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1. The Dallas Morning News

08/31/97; Edition: HOME FINAL; Section: NEWS; Page 8A

Report says U.S. students slipping in reading, writing **Results also show continued improvement in math, science**

By Julie Hirschfeld
Washington Bureau
of The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON - American students are making progress in math and science skills but have lost ground in reading and writing, a national report card released Saturday shows.

The academic progress report from the National Center for Education Statistics is based on tests given last year across the country to more than 30,000 students in the 11th, eighth and fourth grades.

The report found that students have been improving their math and science performance since the 1970s. But reading and writing levels remained stagnant in almost every case and even declined among one age group.

"The results of these tests tell us that our nation's schools are consistently doing a better job in teaching math and science at every age level tested," U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley said.

"Reading scores are stable - which is not good enough. We can do better."

Still, Education Department officials said Saturday's study shows that U.S. students have come a long way since former Education Secretary Terrel Bell declared a national education crisis in 1984's "A Nation at Risk."

"I think it fits very nicely into . . . {President Clinton's} emphasis on higher standards for all students," said Marshall Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education. "We've got to build the habits early and build the skills early."

In his Saturday radio address, Mr. Clinton said the report illustrates the importance of developing national standards and instituting standardized national tests to measure students' achievements.

"The fact is high standards are essential to providing our children the best education in the world, and I intend to do whatever is necessary to make sure we move forward," he said.

In the face of opposition to a government-run testing system, Mr. Clinton said he would propose that the test be developed by an independent, bipartisan board Congress created some time ago.

"This will make sure these tests measure what they should - nothing more, nothing less."

Compared with test results from 1986, Saturday's report showed students aged 9 and 13 demonstrated greater knowledge of everyday science. More 17-year-olds have detailed scientific knowledge and can evaluate the appropriateness of scientific procedures.

Since 1977, 9- and 13-year-olds have also made progress in math, where more can add and subtract two-digit numbers, recognize relationships among coins, multiply, divide, and solve one-step problems. More 9- and 17-year-olds can compute with decimals, fractions and percents and solve simple equations.

While the vast majority of all three age groups can perform the most basic reading tasks, 9- and 13-year-olds showed only modest increases in the past decade in abilities to "search for basic information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations." Seventeen-year-olds showed almost no change at all in reading performance.

In the report's long-term analysis, which compares tests taken since 1969, 17-year-olds showed the least advancement in math, science, reading and writing.

Science performance among 17-year-olds declined, while 13-year-olds performed on about the same level and 9-year-olds improved.

Math performance stayed the same among 17-year-olds between 1973 and 1996, while it improved for 13- and 9-year-olds.

And in reading and writing, where none of the long-term results showed improvement, 11th-graders performed worse than any other group. While the vast majority of 11th-graders have basic writing skills, the report found that the percentage of high school juniors who "can begin to write focused and clear responses to tasks" declined to 83 from 89 percent. Eighth-graders demonstrated similar declines.

The number of juniors who can master the next level of difficulty - "write complete responses containing sufficient information" - fell from 39 to 31 percent.

"High school juniors need to take their writing skills much more seriously if they expect to do college-level work," Mr. Riley said.

The study also found that the number of 17-year-olds who read for pleasure daily has dropped from 31 percent in 1984 to 23 percent last year. Sixteen percent of juniors said last year that they never read for pleasure, up from 9 percent only a dozen years before.

As for homework-related reading, almost half the nation's 17-year-olds, 47 percent, say they read fewer than 10 pages a day. That number has not changed for more than a decade.

"This is another indication that we need to take a very hard look in every community in this nation at the quality of our

curriculum," Mr. Smith said.

Parents' groups said they worried about the study's evidence of a decline in reading and writing.

"It's true that we're really more of a visual generation, and children spend an awful lot of time watching television," said Pat Dingsdale, education commission chair of the National Parents and Teachers Association. "It takes an all-out effort by parents and teachers to role-model and to demonstrate the importance of reading for pleasure and studying."

The report follows a College Board study released Tuesday showing SAT verbal scores stagnant, math scores rising and large-scale grade inflation pervading the country.

The two studies found similar signs of advancement among ethnic and racial minorities and girls, historically at a disadvantage in schools and testing.

More students of all races took chemistry last year than in 1986, according to Saturday's study, and the gap between the number of white and black students enrolled in those courses fell from 14 percent to 9 percent.

In the past decade, the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in chemistry courses has nearly doubled to 46 percent, though that still lags by 12 percent enrollment among whites.

The results were similar for algebra courses.

But Fanni Simmons, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board, warned against too much optimism about shrinking racial disparities.

"The racial gaps have declined substantially since NAEP began around 1970," Ms. Simmons said. "However, the differences are still very large, and since the late 1980s, progress has stalled, and in some cases the differences have become even greater."

For instance, Ms. Simmons pointed to an analysis of 1994 NAEP data that shows the average reading score for blacks dropping by nine points since 1988, while white students' scores slipped only one point. In math scoring, while black students in 1990 cut in half the gap between themselves and whites, the gulf widened in 1994 and again last year to 27 percent.

Another gap that captured the attention of education officials was one between public and private school achievement.

Between 1984 and 1996, public schoolers lost less ground in reading skills than did their counterparts in private schools. Reading achievement fell nine points for private school 17-year-olds, but only one point for their public school counterparts. ■

1. The Washington Times

08/31/97; Edition: 2; Section: A; Page A1

Clinton bends on education testing

By Warren P. Strobel

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

VINEYARD HAVEN, Mass. - President Clinton backed off his suggestion that the Department of Education develop proposed national math and reading tests yesterday.

Instead, he announced that he is giving that task to an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress.

The move, announced in his weekly radio address, was an effort to lessen conservative opposition to his drive for national education standards, but it was immediately denounced as a sham by Rep. Bill Goodling, Pennsylvania Republican.

Mr. Goodling, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, has drafted an amendment that would bar Mr. Clinton from spending any federal funds to develop standardized tests.

Administration officials with the vacationing president acknowledged that the abrupt switch in position was aimed at defusing efforts like Mr. Goodling's.

Taking direct aim at the amendment, without naming its sponsor, Mr. Clinton said it "would prevent us from developing a common test for math and reading and therefore would prevent your school or your state from choosing to take the test."

Of his opponents, he said: "The arguments they're using are the very same ones we've heard for years now. They amount to a determination to avoid accountability.

"High standards are essential to providing our children the best education in the world, and I intend to do whatever is necessary to make sure we move forward," he said.

Mr. Goodling was quick to rebut the president, saying the tests "won't boost the academic performance of a single American child. Americans should not be misled into thinking that new tests will lead to better students. That's akin to claiming that better speedometers make faster cars."

"{Republicans} strongly support high academic standards, but strongly oppose new national tests," Mr. Goodling said in a statement. "House Republicans would rather send federal dollars directly to the classroom, bolster basic academics and seek ways to increase parental involvement."

