobs," says the researcher, Arizona State University professor Thomas Haladyna. Michael Kean, a spokesman for test-maker CTB/McGraw-Hill, Monterey, Calif., says overt cheating has abated. But another once-taboo practice, "teaching to the test," has become more acceptable.

Some experts still consider it unethical for teachers to adapt their lessons to match what's on the test. But National Education Association analyst Glen Cutlip, who studies curriculum and testing policies, says attitudes have softened. "Now, many have the philosophy that if you've developed a good test, there's nothing wrong with teaching toward the test, and having the same kinds of exercises in your teaching," he says.

But it can get complicated when students are required to take more than

one test in a given grade. In Illinois, for instance, one state-mandated test for third graders includes long reading passages and a list of questions where more than one answer can be correct, while another required test for that grade asks students to read short passages and answer fewer questions.

"Schools are befuddled a lot of times because they don't know (which test) they should be preparing kids to take," says Donald Moore of Chicago-based Designs for Change, an independent policy research group.

At Columbia's Carver Elementary, though, teaching to the test paid off. "Even though we didn't want to say it that way, in essence, that's exactly what's happening," says principal James. Last year, she launched a full-scale effort to improve scores, urging parents to get involved, targeting kids with borderline scores and emphasizing basic skills. Three weeks before test time, students worked exclusively on test-taking strategies. The result: a 12% gain in scores above the national average.

James says district's objectives provided a focus. But the practice troubles Thelma Gibson, principal of Bradley Elementary, where scores didn't improve as dramatically.

"You're perceived as having a very good school if you have high test scores, and all of the other good things that may be going on at school are just put aside," she says.

"You're taking all the creativity out of teaching, but if that's what it's going to take, I'll probably have to revert to that."

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY, page A1 (cover story) ■

8. Associated Press

10-07 2:29a

Volunteers gather; Some find too many 'Adults in suits'

MADISON, Wis. (AP) - The volunteers showed up by the hundreds to join a national campaign aimed at giving young people the support they need to succeed in life.

Army Gen. Colin Powell appeared via videotape, thanking participants for "being part of this crusade" by way of the Wisconsin Promise Summit on Volunteerism.

"Yes, indeed, we do need you," Sue Ann Thompson, wife of Gov. Tommy

Thompson, told high school and college students at the 10-hour meeting Monday at Monona Terrace Convention Center. "Your spirit rejuvenates us."

The governor, several former governors and other public officials spoke to the 800 youths and adults from 60 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

The event marked the start of Wisconsin's drive to meet the challenge Powell, President Clinton and three former presidents set at a national summit in Philadelphia in April.

Some said young people could have been given more voice in the day's activities, including planning sessions.

"It was pretty overpowering, all the adults in suits," said Erik Peterson, a Madison high school student.

Peterson and his friends from First United Methodist Church noted that they were given sales pitches about volunteering although they already volunteer.

Peterson's church group, for example, travels to the Appalachians one week

ages of 7 and 17 from the National Health Interview Survey.

They used a standard test of behavior to judge whether a student was demonstrating extreme behavior, like cheating, lying, crying, feeling unloved, or losing one's temper.

They found that in the earlier grades, children who had failed a grade showed higher rates of extreme behavior, but that those who had delayed kindergarten

behaved in ways that were similar to the ways their other classmates behaved. That changed, however, when they reached adolescence.

"At ages 13 to 17, the children who delay kindergarten a year begin to look more like the kids who have failed a grade in their rates of extreme behavior," Dr. Byrd said.

"We are artificially prefailing

children."

At age 17, for example, only 7 percent of the normal-age students showed patterns of behavior problems.

In contrast, 16 percent of those who started school late showed problems at that age, and 31 percent of those who had failed a grade demonstrated such problems.

5. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

October 7, 1997

Opposition To Tests Is Up, Ashcroft Says Senator Vows To Block National School Exam

By Jon Sawyer

Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., said Monday that his campaign to block President Bill Clinton's plan for national math and reading tests was picking up speed and that he was closing in on the votes necessary to give testing a flunking grade in Congress.

Democratic supporters say the faulty math belongs to Ashcroft. They've got 43 Democrats pledged to filibuster any bill that does not contain funds for standardized national tests. They say Clinton remains committed, and that he will veto any bill that blocks the testing funds.

National tests for fourth- and eighth-graders sailed through the Senate this summer, on an 87-13 vote. The House of Representatives voted to bar funding, however, and Ashcroft has seized on the issue since. In recent weeks, as he has toured the country

testing support for a possible presidential bid, he has cited the proposed national testing as an example of Washington meddling in local affairs.

Ashcroft said Monday he now had 31 senators pledged to vote against the pending appropriations bill for the **Department of Education**, should it come back from a House-Senate conference committee with language endorsing the testing program. He said he had "about a dozen" senators lined up to join him in filibustering to block a vote on the testing bill. Under Senate procedure, 60 votes are required to end a filibuster.

"I don't know if I have enough votes to sustain a filibuster now," Ashcroft said.

Sen. Christopher S. Bond, R-Mo., has lined up on Ashcroft's side. Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill., is among the 43 Democrats who signed the letter threatening their own filibuster to make

sure the national tests go forward.

Education Secretary Richard Riley announced last week that the department would suspend further development work on the math and English tests until after Congress acted on the appropriations bill. Ashcroft complained in a letter that Riley's gesture was meaningless, coming after the department had already completed most of its work.

Ashcroft also faulted the department for holding a conference on the tests at one of Washington's poshest hotels, the Four Seasons, just before Riley's suspension announcement.

Education Department spokeswoman Erica Lepping said only 17 individuals took part in the conference, and none of them stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel. They got a government rate two-thirds less at another nearby hotel, she said. The conference itself was held in a room at the Four Seasons. ■

6. Minneapolis Star-Tribune

October 7, 1997

Study links delayed schooling, increase in behavior problems

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Parents who delay their child's entry into first grade to give the youngster more time to mature may be doing more harm than good, a study suggests.

Children who started school when they were a year or more older than their classmates were much more likely to display extreme behavior problems, said the study, published in the October issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

The study didn't explore why being older than classmates increased the risk of behavior problems. But an expert not involved with the work, University of Minnesota sociologist Michael Resnick, said any youngster who is "out of sync"

13. Slate

October 3, 1997

The Gist

National Education Standards

By Franklin Foer

Public education is traditionally a state and local responsibility in the United States. Yet many people feel that poor public schools are a national problem. President Bush proposed national standards for primary and secondary education, and so has President Clinton. Yet many ardent supporters of national standards under Bush, such as former Education Secretary Bill Bennett and former Humanities Endowment Chairman Lynn Cheney, are leading the opposition under Clinton. What changed?

Last January, Clinton ordered the Department of Education to prepare exams to test fourth-grade reading and eight-grade math. These are the first nationwide tests designed to compare student performance across the states and school districts. Participation by school districts is voluntary. A bipartisan, independent federal agency will supervise the drafting and administration of the tests. By making reliable comparisons possible, the new national tests are supposed to create healthy competition among schools, giving them an incentive to improve.

The Senate has approved the spending

of federal money for this purpose, but the House voted last month to prohibit it. Clinton says he will veto the entire Education Department appropriation if a House-Senate conference committee sustains the ban.

Three camps oppose the bill. One, including Bush/Reagan education officials, Bennett, Diane Ravitch, and Chester Finn, supports the idea of testing but opposes Clinton's version. Finn and Bennett consider testing a necessary precondition for school vouchers—a favorite conservative remedy that would allow parents to choose among schools. Without reliable testing, they believe, parents cannot be good “consumers.”

But this group says that Clinton has politicized the test, caving in to left-wing pressure groups. Although the test is being drafted by independent contractors such as the Educational Testing Service, these critics see the hand of liberal Department of Education administrators. Early versions, they say, reward left-wing pedagogical approaches like “new math,” which, they say, wrongly de-emphasize old-fashioned computation. They complain that the fourth-grade math test can be taken in Spanish.

The Bush administration's plan was

more comprehensive. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander proposed to test fourth graders, eighth graders, and 12th graders in five different subjects, including American history. (Designers of the Clinton plan limited testing to reading and math avoiding sensitive subjects like history in the hope of avoiding arguments over politicization.) The Bush proposal, which was never prepared as legislation, would also have created a bipartisan, independent agency to draft the tests. Although Clinton recently modified his proposal to give control to an independent board, he allowed the Department of Education to participate in the early stages of test preparation. When so charged, the Clinton people retort that the independent board will have ample opportunity to amend the tests if they are too easy or ideologically skewed.

A second camp of conservative opponents, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the religious rights, dislikes any version of national testing. This group believes that the standards are a way for liberals to establish a national curriculum and usurp local control of schools. At the very least, they say,

17

schools are forced to tailor curricula to the test. They believe that all attempts at establishing national curricula will be riddled with ideology and partisan politics, and cite the controversial history-curricula guidelines drafted by the Department of Education two years ago.

The third category of opponents comprises liberals, including members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who argue that low test scores stigmatize minority students as “inferior,” when in fact poor schooling and other

disadvantages are to blame for their performance. The test scores, they say, will be used as an excuse to pour resources into a few select schools, harming the hope kids left behind.

However, many liberals who opposed the Bush testing plan have thrown their support behind Clinton's initiative. For instance, the National Education Association—the largest and most powerful teachers' union—long opposed testing, fearing that teachers whose students performed poorly would lose their jobs. But the NEA has now given

Clinton's plan at least nominal support.

Only six states and 15 big-city school districts have agreed to give the test. The reason for their reluctance: A National test could be embarrassing and disprove claims of improvement based on other, less-than-neutral testing regimes. For instance, Colorado school administrators like to brag that their state's average SAT score is the highest in the country. However, most college-bound Colorado students take a different college entrance exam, making the SAT an unreliable measure of school quality. ■

By JANE BRYANT QUINN

QUESTION: *When my daughter graduated from high school, she was named a National Science Scholar. This honor conferred the promise of an annual federal financial award during four years of college (she went to Harvard), provided that she chose to be a math or science major. We expected the award to increase annually, to \$5,000. In fact, she got \$1,860 the first year, less the second year, a token the third year and zero the fourth - because Congress canceled the program. Harvard was a struggle for us, and we had counted on that money. My daughter lived up to her side of the bargain. Can we get the government to do the same?*

KATHLEEN TIEWS,

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.

This is a perfect example of how Congress takes public credit for doing something noble, then brushes off the people who were dumb enough to trust it. The National Science Scholars program started in 1991. Smarties like your daughter competed for this money and - on paper - were supposed to get up to \$5,000 a year.

But as you found out, congress never appropriated as much as promised. The program's fine print said the awards were based on available funding. In governmentese, that meant that Congress could grant as little as it wanted.

The 1994 law wiping out the National Science Scholars was called (are you ready?) the Improving America's Schools

Act. Congress blew off some 2,500 students who had counted on four years of college aid. The honorable course would have been to fund the scholars already in the program, even if taking no one new. But no. Its \$4.4 million was sacrificed to balance the budget.

Not everyone will be sacrificed, of course. Congress plans to overrun this year's defense budget by \$3.7 billion (aiding contractors in the districts of Republican biggies) and the transportation budget by \$27 billion (enough roads, bike lanes and bridges to get almost every legislator re-elected). Your daughter should have been a highway. She'd get more respect.■

4. USA Today

October 6, 1997

Washington

(excerpt)

EDUCATION TESTS:

Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., complained that federal officials have broken their promise to halt work on plans to field-test national exams for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math skills. An aide to Education Secretary Richard Riley said that policy work on the tests has

stopped but that other activity is continuing because it would be more expensive if the work were restarted after an interruption. The fate of the tests is undecided. The House voted last month to deny funding for the voluntary tests;

the Senate agreed to the tests if administered by an independent board rather than the Education Department.

Written by Paul Leavitt with staff and wire reports.■

5. USA Today

October 6, 1997

Can race decide who keeps a job?

PISCATAWAY, N.J. - Even as advocates bicker on their behalf, the two teachers at the center of a Supreme Court case that could shape the future of affirmative action in this country agree on this: Race was no way to decide which of them was laid off.

Though they started the same day and have long taught in adjoining classrooms, Sharon Taxman and Debra Williams rarely speak or even acknowledge each other in school.

This tension dates to 1989, when a teacher had to be laid off at Piscataway

High School. Williams kept her job because she was black; Taxman lost hers because she was white.

Now Taxman's complaint about that loss has reached the Supreme Court, where it may be the most important case of the fall term.

9. LRP Publications

October 3, 1997

Block Grants, Testing Issues Prompt Filibuster Threats

Appropriations Disputes Dim Prospects of Huge Ed Funding Increases

Even before House and Senate conferees hold their first substantive meeting on appropriations for the Department of Education in the coming year, there are indications a controversial proposal to lump a dozen K-12 education programs into unrestricted block grants will not survive.

Rep. Bob Livingston, R-La., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, told reporters he does not expect the amendment attached to the Senate bill by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., to survive the conference. He said he does expect conferees to accept the other controversial provision, a House amendment declaring a ban on Clinton administration plans for a national test of public-school students.

Livingston offered his opinion before Congress recessed for a Jewish holiday and a long weekend.

Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., chairman of the panel's education and labor subcommittee and of the conference, said earlier that Gorton's amendment would constitute a major change in the way

those programs are funded, even though the Republican majority in the House would tend to favor such an approach.

The first substantive meeting of the conferees is expected to be held sometime next week.

Until the conferees complete their work on a compromise, education programs will continue to receive funds as if they were still operating under the 1997 fiscal year budget that expired on Tuesday. That "continuing resolution," however, expires Oct. 23, with Congress planning to adjourn for the year two weeks later.

President Clinton has vowed to use his new line-item veto power to excise both the ban and the block-grant plan from the overall bill appropriating funds for the departments of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services.

Several senators could beat Clinton to the punch, however. The nearly four dozen Democrats have united to threaten a filibuster of the conference agreement if it includes the Gorton amendment and almost as many Republicans vow a

filibuster if the testing ban does not survive the conference work.

A standoff could return Education appropriations to the handling process that was popular up until the past few years. Because of fights over anti-abortion amendments, the annual funding bill often never passed and the departments involved continued to receive funds under the previous year's level, a prospect facing the fiscal year 1998 appropriations effort.

The disputes over the funding bill already have become testy. Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., and Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., strongly criticized Education Secretary Richard Riley for carrying through with an expensive planning session for a national test of K-12 mathematics and reading.

Their letter to Riley suggested the secretary did not intend to place a moratorium on the testing plans, despite his announced plans to do so until the funding legislation is passed. The planning session was held after Riley's announcement. ■

10. Chronicle of Higher Education [Academe Today]

October 3, 1997

U.S. Sues California State U. System, Charging Age Bias in Retirement Program

By JEFFREY SELINGO

The federal government sued the California State University System on Tuesday, charging that its early-retirement program had practiced age discrimination by forcing some professors to stop teaching when they turned 70.

The early-retirement program, established in 1977, originally allowed faculty members who had reached 50 to retire but to continue teaching part time until they had turned 70, according to the

lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

In 1984, state officials revised the retirement program to limit the number of years of part-time teaching to five, regardless of how old professors were when they retired. But about 40 faculty members who had retired before 1984 were still required to stop teaching at age 70, under the terms of the 1977 policy, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which filed the lawsuit.

"Many teachers over 70 remain competent to teach," said Susan McDuffie, district director of the E.E.O.C.'s San Francisco office. "Competence is not necessarily a function of age, and the law bars employers from treating older workers as if their age automatically determines, or lessens, their abilities."

The two sides in the lawsuit disagree about how many faculty members could be affected by the complaint. A spokesman for the university system said

of how Missouri students were learning.

Ashcroft says he still favors statewide testing. But moving control of education away from the state and local level to Washington would put too much power in the hands of officials who provide only a small amount of school funding.

"If you drive a curriculum with a national test, that empowers bureaucrats to impose things on the local level," Ashcroft said in a telephone interview from Washington this week. "That's very risky for education. Having education policy developed and understood and implemented at the local level gives parents and the community the opportunity to shape the system and correct problems and abuses.

later, Ashcroft got 27 senators to sign a letter calling for a reversal of that action and concurrence with the House, which voted to keep the tests from being developed.

Ashcroft has been testing the political waters for a run for Republican nominee in the presidential race in 2000. He says state tests are more appropriate than ones drawn up on the federal level, partly because only 7 percent to 8 percent of the funding for local schools comes from Washington and partly because local control of education is an ideal that should remain intact.

"There should not be a power grab by bureaucrats in Washington that directs the way education is conducted in this

the methods discourage students from learning basic math skills. One year after the methods were introduced, Ashcroft said, test scores dropped 9 points for third-graders, 12 points for fourth-graders, 11 points for fifth-graders and 10 points each for sixth- and seventh-graders. No Defense Department official was available to comment on the test results; a news release in August called the scores "disappointing but not unexpected."

Ashcroft said current tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress did a sufficient job of ranking American students against their counterparts in other countries without establishing more federal tests. ■

4. The Washington Times

October 3, 1997

Inside the Beltway Seasons and suites

By John McCaslin

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The war of words — and mathematics — escalated Thursday.

The Department of Education, accused by two congressmen of "extravagance and arrogance" in continuing to design controversial national tests in reading and mathematics while Congress debates the issue, said both lawmakers arrived at their conclusions because they relied on a "distorted magazine story."

Sen. John Ashcroft, Missouri

Republican, and Rep. Bill Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, sent a letter Wednesday to Education Secretary Richard Riley demanding to know the cost of a two-day meeting of test developers held at the Four Seasons on Sept. 22-23.

The pair questioned why the meeting of winners of the \$13 million testing contract should have proceeded while the entire issue of national testing is under

debate in Congress. They singled out for criticism Deputy Education Secretary Marshall Smith, who reportedly rejected suggestions from uneasy participants to put off the gathering.

Mr. Smith "was not even at the meeting," department spokeswoman Melinda Malico said, "and we have no information that anybody at the meeting expressed any discomfort over the meeting being held."

Further, she added, the group that

6

gathered to begin writing the tests "did not stay at the Four Seasons," where a one-night stay for two costs \$370.

"Only the meetings were held at the

Four Seasons," she said.

Participants instead stayed at the Georgetown Suites at a cost of \$108 a night, "well under the allowable

government rate of \$124 — and got the regular government per diem," Mrs. Malico added. ■

5.

The Christian Science Monitor

October 3, 1997

Girls, Boys, Sports, and Fairness

Warren Richey

3. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

October 3, 1997

Ashcroft Touts Local Control Of Education National Tests Would Undercut Parents' Influence, He Says

By Dale Singer
Of The Post-Dispatch Staff

National education tests would weaken parents' influence in student success and give power to people who have used it poorly in the past, according to Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo.

Ashcroft is leading an effort to block President Bill Clinton's plan for voluntary national testing. As Missouri's governor from 1985 to 1993, Ashcroft championed statewide tests as a measure of how Missouri students were learning.

Ashcroft says he still favors statewide testing. But moving control of education away from the state and local level to Washington would put too much power in the hands of officials who provide only a small amount of school funding.

"If you drive a curriculum with a national test, that empowers bureaucrats to impose things on the local level," Ashcroft said in a telephone interview from Washington this week. "That's very risky for education. Having education policy developed and understood and implemented at the local level gives parents and the community the opportunity to shape the system and correct problems and abuses.

"One of the most important indicators of student performance and achievement is parental involvement. If we back parental involvement out of the equation by making it irrelevant, we will be making a very serious error."

On Sept. 11, the Senate voted 87-13 in favor of Clinton's proposal for voluntary tests of fourth-grade reading skills and eighth-grade math skills. Two weeks later, Ashcroft got 27 senators to sign a letter calling for a reversal of that action and concurrence with the House, which voted to keep the tests from being developed.

Ashcroft has been testing the political waters for a run for Republican nominee in the presidential race in 2000. He says state tests are more appropriate than ones drawn up on the federal level, partly because only 7 percent to 8 percent of the funding for local schools comes from Washington and partly because local control of education is an ideal that should remain intact.

"There should not be a power grab by bureaucrats in Washington that directs the way education is conducted in this

country," he said. "The record of national education operations has been abysmal where standards are concerned. It is a litany of controversy with no productivity."

As an example, he cites problems with what he calls the "fuzzy math" philosophy introduced by the Department of Defense for more than 37,000 children in dependent schools overseas. He says the methods discourage students from learning basic math skills. One year after the methods were introduced, Ashcroft said, test scores dropped 9 points for third-graders, 12 points for fourth-graders, 11 points for fifth-graders and 10 points each for sixth- and seventh-graders. No Defense Department official was available to comment on the test results; a news release in August called the scores "disappointing but not unexpected."

Ashcroft said current tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress did a sufficient job of ranking American students against their counterparts in other countries without establishing more federal tests. ■

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The pair questioned why the meeting of winners of the \$13 million testing contract should have proceeded while the entire issue of national testing is under

debate in Congress. They singled out for criticism Deputy Education Secretary Marshall Smith, who reportedly rejected suggestions from uneasy participants to put off the gathering.

Mr. Smith "was not even at the meeting," department spokeswoman Melinda Malico said, "and we have no information that anybody at the meeting expressed any discomfort over the meeting being held."

Further, she added, the group that

5. The Washington Times

October 2, 1997

National-testing foes rip costly convention

Anti-test vote didn't stop Clinton plans

By Carol Innerst
The Washington Times

Two congressional opponents of national student testing yesterday accused the Clinton administration of "extravagance and arrogance" in continuing to design the tests while Congress debates the issue.

At issue is a two-day meeting the Education Department hosted at the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown. The Sept 22-23 gathering for potential bidders for the \$13 million contract to administer the tests came just a week after the House voted overwhelmingly to cut off all federal funding for Mr. Clinton's testing plan.

Two days after the meeting, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley announced he had temporarily halted department work on the testing plan, but GOP congressional critics said the timing of the secretary's act proved costly to taxpayers.

It "now appears the reported 'suspension' of work came at the close of a busy and costly week designing test development," complained Sen. John Ashcroft, Missouri Republican, and Rep.

Bill Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, in a letter yesterday to Mr. Riley.

"It would have been better for the country, and cheaper for taxpayers, if you had called timeout before the swarm of test developers descended for a two-day session at one of the capital's most expensive hotels, The Four Season," they wrote. "We are told that a one-night stay for two people there costs \$370—unless you want the best view."

The Department of Education, which just learned of the Ashcroft-Goodling letter late yesterday, had no response.

The House vote came just hours after a Department of Education appointed panel approved a blue-print for the fourth-grade reading and eight-grade math tests. The Senate earlier endorsed national tests but voted to move oversight from the Education Department to an independent board.

The lawmakers in their letter singled out for criticism Education Deputy Secretary Marshall Smith. They wrote that participants at the Four Seasons

gathering expressed "discomfort at flying in the face of congressional deliberations" and suggested that the meeting be put off.

"While the expenditure of millions of dollars for federal testing concerns us deeply, the extravagance and arrogance of this session are an affront to the taxpayers of this nation," the letter said.

"The taxpayers deserve to know the cost of this gathering ... and what you will do to assure that they are not stuck directly or indirectly with the cost of travel, meeting rooms, lodging, and catered meals. Perhaps the next bunch of experts you bring to Washington could be persuaded to conduct the meetings at a college campus or at the Department itself."

The letter asks Mr. Riley to provide "detailed responses" by Oct. 7 to a number of questions, including the cost of the event to taxpayers, the amount the Education Department has spent so far on developing national tests, and Mr. Smith's role in reelecting suggestions to defer the event. ■

6. The Washington Times

October 2, 1997

Gingrich OKs vote on ending set-asides

By Nancy E. Roman
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

After blocking all votes on affirmative action for more than two years, House Speaker Newt Gingrich has agreed to allow a House vote next summer on repealing preferences based on race and sex.

The speaker believes Republicans have taken strides in helping blacks and minority groups with school choice and other legislative initiatives that position the party well for such a vote, said Gingrich spokeswoman Christina Martin.

"He recognizes that a level playing field does not exist but says racial and gender preferences are not the way to

achieve it," she said.

Rep. John Linder, Georgia Republican and chairman of the National Republican Campaign Committee, said votes on ending preferences and on abolishing the IRS in favor of the flat tax or a national sales tax are chief among those that the GOP will use to draw distinctions between Republicans and Democrats during the 1998 elections.

Repealing preferences is "a good issue with broad support in the public," Mr. Linder told editors and reporters at The Washington Times yesterday. He noted that about 76 percent of the public favors

awarding federal contracts to the lowest bidder.

The willingness to allow the vote on preferences follows years of equivocation and fear among Republicans, who shied away from the issue believing that if they tried to end quotas they would be branded bigots.

Mr. Linder, a close adviser to Mr. Gingrich, said Tuesday that the speaker told him he would talk to Rep. J.C. Watts — the only black Republican in Congress — to try to persuade him to join the effort to repeal race and sex preferences. But he said Mr. Gingrich

schedule, said David Longanecker, assistant secretary for postsecondary education.

Moreover, he said, the bill would pay the additional \$25 million subsidy to lenders by taking money from administration of the direct and guaranteed programs.

Democrats on the committee supported the bill as a temporary relief measure but said they were worried that private lenders would not accept as many applications.