Mr. Clinton's address comes as most schoolchildren nationwide are preparing to return to class for what is expected to be a record-breaking enrollment.

The president has made national education standards a major goal of his second term, proposing that all fourth-graders take the same national test for reading and that eight-graders do the same for math.

Deputy White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart said the radio address was "laying down the marker that this is an issue that is important, and we're willing to fight for it."

Critics worry that national educational standards would mean a further federal intrusion into educational policy, which traditionally has been under local control. Many of those same critics would like to see the Education Department dismantled.

On the issue of who should develop the national tests, Mr. Clinton acknowledged, "Some people worry that the federal government would play too large a role.

"To meet that concern, I have instructed my staff to rewrite our proposal to make sure these tests are developed not by the Department of Education, but by an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress many years ago," he said. "This will make sure these tests measure what they should - nothing more, nothing less."

Aides identified the panel as the National Assessment Governing Board. Congress created it 10 years ago to oversee the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tests samples of students nationwide each year.

The Education Department already has issued a contract to begin development of the proposed tests for fourth- and eighth-graders.

Mr. Clinton's drive for using the same educational standards across the nation has run into mixed success.

Several states - including Maryland - and many urban school districts have announced they will join, and the president has ordered Defense Department schools to go along. But elsewhere resistance remains high, including among civil rights groups who worry the tests will be used to discriminate■

1. Los Angeles Times

* 08/31/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: National Desk; Page A-14

Clinton Urges National School Test

By MELISSA HEALY
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON — Citing a comprehensive education study showing mixed progress in student performance, President Clinton pressed Saturday for testing based on national standards and sought to blunt GOP opposition by proposing that a bipartisan panel of experts draft the exams.

With the largest group of U.S. schoolchildren in history preparing to head back to classrooms across the country, Clinton renewed his call for nationwide testing of fourth-graders and eighth-graders to determine their competence in reading and mathematics.

Addressing the subject in his weekly radio address, Clinton called attention to a new study by the **Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics** showing gradual improvement in students' science and math performance but little progress in reading and writing.

His appeal comes as Republican lawmakers have begun rallying against Clinton's proposal to offer cities, states and school systems the voluntary option of administering standard tests.

Led by House Education Committee Chairman William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), opponents hope in coming weeks to bar the use of federal funds to draft standard tests that would be administered nationally.

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GOP critics charge that national tests could clear the way for imposition of a national curriculum—a move that would usurp a long tradition of local and state control of public education.

Thinking national performance tests will improve education is "akin to claiming that better speedometers make for faster cars," Goodling said after the president's address.

"The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools," he told the Associated Press.

But with fresh poll results showing support for national tests by a majority of Americans, Clinton tried to head off a partisan battle.

The president, who is vacationing with his family on the resort island of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., asserted in his radio address that the national standards "will help us to upgrade curricula, improve teaching, and target students and schools who need assistance."

The Education Department study shows that U.S. students, particularly African Americans and Latinos, have significantly improved their science and math skills since 1982.

It found that among all groups, many more 17-year-olds were taking advanced math and science courses in 1996 than was the case in 1986—an indication that more 11th-graders are laying the groundwork for higher-level math and science learning.

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But the study also found that all groups have failed to boost their reading abilities over the past 25 years. Even more troubling, 11th-graders have lost ground in their writing skills since 1984, the first year the government began keeping track.

The findings, said Deputy Education Secretary Marshall S. Smith, demonstrate that a nation galvanized to boost its children's educational skills can do so. The improvements in math and science appear to reflect curriculum changes and increased attention to those subjects following the release in 1983 of a Reagan administration report titled "A Nation at Risk."

But Smith said the new figures underscore that parents and school board officials need to press educators to make sure their curricula address the newly identified deficits.

The tests in the study cited by the president give only a long-range, nationwide picture and are not broken down by states. They have asked students the same questions since the late 1960s or early 1970s, and are designed to establish the general trend of academic achievement.

But the study, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also conducts tests in math, science, reading and writing that do provide the states choosing to participate with a sense of how their students compare to those elsewhere. Those tests change in content over time to reflect as closely as possible what is actually being taught in school.

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On those tests, California has lagged far back in the pack in math, science and, especially, reading in the past few years. In May, the national testing program reported that California's eighth-graders ranked 39th out of the 44 states that volunteered to have their students participate.

In February, the state received similarly disappointing news in the area of mathematics. Nationwide, 36% of fourth-graders scored at levels reflecting a less-than-basic understanding of age-appropriate materials, but in California, 54% of the students fell into that category. Among eighth-graders, 49% of the students had not yet mastered the basics, while nationally that group represented 38% of the students.

California has turned in its weakest performance in the area of reading. The latest NAEP results, from the spring of 1995, showed California ranked last among the participating states, tied with Louisiana.

That report said that about 60% of the state's fourth-graders had not yet picked up the most basic ability to read, meaning that they could not understand most of the material they were expected to read in their classes. The report also said California was one of the few states in which reading performance was continuing to plunge, with the proficiency level falling from the 1992 test to the most recent test.

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While Clinton touted the reported overall improvements in science and math, he defended his efforts to press for greater academic achievement by using national tests.

"We all know we have more to do to improve our schools and to raise learning levels for all our students," he said. "I've been working to improve education for nearly 20 years now, and I am convinced we can give our children the education they need to thrive in the 21st century only by setting high standards and by challenging students, teachers, parents and principals to meet them."

Acknowledging Republican concerns, Clinton said he has directed his staff to rewrite the administration's education proposal, first presented in his 1997 State of the Union address, "to make sure these tests are developed not by the Department of Education but by an independent, bipartisan board created by Congress many years ago."

Clinton's earlier proposal was silent on the question of who would draft the national testing standards. But the White House has long expected that it would turn to the National Assessment Governing Board, a 26-member group established by Congress in 1988.

Members of the board include education experts ranging from state governors of both parties to local school board officials and educators. They oversee the drafting of the Nation's Report Card, a periodic measure of students' competence in reading, math, science, writing, history and geography and other fields.

Even as he sought to head off Republican opposition to his proposals, Clinton seemed determined to prevail over expected liberal critics. In the past, some have opposed national testing for fear that it would further stigmatize poor and immigrant students and their schools.

But Clinton noted that officials representing the school districts of six of the nation's largest cities—including Los Angeles—have expressed support for his testing initiative and said they want to take part in the tests even if their states do not.

Times staff writer Richard Lee Colvin in Los Angeles contributed to this story. ■

1. The Washington Post

08/31/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A13

In Attempt to Assuage GOP, Clinton Pledges to Rework National Testing Plan

Associated Press

President Clinton opened a "back to school" push to salvage his national education testing plan today by promising a rewrite to assuage Republican fears of federal power over local schools.

"I intend to do whatever is necessary to move forward," the president said in his weekly radio address broadcast from Martha's Vineyard, where he and his family are vacationing.

Under the rewritten plan, math and reading tests for the nation's schoolchildren would be developed by an independent bipartisan board, rather than the **Education Department**.

"This will make sure these tests measure what they should — nothing more, nothing less," Clinton said.

The Education Department, long under fire, has more recently been slated for extinction by congressional Republicans who view the federal bureaucracy as anathema to the tradition of local control over schools.

Clinton's olive branch did not sway the chairman of the House education committee from opposition to the overall plan.

Thinking national performance tests will improve education is "akin to claiming that better speedometers make for faster cars," said Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.). "The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools."

Education officials say they anticipate it would cost \$16 million to develop the tests initially and \$100 million per year thereafter to update and administer them.

"House Republicans would rather send federal dollars directly to the classroom," Goodling said.

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, based in Cambridge, Mass., urged Congress to block funding for the testing plan. "You don't fatten cattle by weighing them more often, and you don't improve student learning by giving more low-quality tests," said Monty Neill, associate director of the nonprofit group, which promotes fair testing.

Clinton's address and Goodling's rejoinder could suggest barbed partisanship to come. The president plans to dedicate most of September to his testing cause, aides say. Congress returns this week from its August recess.

Since Clinton called in his State of the Union address for higher national standards and performance testing, the movement has lagged. Only six states and 15 major school districts have signed up for the 1999 testing.

But even as Clinton aimed to accommodate Republican opponents, his aides gathered ammunition against them. The speech writers' early drafts of the radio address proposed a much more confrontational tone and the White House communications and research office sought to paint Goodling as having flip-flopped on the issue after supporting voluntary testing in 1992.

In the radio speech, Clinton said he was encouraged by a new government report that found student achievement in math and science improved during 1996. The National Assessment of Educational Progress also found, however, that students from grade school through high school still cannot read or write any better than before.

The tests were given to about 30,000 pupils and chart trends in educational progress since the 1970s. There are no individual, school district or state scores.

The tests measure 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds on math, science and reading. The writing test, added later, is given to fourth-, eighth- and 11th-graders. ■

1. The New York Times

08/31/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section 1; National Desk; Page 1, Column 2

U.S. Is Seeking More Influence Over Education

By PETER APPLEBOME

As vacations end and 52 million students return to school, their elders find themselves in a historic tug of war pitting the traditional local control of education against a growing national presence that is making Washington a bigger player in education now than at perhaps any other time in the nation's history.

When Congress convenes in September, President Clinton will try to win support for the first truly national performance tests in the schools, and Republicans in Congress will mobilize to kill the initiative.

In a radio address yesterday in which he promoted his testing plan, the President said he was encouraged by a report on long-term trends that showed student improvement in some subjects. \$(Page 18\$)

Republicans and a few Democrats will push for proposals to increase vouchers and school choice, a California Congressman will argue for a bill designed to upgrade teaching by linking Federal aid to improved state teaching standards, and other issues like national reading initiatives and development of a national curriculum will receive enormous attention.

Experts disagree on how much of what is happening reflects a long-term shift toward greater Federal involvement or is a result of a historical moment: a politically adroit President intensely focused on education, aging baby boomers who have made education a leading national issue and an absence of competing issues.

And some of the same factors are making education issues equally contentious at the local level, as evidenced by the election-year scrapping in New York City between Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and a Democratic challenger, Borough President Ruth W. Messinger of Manhattan, over who is responsible for classroom overcrowding.

But experts say that educational issues, traditionally the province of state and local officials, have become national ones to an unusual extent. Indeed, both supporters of an expanded national presence in education and those who decry it seem equally willing for now to use the power and bully pulpit of Washington to further their agendas.

"This is a country that is trying very hard to figure out how to do something no nation on earth has done before, which is to have national standards without a national ministry of education, and the competing pressures are just enormous," said Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, which has helped develop voluntary national standards. "It's changed education from an issue that national politicians wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole to one they feel they can't afford to be silent on."

Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said the Administration respected the degree to which the power to run America's schools is and should be based at the state and local levels. But as education becomes increasingly critical to the nation's economic future, he said, improving student achievement must be seen as "a state responsibility, a local function and a Federal priority."

"I'm a former Governor and the President is a former Governor, and we have complete respect for the state and local role in education," Mr. Riley continued. "But this is the education era, and the future of the country is dependent on the ability of children to master the basics and get a good education."

But critics, particularly conservatives, say Mr. Clinton's approach, and especially his proposal for voluntary national tests developed by the Federal Government of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics represents an unwarranted growth of Federal power.

"Once you have the Federal Government saying what children should know, the next step is to prepare the teachers to teach to those new standards," said Representative Bill Goodling, Republican of Pennsylvania, who is chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. "What we're seeing now is the next big step in the federalization of elementary and secondary education."

The United States has one of the most decentralized education systems in the world, and for all the wind blowing from Washington, the money and power still reside largely in state governments and local school districts. Only 7 percent of the nation's education spending comes from the Federal Government.

But, just as he made education a central focus of his tenure as Governor of Arkansas, President Clinton has focused as compulsively on the nation's schools as any President in history. That attention, along with the growth of education to a position near the top of most polls of subjects of national concern, has meant that Washington is no longer a bystander on most education issues.

Mr. Goodling has vowed to attach an amendment to the House Appropriations bill that would prohibit the Administration from going ahead with its proposed national tests.

He and other critics say the tests would be a \$90 million waste of money and an unwarranted step toward a national curriculum, but proponents say it would allow states, schools and parents to spur achievement and gauge how their students are doing compared with national standards.

In his radio address, Mr. Clinton insisted the tests were needed and said he wanted an independent bipartisan board already created by Congress to develop and administer them. He said that would insure that the tests would not represent an expansion of Federal power.

"High standards are essential to providing our children the best education in the world, and I intend to do whatever is necessary to make sure we move forward," he said.

Existing tests either are not based on common national standards or, like the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the best national benchmark, are given to samplings of students and provide only broad national data, not results for individual schools or students.

Clinton Administration officials say they have the authority to go ahead with the tests with or without Congressional authorization, but they are mobilizing their forces to defeat Mr. Goodling's amendment.

Congress is also likely to vote on a school-voucher bill whose sponsors include Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, and Senator Daniel R. Coats, Republican of Indiana; the House majority leader, Dick Armey, a conservative from Texas; and Representative Floyd H. Flake, Democrat of Queens. The bill would create a scholarship fund that would enable 2,000 low-income Washington students to go to the private or parochial school of their choice. While the bill would specifically affect only Washington, a main purpose, sponsors say, would be to stimulate further national debate on vouchers for low-income students.

"It will force us as a nation to confront the palpable anger many parents in urban areas are feeling and force the education establishment to tell these poor families who simply want the best for their children why they can't have the same choice in education that most middle-class and upper-class families already enjoy," a spokesman for Mr. Lieberman said in a statement.