"It is unclear to me how many students will actually benefit from this

proposal," said Rep. William L. Clay, D-Mo., senior Democrat on the education committee.

Democrats expressed support for the direct loan program, saying it has improved the guaranteed program by providing competition. ■

3. Associated Press

10-02 4:31a

Senator questions agency's commitment to stop testing work

By LIBBY QUAIL
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Firing another round at President Clinton's plan for national testing of school children, Sen. John Ashcroft said he doubted whether development of the exams has actually stopped.

Education Secretary Richard Riley announced last week he had suspended further work on drafting the tests until Congress decides whether to allow them.

But on Wednesday, Ashcroft, R-Mo., said Riley's pledge came only after the Education Department convened a seminar to discuss the tests.

"It now appears the reported 'suspension' of work came at the close of a busy and costly week designing test development," Ashcroft wrote in a letter that, along with a clipping of a news account, was sent Wednesday to the secretary.

"It would have been better for the country and cheaper for taxpayers if you had called timeout before the swarm of test developers descended for a two-day session at one of the capital's most expensive hotels, the Four Seasons," he wrote.

A Department of Education spokeswoman said Ashcroft's statements are "simply not true."

"The federal government is not developing the test. Our people are not working on these tests," said agency

spokeswoman Melinda Kitchell Malico. "If they had asked us for information on it ... we would have told them that."

While those attending the seminar met at the Four Seasons, they slept at another, \$108-a-night hotel, she said, not \$370 as the lawmakers suggested. Held by a subcontractor, the conference was a gathering of test panel members to begin developing the tests.

Riley said a week ago that final specifications for the tests will not be submitted to contractors until Congress settles the issue. Malico said development on the subject matter and test questions has indeed been halted.

The only continuing work, she said, is planning how to administer a field test, which involves contacting the participating schools and determining how to draw a sample.

Ashcroft's letter also was signed by Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Opponents say the standardized exams would usurp parental control, promote "fuzzy" teaching and label poor black and Hispanic children in substandard schools as inferior and unteachable.

"Nationalized testing inevitably will drive curriculum and instruction, leading to a national curriculum designed in Washington," Ashcroft wrote. "Such a national curriculum depriving families of their right to shape education at the local

level would be a disaster."

The lawmakers are asking Riley for a detailed accounting of how much the agency has spent on developing tests, how much the seminar cost and whether Deputy Secretary Marshall Smith, during the meeting, had rejected the idea of waiting until Congress settled the testing issue.

The secretary will respond to their request, Malico said. About \$15 million has been spent on the tests to date, she said.

"The test is voluntary - the president has said that since the day he announced it," Malico said. "What is wrong with testing kids on basic reading competencies, basic skills for math? That does not set a national curriculum, it simply gives parents and schools information on basic skills a child should have achieved."

Ashcroft has promised a filibuster unless negotiators eliminate the testing proposal from the \$80 billion spending bill for the Education, Health and Human Services and Labor departments. But Clinton has threatened to veto the bill if it blocks money for the tests.

The senator, who is contemplating a race for the GOP presidential nomination in 2000, also is pushing a bill to bar the education agency from developing the exams, which would measure how well fourth- and eighth-graders can read or do math. ■

workplaces from 1992-93, when the New York City-based research group first reported on them, until 1995-96.

It found that all but two of the programs have expanded since the early 1990s. In addition to adding students and employers, many of the programs have branched out into new occupational fields. They also have created more ways for teenagers and businesses to participate and improved their curricula and instruction.

"The fact that all of the 16 are still alive and well, and all but two have grown," said Rachel A. Pedraza, the study's principal author, "indicates that not only can these programs be sustained, but they can actually expand."

Ms. Pedraza cautioned, however, that the 16 programs—which represent a variety of school-to-work approaches, ranging from career academies to youth apprenticeships—are not a nationally representative sample.

"These are 16 strong programs that are kind of lighthouses, or beacons," she said. The programs began operating between 1982 and 1992.

More Options Offered

Under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, passed by Congress in 1994, 37 states and nearly 125 local partnerships have received grants to build systems that link learning in classrooms and workplaces. But so far, there has been little evidence about whether such

programs can be sustained over time.

The MDRC study, which was done in collaboration with Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based policy and research group, used telephone surveys of educators and employers in early 1996 to follow up on site visits the researchers had made three years earlier. The study did not look at student outcomes.

It found that most employers had continued to take part in the programs, and more employers had been recruited.

In Central Point, Ore., for example, Crater High School began working with 70 employers in 1992-93 and now has a database of 400 employers who are willing to host students.

"In the communities we studied," the report concludes, "almost all of the students enrolled in a school-to-work initiative were able to participate in work-based learning."

But in some of the programs, the number of employers and students engaged remained quite small. Some included as few as nine employers or 25 students.

Although companies were willing to participate in a range of school-to-work activities, few were capable of providing intensive work experiences to more than four students at a time.

'Job Shadowing'

Schools have responded, in part, by involving more students and employers in less intensive ways. These include

adding "job shadowing," in which students follow an employee for a day or more to learn about a career, short-term internships, and work-related projects.

Almost all of the 1,659 students at Roosevelt High School in Portland, Ore., for example, now participate in job shadowing.

The study found a trade-off between program intensity and the number of students served. Youth apprenticeships—multiyear programs that combine highly structured work and learning—had the most difficulty expanding, in part because many students seemed unwilling to make such a substantial commitment.

Still, Ms. Pedraza said, "there is a place for youth apprenticeships," particularly as one option alongside other school-to-work activities.

Among the study's other findings:

Although federal law specifies that school-to-work systems should establish links between secondary and postsecondary institutions, most programs had given less attention to this area than to others.

Nearly all the sites had a full-time or nearly full-time program coordinator.

More than half the programs reported that they had attracted a greater number of higher-achieving students over time.

In most sites, the schools played the dominant role in shaping, expanding, and sustaining the program's activities. ■

22. Education Week

October 1, 1997 Category: Trade

Riley Delays National Tests' Development

By Millicent Lawton
Washington

As support for new national student tests continued to erode last week, the Department of Education temporarily stopped work on the project that is one of President Clinton's top domestic-policy priorities.

In a one-page statement, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced he was halting the development of the proposed voluntary tests in reading for 4th graders and math for 8th graders. The decision was made in concert with the White House, officials said.

The Sept. 25 statement specifically pointed to a conflict over the use of calculators in the math test. It made no

mention, however, of the most contentious issue—the decision to administer the reading test only in English—which has angered many urban officials and prompted several districts to drop plans to give the reading test.

Mr. Riley said he wants the new tests to resemble the existing National Assessment of Educational Progress and believes the way to do that is through the independent, bipartisan panel that now oversees NAEP. He has put further work on the tests—including that of the test contractor—on hold until that body, the National Assessment Governing Board,

or NAGB, can step in. Congress would have to approve giving NAGB oversight of the tests.

"The main thing we're trying to say is: 'We're serious about NAGB being in charge of this,'" Michael Cohen, the president's education adviser, said last week.

The reliance on NAGB is consistent with the administration's recent decision, under pressure from Congress and others, to shift oversight of the national tests from the Education Department to the governing board. And it jibes with legislation on the tests that passed the Senate last month and was endorsed by

the administration.

Mr. Riley's announcement "is a natural outgrowth of the deal that was struck in the Senate," said Marshall S. Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education.

With last week's statement, the Clinton administration has for the first time slowed down the formulation of the tests. As debate raged in Congress and concerns about the tests intensified across the political spectrum, the Education Department forged ahead.

But support seemed to slip even more last week. More Capitol Hill lawmakers said they opposed the tests, and two more urban districts reversed their plans to take part in the reading test.

A conservative-liberal coalition in the House had already voted overwhelmingly to cut off funding for the two tests.

Delay Welcomed

Some leading experts embraced the wait for NAGB oversight. "I think it's a very positive step," said Diane S. Ravitch, a senior fellow at both the Brookings Institution in Washington and at New York University. "NAGB ... has a track record; it's not an arm of the administration," said Ms. Ravitch, a former assistant secretary of education under President Bush. "It's harder to politicize [national testing] when there's an independent governing board."

Wilmer S. Cody, the chairman of the ad hoc national panel that worked to create a blueprint for the new tests, called Mr. Riley's action "appropriate." Mr. Cody, who is the commissioner of education in Kentucky, one of seven states that have signed on to give the tests, added that he thought "the fair and proper thing to do is fold this activity under NAGB or not proceed any further."

Since Mr. Clinton announced his plan for the tests in his State of the Union Address in February, they have proceeded at breakneck speed toward implementation. The president wants them to be given nationwide beginning in March 1999. The test panel of educators and others completed work only two weeks ago on the tests' content and design. ("House Blocks, While Panel Settles On, New Tests," Sept. 24, 1997.)

The tests are to report the scores of individual students and —Mr. Clinton and other officials hope —help parents, teachers, schools, states, and others understand what students know and can do in those key subjects and grades. The

idea is also to hold children nationwide to higher and more uniform academic standards than they are currently.

The specifications drawn up by the national panel were intended to guide the work of the firms hired to write the tests under an Education Department contract. That setup is still the plan.

Mr. Smith said he expected NAGB to endorse "some very large percentage" of the existing specifications. "This is not a strategy to junk these things at all," he added.

Officials from the department and the White House said last week they expected that the delay in test development would not affect the March 1999 testing date.

But William T. Randall, the chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, said the margin for error is slim. "If this isn't settled by the first of November, it's going to create serious problems for the contractors."

'Damage Control'?

Administration officials have said for months they have authority to create the tests without explicit congressional approval. So far, the Education Department has paid out more than \$15 million for contracts for test creation or evaluation.

But lawmakers in Congress, led by the chairman of the House education committee, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., bristled at being left out of an unprecedented shift in national education policy.

On Sept. 16, the House voted 295-195 to support an appropriations amendment by Mr. Goodling that blocked test funding. The Senate had overwhelmingly supported the test plan on Sept. 11 but directed that NAGB have oversight. A conference committee was to begin last week to work out the differences between the two chambers. But Mr. Clinton has said he would veto the appropriations bill rather than cave in on the test issue.

By deciding to postpone further movement on the tests, "I assume what the secretary is doing is damage control," said Chester E. Finn Jr., the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in Washington and a former assistant education secretary under President Reagan.

But a spokeswoman for the Education Department said the thinking was just the opposite. "If we hadn't done this," said Melinda Kitchell Malico, "some would say we were damaging the prospects for the tests."

Nonetheless, the chief congressional critic was skeptical. "The administration is suspending test development in order to look good for the House-Senate conference," Mr. Goodling said in a statement released after Mr. Riley's. "The Clinton administration is arrogant to assume that a Senate amendment will soon become law."

Even though the Senate amendment passed with 87 votes, Mr. Goodling said that some Republicans in that chamber are reconsidering. Twenty-seven GOP senators had signed a letter as of last week saying they preferred the House's prohibition on testing to the Senate provision. Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., the letter's author, vowed to lead a filibuster against a bill supporting the new tests.

Meanwhile, school officials in Houston and El Paso, Texas, also confirmed last week that they have changed their minds about giving their students the proposed test in 4th grade reading. Los Angeles has also pulled out.

The fact that the Education Department has said the reading test is to be given only in English was unacceptable, district officials said. All three have sizable numbers of students with limited proficiency in English, and school leaders contend those students should take the test in their native languages.

Calculator Qualms

In his statement, Mr. Riley said he was concerned that the blueprint for the tests differed too much from NAEP, which has tested a national sampling of students in core subjects since 1969.

The new tests, Mr. Riley said, are meant essentially to be versions of the national assessment that provide results for the individual student, which NAEP does not do. But he pointed in particular to the decision by the test panel to depart from NAEP on the use of calculators on the math test.

AEP's math tests allow calculators on some parts and not on others. The national test panel recommended, but did not require, their use. The calculator issue had divided the national test panel and is emblematic of a schism nationwide about whether basic skills or higher-order thinking should hold sway in math classes.

"In my view," Mr. Riley said in the announcement, "a test of 8th grade students should measure, as NAEP does, whether students have learned how to do arithmetic accurately without a

LOCAL

23. Associated Press

10-01 1:01a Category: Local

Grant helps disadvantaged students

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) - Three New England states are sharing about \$1.4 million in a program that helps prepare disadvantaged students for work.

Vice President Al Gore said the program encourages partnerships between businesses and schools. Gore, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, Education Secretary Richard Riley,

and Vermont Sen. James Jeffords announced the grants Tuesday.

Vermont, Rhode Island and Massachusetts are the New England states that will benefit from the program.

"This grant will give children in Burlington a better opportunity to get the skills that they need to get a good, high

paying job after graduation," Jeffords said. "This program links learning with life."

The labor and education departments will distribute \$15.9 million nationally. The government said the program helps youth who are facing poverty, "ethnic isolation" and the problems associated with America's inner cities. ■

24. Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

09/30/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: LOCAL; Page 1A Category: Local

COLLEGE AID MAY DEPEND ON MONEY PARENTS SHOULD HAVE SAVED

By RAFAEL LORENTE
Staff Writer

In the future, the amount of financial aid your son or daughter receives for college might not depend on how much money you have in the bank, but on how much Uncle Sam thinks you should have in the bank.

In an effort to simplify student assistance and encourage parents to save for college, the U.S. Department of Education wants to establish a formula that would assume parents of similar means had saved similar amounts of money _ instead of calculating financial aid based on how much an individual family had actually saved.

Critics say the proposal would punish students with spendthrift parents. It also wouldn't account for problems such as medical bills that can drain savings accounts.

"You're assuming that families have assets that they may not have . . . and you're assuming that if they don't have the assets it's because they didn't manage their lives properly," said Brian Fitzgerald, staff director for the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, a panel that advises Congress.

Some changes in federal financial aid, which accounts for 75 percent of all assistance to college students, are likely because the Higher Education Act of 1965 expires next year. Congress early next year will take up proposed changes in the act, which governs financial aid policies and programs such as Pell Grants and federal student loans.

This summer, the U.S. Department of Education has been considering proposals for revamping many of the programs.

Maureen McLaughlin, deputy assistant Education secretary, said changing how assets are calculated would simplify the gathering of financial information and make the system fairer to those who save.

"It would be sort of a fairness issue of not penalizing someone who saved more," she said. "And it doesn't make a lot of difference in how much aid students get."

The Education Department has not yet presented tables showing how much money families at varying incomes would be expected to save.

Other proposals from the department include changing the year used for calculating income; increasing Pell Grants to very poor second-year students;

and expanding aid eligibility for distance learning students, a growing segment in Florida.

But critics are particularly upset over the possible change to the way savings are calculated.

Sarah Flanagan, vice president for government relations for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, said the change would hurt children from poor families.

Wealthier families usually are eligible only for federal loans, and if they get turned down for those, they often can borrow against a house or from a bank.

But poor students depend on Pell Grants _ direct cash aid that only the federal government offers, she said.

"They don't have anywhere to go, and the bottom line is the kid doesn't get to go to school," Flanagan said.

Flanagan said parents who save currently are not penalized because the government expects only a portion of the parents' savings to be used for their children's educations, and exempts many assets.

Another proposal would use 2-year-old data to calculate a family's income so that it could be checked more easily against actual Internal Revenue Service numbers. Currently, families file

All three — Williams, Douglas and Johnson — say they are dedicated and determined to make a difference in the

classroom.

"I think I'm doing what I need to be doing. Teaching is a calling, like the

clergy," Johnson says. "You can't not teach. If it's in you, it's in you. It's something you have to do."■

TRADE

11. Education Daily

October 1, 1997 Category: Trade

WITH TEMPORARY FUNDING SET, CONFEREES TO CONTINUE NEXT WEEK

Following the House's lead, the Senate yesterday passed a measure to temporarily fund the federal government for the fiscal year that starts today.

The Senate yesterday voted 99-0 for H.J. Res 94, a short-term continuing resolution that will keep all federal agencies—including the Education Department—funded through Oct. 23. The House on Monday passed the same measure, 355-57, and the Office of Management and Budget says President

Clinton will sign it.

Having prevented a government shutdown, Congress is under little immediate pressure now to negotiate its way through of the haze of education amendments tacked onto the labor, health and education funding bills, H.R. 2264 and S. 1061, that each chamber passed last month.

These include GOP Sen. Slade Gorton's plan to send \$13.4 billion to local education agencies in block grants

(ED, Sept. 25). The House bill doesn't include such a provision but would prohibit development of national tests in reading and math that Clinton wants (ED, Sept. 11).

The labor, health and education conferees did not meet yesterday, as expected (ED, Sept. 29). They plan to adjourn Thursday and Friday for Rosh Hashanah and to start negotiations some time next week, a House source said. — William J. Cahir■

12. Education Daily

October 1, 1997 Category: Trade

SENATE HALTS D.C. VOUCHERS; CLINTON STEPS UP OPPOSITION

Senate Democrats yesterday blocked GOP plans to fund private school vouchers for Washington, D.C., students, a day after House appropriators approved a similar plan, and minutes after President Clinton denounced the proposal.

Voucher proponents in the Senate could muster only 58 votes, two shy of the 60 votes needed to end the Democrats' filibuster. Senate Republicans could still move to bring the amendment to S. 1156 back, an option they were mulling yesterday.

The plan, which the House Appropriations Committee approved late Monday as an amendment to its fiscal 1998 spending bill for Washington, D.C., would provide vouchers, or "scholarships," of up to \$3,200 to 2,000 city students (ED, Sept. 10).

Perhaps sensing the urgency of the issue, Clinton yesterday delivered his strongest remarks this year on the subject.

Congressional voucher supporters "would diminish our country's commitment to public education by siphoning badly needed funds away from public schools," Clinton said during an Oval Office speech.

He stopped just short of threatening to veto a D.C. spending bill that includes vouchers: "I will veto any legislation that damages our commitment to public education," he said.

House-Senate conferees may have to hammer out an agreement on the vouchers when they merge their bills, which otherwise would provide \$4.2 billion to fund city services this year.

The full house is expected to take up

the bill next week.

The school choice issue has heated up this week because, for the second time in three years, Republicans want to use Washington D.C. as a test site for school choice.

A 1995 GOP proposal would have provided \$5 million for vouchers of up to \$3,000 each for D.C.'s low-income students in fiscal 1996; it died in the midst of a massive government shutdown, when DC appropriations were rolled into an omnibus bill (ED, March 8, 1996).

Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., offered the new voucher amendment Sept. 24. The House proposal was incorporated into the D.C. funding bill by Rep. Charles Taylor, R-N.C., chairman of the D.C. appropriations subcommittee.

A National Experiment

September, 1997

1. U.S. Newswire

9-30 Category: Press release

Clinton Remarks on Education

To: National Desk

Contact: White House Press Office, 202-456-2100

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Following is a transcript of President Clinton's remarks upon departure on education:

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Outside the Oval Office

10:00 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I have said that I had no higher priority than getting our children the best education in the world in the 21st century, and that to achieve that politics must stop at the schoolhouse door. I'm committed to making sure every 8-year-old can read, every 12-year-old can log on to the Internet, every 18-year-old can go on to college, every adult can continue to learn through a lifetime. And we have made significant progress in our efforts to strengthen, improve and hold more accountable public education.

As Congress continues to debate the education bill this fall it's become clear that there are some who are waging an effort to undermine our commitment to public education and our public schools. **First, the Senate has passed an amendment that would virtually close the Department of Education and abolish some of its most successful efforts to expand school choice and charter schools, to bring computers to every classroom, to create more safe and drug-free schools.**

Second, the House of Representatives has actually voted to prevent our country from setting high standards of academic excellence with voluntary national tests to ensure that every child masters the basics in reading and math. I will veto any legislation that damages our commitment to public education and to high national standards. I am pleased that our effort on standards has received strong bipartisan support in the Senate and I intend to continue this fight for as long as it takes.

Third, in a vote to occur today, some in Congress would diminish our country's commitment to public education by siphoning badly needed funds away from our public schools into a voucher program that would support private academies for a very limited number of students.

Ninety percent of our children in America attend public schools. Our public schools do face a host of challenges. Every city especially faces problems with large numbers of poor children and often old facilities and other difficult challenges. But the answer, the answer is to put competition, change, excellence, accountability back into the public school system, not to take limited funds away from it.

The District of Columbia has some very good public schools and others that are not performing as well as they should. We can have more competition there and more options for parents and children without abandoning the schools through public school choice and greater use of charter schools. I have worked very hard on these things for the last several years and will continue to support them.

But instead of abandoning our schools, we should continue to support proven reform efforts, including getting more parents involved, improving teaching, getting drugs out of the schools, getting more discipline in the schools, raising the standards so that we can hold teachers and principals, schools and students accountable.

Public schools are the cornerstone of our democracy. We have always recognized our common responsibility for preparing all our young children for the challenges of the future. I call upon Congress to challenge our public schools, to change our public schools, but not to walk away from them.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, what are your concerns about a credibility or confidence crisis for the IRS, and what do you think about this Republican idea for an independent board for oversight?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I think some very important things came out of those hearings to which the IRS has to respond. There has been some response already. But let me back up a little bit and say we have been working to professionalize, not to politicize, the IRS for the last several years. I signed the Taxpayer Bill of Rights about a year and a half ago. We established an IRS modernization board to improve technology and customer service.

One of the things that I asked my staff to find out for me after the hearings were held is, how many of the abuses that were reported occurred before the Taxpayer Bill of Rights was passed, how many if they occurred after the Taxpayer Bill of Rights was passed were a violation of those law's requirements, and then, where are we going to go from here -- that's the most important thing.

For quite a long while now, the Vice President and Secretary Rubin have been working on a project, part of the Vice President's National Performance Review, to change and improve the IRS, and Secretary Rubin will have some more to say about that later. But we believe that we have to respond to what was said.

There were some difficult issues posed, and you have pointed out some of them in your reporting. But I think that we should continue to press ahead with change. But I think it's very important that all the American people have confidence that they're going to be treated fairly and that taxes will be collected in a fair, nondiscriminatory and nonburdensome manner, and that we will not have any kind of abuse there. And so we intend to push ahead

Q But are you concerned that the government's tax collecting agency faces credibility and confidence problems because of the specter of those hearings?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think they raised some legitimate points that ought to be responded to. I believe the IRS is functioning better today than it was five years ago. I think it has to improve more. And I think we should not try to sweep any of these problems under the rug. I follow the hearings with great interest, and I am glad to see that there has been some action based on the evidence that was adduced at the hearings already, and there will be more. But I think it's also important to know that we have done a lot of things to try to make the IRS more accountable, more professional. We can do more. We should not politicize it, and we should not do anything that will in any way call into question whether it's being even-handed or fair in the future.

Thank you.■

1. Associated Press

September 30, 1997

Politics Hit the Schoolhouse Door

An AP News Analysis

By Walter R. Mears

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — A real doozie of a fight, President Clinton calls his dispute with congressional Republicans over education. It is one in which he and his opponents all claim to be shunning politics at the schoolhouse door.

But the rhetoric does not mask the partisan confrontation involved in the three-sided struggle over national testing, government vouchers for private school education, and no-strings federal aid to schools.

Clinton is campaigning for the first, adamantly opposes the others.

He is pushing for national school testing to learn how children in the fourth grade are doing in reading, and in the eighth grade in math. After months of trying — it was part of his State of the Union program — he's up against a House barrier. A bloc of liberal Democrats opposed to testing as unfair to disadvantaged city schoolchildren joined Republicans to approve a ban on spending for testing.

Republican leaders are making their education stand on school choice, their title for the use of vouchers or federal tax breaks to help parents send children to private schools if they want.

And the Senate narrowly approved a measure that would transform education aid into no-strings grants directly to school districts, instead of passing the money through federal and state agencies.

Clinton is threatening to veto appropriations bills carrying the test ban, unrestricted block grants in place of school aid under federal guidelines, or, probably, a first-step private school voucher system in Washington, D.C.

Mutual disclaimers notwithstanding, these are issues sure to echo next year in congressional election campaigns. Education is a political issue. It should be, because it major concern of the voters, and because elections are the way they say what they want done.

The federal role in public schooling has been disputed since the Great Society origins of education aid from Washington. It still is, built into debates over block grants bypassing the Department of Education, and about Clinton's plan for national tests.

The first, according to Republican sponsors, is a reform that would go past federal and state bureaucracies that add regulatory strings and siphon away money.

In Clinton's description, that measure would abandon the most successful national efforts to strengthen schools and instead "throw all of our education funds into a pot and distribute it in an arbitrary way"

Rival accounts of the test plan sound that way, too. A needless experiment that would waste money and eventually threaten local control of the public schools, Republican foes contend. Clinton calls it essential to measure how well public school pupils are doing in the basics, although its reach would be limited.

He's been pressing the issue all year; so far six states and 15 city school districts have said they would participate. Clinton stresses that the tests would be voluntary "with no mandated consequences" for flunking.

The inconsistency between vital and voluntary is a political necessity; there's no way Congress would stand for mandatory national testing. Indeed, opponents of the Clinton plan argue that it is a first step toward a federal school curriculum to fit the tests.

"They say it's a federal power grab," Clinton replies. "It isn't. The tests are voluntary. No state, no school district has to participate."

At the same time, he wants a commitment to national education standards.

Fitting those aims together is the problem. The administration rankled Congress by contracting for work on proposed tests to be given in 1999 without getting advance approval. Clinton said last spring that he was trying to create a climate in which no one could say no to the test plan. He's not even close, although the polls indicate the idea has broad public support, 79 percent according to a survey cited by Education Secretary Richard Riley.