Similarly, Representative George Miller, Democrat of California, following the recommendations of a national commission on the nation's teaching force, has introduced legislation that would require states receiving Federal education financing to set clear standards for teacher quality and help schools recruit and train better teachers.

And Republicans are likely to offer an alternative to Mr. Clinton's proposed America Reads tutoring initiative and offer their competing vision of how to improve reading skills.

These issues and others are striking evidence of a historic national focus on education. From the G.I. Bill after World War II to the Great Society programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson, to the development of special education and Title I financing for low-income students in the 1970's, education issues have cropped up in Washington.

But education historians say those periods did not see the sustained national attention that the current education-reform movement has had for more than a decade, beginning with the Education Department's landmark "A Nation at Risk" report in 1983, which said the nation's economic future was imperiled by a declining school system.

Education experts say there are many reasons for this sustained attention. There is Mr. Clinton's longstanding interest in education at a time when peace and prosperity and a comparative relative absence of compelling national issues has given it unusual visibility. There is the maturing of baby boomers into parents obsessed with their children's schools. Perhaps most of all there is the widespread sense that the economic prospects of children and the nation are dependent on an educational system that is not performing well enough. Given those factors, it was inevitable for politicians in Washington to assert their influence now, some experts say.

"If you've got a hammer, everything looks like a nail, and if you're a politician in Washington, the natural tendency is to use the power you've got," said Frank Newman, director of the Education Commission of the States.

Mr. Newman said a proper balance could be struck between national leadership and local control as expressed in the dictum that efforts toward common standards or tests would be national and voluntary, not Federal and mandatory.

But whether that balance can be achieved is anyone's guess.

David Tyack, an education professor at Stanford University, said that in some ways the intense global competition for educational achievement created pressure for a concerted response from Washington. "There's so much pressure to think internationally, to compare ourselves to other nations, to look at a much smaller, more interdependent world, and that almost demands a national response," Mr. Tyack said. "But that goes against the deeply ingrained distrust of a centralized government, especially in education. There's a fascinating tension playing out that will take a long time to resolve itself." A recent assessment of long-term trends in student performance shows improvement in some subjects but not in others over two decades. It also shows a continuing disparity among parts of the country. Graph compares percentages of 13-year-old students in the Northeast, Central, West, and Southeast with mathematics scale scores at or above 250. It also compares percentages of 9-year-old students in each region with reading scale scores at or above 250.+ Figures are provided for 1978, 1986, 1990 and 1996. (Source: *National Center for Education Statistics*) ■

1. NBC Nightly News

August 30, 1997

National Testing

BRIAN WILLIAMS In this country, domestic politics did not take a holiday this holiday weekend. When President Clinton first talked about the federal government testing all U.S. students, critics cried, 'Big Government' and 'Big Brother'. Today the White House seemed to cry, 'Uncle' and announced they've come up with another plan. NBC's Chip Reid is with the vacationing president on Martha's Vineyard.

CHIP REID The president spent yet another long day on the golf course, but he still found time to take a shot at opponents of his campaign for national education achievement tests.

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, radio address The fact is, high standards are essential to providing our children the best education in the world. And I intend to do whatever is necessary to make sure we move forward.

REID With the nation's children heading off to school, the president now intends to make good on the promise he made at the beginning of his second term -- to make their education his top priority.

CLINTON, State of the Union Address file footage First a national crusade for education standards.

REID In his State of the Union address, Mr. Clinton implored the states to voluntarily adopt nationwide tests in reading for all fourth graders, in math for all eighth graders -- a campaign driven by a history of mediocre scores. American students recently placed 17th in the world in science, 28th in math. It is a popular idea. A recent Gallup Poll found two-thirds of Americans support standardized national tests. Even so, it has become bogged down -- only six states have signed on. Critics say students already get all the testing they need. The Republican chairman of the House Education Committee Bill Goodling today said the president's plan is a waste of taxpayer money that won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools. The president did make one concession to his critics today, agreeing to take development of the tests away from the Department of Education and give it to an independent bi-partisan board, but advisors say he is adamant about the rest of the package and he is ready and willing to fight it out. Chip Reid, NBC News, with the president on Martha's Vineyard. ■

1. Education Daily

August 29, 1997

CONGRESS TO DIVE INTO APPROPRIATIONS QUAGMIRE

An effort to shut down President Clinton's voluntary national tests is expected to dominate debate over the education portion of a fiscal 1998 appropriations bill for social programs when Congress returns Tuesday.

In addition, issues unrelated to education, such as family planning and clean needle exchanges, will likely drag out consideration of the \$79 billion Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bills.

The bipartisanship and compromise that marked this summer's high-profile budget and tax agreements will probably give way to more traditional acrimony: GOP conservatives will put heat on congressional leaders to closely adhere to conservative principals, such as shrinking the size of government and reducing the federal role in education.

The budget and tax deals "left frustration among conservatives that their issues haven't had a chance to be debated," said Ed Kealy, executive director of the Committee for Education Funding.

Congress has only one month to pass a spending plan before a new fiscal year begins Oct. 1; both bills—S. 1061 and H.R. 2264—have been approved by the chambers' appropriations committees.

The Senate is to begin debate on its version Tuesday, while the House is to start considering H.R. 2264 on Thursday.

Both would provide about \$34 billion to the Education Department, up from \$29.8 billion this year, including mandatory funding for programs such as student loans, which guarantee benefits to all who are eligible.

Tests To Technology

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, says he has almost enough votes on an amendment to the bill that would prevent ED from spending more money to develop voluntary national tests for fourth- and eighth-graders (ED, Aug. 28).

And Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif., will press for an amendment to prohibit ED from investigating a state—or imposing any penalty on it—for not providing special education to disabled students above age 18 who are convicted and incarcerated as adults (ED, Aug. 6).

Meanwhile, GOP House members are expected to try to reallocate funds to favorite programs.

Riggs, who chairs the K-12 education subcommittee, wants to move \$25 million to charter schools at the expense of the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund. The House Appropriations Committee voted to give charter schools \$75 million, and Riggs' effort would bring the total to the \$100 million that Clinton requested. He would cut the technology fund to \$435 million, putting it \$10 million above Clinton's request.

Goodling also might try to boost special education state grants by \$25 million by shifting funds from adult job training and other Labor Department programs.

On the Senate side, liberal Democrats could offer amendments to resurrect the State Student Incentive Grants—which neither congressional appropriators nor administration officials want to fund anymore—and to increase funding to Pell Grants, school construction and Head Start (ED, July 11).

Looking Ahead To Conference

After the two chambers pass their separate funding plans, they will have to forge a compromise.

If they run out of time, they would have to pass a stopgap funding measure to keep federal funds flowing after Sept. 30.

Funding levels for major education programs differ significantly between the two chambers' versions. For instance, the House committee's bill would provide \$397 million more for Title I than the Senate's. Conversely, the Senate version would provide \$596 million more for special education state grants than the House's.

Because of the differences between the bills, appropriators will have to "find new money from other committees or the reserve [appropriators set aside for emergencies] if they want to fund both the president's and Congress's priorities," said Kealy. "The only way out is to come up with new money."

That's what Congress ended up doing last year, providing an unprecedented \$3.5 billion boost to education, Kealy notes (ED, Oct. 1, 1996).

In addition, this summer's tax cuts were bigger than the president or Congress originally agreed on, and there is less pressure to cut the deficit because it is shrinking, he said.

While there is no Senate sponsor for a whole-school reform initiative sought by Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., Democratic and GOP sources say they expect some version of that \$205 million plan will emerge from a House-Senate conference (ED, July 17).

+Laureen Lazarovici■

Proposed national tests becoming 'a political football'

Depending on who's talking, voluntary national tests will enable American kids to soar to new heights or will be the cruelest hoax ever perpetrated on the poor.

President Clinton is calling for fourth-grade reading tests and eighth-grade math tests set to world-class standards to raise academic performance. Already the U.S. Education Department has contracted to have the tests developed and is lobbying for state support.

"It's become a political football," says Anthony P. Carnevale, an economist for the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

Competing sides even take issue with a Gallup Poll that shows 57% favoring Clinton's proposal and 37% opposed. Education Secretary Richard Riley says that shows substantial support. But Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of a key House education committee and a foe of the tests, says the 57% represents a drop from last week's announcements that more than 80% of the public support national tests.

Carnevale says, "The arguments in favor of a national test are fairly compelling. You want more accountability in education; you want to find out what works. We can't do that now. We can't compare students from one state to the next; a student from Dubuque (Iowa) to a student in Boston, to a student in Paris, to a student in Taiwan. Each of those students is competing for the same jobs now. So we better figure out a way to find out if our kids are up to snuff, and we know they aren't."

Only 40% of American children meet basic reading standards in the fourth grade, and only 20% have studied algebra by the eighth grade, compared with 100% in many other countries, ETS studies show. The national tests would be based on the highly respected National Assessment of Educational Progress, mandated by Congress to periodically sample student achievement, and it would be linked to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, which compares U.S. students with peers in other countries.

Carnevale says "this will be a test to empower parents," rather than to erode local control. "It will end up being discussed at the kitchen table just like the report card is. This will be something that comes in the mail about their child and how that child compares. One assumes this will start some bottom up change in American education."

In opposing the tests, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund worries there will be "harm to children through misuse of the tests." Officials point to using results for retention in grades, ability grouping, tracking, graduation and possibly teacher assessment.

"The test scores will be of little value for parental action to improve the quality of education

offered to their children because officials will not provide such information as the education level of teachers, school funding levels, availability of books and other supplies, and the ratio of students to teachers," says the civil rights group.

Patricia E. Loera of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund says the fact that the tests will not be printed in Spanish "will lead to the exclusion of over 3 million limited English proficient children nationally. We believe that impacts the validity of the test as well as raises serious equity issues for LEP children."

Loera also fears the tests will be culturally biased. Fifteen urban school districts have agreed to participate, and Loera notes that students with limited English proficiency make up 20%, or 700,000, of their student bodies.

By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY

1. USA Today

August 29, 1997

Clinton pushes for national tests

WASHINGTON - Battles over President Clinton's goal of national reading and math tests for fourth and eighth grades are expected to erupt the day Congress returns on Wednesday.

Clinton, who'll raise the issue in Saturday's radio address, wants to create tests as challenging as any currently available. And while they're voluntary, he's betting districts will want to see how their kids measure against the best.

But he has run afoul of critics who see federal influence creeping into local control of schools. And civil rights groups, including the NAACP, fear the tests being misused to track, or retain, students.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., has an amendment to an upcoming budget bill that prohibits using any federal funds for individualized tests such as those proposed by Clinton. He also has a resolution that forbids the administration from taking any action to develop or prepare for the tests "without Congress' approval."

Goodling, a former teacher, principal and school superintendent who now is chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, is hedging his bets for success. He knows many Democrats, he says, who feel as he does that "it's foolish, a waste of money. But again it's their president's initiative."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Education Department used Congress' recess to award a \$13 million contract to begin development of the tests, scheduled to start in March 1999. Also, Education Secretary Richard Riley hosted briefings for officials from 47 states.

"The president and I had no desire to sit around and merely hope for improvement - we wanted to take action," Riley told the gathering.

Americans are divided. Fifteen urban public school systems will participate. Michael Casserly, head of the Council of the Great City Schools representing the districts, says many more are interested.

By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY ■

1. LRP Publications

Aug. 28, 1997

Riley Wants NAGB to Set Policy for National Tests

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 — Federal education officials are asking Congress to push ahead with voluntary national tests by expanding the role the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

Education Secretary Richard W. Riley plans to ask Congress to pass legislation that would allow NAGB to set policy for the tests. Education Department officials said the plan is designed to ensure that the voluntary national tests "are responsive to and earn the confidence of parents, teachers, communities, states and local school districts."

NAGB is an independent, bipartisan board established by Congress in 1989. The board establishes policy guidelines for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a series of tests which measure performance in several subjects in grades four, eight and 12. Board members select the subjects and determine appropriate performance levels, set objectives and specifications for the tests, develop guidelines for reporting test results, and ensure that the tests are free of bias.

President Clinton proposed the tests for fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics, but congressional Republicans have criticized both the testing proposal and Clinton's failure to get congressional approval before moving the plan forward.

Riley announced the proposal on CBS Face the Nation. ■

1. Education Daily

August 28, 1997

ED WOULD LET NAGB OVERSEE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

In a reversal aimed at placating conservative critics, the Education Department is now willing to allow an independent, bipartisan board to oversee President Clinton's proposed voluntary national tests.

Education Secretary Richard Riley last weekend said he would send legislation to Congress allowing the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) to oversee the exams for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

Congressional Republicans and even conservatives who initially supported Clinton's testing program have complained that an independent body, and not ED, should oversee the tests (ED, July 21).

"That ought to calm a lot of those problems," Riley said Sunday on the CBS public affairs show *Face the Nation*.

Goodling: Still A Waste

The shift, however, did not satisfy Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee and a foe of the tests.

"There is no question that the Education Department shouldn't oversee the tests," Goodling said in a telephone interview Tuesday. "But [putting NAGB in charge] doesn't make the idea right."

During his appearance on the show with Riley, Goodling — a 22-year House veteran — called the tests "the biggest waste of tax dollars I've come across." The test is estimated to cost \$90 million over five years.

Goodling is trying to amend the upcoming fiscal 1998 education funding bill, H.R. 2264, to prohibit ED from spending any more money on the national tests until Congress specifically authorizes them.

He says he's probably amassed 200 votes in the 435-member chamber, including some from Democrats. But he wondered, "Will they cast a loyalty vote or will they vote their consciences?" House appropriations staffers expect a coalition of Republicans and liberal Democrats to come close to or even succeed in passing Goodling's amendment.