But Riley has suspended work on the tests until Congress decides whether to permit them at all.

The Republican platform on education is built around vouchers, so that parents can select schools and get government help to pay tuition.

The District of Columbia appropriations bill pending in the House includes a pilot program which would give 2,000 to 3,000 lower-income families up to \$3,200 to put their children in private schools or in public schools outside the city.

Riley says he will urge a veto if it passes.

He said it would undermine the commitment to public education and "begin the unraveling of this unique American fabric." ■

1. LRP Publications

Sept. 29, 1997

Posturing Precedes Appropriations Conference

The first meeting to work out differences in the House-Senate appropriations bill affecting education spending wasn't without some pre-conference posturing.

Enough Democratic senators to make the threat stick said Thursday they will stage a filibuster on the Senate floor if the House-Senate conferees, who met Friday, retain an amendment offered by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., to move a dozen K-12 programs into a block grant to local education agencies.

In back-to-back news conferences, Democrats released a letter bearing the signatures of 43 Democratic senators vowing to join in a filibuster, and Gorton vowed to fight for his amendment as one of the conferees. Under Senate rules, only 41 votes are needed to protect a filibuster (60 votes are necessary to invoke cloture on a filibuster) and keep it going. Several senators said they expect the Gorton amendment to be the most contentious issue during the conference work.

Although conferees held their first meeting Friday, the real work is expected to begin Sept. 30, likely too late to meet the fiscal year deadline. President Clinton has vowed to veto the block-grant amendment and a ban on a national testing plan if they are part of the appropriations bill sent to him. Because the conferees do not plan to begin their work before Sept. 30, education programs are likely to be included in a "continuing resolution" that provides for funding for all government agencies to continue at this year's level. Continuing resolutions usually are designed to last only a week or two to give the Senate and House a little more time to pass appropriations bills. The 1998 fiscal year at issue begins Oct. 1. In his news conference, Gorton acknowledged that he is not wedded to all of the programs headed for a block grant, an indication some of them could be used as bargaining chips for obtaining a compromise.

Earlier, Gorton said vocational education, vocational rehabilitation and adult education programs should not have been included in the block grant because they are not part of the K-12 system. Also to be excluded from his block-grant provision are Indian Education, the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program, Arts in Education, Star Schools Program and Technology Innovation Challenge grants.

Also, bilingual education funds will be distributed in the same proportion as they have been meted out during the current fiscal year. For their part, the Democrats vowed to continue their filibuster even if only one of the programs were shifted into a block grant. At a news conference, Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., vowed, "This is all or nothing." Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-S.D., added, "there will be fierce resistance on the floor of the Senate" if the Gorton amendment survives the conference. "This is not going to move on the floor of the Senate," he said. Dorgan also said the Democrats would insist on retaining all of the programs Gorton proposed to be put into a block grant. The Democrats accused the Republican majority of trying to kill the Department of Education by subterfuge instead of making the attempt head-on.

Dorgan said Republicans were told by a pollster that if they say they want to kill the Department of Education, the public will not support it.

But if they say they want to take federal education funds and give them directly to school districts, the public would support that. Gorton, joined by Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., accused the department of putting out false figures about the impact of the Gorton amendment. Hagel said the department is telling school districts they will lose funds under the amendment. Hagel said that was misleading information because the Gorton amendment is designed to maintain the amount of funding they were to receive before the amendment was adopted. ■

GETTING TESTY

By The Editors

Six years ago, then-President George Bush announced his support for national education standards—a single, nationwide set of criteria to gauge the performance of students and schools. Congressional Democrats shot down the plan. New tests, they argued, would serve only to stigmatize poor performance.

TNR supported Bush's proposal in 1991, and we support the virtually identical national testing plan President Clinton proposed in this year's State of the Union address. But now, lo and behold, it's the Republicans who are lining up against the idea. Lamar Alexander, who led the fight for national performance tests as Bush's education secretary, now fulminates against them. Alexander's confusion seems to have permeated his party. Chester Finn, a former assistant secretary of education under President Reagan who serves as the GOP's eminence grise on the topic, first issued a ringing endorsement of Clinton's plan—"better than Bush's"—then later announced his modified, updated view that "the president's proposal would do more harm than good."

Confused? So, obviously, are the Republicans. Their excuses for opposing fourth-grade reading tests and eighth-grade math tests seem awfully, well, excuse-like. The tests would cost virtually nothing—\$15 million a year—but William Goodling, chairman of the House Education Committee, vaguely proposes to spend the money instead on "the classroom." New federal pencil boxes for every second grader!

House Speaker Newt Gingrich says that instead Clinton "ought to be focusing on local parents, local students and local teachers," but it's hard to understand what this phrase even means. There is no such thing as a parent, student or teacher who isn't local, since everyone resides in a locality. If Gingrich wants all initiatives to well up from the grass-roots, then President Clinton can't very well "focus" on them, since everything he proposes is by definition a national initiative. If Gingrich is trying to suggest that Clinton should not subject local government to federal regulation, his objection is groundless. Any school or state would have the right to opt out of the tests.

Perhaps the underlying reason for Republican opposition is that national tests will nationalize the debate over education. Currently, parents have no objective measure by which to compare the performance of their child's school district with any other. National standards would allow for inter-district comparisons, thus empowering parents to question the backward and inefficient practices employed by many local school boards. This in turn would expose conservatism's local control fetish. Critics of public education—those who wish to replace it with vouchers, rather than those who wish to improve it—point to the superior educational performance of foreign schools, while failing to acknowledge that all other major industrial countries have centralized, nationally run public school systems.

Of course, should national testing spark a movement for real reform, conservatives are not the only ones who would be threatened. Many administrators and teachers from poor, low-performing school districts resist national standards. Diagnosing the problem, they argue, is not a substitute for treating it. True. But the public will never face up to public education's inequalities and inadequacies until the consequences of those inequalities are laid out in hard numbers. National testing would not only spur reform, it would also serve as an essential condition of reform. Without testing, there's no way to know if reform is actually working.

Clinton's plan, then, has no appreciable downside and could even be a first step toward transforming the political climate on education. But the promise of reform is not the same thing as reform, and for this reason Clinton's education plan, taken as a whole, doesn't quite warrant the lyrical rhetoric with which the president has surrounded it. After all, education was supposed to be the cornerstone of Clinton's second term. But, in pursuit of a budget deal with the Republicans, he bargained away his highly touted plan to spend \$5 billion renovating dilapidated, inner-city schools.

The one portion of his education package that he refused to negotiate—tax deductions and credits for college tuition—is a transparent political bribe and a grossly inefficient method of increasing access to college. That Clinton put a higher priority on tax pork for the middle class than on far cheaper, and more urgent, aid for the truly needy belies his grandiose pronouncements. The only thing worse than Clinton's settling for modest reform is the Republicans' obtuse resistance to modest reform in education. ■

Daily Education News

Monday, September 29, 1997

1. The New York Times

09/28/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section 1; National Desk; Page 33, Column 5

Education Secretary Suspends The Drafting of National Tests

AP

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 — Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has suspended the drafting of national math and reading tests while Senate and House negotiators decide whether to allow the tests.

Mr. Riley announced on Thursday that final specifications for the tests would not be submitted to contractors until Congress settles the issue. The Senate has approved the Administration's proposal for voluntary national testing, but the House voted to block money for the tests.

As negotiators from the two houses on Friday began discussions on a compromise, Mr. Riley tried to defuse another point of contention by announcing that he advocates only limited use of calculators in the math portion of the tests.

National testing is only one of many differences between the House and Senate on a bill to finance the Education, Health and Human Services and Labor Departments in the budget year that begins on Oct. 1.

President Clinton has threatened to veto the bill if it blocks money for the national tests or if it retains a provision passed by the Senate that converts Federal school aid into block grants to school districts.

Senators from both parties set out their own opposing demands on Thursday, promising to block final debate on the \$80 billion spending measure.

Senator John Ashcroft, Republican of Missouri, and 26 other Senators urged in a letter this week that the testing plan be blocked. Mr. Ashcroft also promised a filibuster. "Once the Federal Government is using tests to shape curriculum, parental control through local school boards will be doomed," he said.

Democratic Senators said they had 43 votes, more than enough to block debate on the spending bill indefinitely, if it retained an amendment that would convert school-aid programs into direct grants to school districts.

The amendment passed the Senate 51 to 49, but was not included in the House version.

Democrats call it a back-door effort to kill the Education Department. The chief sponsor, Senator Slade Gorton, Republican of Washington, said the provision would save paperwork expenses and restore local control over education.

Mr. Riley's statement on calculators was a step toward appeasing critics who say the test design favors a less-than-rigorous approach to teaching mathematics.

The National Test Panel, which wrote the test specifications, recommended that students be allowed to take their own calculators to the 90-minute tests.

But Mr. Riley said the tests should allow only limited use of calculators for advanced problem solving.

Gail Burrill, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and a member of the advisory panel, argued against the limitation, saying that without calculators, there cannot be enough questions to test both arithmetic and more advanced skills.

1. Education Daily

September 29, 1997

BUMPY ROAD AHEAD FOR '98 SPENDING BILL

As negotiations began Friday on a compromise fiscal 1998 education spending bill, lead House and Senate appropriators pleaded for cooperation on the thorny issues of local block grants and voluntary national tests. But it doesn't look like they'll get it.

Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., has threatened to filibuster the bill unless it puts a brake on the president's testing program. But forty-three Senate Democrats+three more than needed+have threatened to filibuster if it bars the tests.

Those Democrats also have pledged to hold up the bill if it rolls about \$13 billion in K-12 education funding into local block grants.

And President Clinton has pledged vetoes over both issues.

Bad Timing?

During the first meeting of the House and Senate conferees, Chairman Arlen Specter, R-Pa., of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, sounded an ambivalent note about the block grant plan.

"This may or may not be the right time for final action" on the amendment to the Senate bill by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., he said.

Specter's House counterpart, Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., already has voiced his opposition to Gorton's block grants, but did acknowledge that "there is strong support for it in the House."

An attempt in the House to turn about \$2.8 billion in annual education appropriations over to school districts in block grants was nipped in the bud (ED, Sept. 18).

Perhaps significantly, the tables and notes provided for conferees on the House and Senate bills don't acknowledge Gorton's amendment, instead listing program-specific funding that his block grant would eliminate.

Gorton wasn't pleased, calling the move "cynical and calculated." He vowed that "opponents will not be able to make this debate go away."

Specter, meanwhile, sounded a conciliatory note on Clinton's voluntary national testing program for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math, which the House bill would ban.

"We do need some kind of testing," Specter said, praising the Senate compromise to turn over authority for the test to the National Assessment Governing Board.

But 27 Senate Republicans signed a letter urging negotiators to follow the House's lead and ban the tests in the final bill (ED, Sept. 26).

Porter, who voted against the tests two weeks ago, said only that testing "is going to be something that is going to be very difficult to resolve" and he wants education policy committee leaders to hash out the differences.

Striking A Chord

But it seemed increasingly unlikely that the two spending subcommittee chairmen could convince their more conservative colleagues, who favor both the test ban and block grants.

Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., complained that his own children "have tests all the time. It's an alphabet soup of constant testing."

And Sen. Christopher Bond, R-Mo., defended block grants: "I know this is a radical change, but it is something whose time has come."

The two thorny policy issues threaten to bog down the massive spending bill, which also funds labor and health programs. S. 1061 and H.R. 2264 also include different spending levels for Goals 2000, charter schools, special education and Pell Grants, Porter noted. "There is obviously not enough money to go around for all of these priorities," he said.

Conferees tentatively plan to meet again tomorrow after staff negotiations over the weekend.

With the new fiscal year beginning Wednesday, the House could vote on a stop-gap funding measure today+and the Senate also intends to vote on one this week+in order to keep government agencies functioning at currently funded levels until Oct. 23.

—Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

September 29, 1997

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Negotiators from the House and Senate plan to continue meeting this week to finish a compromise education spending bill, deciding whether to place most K-12 funds in block grants to local education agencies and halt funding for the president's national testing plan. Both chambers could pass a stop-gap funding bill to keep the government operating after the new fiscal year begins Wednesday. The House education committee expects to take up childhood literacy and charter school bills Wednesday.

New Public Law ...

Student Aid Guidelines P.L. 105-43: Allows colleges and universities using need-blind admissions to award institutional aid based on financial need, and to exchange information through an independent third party for four years.

Last action: President Clinton signed H.R. 1866 into law Sept. 17.

Recent or Upcoming Action ...

Fiscal 1998 Appropriations/National Tests H.R. 2264: Would boost the Education Department's budget from nearly \$29.47 billion this year to about \$34.3 billion in fiscal 1998, including mandatory spending on programs such as student loans. It would increase spending on Title I and special education, set aside \$205 million for comprehensive school reform, level-fund Safe and Drug-Free Schools grants, and cut Goals 2000 funding from \$491 million to \$387 million (ED, Sept. 11). It also would provide \$100 million for charter schools and \$435 million for state formula grants for school technology. The bill would set aside \$260 million for a childhood literacy program in fiscal 1999, if it is authorized by April 1. No money could be spent on President Clinton's national testing program, and State Student Incentive Grants (SSIG) would be eliminated. S. 1061: Would send about \$13.4 billion in Title I, Goals 2000, bilingual, technology and vocational education funding to school districts as block grants (ED, Sept. 12). Special education state grants for school-age children would get a substantial boost, to \$3.95 billion.

SSIG would be cut to \$35 million. A reconstituted National Assessment Governing Board would oversee Clinton's voluntary tests. Both bills would raise the maximum Pell Grant to \$3,000. H.J. Res. 94: Would fund federal programs without completed fiscal 1998 spending plans at their current rates until Oct. 23, three weeks after the start of fiscal 1998.

Last action: House and Senate conferees met Friday, and their staffs were to begin hashing out differences between their bills over the weekend. Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., last week proposed shaving off about \$2.2 billion from his original block grant plan (ED, Sept. 25). In a separate appropriations bill for Washington, D.C., the Senate debated a \$7 million plan to fund vouchers for low-income students.

H.J. Res. 94 was introduced Friday.

Next action: Conferees plan to continue meeting tomorrow.

Key Senate Democrats already have said they will work to bar the block grant plan, and the White House is threatening a veto if the legislation would create the block grants or halt Clinton's testing initiative. The Senate aims to vote to end debate on the D.C. voucher plan tomorrow. The House Appropriations Committee plans to take up vouchers for the nation's capital today. The House plans to vote on H.J.

Res. 94 today, while the Senate could vote this week or next.

Omnibus Education S. 1: The GOP bill would allow states to use existing Title VI block grant funds for public and private school choice, would raise special education funding starting with a \$1 billion hike next year, and would authorize a school choice demonstration program for low-income families (ED, Jan. 23).

S. 12: The Democrats' bill would require the federal government to pay up to half of the interest on school construction bonds and authorize \$1.75 billion for reading programs and \$1.8 billion for school technology.

Last action: House Science Committee expressed dismay at a hearing last week that almost half of fourth-grade teachers had little or no knowledge of national math standards (ED, Sept. 25).

Next action: The House Education and the Workforce Committee expects to take up bills on childhood literacy and charter schools Wednesday. The House Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee plans a hearing on school choice tomorrow. The House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee travels to Muskegon Heights, Mich., Thursday for a hearing on federal K-12 policy.

Education Tax Breaks H.R. 2373, S. 1133: Would allow parents tax-free withdrawals from education savings accounts for expenses including private K-12 tuition, transportation, tutoring and computers (ED, Aug. 4.) Last action: House GOP leaders last week said they want to include the education breaks in tax legislation next year.

Next action: The House Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee plans a hearing on school choice tomorrow. The House Ways and Means Committee is expected to work on H.R.

2373 in October. No action is scheduled in the Senate.

Vocational Education H.R. 1853: Would allot school districts at least 90 percent of the basic state grant under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, up from 75 percent, and shave the state set-asides to 2 percent for administration and 8 percent for leadership. It also would lower the minimum school district grant to \$10,000.

Increases in voc ed funds would be allocated under a census and poverty formula for the next three years, then the full amounts would be dolled out under a new formula (ED, July 24). S. 1186: Would maintain separate funding and administration for voc ed, job training and adult education programs, but would let states submit one plan for all three programs and would reward state coordination among programs with incentive grants. Grant minimums and formulas for distributing Perkins state grants would remain unchanged.

Last action: The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee passed S. 1186 Wednesday by voice vote (ED, Sept. 25). It will try to address educators' concerns regarding states filing a single plan for voc ed and job training before the full Senate votes. The House passed its bill in July.

Next action: The Senate may vote on S. 1186 by late October.

HEA Reauthorization H.R. 6: The bill would reauthorize funds for all existing Higher Education Act (HEA) programs, which expire Sept. 30 but receive an automatic one-year extension. After the House writes new legislation for student aid and other programs under HEA, it will be substituted into H.R. 6.

Last action: House Republicans introduced a bill last week that would overhaul the Education Department's student aid management. Next action: When the House takes up HEA legislation next year, it will consider a new ED management structure for the student aid programs.

Just Introduced ...

Student Aid Management H.R. 2536: Would reorganize ED's management of its student aid programs into a performance-based organization with a non-politically appointed CEO-type manager assigned to meet specific performance targets.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 24 by Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif.; referred to the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

Next action: The committee plans to consider the proposal next year.

Loan Consolidation H.R. 2535: Would allow borrowers in the Direct Student Loan (DSL) program to consolidate their debt into the Family Education Loan program through Oct. 1, 1998, with the same DSL interest rate benefits.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 24 by Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif.; referred to the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

Next action: The committee plans to vote on H.R. 2535 Wednesday.

Hispanic Serving Institutions H.R. 2495: Would increase annual funding authorization levels for Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) to \$80 million for undergraduate institutions and \$20 million for graduate programs, and create a broader definition to recognize more predominately Hispanic institutions.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 18 by Rep. Ruben Hinojosa, D-Texas; referred to the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

Next action: Republicans are considering new parameters for HSIs.

Pell Grant Eligibility S. 1199: Would allow independent students to have a higher personal income and still be eligible for Pell Grants.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 18 by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine; referred to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Next action: No action scheduled.

Teacher Training Enhancement S. 1201: Would authorize the Education Department to award \$50 million annually in grants to teacher colleges and universities to improve teacher training as part of the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 23 by Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn.; referred to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Next action: No action is scheduled. — Laureen Lazarovici, Jonathan Fox■

The Wall Street Journal 09/29/97

A Failing Grade for Clinton's National Standards

By Lynne V. Cheney

Steven Leinwand, who sits on the committee overseeing President Clinton's proposed national mathematics exam, has written an essay explaining why it is "downright dangerous" to teach students things like "six times seven is 42, put down two and carry the four." Such instruction sorts people out, Mr. Leinwand writes, "anointing the few" who master these procedures, and "casting out the many." As Mr. Leinwand tells it, there might once have been an excuse for such undemocratic goings-on, but we can now, because of technology, throw off "the discriminatory shackles of computational algorithms."

House and Senate conferees who will soon be deciding what to do about the Clinton plans for national testing ought to read Mr. Leinwand's essay, in part because it helps explain why the committee on which he sits recommended a national math exam that would avoid directly assessing "certain knowledge and skills such as whole number computation." And in case the exam might indirectly assess whether eighth-graders can add, subtract, multiply and divide, the committee recommended that every student be armed with a calculator throughout.

But the most important reason for conferees to read this essay is to gain an appreciation for the kind of thinking that has become all too common in the educational establishment. Although his ideas might seem extreme, Mr. Leinwand is not a marginal figure. He is not only on the committee overseeing the president's proposed math exam; he serves as a consultant to the Connecticut Department of Education, sits on the board of a \$10 million National Science Foundation math program and advises a standards-setting project funded by the Pew and MacArthur foundations.

Since 1989, when the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics set forth a radical vision for how mathematics should be taught, ideas like Mr. Leinwand's have increasingly become the order of the day. Mathland, an instructional program widely used in California's elementary schools, never does show kids the standard U.S. procedure for multidigit multiplication. But, in a fit of multiculturalism, it does offer instruction on the very complicated way in which the ancient Egyptians managed these matters.

In the current debate, many otherwise sensible senators have been convinced that safeguards can be put in place to keep harmful fads from influencing standards and assessments. Recent history does not support this optimism. A few years ago, as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I awarded a contract to develop national history standards. Although I required detailed plans from the contractor and had them thoroughly reviewed by knowledgeable people, the standards that were finally delivered were so suffused with political correctness that I felt obliged to condemn them — as did 99 members of the Senate.

The federal effort to set English/language arts standards produced such a muddle of trendy thinking that in 1994 the Department of Education cut off funding. Late last week, Secretary of Education Bill Riley backed off from the math test into which his department has recently poured thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands — perhaps millions — of dollars. Calculator use should be narrowly restricted, the secretary said.

Some in the Senate advocate turning national testing over to the National Assessment Governing Board, a bipartisan group appointed by the secretary of education, but that won't prevent foolish ideas from making their way into national tests. In order to fulfill the vision of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the board reduced the computational part of its 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress math exam by 20% for 17-year-olds and increased the portion of the exam on which they can use calculators to well over a third.

Meanwhile, there is good work going on in the states: sound history standards in Virginia and Texas, admirable English/ language arts standards in Massachusetts. To be sure, there have been fiascos, most notably with reading and math standards in California, but pressure from concerned parents has turned California's reading program around, and there has been significant progress in restoring to the state a mathematics program strong in the basics.

Setting standards and tests at the state level is no guarantee of success, but the accomplishments there certainly outshine the federal record, and the good work that has gone on outside of Washington could very well be rendered moot by a test created inside the Beltway. Even if a certain state decided not to participate in the Clinton testing plan, a federal test would strongly influence the textbooks used in that state's schools and determine the way its teachers are trained. And if that test is the disaster that the record indicates it will be, the result could be a national calamity.

The president has threatened to veto the labor, health and human services appropriations bill if Congress blocks his plans for national testing, and many members of the Senate are hesitant to oppose him, particularly since a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll that the administration has been passing around shows overwhelming public support for national testing. But Sen. John Ashcroft (R., Mo.), trying to rally his colleagues to kill the Clinton plan, cites another part of the same poll. It shows that when pollsters explain that the federal government would establish the test, and spell

out standard pro and con arguments, support for national testing drops to less than half.

"We should test our kids," Sen. Ashcroft observes. "We need that accountability in education. But what we don't need is the federal government coming up with the tests we use."

Mrs. Cheney is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.■

1. The Christian Science Monitor

September 29, 1997

Getting Smart on SATs

Recently, the spotlight's been on the debate over national tests to assess reading and math skills. But those proposed national exams aren't the only testing controversy around. For years, educators have debated the merits of the SATs and other standard exams that help determine readiness for college.

Critics say the tests tend to discriminate on a race or class basis, and are poor predictors of academic performance. Last week the University of California's Latino Eligibility Task Force asked the Board of Regents to make the SATs optional for applicants to help boost enrollment of Latinos - and other minorities. The regents will consider the recommendation and may vote on the issue next March.

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) is grappling with a similar question. Last week it promised a year-long review of its new, tougher academic requirements for college athletes: at least 820 on the SATs and a high school grade point average of 2.5. The concern in question? That the requirements may hit African-American students hardest.

The College Board, which administers the SATs, hasn't ignored such complaints. In the past few years, it has revised the test with the aim of removing possible cultural bias.

Still, some colleges and universities have dropped the SAT requirement altogether. They assert that other factors - difficulty and variety of coursework, class rank, school reputation, depth and breadth of extracurricular activities - can tell them more about what students have achieved and how well they're likely to perform in college than a standardized test.

That's perplexing. College admissions officials ought to be seeking as much information as possible. It's difficult enough for them to know how rigorous each high school in the country is in terms of grading and assessing its students. For that reason SAT-type tests have value - not as the only tool for judging applicants but as one of many pieces of evidence about ability and willingness to use what college has to offer. Taken together with other measurements, the test scores can provide multiple insights into student performance.

What educators ought to be examining about SAT-type tests is whether all who take them start from a level playing field (levelled up, not down). Students from more privileged backgrounds typically are better prepared. They sign up for test-preparation courses or coaching. As one educator said, give disadvantaged students the same information everyone else has and they'll do fine.

Public school systems flunk if they don't thus level the field. That means making sure that all students have enough practice at taking such comprehensive tests that inexperience and test fright are not inhibiting factors. Ideally, no student - black, white, Asian, Hispanic, privileged, or poor - should have to rely on a Stanley Kaplan or Princeton Review course to approach the exam with confidence. Then colleges would feel less obliged to handicap their admissions teams by rejecting the tests as one of many pieces of admissions evidence.

And, speaking of level playing fields, the NCAA was right to raise its academic standards - to ask that student athletes perform at least to the minimum expected of everyone else. Some students may need extra help. But those standards are important. They require that athletes not neglect their studies. They push schools that use athletes as cash cows to ensure that the athletes don't fumble on the field of learning.

What's the point of college if not to give students a rigorous higher education? And that requires at least some rigor on admissions standards.■

1. The New York Times

09/28/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section 1; Page 1, Column 1

Giant of Exam Business Keeps Quiet on Cheating

By DOUGLAS FRANTZ
and JON NORDHEIMER

Richard Weston was skeptical.