"I think the administration will lose by a large margin," said a GOP source. While slightly more optimistic, a Democratic insider acknowledged, "It could be a close one."

On Sunday's TV show, Riley wouldn't speculate on whether Clinton would veto a bill that would derail the tests, but did emphasize, "It is very important to the president."

Field tests of the exams are slated for spring 1998, with the full testing the following year.

Too Late For NAGB?

NAGB Chairman William Randall was taken by surprise by Riley's announcement, but welcomed it nonetheless. Earlier this summer, NAGB sent Riley a letter asking for the oversight authority (ED, Aug. 4).

"I think it is a very strong move," said Randall, Colorado's former education commissioner. "For the national test to get beyond the pilot stage, it has to be national, not federal."

NAGB includes teachers, state legislators, governors, chief state school officers, state and local school board members, principals, parents and others nominated by sitting board members and chosen by the education secretary.

The board steers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a snapshot of student achievement.

But Randall questioned how much authority NAGB would really have over the tests, given that specifications for the questions have already been formulated and ED has awarded the five-year, \$13 million contract (ED, Aug. 19).

ED will propose legislation to reauthorize NAEP and NAGB "with alacrity," as early as next week, said Mike Smith, ED's acting deputy secretary. Reauthorization of those programs had been scheduled for next year.

They expire this year, but Congress was planning to take them up after an automatic one-year extension. A House education committee spokesman said it was unlikely but not impossible for the panel to take up reauthorization this fall. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The Washington Times

08/27/97; Edition: 2; Section: A:NATION; Page A8

Student tests to get new help Riley wants role for national board

By Carol Innerst

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Bowing to a barrage of criticism over plans for voluntary national tests, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has called for the bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board to have a role in developing the tests.

Mr. Riley said the administration will submit legislation to Congress{D-} to expand the NAGB's authority to include setting policy for the tests, aimed at fourth- and eighth-graders.

"We're mindful of the criticism," Michael Cohen, special assistant to the president for education, said yesterday. "We've been talking of doing this. It's always been in our game plan."

"The problem is, they've already done everything," said Diane Ravitch, one of the most vociferous critics of the administration's procedures pertaining to development of the tests. "It's coming a little late. It's like locking the barn door after the animals are out. It would have been nice to have had nonpartisan input a long time ago."

Miss Ravitch, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and an assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration, has been urging the administration to give the NAGB authority over the new tests. She resigned this summer from one of the test advisory panels because the administration failed to do so, instead giving Education Department bureaucrats the authority. Last week the department gave a \$13 million contract to a consortium of test developers that turned out to be the sole bidder.

A press release sent out yesterday by the Education Department explained that Mr. Riley's proposal to involve the NAGB, which sets policy for the congressionally mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress, is "designed to assure that the voluntary national tests are responsive to and earn the confidence of parents, teachers, communities, states and local school districts."

It was issued the same day that the Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools showed that only 57 percent approve of President Clinton's plan to develop voluntary national tests for fourth- and eighth-graders based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Mr. Riley floated his NAGB plan Sunday on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation."

Rep. Bill Goodling, Pennsylvania Republican and chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, also was on the show. Within the GOP, he has been most active at trying to stop the administration from proceeding with the national tests in reading and math without congressional approval.

"He didn't seem placated when Riley raised the NAGB issue," a Goodling aide said. "If the Education Department seeks statutory authority for NAGB, they must cease doing everything they are doing now until Congress passes a bill. If they continue on the route they are going - developing tests through the department bureaucracy and then handing it to NAGB down the road - it's not something we want to see at all. They need to cease and desist."

"We're happy to have NAGB look at what needs to be done, and if things need to be fixed, fix them," Mr. Cohen said. "It's clear that NAGB would be a policy body with authority to develop or approve the test specifications and contents of the test - the kind of thing it does for NAEP now.■"

Aug 27, 1997

NEA Leader Wants Schools, Communities To Team Up

By Carolyn Bower
Of The Post-Dispatch Staff

Bob Chase, president of the nation's largest teachers union, said in Kirkwood Tuesday that educators and communities must strengthen their links to ensure quality schools.

"To move in the direction of improvement will take communitywide effort," said Chase, president of the National Education Association. "Schools can't do it by themselves. And abandoning public schools is not the way to create communitywide effort."

While only about a fourth of a community has children in public schools, what happens in schools is important to everyone, he said.

Chase visited the area Tuesday to meet with teachers and to visit two schools: Kirkwood High School on its first day of school and Francis Howell Middle School.

At Kirkwood, Principal Franklin McCallie led Chase and other teachers on a tour of the school's \$4.3 million performance wing, named after former Superintendent Thomas N. Keating. McCallie told Chase that teachers worked with architects to design an area that could be used as a performance center and teaching center for music, drama and art students.

Chase called McCallie "an incredible principal" and said: "It is good to see this. There are too many school districts where the arts have become forgotten. The arts are the soul of a culture."

He asked, if a football coach can have six assistants, why not have the same for the arts?

As an example of community support for schools, teachers praised a technology bond issue in Kirkwood that has provided many classrooms with a telephone with voice mail, computer with access to electronic mail and the World Wide Web, and a television screen to project computer information.

Lisa Sienkiewicz, a music teacher at North Glendale School and president of Kirkwood's NEA, has one of those classrooms.

"This has changed my teaching," Sienkiewicz said. "We have access to more people."

Chase said the NEA, which has 2.3 million members, has pushed for collaboration among colleges and communities to improve education. The union is helping veteran teachers work with beginning teachers and with peer evaluations, he said.

The union supports voluntary national tests of student achievement, as proposed by President Bill Clinton, he says.

Educators oppose taxpayer-funded vouchers to send children to private or religious schools, he says.

The union has established a special committee to study the problems of urban schools, particularly the areas of literacy and health, he says.

"Poverty creates a lot of problems, including learning problems," Chase said. "The NEA is committed to making sure schools are quality and to doing the things necessary to meet the needs of kids. But the rest of the community also has to hold itself accountable." ■

1. Detroit Free Press

August 27, 1997

Students' grades up, scores off **Officials at SAT, ACT suspect grade inflation**

BY PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI
AND TRACY VAN MOORLEHEM
Free Press Education Writers

The gap between what students appear to know and what they actually know may be widening, according to a report issued Tuesday with the annual release of national Scholastic Assessment Test scores.

Though overall SAT scores were up in 1997 compared with those from a decade ago, scores earned by A students actually fell.

Testing officials tracking the trend said it looks like grades are being inflated. But officials at colleges and high schools aren't ready to agree that the A's on high school report cards are worth less today than they were in 1987.

"A lot of kids are suffering a kind of shock," said Kelly Hayden, director of communications for American College Testing, which administers the nation's other college entrance test. Students in high school are confused when they end up with C's or even D's in college, he said.

But Thomas Evans, assistant principal at Novi High School, said the test data do not jibe with statistics collected at his school, where both grade-point averages and college-entrance test scores are on the rise.