The man on the telephone said he was a Louisiana teacher and had a stolen copy of the standardized test that Mr. Weston's company, Educational Testing Service, administers to teachers who want to be school principals. As the caller read off question after question, Mr. Weston's skepticism turned to alarm.

Mr. Weston, a security manager for the world's largest and most influential testing organization, said he was very interested and that a security team from the service outside Princeton, N.J., would go to see the teacher as soon as possible.

Three days later, Mr. Weston and two other senior managers of the testing service were in Louisiana confronting a situation that was even worse than they had thought. Copies of the test's 145 multiple-choice questions, along with correct answers, had circulated among teachers throughout southern Louisiana, probably for years. In a state mired at or near the bottom of almost every educational ranking, teachers had cheated their way into running public elementary, middle and high schools.

But when E.T.S. faced this situation last fall, in what could have been one of the worst public scandals of its history, the testing service decided to keep it quiet. State and local education officials said they were refused information on the extent of the cheating. Instead of publicly disclosing the possibility that unqualified cheaters were running schools in southern Louisiana, the testing service quietly notified at least 200 teachers who had passed the exam that they had to take the test again to "confirm" their earlier scores.

Rather than an isolated incident, the situation that E.T.S. officials found in Louisiana and how they reacted to it fits a pattern uncovered in a four-month examination by The New York Times of the huge nonprofit company that runs most educational testing in the United States, from the SAT for college-bound high school students to tests for licenses and certification in 34 professions.

In numerous instances across the country, E.T.S. has confronted case after case of cheating but withheld information from the public and failed to take aggressive steps in time to insure the integrity of its tests, according to internal documents and interviews with current and former officials there.

The questions about E.T.S. come at a time when Americans seem obsessed with testing. President Clinton is pushing national testing for millions of students, competition is increasing for admission to the best universities, and a growing number of people must pass a test to get a job or win a promotion.

The stumbles of the service illustrate how difficult it is, even for the dominant company, to police cheating in this golden age of testing. While the organization professes zero tolerance when it comes to suspected cheating, its critics, including former E.T.S. officials, say the company is all too eager to sweep its dirt under the rug to protect its lion's share of the testing business instead of spending the money to tighten security. In many cases, the company's insular culture dictates that lapses of testing security remain hidden behind the curtain of customer privacy and test confidentiality.

"The tendency has been to lean over backwards to keep matters pertaining to test security sort of under wraps," said Winton H. Manning, a former senior vice president who retired in 1995 after more than 25 years at E.T.S. "There is a certain amount of good business sense to that. Admissions officers and deans would begin to wonder just how reliable are these folks if they knew everything."

Senior officials at E.T.S. defended their handling of cheating incidents and said they had been as forthcoming as possible, given the constraints of privacy and test integrity involved. In the Louisiana case, they said that they provided state officials with as much information as they could but acknowledged that they were unable to answer their most pressing questions.

"What those local authorities want is evidence of who cheated, and that's not what we have," said Nancy S. Cole, the E.T.S. president. "We don't think we have the evidence to say effectively to the state who cheated and who didn't cheat. But we're pretty sure that we got rid of the bulk of the scores that included most of the people who cheated." The Methods Variety of Ways To Obtain Answers

While the company's administration of the widely used SAT I and SAT II on behalf of the College Board has not been marred by major cheating episodes, its handling of the Federal Government's test for immigrants who want to become citizens has been riddled with fraud and abuse, according to documents and interviews.

People who cannot speak any English have appeared at offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service across the country with certificates saying that they had passed English and civics tests administered at E.T.S. affiliates, raising the possibility that independent contractors hired as test supervisors may have taken bribes, according to the documents and interviews.

In 1995, the company was forced to close 23 citizenship testing centers in New York City because of evidence of cheating and bribes made to test givers. Yet the reasons for closing the centers were never made public, and E.T.S. issued a press

release saying the move was made to improve service.

A spokesman for the company, Tom Ewing, said the press release was simply to alert immigrants to the new testing procedures. He said it was not "a venue where we wanted to air the problems that we had with these test centers."

Even E.T.S.'s push into the new world of computerized testing suffered a serious security lapse. In 1993, its new computerized test for graduate school admission was found to be vulnerable to one of the oldest cheating techniques: People who had taken the test were able to remember enough questions to reconstruct almost the entire examination. Unlike paper tests, which are given only a few times a year, computerized tests are offered anytime. And if the tests use the same questions day after day for months, they are much more vulnerable to cheaters who can memorize the questions.

Internal E.T.S. records show that in the rush to gain an early foothold in the field of computerized testing, company executives ignored warnings from their own test experts about the risk of using a single set of questions and later misled New York legislators by saying the testing service was using multiple sets of questions.

Cheating problems have also plagued the tests for graduate school and on English-proficiency that were administered by E.T.S. Three years ago, in its biggest security breach, the company canceled the scores of 30,000 students in China on entry tests for graduate schools after the discovery of a ring that was selling the examinations. Last month, Federal prosecutors in Manhattan unsealed documents describing a nationwide cheating operation in which hundreds of students paid as much as \$9,000 for answers to graduate-school and English-proficiency tests. As outlined by prosecutors, experienced test takers took the exams in New York City and telephoned the answers to accomplices in Chicago and Los Angeles, who passed them along to those taking the tests in the later time zones.

Time-zone test schemes are nothing new for the service. Critics complain that the company's failure to spend enough money to search aggressively for patterns of cheating or even provide different versions of the same test for each time zone are other examples of its passive attitude toward security.

"Cover-up is probably more prevalent than cracking down because cracking down is expensive," said Monte E. Perez, who ran E.T.S.'s troubled citizenship testing program for four years until he resigned in 1995.

Officials of the testing service said that breaches of test security might be more prevalent today than in the past because of what they called a weakening of the taboo against cheating. But they said that spending the money required to make tests virtually impregnable would drive up fees for test takers and create an intrusive atmosphere.

"We don't want to act like kids are coming into a police state to take a test," said Mrs. Cole, the president. "The general thrust has been to educate our test center supervisors better about security issues and to institute a host of things aimed at prevention."

"One of the dilemmas that plagues that area is that we do worry whether or not the whole educational system takes cheating as seriously as it might have in the past."

Mrs. Cole is a former dean of the college of education at the University of Illinois and an expert in test bias. She joined E.T.S. in 1989 and became its fourth president in 1994.

From its 360-acre campus, E.T.S. develops and administers nine million tests a year worldwide, often on behalf of academic associations. A nonprofit organization since its founding in 1947, it has grown into the largest educational testing company in the world, with 2,400 employees. Last year, its revenue topped \$400 million and it had a surplus of nearly \$9 million, which swelled its reserve fund to \$91 million.

Some critics contend that weak security survives at E.T.S. because there is no public accountability. No Congressional committee or Federal agency monitors the testing industry, and few individuals have the resources to challenge a giant like E.T.S. in court.

"There is more public oversight and control over the food I feed my cat than the tests they give my kids," said Robert Schaeffer of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing in Cambridge, Mass., a nonprofit watchdog group. The Whistle-Blower Feeling Cheated By Colleagues

On the morning of July 13, 1996, two teachers from Lafayette, in southern Louisiana, were on the way to take the E.T.S. exam to become school administrators when they stopped at a Burger King.

As the two men sipped coffee, one pulled out 20 typewritten pages that he described to his companion as a "study guide." It contained 145 questions. Correct answers had been typed and underlined in black.

The second teacher recalled that he leafed through the papers but thought little of them until he sat down at the test center later that morning. He immediately recognized questions on the first two or three pages, and he began to suspect that all 145 questions were identical to the ones in his friend's guide.

"I felt like everyone in the room had the test to study except me," the teacher said recently, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "There were 145 questions to complete in 120 minutes, but almost half the room left in just one hour."

The teacher became angry a few weeks later when he learned that he had narrowly missed a passing score, dashing his hope of becoming a principal.

He decided to expose the cheating, with the help of another local educator from whom he sought advice. So, with a tape recorder in his pocket, he visited the colleague who had showed him the "study guide" and said he now wanted a copy of his own. The colleague, who had passed the test, gave it to him, explaining that he had gotten it at a study session with other teachers the night before the test.

Armed with 20 pages of questions and answers and his tape recording, the teacher called Mr. Weston, the E.T.S. security manager, in New Jersey.

The Columbus Dispatch September 28, 1997

CLINTON, CONGRESS CLASH ON EDUCATION BILL

President Clinton finds himself fighting a two-front war for his educational priorities. He is threatening to veto the education appropriation bill unless the House and Senate give him what he wants. In the House, representatives voted to reject Clinton's plan for nationwide competency tests for fourth- and eighth-graders. The Senate voted to convert most of the education budget to block grants that would go directly to school districts, bypassing state and federal bureaucracies.

Of the two, the Senate measure, sponsored by Washington Republican Slade Gorton, most threatens the education establishment. Although the federal government provides only about 8 percent of total school funding, it creates about half the * paperwork that burdens local administrators. Moreover, the U.S. * Department of Education, dominated by teachers-union lobbyists and other public-education monopolists, is a curious place, at best, to achieve reform and improvement at the lower level. Gorton thinks local boards of education are better equipped to decide how best to spend federal education dollars, while Clinton wants to preserve the federal prerogative to dictate how the money is spent. "By taking this position," Gorton says, "I think the president is telling parents and teachers, 'I don't trust you.' Those in Washington, D.C., guard their power jealously, and they won't give it up easily." * It's hard to see what the U.S. Department of Education has accomplished in its 20 years of existence to improve this country's system of schooling. The Senate's block-grant approach is worth a try. On the issue of national exams, this is an idea that most other countries use to ensure that certain academic standards are met. In this country, with its thousands of diverse school districts and dozens of standardized tests, it makes sense to have one national test of competency that would allow direct comparisons to be made among states, districts, individual schools and individual pupils. President Bush proposed as much five years ago, which the Democratic Congress rejected out of hand. Unfortunately, Clinton poisoned the well on his own testing proposal by ordering the Education Department to proceed with developing tests without any public input or even an authorization vote by Congress. For such a significant new national program, written by a secretive group of "experts," to go into effect without any authorization or oversight by Congress was a serious mistake by the president. The mindless opposition to national standards now being exhibited by House Republicans, however, is also ill-considered. Although Clinton insists his tests would be "voluntary," there is no question that such exams would have a profound influence on classroom curricula, traditionally a province reserved to state and local officials. If such national tests are to be instituted, the process should be fully public, including authorization by Congress and participation in the development process by recognized scholars who won't dumb down the exams. The president's recent concession to allow the existing National Assessment of Educational Progress advisory board to supervise the test development is a welcome step in this direction, although given his previous missteps, it is unrealistic to expect Congress to give him carte blanche on testing in this year's budget. As for Clinton's opposition to the Gorton amendment, he may find it difficult to defend preserving the micromanagement powers of federal bureaucrats. Schools need more red magic markers and construction paper, not red tape. ■

Last Oct. 7, the teacher, the colleague who had advised him and a school board member met with the three officials of the testing service at the Cypress Tree Inn in Lafayette and gave them a copy of the questions and answers, the name of the teacher who had provided them and the audiotape.

By the teacher's account, which was supported by the other educator, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, and the school board member, E.T.S. officials confirmed that the material contained the actual questions and correct answers. They said they would investigate how they had been obtained, the Louisianians said.

"The E.T.S. people struck me as being very concerned that night," said Kay Gibson, the Lafayette school board member who was at the meeting. "So was I. If we are going to hold children to a certain standard in taking tests, we have a strong responsibility to hold educators to an equal standard. I do fear that cheaters are now administrators here." ■

09-26 1:27a

President encouraged by community college scholarship survey

By SANDRA SOBIERAJ
Associated Press Writer

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - While the centerpiece of his education agenda falters in Congress, President Clinton can claim one victory: New data show that his HOPE scholarship program will make community college tuition free to students in seven states.

The president was traveling from Arkansas to the San Jacinto Community College in Pasadena, Texas, today to outline the benefits students can claim beginning in January. He also planned to urge Congress not to scale back his other proposals for tuition assistance.

He was armed with an Education Department analysis, released today, that showed the new HOPE scholarships would fully cover community college tuition and fees in seven states - Arizona, California, Hawaii, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina and Texas.

Students in New Hampshire, where the estimated \$3,000 tuition for 1998-99 is the nation's highest, the maximum scholarship tax credit would cover a little under half.

The scholarship, which students can apply for starting in January, provides a maximum of \$1,500 per year to families with incomes under \$80,000.

Clinton was promoting the government help two days after the College Board reported an average 5 percent increase this year in tuition and fees at four-year colleges.

"It points to the need for continued assistance for those families and students who want to seek opportunities for higher education," White House press secretary Mike McCurry said.

He jokingly noted that the president, whose only child enrolled last week at Stanford University, was interested in expanding government tuition aid "much prior to his own entry into the ranks of tuition-paying parents."

From Pasadena, Clinton was heading to Houston and a \$600,000 Democratic National Committee fund-raiser - his second in three days.

The Education Department analysis was done in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Truman Commission report that first urged the creation of a nationwide network of low-cost, public community colleges.

The analysis found that in 35 other states, the HOPE scholarship would cover 75 percent or more of community college tuition. All told, the Education Department estimates that 5.8 million students will benefit from the scholarship.

"This meets the president's goal of making the 13th and 14th years of college affordable," White House communications director Ann Lewis said.

Clinton has said repeatedly this year that his aim was to provide enough federal tuition aid that two years of college could become as universal as four years of high school.

But the centerpiece of Clinton's education platform, which he boldly laid out in his State of the Union address as top-priority this year, was in peril on Capitol Hill.

House and Senate negotiators were beginning work on the education spending bill, with House members intent on blocking funds for Clinton's voluntary national tests in reading and math. At the same time, Senate support for the testing has eroded.

Also, neither chamber included in the bill Clinton's request for a full \$700 million to expand Pell grants to several hundred thousand poor adult students.

Clinton has threatened to veto the bill if its sent to him without the testing and grant funds. ■

All Things Considered (NPR) 09/26/97 Section: News; Domestic;

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports that while Congress and the president battle each other over educational testing and vouchers, educators are more and more often coming to agreement.

Whether liberal or conservative, there is growing support for standards and vouchers.

By Claudio Sanchez, Washington, DC; Robert Siegel, Washington, DC;

Liane Hansen, Washington, DC

LIANE HANSEN, HOST: This is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I am Liane Hansen.

ROBERT SIEGEL, HOST: And I'm Robert Siegel.

Congress began negotiations today trying to resolve a bitter dispute over the future of education. At issue: national tests for school children; private school vouchers; and the downsizing of the U.S. Department of Education.

The debate in Washington has colored discussions around the country. The fact that the subject has become so politicized is disappointing to liberal and conservative education experts, who have been working well together on key issues in recent years.

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports.

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ, NPR REPORTER: There is a liberal/conservative consensus on the need for more academic rigor and less tolerance of failing schools, but there's been almost no consensus in Washington.

President Clinton is convinced that national standards and tests are key to better schools. Many Republicans and even some members of the president's own party oppose tests. In his weekly radio address last Saturday, the president said he would veto any budget deal that does not include funding for the two national tests he's proposing in math and reading.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: If Congress sends me partisan legislation that denies our children high national standards or weakens our national commitment to stronger schools, I'll have to give it the failing grade it deserves — and I'll veto it.

U.S. SENATOR SLADE GORTON (R-WA): By taking this position, I think the president is telling parents and teachers "I don't trust you."

SANCHEZ: Republican Representative Slade Gorton of Washington state responded.

GORTON: Apparently he prefers a system that has Washington, DC deciding what's best for the school children in Chehalis, Washington, New York City, and every place in between.

SANCHEZ: The fight over the tests is so politically charged that Education Secretary Richard Riley yesterday suspended further work on the development of tests, until House and Senate negotiators reach a compromise.

House Republicans oppose tests. The Senate, siding with President Clinton, wants tests, but Republicans there don't want the U.S. Education Department involved. And while Republicans in both Houses want vouchers, the president says he'll veto that proposal too.

SOUNDBITE OF A CROWD

SANCHEZ: The partisan bickering in Washington is a setback politically for the school reform movement because in the last few years, liberals and conservatives have actually found some common ground on several issues.

That was the focus of a panel convened by the Brookings Institution in Washington recently. James Pinkerton (ph), a former adviser to President George Bush, says the fight over tests is particularly strange given that the tests were a Republican idea, central to the Bush administration's national education reform plan. It's one that most Americans still support, says Pinkerton.

JAMES PINKERTON, FORMER ADVISER TO PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH: There's a general consensus that schools need to improve and that bench-marking and testing are a useful tool in that improvement. The devil is clearly in the details.

For example, the Clinton administration originally wanted to make it possible to take the eighth grade test, math test in Spanish. You know, that does tend to argue against the original logic of the test which was, uniform standards contributing to the effective assimilation of everyone into the mainstream.

SANCHEZ: One more detail of the president's proposal that worries Diane Ravitch (ph), another Republican who supports tests, is that the time table. Ravitch, a former deputy secretary of education in the Bush administration, originally volunteered to help devise the Clinton test plan. But she withdrew because the president wanted the tests ready in six months to two years.

"That's absurd," says Ravitch. "To do it right, you need 10 to 15 years."

DIANE RAVITCH, FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, GEORGE BUSH ADMINISTRATION: I think that we should look on this as a moon shot issue, where the president can claim credit for having launched it correctly with great credibility, but then it should be pilot tested; it should be field tested; there should be great credibility attached to it. Otherwise, it will be offered once and never done again. And I think that will be a serious casualty of having politicized this process.

SANCHEZ: Educators, regardless of their political bent, have been willing to overlook their differences for the sake of supporting national standards and tests. Conservatives and liberals also seem to agree that there are really two public school systems in America, one that is predominantly affluent, white, suburban, that everybody assumes is doing just fine, the other poor, black, Latino, urban, that everyone knows is in crisis.

Bill Galston (ph), President Clinton's top education adviser in his first term, says the reasons for this crisis are clear.

BILL GALSTON, FORMER EDUCATION ADVISER TO PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON: In all too many urban areas — and here I will be very blunt — the school system has become a jobs program at the expense of the children that it was supposed to serve. And there has been a systematic disinvestment in textbooks, materials and infrastructure. This is nothing less than a failure of democracy to serve the needs of our children.

SANCHEZ: A better way to serve poor inner city children could include vouchers, says Galston, who now openly chastises his former boss Bill Clinton for opposing vouchers. Galston wants to proceed with caution, but like most Americans, he believes it's time to try vouchers.

GALSTON: The people who say that school choice means the new Jerusalem in my judgment don't have the evidence, and the people who say it means disaster for kids and for public education don't have the evidence either. Let's give it a try and see what happens.

SANCHEZ: This may sound funny coming from a Democrat, but the fact is that some of the most enthusiastic supporters of vouchers are poor minority parents who have traditionally supported Democrats.

Support for vouchers is in fact a good example of how party affiliation and ideology are almost meaningless when the objective is improving children's quality of education, so much so that Republicans are now using the voucher issue to win Democrats over to the GOP.

Clint Bollick (ph) is with the conservative Institute for Justice.

CLINT BOLLICK, INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE: I think we need to go further and to make private school choice a part of a much broader and systemic education reform, what I would call child-centered education funding; strapping money to a child's back and that money will follow that child wherever she goes.

SANCHEZ: Despite growing public support for vouchers, Congressional Democrats have vowed to block them. National tests in reading and math, however, have a good chance of passing in some form, despite the threat of a Republican filibuster.

If the test proposal survives, it would become the next crucial piece of the 15-year-old bipartisan school reform movement in this country, and on that, educators agree.

I'm Claudio Sanchez, NPR News, Washington. ■

Daily Education News

Friday, September 26, 1997

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Public Affairs

1. The Associated Press Political Service

09/25/97

Proposed national tests for mathematic.

By ROBERT GREENE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) _ Proposed national tests for mathematics should allow only limited use of calculators, **Education Secretary Richard Riley** said Thursday. He also ordered a temporary halt in test development.

The announcement came as House and Senate negotiators prepared to wrestle with two extremely contentious education issues while working out an \$80 billion spending bill. The bill funds the Education, Health and Human Services and Labor departments for the budget year starting Oct. 1.

Disputes over national testing and control of \$13 billion in Education Department aid programs have caused Clinton to threaten a veto. Senators from both parties threatened on Thursday to block debate on the bill.

Riley's statement on calculators took a step toward appeasing critics who say the test design favors a less than rigorous approach to teaching mathematics. The nonbinding position goes against the advice of a panel created to decide what should be in the test.

The Senate approved the testing proposal, 87-13, this month after putting control of the tests in the hands of an outside governing board. An alliance of liberals and conservatives in the House rejected the plan, 295-125.

"I consider our 295-125 vote to be veto-proof," said Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Republican Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri and 26 other senators urged in a letter this week that Senate negotiators go along with the House. Ashcroft also said in a forthcoming article in the conservative journal Human Events that he will filibuster the bill if it allows tests to go forward.

Opponents say the tests of fourth-grading reading and eighth-grade math would lead to a national curriculum, take away local control of education, be used to discriminate against disadvantaged minority children and promote "fuzzy" teaching of mathematics.

In a statement Thursday, Riley tackled the math criticism. He also said the contractors writing the tests would not be given the final specifications to work with until the matter is resolved in Congress.

The National Test Panel, which wrote the test specifications, recommended that students be allowed to take their own calculators to the 90-minute tests.

But Riley said the tests should allow only limited use of calculators for advanced problem-solving in algebra and geometry, where students may need to find square roots or exponents.

That is the approach used in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a test given to a sample of students nationwide to measure trends. The individual tests would be based on the national assessment.

"In my view, a test of eighth-grade students should measure, as NAEP does, whether students have learned how to do arithmetic accurately without a calculator," Riley said. "But a visit to any good eighth-grade classroom will show students who have moved beyond arithmetic to more advanced topics."

If the Senate version prevails, the outside National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees NAEP, will make the decision.

Also Thursday, Democratic senators said they had 43 votes, more than enough to block debate indefinitely on the spending bill if it retains an amendment that would convert school aid programs into direct grants to school districts.

The amendment passed the Senate 51-49, but was not included in the House version.

Democrats call it a back-door attempt to kill the Education Department. The chief sponsor, Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., said the provision would save paperwork expenses and restore local control over education. ■

1. Education Daily

September 26, 1997

ED HALTS TEST DEVELOPMENT AS SENATE SUPPORT DISSIPATES

The Education Department has suspended developing voluntary national reading and math exams until Congress decides their fate.

Education Secretary Richard Riley yesterday said he would wait until the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) "assumes its new role" overseeing the exams before forwarding recently completed specifications to the test contractor.

Under recently passed fiscal 1998 spending bills, the Senate would allow the test to go forward under the supervision of a revamped NAGB — the independent panel that already governs the National Assessment of Educational Progress—but the House would bar further funding of the program.

Second Thoughts

The Senate compromise to turn the tests over to NAGB passed with an 87-13 vote, but at least 14 GOP senators seem to be having second thoughts: Along with their colleagues who originally voted against the plan, they've signed a letter asking congressional negotiators to follow the House lead and ban the tests.

"We strongly urge you to adopt the House position of prohibiting the use of federal funds in fiscal 1998 for a new national testing program," says the letter by Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., and signed by 27 senators.

A spokesman for Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., who voted for the Senate compromise and also signed the letter, said the two positions are not mutually exclusive.

The Senate compromise "was not an endorsement of the president's plan, but rather a safeguard," he said. "The House version is a better way to prevent national testing, which will lead to national standards."

ED Angers Goodling Far from appeasing test critics, ED's suspension seemed to further enrage them.

"By trying to turn over the national test project to NAGB, it's plain as day that the Clinton administration is setting up NAGB to be a national school board," said Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House education committee and architect of the testing ban.

"The Clinton administration is arrogant to assume that a Senate amendment will soon become law," Goodling continued in a statement. "I consider our 295-125 vote [to halt the test] to be veto-proof."

Only 290 House votes are needed to override a veto, but Senate opposition hasn't reached veto-proof proportions. In addition, it is unclear whether members of Congress would cast their vote on the entire spending bill—which also funds labor and health programs—based solely or even mainly on the testing issue.

Adding Up To More Opposition

The test specifications include a recommendation that eighth-graders be allowed to use calculators on the math tests—an issue that has raised hackles among conservatives.

"The proposed math test is steeping in the new, unproven 'whole math' or 'fuzzy math' philosophy, which encourages students to rely on calculators, discourages basic math skills and has resulted in declines in math performance," said the Senate GOP letter.

The chairman of the panel that created the test specifications acknowledged that it was a controversial issue, but defended the 6-5 decision.

"Lengthy deliberations have occurred on such topics as the use of calculators in math testing," said Wilmer Cody, commissioner of Kentucky schools and chairman of ED's National Test Panel, noting that the majority prevailed.

House and Senate appropriators are set to begin deliberating today on a compromise fiscal 1998 education bill, though they plan to leave conflicts over non-funding issues such as the national tests to the education policymakers to work out with the White House. President Clinton has threatened to veto any bill that would block his tests. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The Associated Press Political Service

09/25/97

Ashcroft fights national testing proposal

By LIBBY QUAID

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) _ Sen. John Ashcroft is leading an effort to kill President Clinton's proposal for national reading and math tests for school children, saying they would deprive parents of shaping their kids' education.