"Our analysis says we have a pretty consistent percentage of kids taking the tests and our scores are gradually going up," he said Tuesday. "So if their GPA's are going up slightly from year to year, we feel very comfortable about that."

In its report, the College Board, which administers the SAT, said it's time to find out just how much kids are learning in high school.

Nationally, the average math SAT score was 511, the highest in 26 years and three points above the previous year's. The average verbal score, 505, was the same as last year's.

Michigan students scored an average 557 on the verbal test and 566 on the math test. Only about 12,000 Michigan students took the SAT, compared with 66,600 who took the ACT, the traditional test of choice at the state's public universities.

But SAT and ACT officials said grade inflation may indicate overall standards have slipped.

According to the SAT, 37 percent of those who took the 1997 test were A students — up from 28 percent a decade ago. The average GPA for all students who took the test was 3.22, up from 3.07 in 1987.

However, the average scores on the verbal test fell 13 points in the last 10 years for that group. The average math score fell one point, which officials said was mitigated by an increase in girls' math scores.

"Educators who give high grades for average or below-average performances promote a hollow, just-good-enough attitude that is detrimental to students and society," said Donald Stewart, College Board president.

ACT reported a similar trend. The percentage of students who said their high school GPA was 3.5 or higher has doubled since 1970 to 32 percent, Hayden said.

The average ACT score was 21.5 out of 36 in 1970, compared with 21.0 in 1997, Hayden said.

"Basically, what it demonstrates is high school grades are given for so many factors other than simply ability ...they're not very meaningful as gauges of academic achievement," Hayden said.

"For kids, it's good. It used to be there would be one valedictorian in a class. Now you see classes with 14 valedictorians. More kids are getting honors. More kids are feeling better about themselves."

Evans wonders whether today's SAT scores are truly comparable to earlier scores, given changes to the test, and whether the College Board attempts to verify students' grades.

ACT and SAT say the difficulty of their tests hasn't changed.

Michigan State University and the University of Michigan report no decline in the level of preparedness by freshmen.

William Turner, MSU vice president of admissions, said that some high schools do appear to inflate grades, but he does not see the problem spreading in Michigan.

"I see more constancy, if anything," Turner said.

The issue appears to be important to parents anxious to understand their child's education. The Gallup Poll released Tuesday shows parents want national standardized tests to measure how well children do in school.

National tests rank high on President Bill Clinton's list of educational goals, and he'll be touting school issues when he returns to Washington in September. He also must fight an effort in the House to deny funding for voluntary national tests.

Opponents and supporters of voluntary national tests say the Gallup results show the public leaning in their direction. In Michigan, Gov. John Engler has pushed for a national standardized test that would level out differences between schools and states.

"A standardized test would cut through all that. Two plus two equals four no matter where you would go," John Truscott, Engler's spokesman, said Tuesday. ■

1. Education Daily

August 27, 1997

VOUCHERS GAIN POPULARITY, NEW GALLUP POLL SHOWS

The public is just about evenly split in its support for publicly funded vouchers for private schools, according to a poll released yesterday.

Forty-nine percent said they favor allowing parents to choose private or parochial schools, with the government paying all or part of the tuition, in this year's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on public attitudes toward education.

Forty-eight percent were opposed.

Bill The Government

Pollsters asked their voucher question two ways. Some respondents were asked whether they favored allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at "public" expense. Others were asked about attending at "government" expense.

Not surprisingly, those polled were more likely to favor vouchers at "government" expense (48 percent) than at "public" expense (44 percent). Support for vouchers at public expense was 36 percent last year (ED, Aug. 27, 1996).

"Each year, the public has been increasingly willing to provide funding for private and even religious schools," said Lowell Rose, former executive director of Phi Delta Kappa, who directed the poll.

A dramatic shift among black respondents accounted for at least some of the uptick: 64 percent of blacks favored vouchers this year, up from 42 percent last year.

But those polled also would impose conditions on voucher programs: 78 percent said schools that accept public funds should be required to enroll students from a wider variety of backgrounds and academic abilities "than is now generally the case."

Phi Delta Kappa surveyed 1,517 adults between June 3 and June 22.

Mixed Review On National Testing

Two-thirds of the public supports national testing in general, with 57 percent specifically backing President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

Jack Jennings, executive director of the Center on Education Policy, speculated that asking about a specific politician's plan introduces a partisan element to the question.

When compared with Clinton's technology and education tax credit initiatives, "the president's testing proposal has the least support and, based on past experience, is likely to generate the most controversy," the report on the poll said, with considerable understatement.

Education Secretary Richard Riley said the poll "shows conclusively that the American people support voluntary national tests by a wide margin ... I hope the Congress will not ignore the voice of the American people."

Support for a national curriculum remained high, at 66 percent. Curriculum in local schools needs to be changed to meet today's needs according to 54 percent of those polled.

The most popular reform was getting computers into classrooms, which earned support from 81 percent of those polled.

Lengthening the school day and year were the least popular of 10 reforms listed in the poll, garnering support from only 25 percent and 38 percent of respondents, respectively.

"The polling data shows that the public wants everything—the basics, extracurricular activities—all without lengthening the amount of time," said Rose. "There is an unrealistic element" to that sentiment, he said.

Those polled said overwhelmingly that parental support for schools was crucial: 86 percent said it was very important in determining the quality of local public schools. In comparison, the amount of money spent on public schools was seen as very important by 62 percent of those polled.

As in past years, those polled rated their neighborhood schools more favorably than the nation's schools, proving "that the closer respondents are to the public schools, the higher the grades they give them," the poll said.

"Familiarity with the public schools breeds respect for them."

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of parents with children in public schools gave the school their oldest child attends an A or B.

Forty-six percent of respondents gave local public schools in general an A or B grade, almost identical to last year's results. Parents with children in public schools were more supportive, with 56 percent of them giving local schools top grades. But when asked about the nation's schools, respondents had a much gloomier view: Only 22 percent gave them an A or B.

"The low grades given the nation's public schools are primarily media-induced," the report said, citing another poll (ED, May 8).

Asked what was the lowest grade a child could bring home without causing upset or concern, 60 percent of respondents said a C. Thirteen percent said a D and 21 percent said a B.

The poll is \$10 for a package of 25 copies from Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402, (800)766-1156. Detailed tables are \$95 from the same address. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Houston Chronicle

August 27, 1997

Critics question need for national exams

By NANCY MATHIS

EDGARTOWN, Mass. — President Clinton's push for voluntary testing of the nation's fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math has:

- A. Landed on rocky political shoals that could end it before it even begins.
- B. Become the administration's highest second-term priority in its effort to improve the nation's public schools, a task that bested previous presidents.
- C. Emerged as a target of conservative organizations that view it as the first step down the slippery slope of national control of local schools.
- D. All of the above.

Eight months ago, Clinton challenged the nation's schools to increase standards and test students to ensure they were meeting those standards. He ordered the **Education Department** to develop a national test that fourth-graders and eighth-graders could begin taking in 1999.