Ashcroft, R-Mo., is threatening a filibuster if the student testing standards survive negotiations on an education spending bill. If he wins, he'll be facing a veto from Clinton, who warns he'll strike down a bill that lacks his testing plan.

The freshman senator circulated a letter this week asking conference committee members to eliminate the proposal, which the president introduced in his February State of the Union address. The committee is wrangling over differences in House and Senate versions of the \$80 billion spending bill for the Education, Health and Human Services and Labor departments.

Ashcroft, who is considering a run for the GOP presidential nomination in 2000, also has introduced a measure to prohibit the education agency from developing the exams, which would measure how well fourth- and eighth-graders can read or do math.

"Parents are looking to Congress to protect their right and their ability to shape the education of their children," he wrote in the letter. "A national testing system would deprive parents of this vital opportunity."

Ashcroft also argued that teachers and schools would feel compelled to "teach the tests," altering their classes to fit the exams and generate higher scores. Testing opponents say the exams promote "fuzzy" teaching and civil rights groups worry that poor black and Hispanic children in substandard schools will be branded as inferior and unteachable.

"Make no mistake: National testing will lead to a national curriculum," Ashcroft writes in an article scheduled for publication Monday in the conservative weekly "Human Events."

"When Washington writes tests and determines curriculum, it will have replaced parents and teachers and federalize our children's education."

Only 13 senators voted against the national tests last week when the Senate gave an initial go-ahead, but Ashcroft has collected signatures in support of his letter from 26 other senators, including fellow Missouri Republican Sen. Christopher Bond. The House last week rejected the plan, 295-125.

The test specifications call for "MTV math and politically correct English," Ashcroft said. He opposes National Test Panel recommendations that students be allowed to bring their own calculators to the 45-minute tests.

However, **Education Secretary Richard Riley** said Thursday the tests should allow only limited use of calculators. ■

Daily Education News

Thursday, September 25, 1997

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Public Affairs

1. The News & Observer (Raleigh, N.C.)

09/24/97; Edition: Final; Section: News; Page A6

Riley blasts GOP's school voucher plan

By MELISSA HEALY
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Richard Riley on Tuesday launched the Clinton administration's counterattack on GOP lawmakers' education proposals, calling taxpayer-funded vouchers for private education a "fad" that will benefit a few and leave most students behind.

Confronting a new spate of education-related legislation from conservative Republicans, Riley renewed the administration's call for standardized national tests in reading and math, and called for a new federal commitment to aid local school districts in addressing overcrowding.

And Riley warned that he will urge the president to veto a pair of legislative initiatives - one that would use federally funded vouchers to send 2,000 low-income children in the District of Columbia to private schools, and a second that would establish tax-protected savings accounts for parents who send their children to such schools.

President Clinton already has vowed that he will try to block two other measures now moving through Congress: a bid to block national standards testing and a measure that would send all funds now disbursed by the Education Department directly to local school districts.

Riley's latest challenges underscore the administration's determination to put its imprint on the education issue in Clinton's second term. But with Republican leaders equally bent on recasting education policy in distinctly different ways, the issue has become a political battleground.

Riley called Republican initiatives like vouchers "divisive" and warned that they would draw much-needed funds from public-school coffers, even as they left the bulk of students in those schools.

"It could cost roughly \$15 billion just to pay the tuition of the 5 million children already enrolled in private schools in this nation," he said. "The last thing we should be doing at a time when so many of our schools are bursting at their seams is to be draining public tax dollars from public education to subsidize private education."

In a "White Paper" released at the time of Riley's speech, Education Department experts cautioned that even if private schools become readily accessible to all students, the limited capacity of existing private and parochial schools means that only a small percentage of the nation's 46.5 million public school pupils would be able to use vouchers. Given the competition for such slots, the experts warned that public schools would likely lose their best students and most actively involved parents.

In the aftermath, the paper concluded, the most disadvantaged students would be left in schools drained of their most valuable resources - public funds, motivated parents and students who are high achievers.■

Daily Education News

Wednesday, September 24, 1997

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Public Affairs
FB-10B, Room 2200 • 401-1218
Norman Greenberg, Editor

1. Washington Week in Review (PBS)

September 19, 1997

Potential achievements of shortened congressional session

(excerpt)

KEN BODE, host: Ron, the budget deal is finished and Congress has to do appropriations; we know that. Also, the question is what else gets done up there? Either nothing, and they stake out positions that they just argue about, like in education policy, where the president's standardized tests got defeated in the House, where next week they'll pass vouchers in the Senate which Republicans want and the president will veto them. You have a better idea.

Mr. RON BROWNSTEIN (Los Angeles Times): Well, I hope I have a better idea. Actually, Franklin Roosevelt had a better idea when he talked about pursuing an administration of bold and persistent experimentation. We are headed for, on Capitol Hill, the potential for a series of stalemates between the Republicans and President Clinton, who each want to pursue contrasting objectives in a whole series of domestic policies in the wake of the budget deal.

Education, as you mentioned, is a prime example. Last week you saw 296 —295 members in the House vote against a relatively modest idea of the president's of having voluntary national tests to provide a common yardstick against which to measure all students. And as you said, next week Republicans are going to probably —are going to try to pass in the Senate a bill to establish parental vouchers in —in DC that would allow parents to send their kids to private schools, as David talked about here recently. And —and the —the problem is even if they can get pass a —a Democratic filibuster, President Clinton could veto that.

Now these kind of confrontations serve the interests of political strategists who are trying to draw brighter lines between the parties. But in policy terms, they lead to stalemate, and a stalemate with two particularly large ironies. First of all, both of these reforms are really aimed at the same thing which is trying to bring to bear marketplace pressures on the schools. And even more importantly, in both cases, neither side can really say for sure what their impact would be or whether they would work.

So the idea that I sort of put forward is rather than arguing at the level of theory and debating in Congress —you don't have to agree. You take your disagreement to the level of practice by authorizing each side to pursue field tests of these ideas and then you measure the results, you look at what happened. And you come back at certain amount of months, certain amount of years and you say, 'OK, this is an idea worth taking national,' or 'This —this is something that deserves a quiet burial.'

BODE: The idea of just the District of Columbia having vouchers, that's essentially a field test, sort of like medical savings accounts was in the last budget deal before the last budget deal.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: They —they've already done this with the medical savings accounts. The way they resolved that dispute over —for years about allowing people to purchase their insurance that way, through a sort of small test of the idea. And you can imagine other sets of ideas where Republicans and Democrats could do this.

For example, President Clinton is very interested in the idea of community development banks, small-scale banks that invest in the inner city and help people buy houses and start businesses. He's trying to increase funding for that. Republicans want to increase the ability of private faith-based charities to administer social programs in the inner city. Both sides are really sort of blocking the other. It's a —it would be entirely reasonable for them to each say, 'OK, let's go test this idea in 10 cities. We'll test our idea in 10 cities.'

In —in another area, Clinton wants to take all of the job training programs and move it into a voucher program that would allow people to sort of take it with them and use it. Republicans aren't sure they like that idea. Clinton doesn't like the Republican idea of letting private contractors run state welfare programs and, in effect, is blocking those ideas.

So, again, it —you could imagine a —a scenario where, instead of simply stalemating each other, one after the other,

they could allow each other to pursue these on the ground. They don't have to agree. They don't have to say, 'This is a good idea.' They say, 'We will take the competition to the level of practice.'

Ms. LINDA GREENHOUSE (The New York Times): Ron, a —a —a cynic might make a couple of points about this, and you —you suggested this in your...

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Yeah.

Ms. GREENHOUSE: ...in your introduction that so often on —on Capitol Hill, it's —it's the slogan and the symbol that matters, rather than the bottom line result. And often it seems people would rather have —keep the slogan and keep the symbol and not really have to deal with the bottom line. And also, course some of these test programs would —would outlive an election cycle...

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Yeah.

Ms. GREENHOUSE: ...and the payoff would come somewhere down the road and people aren't necessarily looking down the road.

Mr. BROWNSTEIN: Well, you know, in many instances I think what you see is that the parties prefer the fight. They need the fight, especially after the budget deal, especially in light of all that Clinton has done in the last three years to try to position —five years to position himself in the center that has tended to sort of efface and sort of collapse some of the differences between parties.

So there is enormous centrifugal force. But all I'm saying is that if in —the —the alternative to simply —if —if you go down that road, what you've got, in effect, is a policy gridlock. The alternative is to take the competition to the level of practice, and let's see which one of these ideas really have some impact, and we can come back and see which ones deserve to be expanded.■

CongressDaily

1. Charleston Post and Courier

September 24, 1997

Education chief opposes vouchers

By STEVE PIACENTE

Of The Post and Courier staff

WASHINGTON - Using tax dollars for private school vouchers is an idea that is "dead wrong," and would "undermine the nation's 200-year commitment to the common school," U.S. **Secretary of Education Dick Riley** said Tuesday. Riley, who just returned from back-to-school visits in a dozen states, used a National Press Club appearance to argue against vouchers and to promote voluntary national testing in math and reading. The former South Carolina governor said it would cost \$15 billion to pay the tuition of 5 million children already enrolled in private schools throughout the country. "The last thing we should be doing at a time when so many of our schools are bursting at their seams is to be draining public tax dollars from public education to subsidize private education," he said. Riley said the money would be better spent repairing old schools and building new ones. Riley also said schools that are failing to educate can't be allowed to drift, and that burned-out teachers should be counseled "to leave the profession." The best way to gauge progress in education, he added, is with voluntary national tests in basic subjects. "This is a very conservative idea, so it always surprises me that some on the right attack the president's proposal," Riley said. One critic is Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who believes such testing would diminish local control over education. "National school testing should send chills up the spine of every parent in South Carolina with a child in public school," Graham said. Graham, who serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, said national testing would be "the first step toward a national curriculum and national control over local schools." Though complimentary of Riley in the past, Graham said the education chief "has been in Washington too long. He needs to come home and visit with the people in South Carolina." On the voucher issue, Graham said he has mixed feelings, despite public opinion polls that show support for the concept. Graham said the idea "grew in response to public school systems that aren't delivering" and would be a good way "to introduce an element of competition." However, Graham said he would not want a voucher system initiated by Washington bureaucrats. ■

1. Education Week

September 24, 1997

Compromise Is Next Step in Test Odyssey

By David J. Hoff
Washington

Now that the House and the Senate have staked out opposite positions on the proposed national testing initiative, the two chambers and President Clinton will likely shift their attention toward reaching a compromise that satisfies several competing interests.

For Republicans, that will mean finding a middle ground between one faction of conservatives that opposes the tests on any terms and another group that favors such assessments but wants them monitored by a nonpartisan panel.

Mr. Clinton, meanwhile, will need to pacify House liberals in his own party who don't want the tests until the federal government does more to address economic and social needs in inner cities. He will also have to maintain the loyalty of Democratic senators who supported his national test plan so that his veto threat will carry weight during negotiations with the House, which assembled a veto-proof majority last week for an amendment requiring the administration to halt test development.

At the same time, all indications are that Mr. Clinton will want his plan for voluntary 4th grade reading and 8th grade math tests to remain on an ambitious schedule that would have them ready for students by spring 1999. A national panel that convened under a Department of Education contract approved a detailed blueprint for the tests just hours before the House vote last week. ("House Blocks, While Panel Settles On, New Tests," in This Week's News.)

So far, seven states have signed on to use the assessments. In addition, 15 big-city school districts have said they'll take part, though one of them, Los Angeles, plans to use only the math test.

"I assume we will be able to find some way to resolve the differences" on the testing issues, said Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, a testing proponent who will lead the House Democratic delegation in a conference committee with the Senate.

Others involved in the debate aren't sure. Many House Republicans are so committed to stopping the tests that they would be willing to dare Mr. Clinton to reject the \$270 billion bill appropriating money for education and social programs, which includes the amendment that would block the tests.

"If he wants to veto it over national testing, people on our side of the aisle are fine with that," said Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich. "For many of us, it's a matter of principle."

The House-Senate conference committee, which will work to settle the differences on testing and hundreds of appropriations items, may meet as early as this week.

Given the distance that separates the two sides on testing and the number of items in the spending bills, a quick resolution is unlikely. The conference talks could drag on for two or three weeks.

A Resounding Defeat

The House voted Sept. 16 to prohibit the Department of Education from spending any of its funding on developing the tests.

The vote resoundingly rejected, 295-125, President Clinton's top education priority. It also cleared the two-thirds majority needed for a House override of a potential presidential veto. Seventy-five Democrats, many of them black or Hispanic, deserted Mr. Clinton on the vote. Some black and Hispanic members have argued that the tests would be unfair to minority and poor children who haven't had the educational advantages that children in more affluent schools have. Only three Republicans voted against the amendment, which was sponsored by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa.

But House members aren't confident that the president would be overruled in the Senate, where none of the 45 Democrats has spoken out against testing. A veto override requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers of Congress.

The Senate voted Sept. 11 to redirect Mr. Clinton's testing program by giving the National Assessment Governing Board, the nonpartisan panel that oversees the existing national assessment program, control over it. The administration endorsed the compromise brokered by Democrats and Republicans and eventually approved by 87 senators. ("Senate OKs Reworked Testing Plan," Sept. 17, 1997.)

Mr. Goodling, however, dismissed the Senate proposal. The assessment governing board, known as NAGB, would be too independent and powerful, he said, if it were allowed to nominate its own members, as the Senate amendment would allow.

Timing Questions

Mr. Goodling said the decisive House vote indicated he would not compromise and allow funding for the test development to continue in fiscal 1998, which begins Oct. 1. He wants to defer debate until Congress starts the process of reauthorizing NAGB and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, for which NAGB sets policy. That may not begin until January.

"That's the time to discuss testing," said Mr. Goodling, who would oversee the process as the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. "It's not now when you haven't gone through hearings or anything else."

The administration will not want to wait that long. Mr. Clinton originally proposed developing the tests without

congressional debate because he didn't want the initiative bogged down in legislative haggling, which could take a year or more to complete. But Mr. Goodling and others have questioned the executive branch's authority to proceed without the approval of Congress.

The administration is on a tight schedule to meet its self-imposed spring 1999 deadline for testing students.

Another influential Republican, meanwhile, said a settlement might include allowing NAGB to take charge of the test for now, but giving Congress the last word next year in NAEP's reauthorization.

"The most important issue is to have the national debate," added Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif., who chairs the education subcommittee responsible for NAEP.

At this point, however, neither side is talking compromise.

"I've told the [GOP] leadership: 'If you let me down on this, don't expect my support on anything,'" Mr. Goodling said in an interview. "This issue is that important to me."

"The House vote is unacceptable, and it will not stand," Mr. Clinton said in a statement shortly after the Goodling amendment passed. "My administration will work hard to make sure that the final legislation reflects the bipartisan support of the Senate and the broad support of the American people." ■

1. Education Week

September 24, 1997

House Blocks, While Panel Settles On, New Tests

By Millicent Lawton
Washington

House lawmakers last week tossed President Clinton's highest education priority into political limbo.

The House voted overwhelmingly Sept. 16 to cut off federal funding for the creation of national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math —just hours after a panel of educators and policymakers approved the design and content of the voluntary exams.

The Senate had already voted to support the tests, which are to be given for the first time in March 1999. The two chambers will have to settle their differences in a conference committee, leaving the tests' fate uncertain for now. ("Compromise Is Next Step in Testing Odyssey," in This Week's News.)

Members of the national test panel, convened under a Department of Education contract, were well aware last week that their months of work could end up moot thanks to congressional politics. But if the proposal for new tests measuring individual students' academic achievement survives, the committee's report could carry great weight: Its specifications are to be used by the contractor to write the tests that could be taken by hundreds of thousands of children.

Apart from actions pending in Congress, the panel's decisions have a "99 percent chance of surviving and becoming the national test," Gary Phillips, who is directing the national test effort at the Education Department, told the group at its two-day meeting here.

Even as the national test issue stirred debate on Capitol Hill, the panel's own deliberations were also contentious at times. Some panelists expressed interest in submitting dissenting viewpoints for inclusion in the group's final report to the department. They want to make clear their opinion that the tests should not be used to rank schools or determine grade promotion or retention.

Similar to the philosophical differences that have split educators and policymakers across the country, the panelists also sparred over how much of the "basics" should be incorporated into the tests, particularly for math.

Calculating Debate

In working through specifications for the 4th grade reading and 8th grade math tests—including the types of test questions, length of test periods, and methods of reporting scores—the panel wrestled with many of the same testing issues that perennially vex educators. The use of calculators on the math test and accommodations for students with disabilities or limited proficiency in English on both tests were two topics that prompted lengthy debate.

In the end, the group voted narrowly to recommend, but not require, the use of calculators. The panel tied 5-5 on the issue, but Chairman Wilmer S. Cody, the commissioner of education in Kentucky, broke the tie by voting to recommend use of the electronic aids.

The idea the panel endorsed is that of allowing students to employ whatever tools they are accustomed to using in the classroom. The math test could also be taken without a calculator.

A separate math committee presented the national panel with data from the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress that showed 83 percent of students nationally receive instruction in how to use calculators, and 67 percent of students use calculators on tests. The panel also heard that in the 1995-96 school year, 31 states said they permitted students to use the devices on some or all parts of their statewide assessments.

The test panel was charged by the Education Department with using the existing NAEP as its testing blueprint. And, in large measure, the panel was faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the national assessment's framework. But the specifications for the proposed new tests must differ from NAEP for technical reasons because the new tests would provide the scores of individual students, which NAEP does not.

On some matters, though, it was up to the panel whether to part from NAEP practices. The calculator issue was one on which it did so. The national assessment, mandated by Congress and given since 1969 to a sampling of students in several core subjects, gives math tests that allow calculator use on some parts and forbid it on others. The students taking part in NAEP are also provided with calculators to use on the math test. Students using calculators on the new national test would use their own or those provided by their schools.

On the reading test, the panel also made a significant departure from practice on NAEP's 4th grade reading test. The new national test is to include "intertextual items" that ask students to answer questions by drawing comparisons about two separate passages they have read on the test.

Such items are used on the NAEP reading tests for 8th and 12th graders, but not for 4th graders, "due to time constraints," according to the reading committee advising the panel. With each student spending more time on the national test than on NAEP, the reading committee wanted to include that type of item.

The national panel also endorsed going beyond NAEP in making a bilingual English-Spanish math test available for students who need it, as well as providing some accommodations on the new tests for disabled students and those with limited

English proficiency. Advisers to the panel pointed to the use of such assistance on NAEP, but to date, that help has only been provided in small, experimental administrations of the national assessment.

Marking Time and Rigor

For most of its decisions, the 18-member national test panel largely followed the recommendations set forth by the math and reading committees, made up of teachers, administrators, and academic experts in the subjects. The two committees, whose memberships were separate from that of the test panel, held public hearings and came up with sample test items. ("Hearings Draw Few, But Varied, Remarks," Sept. 3, 1997.)

The test panel agreed with the math committee's advice that the math test should be designed so that most students could complete it in two 45-minute sessions, one on each of two consecutive days. But students would be allowed 60 minutes each day to complete the 90-minute test. The committee had earlier considered an untimed test.

"We're not trying to measure who is the fastest student," John A. Dossey, the chairman of the math committee and a professor of mathematics at Illinois State University in Normal, told the test panel.

The panel accepted the reading committee's recommendation for two 45-minute sessions over two consecutive days for the 90-minute reading test. Both subject tests are to include a mix of multiple-choice and open-response items.

The panelists also agreed with the recommendation that the reading and math tests should evaluate a range of ability levels. In addition to having rigorous items, the tests are to include questions that are somewhat easier than those on NAEP. That decision is meant to address longstanding concerns among some educators that NAEP does an inadequate job of measuring abilities of the lowest-achieving students.

Panel members also discussed how to address critics who have called for the math test to emphasize basic, computational skills rather than some of the more complex or conceptual thinking endorsed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Debate centered for a time on adding items that would measure only basic skills. Members of the math committee, including the president of the NCTM, Gail F. Burrill, argued successfully that the items they suggested for the test measure a variety of skills and that the test both assumes and requires basic computational ability.

In a letter separate from its 150-page report, the reading committee recommended —unsuccessfully— that the name of the test be changed from the "Voluntary National Test in 4th Grade Reading" to the "Voluntary National 4th Grade Test of Reading in English."

The committee wrote in its letter that it wanted to "send a clear message that competence in reading in English is crucial ... without regard to what a child's first language is."

Members also wanted to make the point, according to the letter, that "for multilingual children the ability to read in English represents one important dimension of their ability to read, but not necessarily all aspects of their reading ability" because they may have literacy skills in other languages. Renaming the test, they said, would "more accurately characterize the nature of the test."

'Deal Breakers'

The proposed name change for the reading exam drew negative reactions from several members of the national test panel, including one representing urban districts.

Sharon Lewis, the director of research for the Council of the Great City Schools, a Washington lobbying group for big-city districts, distributed a letter to panelists that stated her group's opposition to the creation of a reading test only in English.

Ms. Lewis said the reading committee's proposal could curtail ongoing negotiations with the Education Department on the creation of reading tests in languages other than English. "We don't consider it a closed issue," she told her panel colleagues, "so I couldn't support renaming the test."

In an interview last week, panel member Arnold Fege, the director of governmental relations for the National PTA, agreed with Ms. Lewis.

"The federal government cannot send the message that we have developed very important educational measures for all children except for 3 million that may not read English," Mr. Fege contended. The PTA could not accept a national test of reading only in English, he said, adding that the issue numbered among the "bottom-line deal-breakers for us."

He said that he planned to submit a report this week to be included as a minority viewpoint in the panel's final report.

Mr. Fege also tried unsuccessfully to persuade the panel to clarify the purpose of both tests and their use. Among other changes, he wanted to prohibit states and districts from being able to rank students or schools on the basis of national test results. But he only succeeded in getting the national panel's reading report to reflect that the results are "not intended" to rank students or schools.■

1. Education Week

September 24, 1997

House Members Question Charter School Access to Federal Funds

By Joetta L. Sack
Washington

Most directors of charter schools feel they have adequate access to federal funding for at-risk and disabled children, according to preliminary results of a study by the General Accounting Office.

But some members of Congress remain skeptical that such schools receive their fair share of federal dollars, compared with traditional public schools—or that charter school administrators are even aware they can receive such funds.

Rep. Frank Riggs, the California Republican who chairs the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families, brought funding questions to the forefront at a hearing on charters last week.

Mr. Riggs and other subcommittee members said they were worried that charter schools—which are publicly funded but typically operate free of many state and local regulations—were not receiving their full share of support under federal programs such as Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Many of the members' concerns could not be directly addressed, representatives of the GAO said, because states and districts are given broad discretion over distributing most federal money, and funding varies widely. The full report by the GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, is slated to be released in April.

But some charters may have missed out on Title I dollars for schools that serve a high proportion of disadvantaged students because they did not have the data needed to prove that their students had histories of low academic performance, according to Cornelia Blanchette, the GAO's associate director for education and employment issues. The investigators' preliminary findings show that charter school operators surveyed in seven states cited inadequate time and resources and a lack of knowledge about the process of applying for federal grants as deterrents to staking claims to federal funds.

Some charter school operators have also resisted applying for aid because of philosophical disputes over the wisdom of accepting federal support and the massive paperwork involved, according to the GAO.

The information did not sit well with Republican members of the panel, who earlier this year vowed to reduce bureaucracy in federal education programs.

Mr. Riggs said that charter school legislation he intends to introduce next month might contain language to ensure that charters receive a fair share of federal funding. The committee was unable to provide further details.

A Charter Priority

While members of Congress have been debating fiscal 1998 appropriations and a plan for new national tests in recent weeks, Mr. Riggs has focused much of his energy on charters.

Mr. Riggs co-sponsored, with Rep. Tim Roemer, D-Ind., a successful amendment to the House appropriations bill to increase federal funding for charter schools to \$100 million, the same amount President Clinton requested. The current federal appropriation for charter start-up money is \$50.9 million.

And he delivered the Republican radio address on Sept. 13, saying that the GOP was responding to parents who wanted better schools for their children. "We want to expand new innovations such as charter schools and give options for parents who want a greater say in how and where their children are educated," Mr. Riggs said in the address.

While several Democrats on the subcommittee last week were generally supportive of charters, the ranking member warned against looking at such schools as a silver bullet for education reform.

Rep. Matthew G. Martinez, D-Calif., said Congress must also focus on improving the traditional public schools. Money spent to buy textbooks and supplies for charter schools could be used to buy computers and upgrade technology in existing schools, he suggested.

"What I'm worried about is all those kids we're leaving behind in public schools," he said. ■

1. Bismarck Tribune

September 16, 1997

Riley backs testing

DON DAVIS
Bismarck Tribune

Gov. Ed Schafer stepped up his attack on President Clinton's proposed national testing of elementary school students,

even in his Monday introduction of the U.S. education secretary.

"The federal government should be developing initiatives with fewer regulations, not more," Schafer told nearly 500 North Dakotans attending an educational improvement workshop in Bismarck.

"The responsibility for curriculum development and student learning must remain at the state and local level," the Republican governor said. "Why? Because I believe in the end, we cannot create a federal monitoring system that will provide better oversight, guidance or concern for student learning than do parents and citizens who live and work and educate their children in local schools."

Schafer said Clinton's national testing plan — promoted in a two-day Bismarck visit by Education Secretary Richard Riley — is premature, redundant and could threaten local control of schools.

Monday's attack followed comments Schafer made to the Tribune Sunday night and then to Riley during a higher education roundtable discussion. But Monday's comments were stronger.

Riley, meanwhile, told reporters he agreed community involvement in schools "really makes a difference. That is what I see so much in North Dakota." But he repeatedly supported Clinton's call for national testing of fourth-grade students for reading skills and eighth-graders for math skills.

The voluntary testing — which states or school districts could reject — would "give parents and teachers a tool for improvement that they've never had before," Riley told educators. Good parents already should know how well their children do in math and reading, he said, but not every parent does.

Riley said the test would be based on existing tests already used nationally. The Senate voted 87-13 for the tests Thursday, with both of North Dakota's senators on the winning side.

"It's to focus the nation on reading, and reading well, by the end of the third grade," Riley said, indicating that is President Clinton's top education goal.

Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., said with two children approaching school age, "I want to know how Kathryn and Scott are doing in relation to the country. ... These national tests aren't a threat."

The Senate said use of the tests cannot be a condition for receiving federal funds, but Schafer said he is concerned because "today's voluntary tests could become tomorrow's mandatory tests."

The governor also said national tests may not reflect what North Dakotans feel is important. Most states already have, or developing, their own standard tests, he said.

Riley defended federal involvement in education, which last year was attacked by Republicans running for Congress.

"The federal government can make a limited, but important, contribution," Riley told educators.

Riley touted federal help in getting technology into schools, especially paving the way to a low connection cost to the internet. He also told about new types of federal education funding with few strings attached, including some helping American Indian children.

On another topic, Riley declared Clinton's direct student loan program a success. The program, watered down from earlier proposals, provides federal money directly to colleges to lend to students.

On Sunday night, Schafer and higher education officials told Riley the state's program, through the Bank of North Dakota, is among the nation's best and should not be changed.

On Monday, Pomeroy said he now sides with the Education Department's direct lending program, as long as private banks and the Bank of North Dakota can maintain their programs, too.

While in Bismarck, Riley announced a \$4.5 million grant over five years for a Grand Forks school project that will develop six curricula on the internet to allow North Dakotans — and others — to learn about state parks, the sky, environment and other topics.■

1. Richmond Times-Dispatch

September 24, 1997

Beyer backs Clinton's national tests

Don't 'dumb down' state curriculum, Gilmore says

BY TYLER WHITLEY

Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Donald S. Beyer Jr. yesterday endorsed President Clinton's plan for national testing standards, prompting criticism from his Republican opponent, James S. Gilmore III.

Answering questions from reporters after a riverside news conference at which he received the endorsement of an environmental group, Beyer said national tests will determine how well Virginia's students stack up against those in other states and around the world.

Later in the day, Gilmore said the national tests are not needed and said Virginia, under Gov. George Allen, has developed far more rigorous standards than what Clinton would propose.

"Don Beyer wants to endorse less demanding national tests that will dumb down Virginia's curriculum," Gilmore said.

Beyer brushed aside suggestions from some conservatives that the federal Department of Education would use the tests to establish a national curriculum.

"They are not attempting to mandate; they are just giving a benchmark," Beyer said.

Gilmore said Virginia students already participate in two national education tests, the National Assessment of Education Progress and the Stanford 9.

"As Virginia has proven, setting world class standards is done from the ground up: by parents, teachers and local administrators," Gilmore said.

Beyer backs the Allen standards and has suggested more emphasis on remedial education for those who fail the new tests.

Clinton proposes tests in the fourth and eighth grades. The tests have run into objections in the House of Representatives.

The state's new Standards of Learning tests will be administered in the third, fifth, eighth and 11th grades.

Beyer said tests are "not a bad thing." The more experience students get taking tests, the better SAT scores they will get, he said.

The clash over education overshadowed the endorsement of Beyer by Clean Water Action, an environmental group that goes door-to-door to solicit signatures and raise money. Clean Water Action coordinator Kye Briesath said the Virginia chapter has 120,000 dues-paying members.

"We urge everyone in Virginia who is concerned about the environment and outraged about the current administration's lack of leadership and support of polluters to vote for Don Beyer," Briesath said.

As Canada geese swam in the James River behind him and a great blue heron spread its wings, Beyer attacked Gilmore's environmental record.

"This race is about differences: who will protect the environment and who will continue the decline in environmental protection," he said. "Who will hold the polluters accountable and who will look the other way?"

Beyer said the recent Pfiesteria fish kills underscore the need for a long-term commitment to reduce nutrients going into the Chesapeake Bay by 40 percent by 2000. Neither Virginia nor other states bordering the bay are close to reaching those goals.

But Beyer acknowledged he had no strategy to reach that goal.

Asked whether the lesser fish kill in Virginia might indicate Virginia's waters are cleaner than in North Carolina and Maryland, Beyer said "at least initially that does look like the case." But he said the speed of the flows in Virginia might be the main reason for the apparently healthier waters. ■



NEWS TODAY

Hattie Mae White Administration Building • 3830 Richmond Ave., Houston, Texas 77027

Rod Paige, Superintendent of Schools

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1997

Houston Chronicle

★★★ 17A

HISD pupils to take standardized test

By **MELANIE MARKLEY**
Houston Chronicle

For the first time in four years, Houston Independent School District students are taking a standardized achievement test this week to compare their performance on a national scale.

The Stanford Achievement Test, first administered Monday, will enable school officials and parents to determine how first- through 11th-graders compare academically with students across the country.

"No one is forcing us to take this test," said Superintendent Rod Paige. "We are doing it because we want to reach higher standards, because we want to be the premier school district of this size in the United States."

HISD students last were given a national norm test in 1993, when the

state administered the Norm-referenced Assessment Program for Texas.

That test, however, was discontinued, leaving only the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, which measures how well Texas students learn what they are supposed to know but does not compare their performance with students outside the state.

Before the state's short-lived achievement test, HISD gave students the Metropolitan Achievement Test.

The Stanford Achievement Test, which has an English and a Spanish version, will be administered over four or five days this week. Students will be tested in reading, math, language, listening, science and social studies.

After this school year, the exam will be given during the spring, officials said. Other districts using the

Stanford Achievement Test are Spring, Katy, Conroe, Corpus Christi, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

School Board President Don McAdams, a strong proponent of standardized testing, said board members have been pushing the district to move forward with the test, which was budgeted last month for \$700,000.

McAdams said the test will help teachers diagnose academic strengths and weaknesses, inform parents how their children compare with others taking the test and give the business leaders another tool for measuring the district's academic performance.

"This is a dream come true for me," McAdams said. "I think this is a very historic event. It is something I've been trying to see happen for four years."

1. Federal News Service - Washington Package

09/23/97 Category: Press release

PRESS CONFERENCE WITH SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RICHARD RILEY SUBJECT: SCHOOL VOUCHERS

**MODERATED BY DAVID FRANK, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB,
WASHINGTON, DC, 10:06 A.M. EDT**

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

SEC. RILEY: Thank you, David. And thank you all for being here. I am very pleased to be back in Washington after completing the first leg of my annual "America Goes Back to School" campaign. As I've told some of you, several weeks now I've been traveling some 12 or more states, talking to parents and teachers, students; to Alaska to Florida, Wyoming, Colorado, Ohio and whatever.

I mentioned to someone yesterday that when I was in Ohio, I went to the Columbus Zoo, which has a very strong education component. They actually have 26 full-time teachers there.

When I got off the plane to go visit the education part of the Columbus Zoo, I was met with a large yellow python and was asked then to cozy up to this python and then smile for the cameras. And that was kind of difficult. But they did name a penguin after me there — (laughter) — and I was very proud of that. So if any of you go to the Columbus Zoo, look up Riley. He's a very healthy penguin. (Laughter.)

These trips are all worthwhile. I always get back here to Washington with a lot better sense of what really matters, what's important out there, what's going on in the classroom, what are parents and teachers and students and principals and superintendents, community leaders — what are they talking about. And I want to make some comments about my impressions and then speak to several of the issues in the background paper that we have handed out, entitled "What Really Matters." And I really want all of us in this country to stop and think about that.

One of the strongest impressions I have is that we have very crowded schools. We start with that — that's a quantity issue — in the beginning. Right now we have 52.2 million young people in our schools, public and private, a new national record.

I was in Florida Thursday and Friday of last week, and I can tell you that the school construction issue in Florida is alive and kicking. And you see that everywhere that you do have large numbers of — growth taking place.

I believe the Congress needs to revisit this issue, and do it within a balanced budget framework.

The second impression is that a new American consensus has now developed about how to improve education — a consensus, I think, and I strongly think that. It has taken place, really, over a period of years; Ted Bell, in '83, I think it was, in "Nation at Risk." And then this consensus has developed over the years, really since then. The American people got — paid attention to education then and where we were going. Everywhere I go I see the core elements of this consensus being put in place. There is a growing emphasis, for example, on early childhood and the importance of pre-K, kindergarten and all children concerned in those early years. I attended the president's conference on brain research — and the first lady. And I can tell you that research is really a galvanizing issue on this early brain development — brain research.

A second element is a commitment to high standards linked to challenging assessments. The American people also recognize that progress is only going to happen if we make sure that every child has mastered the basics, once and for all. And I think that's the third element of this consensus, and that is a clear focus on fundamentals. This is a very conservative idea, really, so it surprises me that some on the right attack the president's proposal for voluntary national tests in the basics of reading and math. Dr. Edwards Deming said this, "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." That's a very basic comment that all of us, I think, would understand and agree with. The president is on a national crusade to lift up American education, starting with these two — (inaudible). And that's why 79 percent of all Americans support these voluntary national tests. And that was in this latest Wall Street Journal-NBC poll that just came out last Friday. And it's why I think the American people have responded that education is the number one issue that should concern our country. That was clear in this poll.

I believe that the two voluntary national tests in reading and math, coupled with our strong investment in education, can truly shake up the status quo and help drive American education forward.

As I travel around the country, I see four other elements to this new education consensus falling into place. These include a stronger focus on teacher quality, a greater investment in technology, more parental involvement, a growing recognition even among young people that taking the tough core subjects pays off.

Another element to this consensus is the willingness of school leaders to get on with the job when it comes to turning

community backed the schools and believe in them, and family involvement, of families involved with their children.

Vouchers, on the other hand, divide the community right down the middle instead of bringing a community together in support of the public schools.

The background paper also provides research evidence — and this is very important — that the most important choice that students can make is not the type of school they go to — public or private — but the academic courses that they take. The most effective choice that parents can make is the choice to become involved in their own child's education, regardless of where they're in school, public or private. But the first choice — first choice — that parents should be making is to make sure their children take the tough academic courses, like algebra, geometry, chemistry, and other core courses.

That's why I'm always perplexed that voucher advocates almost never talk about how to improve reading, how to improve teaching, how to raise academic standards, how to fix crumbling schools. Their solution for every single issue seems to be — that confronts American education out there is — the answer happens to be vouchers. It's very simplistic worldview, a silver-bullet solution, and it is just dead wrong.

If a school is failing, the solution isn't to give scholarships to 50 children and leave 500 behind, but the solution is to fix the problem, fix this whole school that's there.

The current \$7 million DC voucher initiative in Congress, which offers vouchers for 2,000 low-income DC public school students, I think, is a very good case in point. It targets 2,000 children and leaves another 75,000 behind. Is that fair?

If Congress has an additional \$7 million to spend on education in the District, let me tell you how it could be spent. You can spend it to support additional reading programs. We've already recruited 450 work-study college students from six local colleges to be reading tutors here in the District. Or you can spend it — and help a lot more young people get ahead — in other ways.

And let me tell you how I would suggest spending it. My proposal is to take one half of the 7 million (dollars) that they are talking about, 3-1/2 million (dollars), and use it to match up 58 schools here in the District with proven educational reformers like Robert Slavin's (sp) "Success for All" program, or Johns Hopkins University "The New American Schools" effort, or "The Laboratory for Success" at Temple University. These are programs with a solid track record that are specifically designed to turn around failing inner-city schools. This effort would impact 29,000 District children — not 2,000, but 29,000.

Each of these programs is based on solid research that will help local schools redesign themselves with a program of high academic standards, professional teacher development, and real parent involvement.

We need to respect home rule here in the District and let every parent in D.C. know that all of their children, all of their children, deserve the best education possible. Our challenge is not to help 2,000 students move out, but to help all 78,000 District children, District students, to move up academically.

My proposal would also set aside the other half — \$3.5 million — to support 70 new after-school programs in the public schools to help 7,000 children. The FBI tells us that after-school hours from 3:00 to 6:00, the most dangerous hours for children. And let's give these young people safe havens where they can be safe and get the extra tutoring and academic help that they need.

Now, does public education need to be improved? Yes, of course it does. And there I think is a consensus in this great country about how we can about doing it and what we are doing to get it done. Public tax dollars ought to be spent to improve reading and math, improve the skills of America's teachers, to get computers into the classroom, to get parents and families more involved, to renovate and build new and more safe schools, to make sure that high school diplomas really mean something.

And I believe that if we focus in on what we are agreeing on and what really matters, rather than what divides us, we can make the next 10 years the golden era of American education. The American people have made the improvement of public education a national priority under the leadership of President Clinton. We know how to fix our schools. Now is the time to roll up our sleeves and get it done.

Thank you. And I'll be happy to respond to questions. And I have Jerry Tirozzi here and Terry Peterson if any technical questions that I want to refer to them, I might call on them to help.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, Paul Peterson at — (inaudible) — last week released an evaluation of the Cleveland voucher program, and it says that two-thirds of the parents of children who have vouchers now who were in public schools previously are happier now with the academics that their children are receiving with vouchers. What would you say to them?

SEC. RILEY: Well, let me discuss a little bit about that, then I might ask Terry Peterson to add some to it.

This recent analysis, which was in the New York Times with the headline, "School Vouchers Study Finds Satisfaction" — we think that the article and the discussion of it is methodologically flawed; unrepresentative of the overall population of voucher recipients. The article misrepresents several things, we think. Cleveland's voucher program has been in existence since the '96-97 school year. The research results from the formal evaluation on the impact of the program on student achievement have not been released and won't be released for two weeks. The official state evaluation is being conducted by researchers at Indiana University. The first year report focuses on the achievement gains of third-graders in the Cleveland voucher program and comparable gains of students in Cleveland public schools expected in September.

The New York Times article conveys results from an official evaluation and contains no new information on student achievement. And it cites findings from several articles. The analysis was funded by the Olin Foundation — and I think they probably are for vouchers — and is not connected with the official state evaluation.

In the study, Peterson claims that students enrolled in two of the 41 schools participating in the Cleveland voucher

program have realized moderately large gains in reading, and even more substantial gains in math. But the language scores declined 5 percentage points.

So, I mean, it's a mixed finding even at best; some things went up, some things went down. Grades one to — one through three showed a reduction in language in 19 points for first-graders, which is a rather serious finding. So I don't think that you can pick this up as some example of something that is so clear and without complicated comparisons.

Terry, do you want to add anything to that?

TERRY PETERSON (counselor to the secretary of education): Yes, sir.

It clearly was not an evaluation of a voucher program in Cleveland, since they only contained two of the schools. And it isn't clearly the kind of fair comparison that's going to be made over time and which you need for these types of voucher programs. In fact, what concerns us — they sort jumped ahead of the main study that's being done of vouchers, and that's problematic.

SEC. RILEY: Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, the president sent his daughter to a private school. I would imagine a lot of the people in the administration may send, may have sent their children to private school.

A lot of people wonder why the average person can't have this kind of choice that people who are well-off have. Why can't the average citizen have this kind of choice? And as some would suggest, of course, it would help us raise the standards on the public education side.

SEC. RILEY: Well, I strongly believe in and support quality — quality — private/parochial schools. All of them are not quality schools; many are. And I strongly support the whole concept of that being part of the interesting mix in education opportunities for people who then can afford it — to go to private/parochial schools, parochial schools oftentimes a lot less in cost. That is a grand part of our school mix, and I wouldn't do anything to toy with that. And parents have all kinds of reasons for wanting to send their children to certain schools or whatever.

The point is, though, if you then start putting public tax dollars over into that system through the voucher or through one of these other methods that people are coming up with, which is just — it's almost a driven thing to try to get public tax dollars over into the private schools — that doesn't solve any problems. It's harmful to the public schools. I've tried to make that case in my statement. We've got a growth of enrollment. It's more complicated. We've got a growth in quality. And the public schools are moving in the right direction. And what benefit, then — to take dollars away from the public schools and shift them to the private schools at this particular time is a real mistake.

And then it gets private and parochial schools into this kind of public domain, which is the — one of the strengths of having them is that they are private and they are parochial.

The Washington situation, for example — and I'm not completely familiar with how that works, but I think they propose setting up a separate board appointed by the government — and you say, "Well, what private schools, then, would these children go to?" And they say, "Well, the board would decide which ones are eligible." I think that's right. They say, "This religion school over here is eligible, and this one isn't." And who's then to say in the government that this school is better than that one, or that this school is on the wrong track, or that "this is a cult," and "this is a legitimate religion"? I think you get then into the very complicated mix of public and parochial, any way you look at it. You can try and try and try, but when you mix them up, you get into this very complicated structure.

So my view is to put our resources where the consensus is building and is there, to improve the public schools, to have enormous choice within the public school system. The charter school concept, for those people who would desire to take their children into some school without regulations and so forth, is a very good option. Public school choice, open enrollment, magnet schools, schools within schools — all the different kinds of schools we think should be options for the school board to consider — and then if schools are failing, to come in and turn them upside-down and straighten them out — I think that's the way to go.

And for someone who is not pleased with the kind of education their children happens to be getting, then they should become more involved with the school, to try to change it, to try to make it move in the right direction. And they would find all kinds of support in doing that.

Yes?

Q Your proposal, is it going to be put in the form of legislation and sent to the Hill? What are you doing with it?

SEC. RILEY: Well, it's really just a response to the proposal that is discussed in the subcommittee, as I understand now, which calls for \$7 million, approximately, for 2,000 students to receive private school vouchers in the District. And I wanted to show that you can take that same \$7 million and impact over half of the children in a very significant way and then, over a period of several years, impact all of the children in the District. And instead of pulling 2,000 kids out, and this way of deciding what children and what schools they're going to, and what schools qualify — which I think is an enormous problem. It also takes from the school district and makes it weaker and does not improve it.

And what we're talking about is improving the schools in this great capital city. And I think the proposal — if they have \$7 million — and they must, because that's what they're talking about — to do what we said and to literally get these reform movements going in this large number of schools I think is an enormous direction to go; and the afternoon programs, which also would be tremendously helpful. That's a clear example of what you could do with this \$7 million here in just this city.

This city is different, and we need to all understand that. Other cities have state support, as many of us have read about — some of the articles about the D.C. schools — they have state support and local district support. And Washington, D.C. is

falling-down school, failing school" — I said that to my wife this morning. And she said, "Well, how about the community around the school? Isn't it failing, generally?" And I said yes. And she said, "Well, why don't we talk about that?"

We've got to talk in this country about straightening communities up also. Schools can be in the center. Schools can be the ray of hope, the way to bring a community into a better world. But it is not out there by itself. It's not an island. It's in the middle of a community. And that's why community support is important — to get people — they don't have to be wealthy people; they don't have to be well-educated — but to get people in the community supportive of the schools. Those kind of things are really what matters.

Yes?

Q As you know, we had a crisis here in our school system. Some people took it (negative ?), and others took it in a positive direction. Out of that crisis came 50 percent of the school — of the students in school September — (off mike).

And I don't know if you followed what was done, because it was so scattered, and each little recreation site did its own thing and each church did its own thing and got involved with it. But it wasn't a negative solution. And I think the Department of Education ought to take a good look at following up with that community involvement and getting a community hearing in — (off mike).

SEC. RILEY: Well, and I think that's a —

Q I'm a westerner. I can fly down (there ?) any time I want to. My cousin is a state — (off mike) — and have a party.

SEC. RILEY: Yeah, get out underneath the big sky.

I think that's a good suggestion. I'll say there are a lot of good efforts taking place here, and you don't hear too much about them. And if you do, it is scattered. I know there's an effort in the afternoon program, people raising private funds and getting churches and synagogues involved, and some of these school reform measures, and in recreational ways.

I do think people are tuning in to doing constructive things in Washington, and I think the citizens of Washington are ready for it and ready to be moved in some very exciting ways.

Yes?

Q There are those on the Hill who say that the DC voucher proposal will pass Congress but the president will veto it. Is that the way you see it?

SEC. RILEY: Well, as I indicated in my remarks, I would urge the president to veto it. I think it would be a very serious federal government mistake for the federal government to say this is a plan that we endorse. And then you've got the whole country so terribly confused by the many, many problems that it would cause and the no solutions that it would cause.

MR. FRANK: I just wanted to mention, also with us are a number of people who are very conversant with school improvement, especially urban school improvement: Donald Stewart, the president of the College Board, and Enida (ph) Jones, the executive director of Equity 2000, and Paul Schwartz, the principal in residence at the Department of Education from Central Park East Secondary School in New York City, as well as Jerry Tirozzi, the assistant secretary for elementary and secondary.

SEC. RILEY: So any of you-all who have any questions or whatever, when we leave, we've got some people here who have turned around urban schools. Paul was very much involved in that in Central Park East. And so please feel free to use our people.

Yes?

Q Mr. Secretary, what's wrong with Senator Coverdell's proposal, the tax break?

SEC. RILEY: Well, several things wrong with it. First of all, it's another voucher-type a proposal. It's another way to try to get federal tax support for private schools.

And it's not the first time that Senator Coverdell has tried that. He's tried — you know, S. 1 was an approach that people who said they had violence — or they were concerned about violence in their school, could get some kind of a voucher. I mean, I don't know, you know, how do you define violence, and how do you get into a determination of who is entitled to that or not, and then what school are they going to, and who's going to say that this is a school and this isn't? So you get into all of these different issues.

On this IRA-type thing, you say, well, who then would benefit from that? And they say, well, the poor people. Well, how many poor people do you know that are going to be saving money to send their children to private school in the third grade?

And I've been to a lot of elementary schools around and a lot of other middle and high schools, and I'm telling you, I really see things happening out there in these elementary schools. And I would invite all of you to take a look at some of them. I think the (TIMS ?) study showed very clearly, in math and science in the fourth grade, our students throughout this country, with all the diversity, all the so-called failing schools included, we were second only to Korea in science, and we were well above average in math — fourth grade. Now, we get into some problems in the 8th grade, and I'm sure we will in the 12th. But I'll tell you, good things are beginning to happen.

And the idea of a poor person getting federal government tax support for saving their money to send their child to a private kindergarten or third grade or fifth grade, or whatever, really serves, again, no useful purpose. Now, somebody who is wealthy, or who has funds, that would be some small benefit to them if they were planning to send their children to private school anyhow, probably. I just think that's another kind of a convoluted silver bullet; it wouldn't amount to much, but what it would amount to would be negative instead of positive, in my judgment.

Yes?

1. Education Daily

September 23, 1997

EDUCATION ADVOCATES TOLD NOT TO RAISE BUDGET HOPES

A key congressional staffer warned advocates for schools yesterday not to count on a windfall from House-Senate negotiations on the fiscal 1998 education spending bill.

While both the House and Senate have proposed about \$34 billion for the Education Department next year, their priorities differ.

"I want to caution you to lower your expectations of what is possible in conference," Mike Meyers, a top staff member for the House education appropriations panel, told members of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) at a legislative briefing.

CEF is urging House and Senate negotiators to choose whichever chamber's funding level is higher in each program, as they craft compromise spending legislation. But Meyers said that would put the bill \$2 billion over what appropriators allocated for the programs.

The House passed its version of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill, H.R. 2264, last Wednesday.

The Senate approved its version, S. 1061, on Sept. 11.

The Senate bill would provide about \$600 million more for special education state grants than the House bill, though House members are interested in boosting the level to the higher figure, Meyers said.

Pell Problems

On the down side, new budget estimates will require \$200 million beyond what the House and Senate have approved to raise the maximum Pell Grant to \$3,000, as promised in budget negotiations with the White House.

The Senate bill already would rely on \$35 million in Pell surplus funds to save the State Student Incentive Grants program, which the House and White House want to eliminate, and \$60 million for school construction.

In addition, the White House is expected to press for funds to expand Pell Grant eligibility to independent students, with its \$528 million price tag. The House included independent students in its total allotment for Pell Grants, while the Senate did not. However, the Senate did overwhelmingly pass a nonbinding "sense of the Senate" resolution expressing support for an unspecified amount for Pell Grants for independent students (ED, Sept. 12).

Finally, the Clinton administration will likely push for a high level of Goals 2000 funding, Meyers said. The Senate bill includes \$530 million for Goals 2000, while the House would cut the reform program to \$387 million from the fiscal 1997 appropriation of \$491 million.

Taken together, those increases would leave little wiggle room to boost other items, Meyers said.

Funding levels aren't the only things that negotiators will have to worry about.

House and Senate education policy leaders are expected to work with the White House on the thorny policy issues—block grants and national tests—that have been tacked onto the spending bill, Meyers said. But those committee members aren't expected to be on the actual conference committee, which will likely comprise only appropriators.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., plans to offer a resolution as early as today to advise Senate negotiators to strike from the final bill a plan by Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., to send local districts about \$13 billion in K-12 education funding as block grants.

The so-called "motion to instruct conferees" would be nonbinding but could send a strong signal, if passed, that support for block grants is soft, said a Bingaman spokeswoman.

Some senators have said that their colleagues did not know what they were voting on at the time. Gorton's amendment passed with little debate during a late-night session.

Under The Gun

In his radio address and public appearances over the weekend, President Clinton reiterated his threats to veto an education funding bill that would send money to local districts as block grants or would bar ED from developing voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

CEF members at the meeting seemed little interested in defending Clinton's testing plan.

The new fiscal year begins next Wednesday, and if an education funding bill isn't signed by then, an emergency stopgap measure would be needed to keep most of ED's offices open, although fiscal 1998 funding wouldn't normally flow to states for most programs until July.

Senate conferees, named late last week, include all 15 members of the education funding subcommittee, as well as the chairman and ranking Democrat from the full appropriations committee. House conferees are expected to be appointed today.

—Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Associated Press

09-23 10:04a

MAKING THE GRADE: Education secretary defends Clinton's assessment plan

By The Associated Press (Wyoming)

If Congress insists on derailing the development of national reading and mathematics tests, President Clinton should follow through with his threat to veto an appropriations bill, said **Education Secretary Richard Riley**.

Quoting former University of Wyoming professor and management expert Edward Deming, Riley said Monday, "You can't improve something you can't measure."

The Clinton administration wants to use about \$90 million next year to develop and administer the voluntary tests, the Casper-Star Tribune's Washington, D.C., bureau reported.

This month, the Senate overwhelmingly supported an adaptation of Clinton's plan, but would transfer control over the tests' development from the U.S. Department of Education to the independent, non-partisan National Assessment Governing Board.

The House version - supported by Rep. Barbara Cubin, R-Wyo., - would prohibit the Education Department from using any federal funds to develop or administer the tests.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., has called the tests redundant and promised not to back down.

Meanwhile, state leaders appear ambivalent. Only 15 school districts and six states nationwide have signed up to participate.

Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction Judy Catchpole said she would be happy to use a national assessment test that complemented Wyoming's education program and reduced the state's testing costs. But, she said, a nationwide test may be too general to elicit much useful information.

Students in Wyoming and virtually every other state already participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress - a test that samples 3,000 students in each state.

The new tests, Riley maintained, would enable parents, teachers and school districts to measure the performance of individual students and schools.

He also dismissed arguments by some conservatives that the tests would push an ideological agenda on local school districts.

"These are basic skills. If a child knows how to read, they will do well on the test," Riley said, adding that the tests avoid subject matter that can be swayed by cultural influences.

Riley produced a chart that compared student reading performance on NAEP tests with state reading assessments in 11 states.

Of those states, he said, only one scored higher on the NAEP test than its own assessment.

In Riley's home state of South Carolina, 82 percent of students passed the state's reading test, but only 20 percent passed the NAEP test. What that demonstrates, he said, is that most states don't measure student performance as rigorously as they should. ■

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Norman Greenberg, Editor

1. The Wall Street Journal

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American Opinion (A Special Report): A Quarterly Survey of Politics, Economics and Values

Environment, School and Health Issues Capture Imagination of American Voters

By Jackie Calmes
Staff Reporter
of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — Stuart Rothenberg, one of this town's best-regarded election specialists, was hard at work this week on his latest bit of analysis. The hot political topic?

Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

Such is the often-obscure stuff of campaign discourse as politicians approach next year's midterm contests for control of Congress: environmental emissions, national education testing, school choice, "partial-birth" abortion. Republicans and Democrats alike are groping for issues and symbols to capture the attention of voters, who have moved in this decade from angry and vengeful to content and happily apathetic.

The political terrain for 1998, and perhaps the presidential year 2000, is still being mapped. Economic issues have been the dominant backdrop for American politics since the Vietnam War: high inflation, tax cuts, unemployment, deficits, income inequality. Now such issues are muted, thanks to the current good economy and the summer agreement between President Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress to balance the budget and cut taxes.

While economic and fiscal issues won't ever disappear — and would of course come roaring back in the event of a recession — both parties, but especially Republicans, are trying to find their voices in social and quality-of-life issues such as the environment, education and health.

"With the fiscal issues now neutralized, the new agenda of education, social responsibility and protecting Social Security and Medicare works to the Democrats' favor," say Peter Hart and Robert Teeter, who conducted the latest Journal/NBC News poll.

No single issue dominated in voters' rankings of concerns, reflecting their generally favorable feelings in a good, peacetime economy. Nearly two-thirds of those polled pronounced themselves satisfied with the economy. In contrast, 57% described themselves as dissatisfied in a Journal/NBC poll as 1996 began.

Not surprisingly, economic issues are low on Americans' scale of concerns. Asked to rank five of the nation's problems, respondents put "economic insecurity" last, with only 11% naming it as the country's biggest problem. Social and cultural issues scored higher: Nearly a third of those polled cited declining moral values as the biggest problem, followed by a belief that public institutions such as schools and hospitals aren't performing well.

To another question gauging Americans' concerns, asking what one thing needs the most government attention, just 14% of those polled cited the budget deficit. The current federal deficit, estimated at \$34 billion for the fiscal year ending this month, is the lowest in 23 years, and the Clinton-Congress budget deal promises surpluses by 2002. Only 11% of respondents cited the economy as a top concern, and 2% put trade pacts at the top, just as the president is seeking fast-track authority to negotiate such international agreements.

A cluster of social, cultural and moral issues resonated more, although, to be sure, no single issue stands out for an electorate that seems increasingly disengaged from its government. **Education was at the top, with 28% saying it demanded**

the greatest federal attention, and next, at 19%, was the financial stability of Social Security and Medicare.

These social issues play to Democrats' strengths because theirs is traditionally seen as the party most concerned and best able to deal with them. Republicans get higher marks on economic issues. "Republicans don't talk about these quality-of-life issues as well as Democrats," says Mr. Rothenberg.

Even Republican strategists are cautioning their party's incumbents and candidates that the Democrats have the advantage on issues for 1998, and perhaps 2000. "The Republicans face the most severe agenda vacuum since Ronald Reagan ascended as their leader in 1980," wrote GOP strategist Ralph Reed, the former Christian Coalition leader, in a recent memo to party leaders. His top advice: "Our candidates should address values and morals as the centerpiece of their campaign message in 1998."

Yet the party's conservatives and moderates differ vehemently on just how to translate that advice on issues, such as abortion, schools, the environment and much more. Those intraparty divisions, together with Mr. Clinton's popularity, should it weather the current ethics probes, probably could rob Republicans of the big "six-year-itch" gains that an opposition party typically wins in the sixth year of a president's term.

Yet even if the issues don't favor Republicans, the persistent good news about the economy is itself good news for them. With a satisfied electorate, the 1998 contest shapes up as a status-quo election — suggesting continued GOP majorities, if narrow, in the House and Senate.

Meanwhile, Democrats are happily on the offensive. "Without the deficit hanging over us, without 'tax-and-spend' as the defining issue against Democrats," says Paul Begala, a senior political adviser to Mr. Clinton, the party can push "a whole cluster" of work and family issues — education chief among them.

That is "the No. 1 issue in America" today, Mr. Begala says. Democratic proposals, such as the president's plan for national testing of schoolchildren, are generally popular, while most Republicans oppose the idea and promote the more divisive ideas of tax breaks and vouchers for those attending private schools.

Environmental groups, meanwhile, are telling politicians that, with economic issues off the table, such causes as clean air, water and ozone protection gain prominence. GOP leaders, acknowledging they can't compete fully with Democrats on green issues, go so far as to advise their members to seek photo opportunities back home planting trees and joining river cleanups.

The political jousting over the environment is where Mr. Rothenberg's analysis of EPA rules comes in. The Clinton administration has proposed to tighten regulations against smog-producing emissions, angering utilities, auto makers and other manufacturers but cheering environmentalists and health advocates. The issue has come to be a defining one for competing GOP factions. The most conservative Republicans are pushing in Congress to delay the regulations, arguing privately that such pro-business defiance is essential to fire up the party's base. But party moderates oppose delay, warning of a potential pro-environment backlash against Republicans in critical suburban districts.

Democrats have internal tensions, too, and those are likely to flare by 2000 when Mr. Clinton is no longer on the ballot. Already, liberals and moderates are skirmishing to define the party on a full range of social issues as they look to pick the next presidential nominee.

Mr. Rothenberg, who provides nonpartisan analysis through newsletters, speeches and media commentary, contrasts the current political landscape with the past three election cycles of the 1990s — when the voters were mad, and the parties seemed to know their respective messages, mostly economic. "We've flipped," he says. "The country is relatively content, and the parties are searching for something to say."

How the Poll Was Conducted

The Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll was based on nationwide telephone interviews of 2,004 adults, conducted between Thursday and Monday by the polling organizations of Peter Hart and Robert Teeter.

The sample was drawn from 520 randomly selected geographic points in the continental U.S. Each region was represented in proportion to its population. Households were selected by a method that gave all telephone numbers, listed and unlisted, an equal chance of being included.

One adult, 18 years or older, was selected from each household by a procedure to provide the correct number of male and female respondents.

Chances are 19 of 20 that if all adults with telephones in the U.S. had been surveyed, the finding would differ from these poll results by no more than 2.2 percentage points in either direction among all adults. Sample tolerances for subgroups are larger. ■

A TEMPEST OVER NATIONAL TESTING

THE PUBLIC LIKES A WHITE HOUSE PLAN TO TEST GRADE-SCHOOLERS, BUT IT'S TAKING FIRE. HERE'S WHY

BY ROMESH RATNESAR

The trouble with congressional Republicans isn't that they like a good fight—it's the fights they like to pick. Time and again, most notably during the government shutdown in 1995, the Clinton Administration has beat up on G.O.P. lawmakers and in the end subjected them to painful public embarrassment. So when House Republicans forced a showdown last week with the President over his treasured plan for national math and reading tests for students—despite a White House threat to veto an entire spending bill if the testing money was not included—it seemed on the face of it that these guys were just gluttons for punishment.

After all, the President's proposal to develop voluntary fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math tests by 1999 has enjoyed public support since its unveiling last February. Education experts agree that American public schools badly need tougher—and higher—national standards. National testing would enable parents and schools from Cambridge, Mass., to Compton, Calif., to measure an individual student's performance against a common yardstick. A well-executed national testing system might also ease the transition to charter schooling and public-school choice by providing a standard method of assessing different schools' strengths. In a TIME/CNN poll last week, a majority of adults surveyed said they support the President's testing plan.

Another knockout for the White House, right? Well, no. Even as the testing issue has charged to the top of the President's fall agenda, the ranks of those charging behind him have oddly dwindled, as former allies splinter into bickering special-interest groups and switch to the enemy camp. Only seven states have signed on to the plan. In the House, an improbable coalition of social conservatives and progressive Democrats were at week's end on the verge of stripping a \$279 billion education bill of all its national-test money. That forced the Administration to scramble for a compromise in the Senate; to save the testing money in that version of the bill, the White House agreed to turn over control of the tests to an independent agency. And the tests might still get axed when the two chambers reconcile their respective bills next month. "Americans have asked us for common-sense education ideas," says Republican Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania, the leader of the House antitestng insurgents, "not poorly designed federal tests created by Washington bureaucrats."

How did this happen to a seemingly popular idea? From the start, powerful conservative organizations like the Christian Coalition and the Eagle Forum derided the very notion of national examinations, claiming they violate a cherished American ideal of local-school control. Worse, they warned, the national tests would lead to homogenized classroom curriculums and ultimately to federal educrats wresting control of American classrooms from parents, teachers and students. Says Jennifer Marshall, an analyst with the Family Research Council: "We don't think there is such a thing as a good federal test."

What's more maddening to national-test advocates is the defection of their supposed friends on the left. Liberal critics assert that the math test will stigmatize poor and minority students who don't perform well. They fret that schools will use national-exam results in determining who to promote to the next grade. And they even complain that the reading test discriminates against students who don't read English. Feelings run so strong in the House that virtually all members of the left-leaning black and Hispanic caucuses plan to vote against the tests this week. "If national testing went down in flames," says Chester Finn, a conservative analyst at the Hudson Institute, "it would be because those on the right couldn't stand the word national, and those on the left can't abide testing."

Then there's the matter of the test questions. Test designers have released a few sample problems, but no one knows exactly what the exams will look like. And so everyone is anxious. Critics charge that the committees drafting the exams are using them to promote faddish pedagogies like "whole language" and "fuzzy math." Last month a disgruntled group of teachers and academics penned a letter to the President contending that the eighth-grade math test isn't tough enough in measuring basic computational skills. On the other side, the Cambridge-based watchdog group FairTest opposes the exams, executive director Laura Barrett says, for focusing on "rote memorization rather than creative problem solving."

Administration officials chalk up the opposition to overheated speculation on all sides, and they're partly right. But the White House has made misuses of its own. Early supporters of the national-test plan, like Finn and Brookings Institution scholar Diane Ravitch, have deserted the President because the tests were developed through the politically appointed Department of Education rather than by a nonpartisan body like the independent National Assessment Governing Board. "It's wrong to have a new national test every time a new President is elected," Ravitch says. Last month Education Secretary Richard Riley agreed to surrender control of the tests to the governing board; the handover was cemented in last week's Senate bill. But critics say the concessions come too late in the test-writing process. Says Finn: "It's like asking the new cook to please cook by the recipe that someone else came up with."

Others are questioning whether the country needs new national exams at all. A federally monitored examination already exists: the 28-year-old National Assessment of Educational Progress, a test that provides reliable state-by-state performance data—but not the scores of individual students. For that, many public schools use privately developed exams, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

and the Stanford Achievement Test. "American school kids take more than 100 million standardized tests each year," says Barrett. "We already know what schools and which children perform well or poorly." Asks Boston College professor George F. Madaus: "How is this going to be any different from a first-class test from a commercial publishing company?" (One difference: a higher price tag. The department estimates the tests will cost \$12 per child —the Iowa exam costs less than half that —and \$27 million overall.)

In the end, that may be too much buck and too little bang to sway a Congress averse to social spending. But even as they went about savaging the national-test plan last week, the White House's opponents on the Hill proffered an expensive alternative. "Rather than spend [millions] on one more test," Goodling said, "House Republicans and many Democrats would rather send federal dollars directly to the classroom." Sounds surprisingly un-Republican. Did we mention that 1998 is an election year?

—With reporting by Chandrani Ghosh /Washington■

1. Talk of the Nation

09/22/97 Section: News; Domestic;

Education Testing

The battle over President Clinton's plan for national education testing heats up this week when members of the House and Senate meet to hammer out a compromise. The Clinton plan calls for voluntary national testing of all fourth-graders in reading and all eighth-graders in math starting in 1999. The House rejected the proposal, the Senate gave it the green-light. Join Ray Suarez and guests for a look at the bitter debate over the government's role in setting educational standards.

By Ray Suarez, Washington, DC

RAY SUAREZ, HOST:

This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Ray Suarez.

The Senate has passed a bill compromising with the White House on national standardized testing for school children. The House has come out swinging against the president's plan and now the two chambers must go to conference to come up with something the president will sign.

He promised over the weekend that if the plan does not include the key elements he's looking for, he'll veto it. In the interest of simplification I'll quickly sketch out everyone's position.

The president wants to set national standards and various disciplines, then pull up schools that are not meeting them. He sees the national test as a way to easily diagnose which schools are home to large numbers of children not meeting the standard, which will help target aid and attention.

He's tried to take the poison pill of Washington involvement out of the argument by having the test designed and presented by others, and overseen by a board of educators appointed by Congress.

The Senate is far more interested in block granting current Department of Education programs and sending the money and the functions back to the states. They haven't altered the testing plan too much.

The House, meanwhile, wants no funding for the national tests. Under the House bill there would be no money to give reading tests to fourth graders and math tests to eighth graders. House opponents say the test will do nothing to improve the quality of education, and represent the federal government meddling in what is the most local of local functions: elementary education.

What do you think? If like me, you have primary school children you may be thinking you haven't heard enough of this argument to know what you want. And you may wonder how, for or against, your own member of Congress knows so much about your own desires. This is an hour to put some meat on the bones.

Marge Roukema of New Jersey is one of the most senior Republicans on the Education and Workforce Committee and a former secondary school teacher. She joins us from her district in New Jersey. Welcome to TALK OF THE NATION, Congresswoman.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE MARGE ROUKEMA (R-NJ): Oh, thank you, very much. Glad to be here.

SUAREZ: Representative George Miller is a Democrat from California. He's one of the most senior Democrats on the Education and Workforce Committee, and vice chairman of the House Democratic Policy Committee. And he joins us from Berkeley, California. Good to have you with us Congressman.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE MILLER (D-CA): Thank you.

SUAREZ: Our number is 800-989-8255. That's 800-989-TALK.

Representative Roukema, why don't you begin by sketching out the basic reasons why your caucus is generally opposed to this plan.

ROUKEMA: Well, I'll tell you. First of all, the proposal came as a surprise to many of us. And by that I mean certainly those of us on the education committee with jurisdiction over the issue. It was a circumvention of the authorization authority of our committee.

However, I'm not using that as the fundamental argument. I mean, I don't want to play, you know, that kind of politics or whatever — whatever way you might designate it, as my fundamental problem.

When it came as a surprise, and I began to look at it, I said to myself, what are they talking about here? As far as I'm concerned, I think a national debate on educational standards is probably all long overdue, but this sketched-out proposal, while it — and it's only a sketched-out proposal — it asks for precise amounts of money but tells you very little about what they're going to do with it or how they're going to implement it. And then, to my surprise I found that they were already putting out the contracts for these tests.

Now, am I just playing petty politics here? Not at all. First of all not only wasn't I a school teacher in public schools, a secondary school teacher, I sent all my three children to public schools, I served on a board of education, the only other elected position I've ever held, and I feel deeply about public education and educational standards.

If there's anything we know in this country, there's alarm bells going off, because we feel as though our standards have been eroded. But I take it very seriously, and when I looked at the proposal I said: what are they making this up as they go along?

Every time chairman Goodling raised a legitimate question, or the people on the Senate side raised a legitimate question about what the proposal was, the administration — the department quickly turned around and said, well, that's not what we meant, or we'll deal with you and we'll change it. It showed how ill-considered the whole thing was.

Now, what did that do? That raised legitimate questions, not only in the most conservative elements of the Republican Party, but it raised legitimate questions in moderates like myself, and even saw many — a good many of the urban Democrats that were concerned about what the true objectives were here.

Speaking now for myself, the alarm bells went off because I said, now wait a minute, I want this to — I want education to remain a state and local priority, and I do not want to set a national curriculum. I have long proposed that, but I began to be suspicious.

How can you set up a so-called "voluntary program" set up by the department without any outside input, and say that you're not — and not be able to identify how you have set your goals and your standards and what application you're going to make. That's where I'm telling you they were making it up as they went along. So, I...

SUAREZ: OK, well, let's take a look at your opp...

ROUKEMA: Wait a minute, wait a minute, so I decided that the real intention here was to open the door widely, not just a crack, but widely, for national curriculum standards and I was not going to sign on to that unless we had full and open debate on the specifics of the proposal.

SUAREZ: From what you've said about the lack of consultation, beforehand, and I understand why that's a problem and the...

ROUKEMA: This is not just about that though...

SUAREZ: ... and the problems with the design of the legislation, as it stands now...

ROUKEMA: Yes.

SUAREZ: ... one thing you haven't said is that you are opposed to standardized testing...

ROUKEMA: Per se.

SUAREZ: ... as a tool.

ROUKEMA: No, no, I am not oppose to standardized testing per se. I really believe and said so in my debate on the floor, that this kind of debate is long overdue. What does trouble me and even some of my business supporters — Republican business supporters who have a lot experience from state to state, have expressed concerns, not that they're not supporting, you know, standardized tests for national curriculum, but they have expressed concerns that we don't know from one state to the other how the achievement levels of our employees are measuring up.

So, it is a larger question here, but I don't want to sneak things through the back door.

SUAREZ: Representative Marge Roukema joining us from New Jersey. Representative George Miller, why don't you lay out the case for those people who think this is a good idea?

MILLER: Well, thank you. I think to lay out that case you have to go back all the way to 1991, 1992 when President Bush offered exactly the same program, suggesting that we needed a national assessment so that we could start to upgrade the standards, and so

that our students could start to compete on a national and an international basis.

As you know, that was about the time when we really started to take notice of technological changes and how they might be brought into the educational systems of this country. And in fact in 1994, the Congress authorized the Secretary of Education to go forward and to engage in this kinds of activities.

The president then said in his State of the Union, along with his 10-point program, that he felt that national testing and national standards were a key component of that effort.

We currently give a high quality high standard test to many, many, many students across this nation, and to see how they're doing. And interestingly enough, those students who historically do fine on their local and state tests don't do very well on this high quality test — national test. And that raises some very real concerns as to what's going on locally, whether or not tests are being dumbed down locally, whether or not children are being passed from grade to grade without being proficient in the subjects at the grade level that they should be. And so, this program has worked its way forward.

Interestingly, somehow this — decided to be sort of a test run for, I think, a component of the Republican Caucus in the House that's decided that they lost their way after the budget agreement, and that they didn't get credit, and now we were going to have some kind of assault again on federal education.

And tragically this is now caught up in that sort of political football, it's not — many of these people, you know, would — had voted to, and I'm not speaking about Congresswoman Roukema because I don't believe this is her position — never has been, but if you start to look at what took place during the appropriations bill, solid attacks on many components of education, and at the same time also opposing these standards.

Obviously, what we believe is that these standards start to drive other actions, and they start to empower parents; and they start to let parents know what is really going on and how their children are doing. Because even in the national test that we

give now, we don't compare students, we simply make generalizations about how American students are doing.

But, the fact is in my own state, in California and all across the country, states are investing billions of new dollars into education, local bond issues, at least here in California, are passing, I think some 70 percent of the bond issues are passing by a two-thirds vote, before that it was 30.

There is a reawakening in America that education is the key. The question is: will we be doing the right things with those billions of dollars? And this gives local districts the chance to measure how they're doing; how their individual students are doing; where they can direct the resources for those students who turn out aren't doing terribly well on the reading test or the math test; and get a concentration of efforts on those.

I also think that bill's a political base for an awful lot of schools that have been neglected by local school boards, by state legislatures, to start to put a claim on some resources so that they too can share in the kinds of technology, first class textbooks, first class qualified teachers, that very often are denied those students most — most often identified as central city core students, but other...

SUAREZ: Well, Congress Miller let me just jump in for a second because...

MILLER: Sure.

SUAREZ: ... we should talk about the utility of such a test, and a body of national results as a tool. There are a good number of tests already given to students between K and eight. And I think if we were with big system superintendents like Rudy Crew (ph) from New York, Paul Vallis (ph) from Chicago, they would be able to tell you — ticket off on their fingers which are the schools that are already in trouble; that we already know aren't meeting the standards; that we know would have problems with their third graders in math or their eighth graders...

MILLER: There's no question about that.

SUAREZ: ... in reading. Is this a tool that is going to have the kind of utility you seem to think it'll have if you already...

MILLER: I think it's very clear...

SUAREZ: ... know a lot of the information it'll endorse?

MILLER: It's very much like when the college presidents decide that you were going to have — have to have a 2.0 grade point average to participate in athletics as a freshman. It drove additional actions at the high school letter — if the uni — level.

If the University of California or Harvard University, University of Illinois raises its standards, it drives a whole set of actions at the local level so that students can then meet those standards because that's what parents expect.

The — one of the reasons the City of Chicago has signed up for this: by putting forth that they now have the expectation that their students and their schools will be able to provide a curriculum that can meet high quality international standards in testing in mathematics and reading has allowed that superintendent to drive some additional actions, such as taking over local schools, reconstituting those schools; putting in new principals; putting in new faculties; changing the way that those schools have been run and the test, in fact — the knowledge on parents that look at some of this as very necessary should have been done years ago, it was never done.

I think that's true. That's going on in the City of San Francisco where we see schools that have been lagging, because people are starting to think to themselves: this isn't good enough. This

test will help drive those kinds of actions, it will also let you know if the decisions that you're making today, in fact, are working out.

SUAREZ: Go ahead.

ROUKEMA: Let me observe something here. You know, George, I don't know. Maybe if you and I sat down and worked on this for a year or two, we'd really come up with something that we could both agree to, from different sides of the spectrum, but — I hear what you're saying, but everything that you've pointed to has been the effectiveness of states and local communities taking charge to empower parents.

MILLER: But, a...

ROUKEMA: ... and that...

MILLER: ... part of that equation, Marge, is that we have a huge number of 12th grade students who can't read their diplomas, we have fourth grade students...

ROUKEMA: No, wait a minute I'm...

MILLER: ... who can't read at grade level, and that's all run at the local level...

ROUKEMA: I...

MILLER: ... this is a way to start to drive some higher...

ROUKEMA: ... Yes...

MILLER: ... expectations because a lot of students have been just allowed to slide though.

ROUKEMA: Yeah, but then you inevitably have to face the question: does this not inevitably lead to a national Department of Education that controls the curriculum? Now, you and I might disagree on that.

I am not ready to make that leap. Nor do I think the Congress — regardless of partisan points of view — I don't think that the Congress for intelligent reasons is yet ready to do that.

In the first place, they don't want that entails. In the second place, it goes completely contradictory to our experience in other departments where we're pulling back and giving more authority to the states, rather than less authority...

MILLER: This doesn't change — but Marge you know that this standard is...

ROUKEMA: ... well, let me, let me just finish this. Let me just finish this point. I think there is — the administration brought on most of its own trouble. Because as I said before, you got the feeling they were making it up as they went along.

Either they were trying to hide something, or someone had not given the serious didactic, rational, analytic approach to this subject that it should have been given. And so, they were asking for enormous amounts of money, millions — multiple millions of dollars going into the billions of dollars, just to administer tests or to form tests, and then administer the test that they claimed were only going to be voluntary. And with...

MILLER: Right.

ROUKEMA: Well, wait a minute now. You can't say that it has any credibility of setting a national — telling parents how their children are getting along nationally, on national objective standards, when one you haven't defined what those objective standards are, and two, every time you're criticized you're saying, oh well don't worry about it they're only going to be voluntarily...

SUAREZ: Well, let's get a reply from George Miller...

ROUKEMA: ... you only have...

MILLER: No, that's not an answer...

ROUKEMA: ... a handful of states that have even expressed an interest, much less signed up...

MILLER: The answer that it's only going to be voluntary is not...

ROUKEMA: ... and the cities are pulling out as they learn more about it. This whole thing was not thought through completely. But, again...

SUAREZ: Let's get a reply from George Miller..

ROUKEMA: ... I believe this...

SUAREZ: ... and then I'll take some phone calls at 800...

ROUKEMA: ... I believe it's because...

MILLER: The answer that it's voluntarily, is not a answer to criticism that you might have of the exam. The answer that it's voluntarily is, like most federal programs, they are in fact voluntary.

ROUKEMA: No...

MILLER: And — oh, yes, yes...

ROUKEMA: ... but then it doesn't give you a national standard that you're claiming...

MILLER: ... let me finish. Yes it does give you additional standards, 'cause with all do respect most parents and most children want to perform at a high level, OK...

ROUKEMA: Yes, of course.

MILLER: ... now the problem is...

ROUKEMA: ... of course.

MILLER: ... that many local districts, and many teachers, and many principals, and many superintendents from time to time, have not been exactly willing to tell parents the truth. So their children come along and they do fine...

ROUKEMA: Oh, I have to...

MILLER: ... they do fine on an exam at the state level, in Louisiana 88 percent of the children passed the fourth grade reading assessment, but only 15 percent of them could pass the national test. In South Carolina, 82 percent passed the local state test, only 20 percent of them can pass the national test. In Georgia the same point; in North Carolina the same point; Wisconsin the same point; in Connecticut it's the same.

This starts to tell you that maybe the dumbing down, maybe the lack of expectations, maybe the stereotyping of children is taking place at the local level, and this assessment will give parents a way to break out of that and say, I expect more on the behave of this district.

This is about empowering parents, not empowering the Department of Education. This is about parents being able to walk through the front door and say, all right now start to explain to me why my child...

ROUKEMA: Look...

MILLER: ... cannot perform at fourth grade proficiency as other children can in other districts, or in other states, and I want some answers to these questions...

ROUKEMA: That rhetoric sounds very good...

MILLER: No, no that's not rhetoric...

ROUKEMA: ... about empower parents...

MILLER: ... that's what's happening...

ROUKEMA: ...if the whole history of...

MILLER: ... all across this country...

ROUKEMA: ... the whole history of...

MILLER: ... is parents are starting to raise questions about...

ROUKEMA: ... excuse me...

MILLER: ... about the how they've been...

ROUKEMA: ... excuse me...

SUAREZ: George Miller, please...

MILLER: ... how they've been slighted by local administrations...

SUAREZ: ... Representative Miller, Representative Roukema, please don't continue to talk. You hear me trying to

come in here and try to introduce the topic ...

ROUKEMA: I'm sorry I didn't hear you, Ray.

SUAREZ: ... no, not you Congressman Roukema, but Congressman Miller, you're very well aware that I've been trying to get in here. If you're just joining us, we're talking about the educational standards testing that the president has proposed to the Congress. The House has given him a setback in debating that and denying funding for various forms of the national standardize testing.

The Senate is perhaps less hostile to the testing plan, but is trying to put through other priorities, conferences committees are going to work. Representative Marge Roukema, Republican of New Jersey joins us from her district, and Representative George Miller joins us from Pacifica Station KPFA in Berkeley. He's a Democrat from California.

Our number in Washington is 800-989-8255. Anne is in Frederick, Maryland. Hi, Anne.

CALLER: Hi. I really agree with Representative Miller. I think that any kid in this country ought to get the same education whether they live in Maine or whether they live in the barrios. I think that we need to be able to measure that.

And the only way that we're going to be able to tell that my kid is in a supposedly really good decent school here is actually doing as well as they say he is compared to the other kids that he's going to be competing against to get into college is to have a national testing program that'll tell each individual kid how they did compared to everybody else, and how they did on a standard objective scale.

And I think they ought to get rid of all these darn local tests, which are taking the kids out of classroom time, that — it seems like every year they're spending more and more time being tested, and we should have just one set of national tests that everybody is compared to and compared against.

And, you know, frankly I don't care if we don't really know exactly what they're going to end up being tested on 10 years from now. I think we need to do something and get it started, and refine it as time goes by.

SUAREZ: Anne, one of the principles of American education is local control, and we've heard that, I mean, historians have noted it about American schools since public schools started in this country. Do you think you...

CALLER: Well, I disagree with that principle because...

SUAREZ: ... do you think you'll give up anything by letting the federal government take a glimpse into the working of your school? Do you surrender a piece of local control when you submit your students to a test like this?

CALLER: I worry about local control, because local control is where you get the bigots; local control is where you get the people that started things like the Scopes monkey trial; local control is where people who are not trying to find the truth exist.

I want to go for a national standard that everybody has to debate against. And if individuals feel that they need to teach their kids something more, then they should be teaching their kids themselves that something more. I feel that if your local standards don't stand up to what nationally we agree on, then there must be something wrong with your standards.

SUAREZ: Anne joining us from Frederick, Maryland. I'm Ray Suarez. You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION, from NPR News.

Marge Roukema, go ahead.

ROUKEMA: Well, that woman at least is direct and intellectually honest with her straightforward approach, I just happen to disagree with her — with her assumptions. Her straightforward approach would lead to, without question, and she said that she would much prefer that, a national ministry of education that would direct education from Washington and override state and local control.

Fine, if she's living in that kind of a world. I do not want that. I don't believe the American people want it, and I have never known of any circumstance where I would trust the Department of Education over my local school board.

I can go out and vote for that local school board. I in New Jersey can go out and vote for the funds for that school board, and vote for more money and put the priorities there. That is the heart of our democracy in this country, and I see no reason to change it right here and now on these educational standards.

Do I believe that we are long overdue for a national debate on how we approve — improve educational standards? Fine. I do not criticize the teachers the way many would. Many would accuse the National Educators Association and the State Teachers Association, with their union approach to things, for having led to this decline in standards.

And therefore, they have been part and parcel of the problem here, and leading to a national program like this seems to me to be moving us farther down that old way, which I don't believe has done public education any good.

SUAREZ: Congressman Miller.

MILLER: Well, you know, it's kind of interesting, that this whole notion that the federalization of education or a national curriculum. The fact of the matter is, those arguments are being induced for one simple person — reason, and that is to try to rally people against this program. They know that these standards are voluntary just like they know most of the federal education programs outside of education for the disabled are in fact voluntary, and if school districts don't like it, they don't have to participate.

But, I think really what the previous caller was telling you is that they want to know that their child's education of a world class standard. They want to know that, in fact, their child is really reading at what fourth grade children are capable of reading at that level. And all of the rest of this is kind of an interesting political attack.

I don't think it's going to hold water, it's not going to hold up in the conference committee. I think you have a very strong bipartisan support from William Buckley to David Gergen, to President Clinton, to educators, CEOs of top corporations that believe that this is a fundamental part of the building blocks of high standards, and a world class education for America's

children in the future.

SUAREZ: You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION, from NPR News. I'm Ray Suarez.

You just heard from Representative George Miller of California and Representative Marge Roukema of New Jersey is always with — also with us. We're going to take a short break now, and when we return we'll take more of your calls at 800-989-8255.

You can also e-mail us at totn@npr.org or send us a letter:

TALK OF THE NATION Letters 635 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20001

At 33 minutes past the hour, it's TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

Welcome back to TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Ray Suarez.

We're talking today about the national debate over standardized testing. My guests are Representatives Marge Roukema, Republican from New Jersey; and George Miller, Democrat from California. Both are members of the House Education and Workforce Committee, looking into President Clinton's proposed plans for national education testing.

If you want to join us, our number is 800-989-TALK. That's 800- 989-8255. Ellen writes from Strongsville, Ohio: "one of the questions you should be asking is what will happen once we get the results of the tests. They will really do no good unless you can offer programs to help those students who do not make passing scores."

"How will they implement and who will pay for the programs to get the failing teachers, students, and schools up to speed? Another test pointing out failures will do no good without a plan to fix the problem."

And this from Joan Davis Radoray (ph), who's the President of the Institute for Independent Education, which represents mostly African- American independent schools in cities around the country: "the use of tests is the single most aggravating assault on urban youth in elementary and secondary schools to diminish their spirit and educational attainment."

"The National Assessment of Educational Process, or NAEP, has been one of the most positive additions to the testing arsenal because it focused the spotlight away from individual achievement to the performance of local, state, and national entities. In fact, the trend data of NAEP have helped consumers to understand in some detail how state standards are being implemented in various jurisdictions."

"If we're going to have high-stakes testing, we need to provide a solid foundation for the growth of these tests out of strong curricula and teaching practices, thereby providing genuine direction for change in the learning environments of our youngsters."

Well there, George Miller, we hear from somebody representing basically minority students, saying, you know, if you want to have testing to figure out what districts are a problem — in trouble or what schools are in trouble, fine. But this one, which has a higher individual stress, is not the answer. And Ellen in Strongsville, Ohio saying OK, fine, once you get the results, what are you gonna do with them?

MILLER: Well when this was first — national testing was first suggested by President Bush, I argued very strongly that we should also have national opportunities to learn standards, which were fought by the Republicans and others. And I think even including maybe some of the Democrats in the Congress, on the theory that yes, once you did take these assessments — then once you had a roadmap to those students who were in trouble, to those schools that are in trouble and at risk of failure, you ought to then apply the resources in those areas.

And I continue to believe that's true. I think there's an interesting argument coming from the minority community. That is, if this test tells us that our children aren't performing, what will happen is nothing.

Well, that's an interesting political dynamics for people who insist on putting so much responsibility and love and care into local school boards and state legislatures and school districts. If the answer is that those districts will do nothing in light of evidence that their schools are falling behind, their children are at risk of failing, or in fact are failing, then we have a very serious problem in this country.

I happen to think that maybe cities like Chicago, San Francisco, and of course many others that I'm not aware of — but North Carolina is a state — are making a real effort at using high national standards and testing to drive an improvement in curricula; to drive higher expectations by teachers.

You know, one of the things we've learned over the last 25 years is that children are capable of so much more than we have historically asked of them, in terms of their ability to think and to reason and to carry out educational functions. And we've now got to put that to work.

But if the argument against testing is that school boards, when they find out that they're not doing very well, will do nothing. First of all, that sort of sounds like today. But I think what you'd need there is not a different test, what you need is a new school board or a new state legislature that will respond to the needs of parents and children.

SUAREZ: Representative Roukema?

ROUKEMA: Well, I'm kind of laughing here because I probably agree with the last part that George Miller just said: yeah, you do. You need a new state legislature, new governor, and a new local school board. But let me go to make another point, OK? 'Cause I think it's related to these issues as you've now raised them.

I want to have the national debate on what can, if anything, usefully be done. OK? But in the meantime, we have so many tests and so many standards whereby we already know the deficiencies, whether they be in urban education or across-the-board in science, math, reading et cetera.

And yet we don't — are not putting back the resources in there. We're cutting back on those resources. It would seem to me that if we want to get our priorities straight, we'd take this 90 — well, over \$100 million, OK, billions of dollars that we're going to put into this — and redirect it right now in the short term at least to Head Start, Early Start, and teacher preparation.

Wherever I go, I am told that they need better teacher preparation. They have unqualified teachers in the elementary schools and in the junior highs. And so if there's anything that school boards and school superintendents would quickly come to assess — agreement on, would be if they had the money, they would put those teachers back into training programs and get them more highly qualified to teach to those standards in the local classrooms.

SUAREZ: 800...

ROUKEMA: It is admittedly a question of priorities. And I think we — there are known programs that work that we're in desperate need of and that we've been cutting back on the financial resources for. And that should be the first priority and then we'll continue to discuss whatever relative merits there may or may not be to national testing.

SUAREZ: 800-989-8255. Jeffrey's in Tallahassee, Florida. Hi ya, Jeffrey.

CALLER: Hey, Ray. We do things other than play football here in Tallahassee.

SUAREZ: Well, that's good to know. You do that well, though.

CALLER: Let me just say: I think the, unfortunately, the topic and the people speaking on the topic sometimes are missing the point, that when it comes to looking at education, that I see all these people are like the old story, they're all trying to fiddle around with the alarm system that's sounding off while the building continues to burn.

I'm a father of five home-school children. My wife and I home-school our children, and I would just say as a general principle two things are completely working against the whole system of public education in this country, and one is: the majority of the people who are presently and in the past who've been in education; and number two, the eroding of the American two-parent family.

As long as those two elements continue as they are, and dig in — the educators and all the people who are in education dig in, and the family continues to erode, it's just a moot point. You can just discuss what you want ad infinitum.

SUAREZ: So Jeffrey, I take it you are opposed to testing?

CALLER: No, it's — no, I'm not opposed or for it. It's just, again, it's — unfortunately, what a lot of topics end up on the public radio system, it's pouring from the empty into the void.

MILLER: I don't think that's what's going on...

SUAREZ: Geez, Jeffrey. I don't know if that's necessarily a policy problem of public radio in particular. I mean, we're talking about something that the House Education Committee has been taking up as well, and public...

CALLER: Let me just say: that's nice. But they've been talking and discussing all these things for about the last 20 or 30 years. That's fine, but let me — to just give a slightly different nuance on this, let's take Switzerland for example.

They don't — 22 percent of people in Switzerland go on to college compared to 50 percent in America. The Swiss people, many of their top managers, many bankers, and people who are very successful in Switzerland, a very educated country, many of them have never seen the inside of a high school.

We have to realign our whole idea of what it is to teach a human being. And as long as the educational system continues to dig in, and all of these other people, whether it's the people who've been in the education system or all these government people — whatever they do, they're just beating a drum. That's all. Unfortunately, it's very unfortunate. A lot of us who know this have had to just go on out and, like my family and I, we've just had to go to home schooling.

SUAREZ: Jeffrey in Tallahassee, Florida, thanks for your call. Let's go next to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Marilyn, welcome. Marilyn.

CALLER: Yes, hello.

SUAREZ: Hi, Marilyn.

CALLER: I agree with both of your guests to some degree. I do agree that a voluntary test is not going to do any good. It doesn't have any teeth. But I think the Congresswoman is incorrect in that all of the control needs to be at the local level.

I'm — I just retired this past year. I'm a veteran of many, many years in the schools in Missouri and in Oklahoma. And I found that this is getting worse as time goes by. There are too many parents who don't understand whether or not their children are learning critical reading skills. This is — this is something that is my area. I can't speak to the math.

But they don't understand that they are not reading critically. And there are too many teachers that are giving extra credit to bring up grades because they don't want the parents on their back. They don't want to have to deal with all of this harassment. So, they give extra credit. A kid — used to be that a kid would copy down an encyclopedia article. Now, they run them off on the computer.

Now, you know, that's not doing a bit of good.

SUAREZ: Well Marilyn, as someone who until very recently was in the classroom, maybe you can tell us what kind of tools there were at your disposal for doing diagnostics? Some people have said there are already an array of tests, state to state, that helps teachers understand which kids are having trouble; or helps department chairmen understand which teachers are having trouble.

Did you have those at your disposal?

CALLER: Yes. We gave the Iowa tests of basic skills. And for some things, it was good. It was not particularly good in assessing critical reading skills.

ROUKEMA: May I ask her — there's no great mystery to this, is there? If you're a really talented teacher, you know who's achieving and you know if you're talented.

CALLER: Yes.

ROUKEMA: You know the children that need extra help.

CALLER: Yes.

ROUKEMA: There's no big mystery there, is there?

CALLER: That's the problem. The problem is in getting parents to go along with us.

ROUKEMA: Mm-hmm.

CALLER: That's the problem. And teachers — teachers really are tired of being hassled. And so, they're going to this dumbing down thing. The congressperson from California is correct. And it's

getting worse and worse. It's scary. I taught in one of the best — supposedly one of the best schools in Oklahoma.

And he's right about kids being able to do amazing things. They can do amazing things. A state test was instituted. My kids in government took it for the first time last year. And it was just amazing, the difference, because they thought they had to pass that test in order to graduate. Now...

MILLER: And I think, Marilyn, that's the point. When you set out what the goals are going to be or what the standards are going to be, it's amazing how children — how all of us — how all of us will respond. If we decide — you know, if Marge and I decide we want to — the goal is to run for the Senate, we know all kinds of things that we have to notch up and that we have to do and that we have to be proficient in and how we have to change things.

It — that's life. And it's — you know, there are tests in life. It's about getting employed. It's about, you know, it's about the SAT. It's about people notching themselves up to pass a law school exam to get into law school and to pass the state bar exam; to pass their graduate school exams.

You know, people notch themselves up based upon what they know their expectations are. And I have to tell you, I'm a great supporter of local education. That's where I've been for 23 years. But something is terribly wrong when this many children are slipping through the system. And I see schools where they concentrate on children, and you know how many — I mean, it's just amazing how many more of these children we can get to read at grade level when we make the effort.

So something is terribly wrong here, and I think this kind of national assessment will drive — listen, it may be voluntary, but if you think states are going to start opting out of the system when they see other states taking it, and their children doing well, or that — or parents asking: we want to know how our children are doing. It's just, you know, it — they're going to decide to participate, too.

SUAREZ: Marilyn in Tulsa, Oklahoma, thanks for your call.

Go ahead, Congresswoman.

ROUKEMA: This sounds extraordinary because some of the same arguments this last speaker made is what people like myself look at as the dumbing down of our educational system, was not brought on by the parents, but by the professional educators who had a philosophy for social promotion and the need — I've forgotten what the jargon is — but the need for self-respect et cetera.

And so they looked for interactions and social relationships, rather than getting back to basics. Now, this conversation...

MILLER: Marge?

ROUKEMA: ... this conversation, though, shows on the one hand how there's probably more agreement between Mr. Miller and myself, if

not coming to the same conclusion, but an agreement as to what the problem is. But the callers have indicated a wide misunderstanding of what the essence of this question is.

And we're all looking, I guess, at different sides of the issue and seeing it very differently, which just shows how much of a consensus there is in this country, to have a full debate over what are the problems and how much more resources, financial resources, should we be putting into it? And if so, where? Where do we put those financial resources?

MILLER: But Marge, I think a lot of that debate has already taken place. It may be new to the Congress...

ROUKEMA: Think so?

MILLER: ... but the fact is that state legislatures and local school districts are investing, this year, billions of new dollars that were not invested before.

ROUKEMA: That's true.

MILLER: And I think this...

ROUKEMA: And in New Jersey, that's very true.

MILLER: ... test raises — you know, and the interesting thing is when you look at the state exams, somewhere between 25 and 35 percent of the kids meet the state standard. When those same kids go forward to take the national exam that we currently have, where we just kind of compare on a general basis, somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of those kids can't meet that standard.

ROUKEMA: In certain states; in certain states, but not in California and New Jersey, right?

SUAREZ: OK, well...

ROUKEMA: It makes your point. I don't know.

MILLER: No but...

SUAREZ: Marge Roukema is in New Jersey. Representative George Miller is in California. And I'm in Washington. I'm Ray Suarez. You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

And Paul is also in California. He's in Mountain View. Hi ya, Paul.

CALLER: Hi. My question is: what is the point of the testing? What it comes down to is something that Congressman Miller mentioned earlier in this discussion, which is parental control. And if you find that a school is not performing up to your

standards or to the national standards, you can't do anything about it. It takes years to replace a school board or a state legislature or a governor.

And if you can't move your kid out of that school, then it's tough luck. And your kid is going to be...

MILLER: Well, I...

ROUKEMA: Then what's the alternative?

MILLER: Well, in California, you know, in California, I think many people on school boards would tell you they've been replaced rather quickly.

ROUKEMA: Absolutely. In New Jersey, too.

MILLER: In recall elections...

ROUKEMA: Absolutely.

MILLER: ... and you know, if the constituency, the parents, are going to say: "well, there's nothing you can do," then all is lost.

SUAREZ: But Paul...

ROUKEMA: And superintendents...

SUAREZ: But I think Paul might be making a...

CALLER: ... know that California it is, by law, required that a child with a Hispanic surname is placed into a immersion class, regardless of whether or not that child happens to be of Hispanic ancestry or not. And there is nothing you can do to get your child out of that program.

SUAREZ: So there's no language assessment at all, Paul?

CALLER: None.

ROUKEMA: Well, let me ask you: would you like that judgment to be held in Washington in the Department of Education? Because...

CALLER: Absolutely not.

ROUKEMA: All right.

CALLER: What I want is for my kids to be able to go to a school that will, in fact, perform. And I can't move my children out of any public school.

SUAREZ: So Paul, more than testing, you're talking about school choice.

CALLER: Exactly.

ROUKEMA: Oh, oh, OK.

MILLER: Well, but let me say, Paul, with all due respect, there's parents in school districts all over this state, I mean, I'm across the bay from you, who are moving their children from school to school based upon their decisions where their child can get a better education within a school district. So I'm not sure you're giving us

an accurate representation of the situation, certainly, not on a district-wide or state-wide basis here.

Paul in Mountain View, thanks for your call. We'll have time for one more this hour, from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Curtis, welcome.

CALLER: Hey, Ray. It's great to be on your show. The point of all this is we want our kids to succeed, and we feel that this test is going to show us if they have the potential to succeed. Do we agree with that?

MILLER: Well, it's not just the potential.

ROUKEMA: Not the way...

MILLER: It's how they're doing. It's how are they — are they reading at fourth grade level proficiently enough so that they can then read to learn.

CALLER: Let me take this from a business perspective. If you're a businessman, and I haven't heard that any businessmen are going to be involved in developing a test, but if you were a businessman...

MILLER: They are.

CALLER: ... if you could just — if you could just say: here's the 10 things — 10 things only — that I want my new employee to know, and you went out nationwide with that, because this is what it boils down to: we want the kids to succeed in school so they can get a job. And if they test well, then that shows we're teaching them the right thing.

If we can know how the kids in Arizona do, versus North Dakota, and I'm a businessman looking for an employee, I know where to go. And the student knows what to learn. I mean, what to apply his talent to. The school system knows what to apply.

MILLER: Well, that — Curtis, that's the purpose of this exam. Children come to school in kindergarten, first, second, third grade, and we start the process of helping them to learn to read. The fourth grade exam is whether or not they have now learned sufficiently at a high enough level so that they can now read to learn, if you will; so they can start to acquire knowledge in other areas because of their reading skills.

The same with them would be true in mathematics. And that's the reason that the National Business Roundtable, I think there's 200 high technology executives that have supported this effort because they believe you have to establish these benchmarks so that not only can children work toward the benchmark, but we can tell which children haven't achieved it or which districts haven't achieved it, and we can then make the adjustments.

SUAREZ: But that's where the voluntary nature of the test, which is meant to make it more politically palatable...

ROUKEMA: Yes.

SUAREZ: ... makes it also — undermines its effectiveness as an evenly-applied national tool. Congressman...

MILLER: But you are never going to have a mandatory test because the Congress of the United States and parents and local — will never go along with a federally-mandated exam or curriculum.

ROUKEMA: George Miller...

MILLER: So ...

ROUKEMA: ... I've got to ...

MILLER: ... that's just never going to happen.

ROUKEMA: That's a good example...

SUAREZ: OK.

MILLER: So this is what business and others have decided is the next best thing.

ROUKEMA: May I just say to my business person — the business caller there, you do recall that this was one of the points I made at the beginning, that the one thing that gives me pause to think about this a little bit more is the fact that I have some business people that have raised exactly the same question — people with businesses outside the State of New Jersey who are concerned about the low level.

That's something that we should think through. But I don't think this preemptive strike with an ill-thought out and ill-conceived, and poorly analyzed proposal...

SUAREZ: Well, that's all the time we have for this hour. Representative Roukema, thanks for being with us, Marge Roukema from New Jersey; and Representative George Miller joined us from KPFA in California — Berkeley.

In Washington, I'm Ray Suarez, NPR News.■