Now, the plan faces political attacks from many quarters and moves in the Republican-led Congress to shut off funding.

"There is a fanciful effort to find things wrong with it," said Mike Cohen, the president's education adviser.

Jennifer A. Marshall, the education policy analyst for the conservative Family Research Council, counters, "A national test is a step toward a national curriculum."

Mary Elizabeth Teasley, government relations director at the National Education Association, suggested politics was at play.

"A part of this is also about defining the differences in the parties around issues of education," she said. "Every poll that's been taken says education will be the No. 1 issue again in 1998, even more important than it was in 1996. It outpaces crime."

A poll released Tuesday by Phi Delta Kappa, a professional society for educators, indicated 57 percent of the American people back Clinton's testing plan. The survey showed an even greater number, 77 percent, said "establishing national standards" would help students "a great deal or quite a lot."

A leading opponent of the Clinton plan, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., claimed the poll shows public support is dropping.

"Just last week the White House and the U.S. Department of Education indicated that more than 80 percent of the public support national tests," said Goodling, chairman of the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee.

When Congress returns next month, Goodling will take a series of steps to stop the program. He intends to place an amendment in the Education Department's budget to bar expenses for developing the tests. He also has a resolution banning the department from developing any tests.

"We already have plenty of tests," Goodling said. "Nearly all the states have their own testing programs. Why have another measurement instrument to tell us what we already know?"

Some critics also question why the president wants to create a separate testing program instead of expanding the National Assessment of Education Progress tests. Those tests, which cover many subjects, are given to a sampling of students nationwide to keep track of their progress.

In a recent speech to the National Governors' Association, Clinton acknowledged some problems. "I know there is some reluctance here," he said. But he pledged that it was "not a federal government power grab" and that the national test would not interfere with state achievement tests.

"I do not believe that we will be the leading economy in the world 50 years from now unless we can do a more uniform job of getting people out of high school with excellent, world-class educations," Clinton said.

Despite the president's repeated challenge, which began with his inaugural address in January, the idea has hardly generated a groundswell of support.

Last month, Clinton's standards and testing proposal received its biggest boost when 15 urban school districts, including Houston, signed on. So far, only six states — North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Kentucky and West Virginia — have embraced the idea.

Cohen said he anticipated schools would warm slowly to the idea. "We're selling a product that hasn't been developed. It is inherently challenging," Cohen said.

The proposal is moving forward. The Education Department last week awarded a contract to craft the reading and math tests based on an advisory board's recommendations.

Also, the department held a session on Aug. 19 about the tests that representatives from 43 states attended. Cohen said the large attendance was a "sign of very serious interest" in the idea. "As states look at what we've done, I think it will go

forward and more places will come on board," Cohen said.

Texas, which had a representative there, intends to "watch and monitor" the progress of the tests, said Ann Smisko, associate superintendent for curriculum assessment and technology for the state. "We're not at the moment making a move as a state to sign on," Smisko said.

She noted the state already has an extensive testing program and wants to see how Clinton's plan would differ. However, local school districts are free to join Clinton's program if they wished, she said.

Most other states also have tests that track their students' performances, which has helped dampen the enthusiasm for Clinton's plan.

"The main concern we have with any type of national standards is, first of all, who is going to set them and is it going to be the lowest common denominator?" said Nina Shokraii, education policy analyst with the Heritage Foundation.

Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association, said her organization has not taken a formal position on Clinton's testing idea but does support its voluntary nature.

"We need to use these tests as a benchmark for schools to improve themselves year by year and not to set up another whole competitive situation where school districts are pitted against each other," Bryant said.

Still, she added, it would be "too bad" if Congress squashes the voluntary testing idea before it begins.

Cohen said Clinton, who, as Arkansas' governor, enacted a series of education reforms, intends to keep pushing the proposal. "This really is a very high priority for him," Cohen said. "It's a deep and abiding passion for him. He's also convinced it's the right thing to do."■

1. Los Angeles Times

August 27, 1997

Americans Back Moves for School Reform, Poll Finds

By KASPER ZEUTHEN

Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON —Americans strongly endorse a wide range of proposals to reform the nation's public schools, from establishing national curriculum standards to allowing students to attend the public school of their choice, according to results of a Gallup Poll released Tuesday.

The poll found that most Americans are committed to public education and feel good about their children's public schools. About 7 in 10 respondents in the survey, conducted on behalf of the Phi Delta Kappa professional education fraternity, said they would prefer to see existing public schools reformed more than the development of alternatives to public schools.

Only 44% of respondents favored allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense; 52% opposed it. There was a sharp racial divide on the question: 72% of blacks support attendance at private schools at government expense, compared to 45% of whites.

But other proposals received broad support, including putting a computer in every public classroom (81%), establishing national standards for measuring academic performance (77%), moving "troublemakers" into alternative schools (75%), allowing students to attend a public school of their choosing (73%), using standardized tests to measure student achievement (67%), establishing a national curriculum (66%), grouping students in classes according to ability level (66%) and providing health care in schools (61%).

"I think the poll tells us that they [the public] want everything," said Lowell Rose, Phi Delta Kappa's poll director.

In Edgartown, Mass., where President Clinton is vacationing, spokesman Barry Toiv said the White House was "very pleased" by the results of the Gallup survey. "The poll suggests that there is really a very strong consensus among the American people in support of high national standards for education and specifically for standardized national testing to measure students' achievements," said Toiv.

The poll surveyed 1,517 adults, the overwhelming majority of them —1,017 —being parents of public school children. Its margin of error is three percentage points.

Times staff writer Art Pine contributed to this story from Edgartown, Mass. ■

1. Detroit Free Press

August 26, 1997

U.S. role in school testing challenged

BY MELANIE EVERSLEY

Free Press Washington Staff

WASHINGTON — A debate over whether American children are learning what they need for the global marketplace is boiling down to a showdown between big-government foes and education advocates.

Some Republicans in Congress, led by Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., are promising that when lawmakers return from their summer recess next week, they'll do what they can to kill new national reading and math tests for fourth- and eighth-graders that are advocated by President Bill Clinton.

Goodling, who chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, says the national exams would give the federal government too much influence in the classroom. He has introduced a resolution and an amendment to a House appropriations bill to stop the testing initiative.

Students are "tested over and over at the national, state, school district and classroom levels. Just ask any parent," Goodling said in a recent letter to House colleagues. "We simply don't need any more tests."

The debate over the national tests is particularly important to Detroit Public Schools, one of 15 urban school districts that have volunteered to serve as pilot sites next year.

Clinton, backed by the U.S. Department of Education, has been touting the exams as effective tools for parents to assess their children's performance. Tests now administered nationwide — the National Assessment of Educational Progress and Third International Mathematics and Science Study — survey only samplings of students.

"The whole purpose of this test is to empower parents, to give them information about how their children are doing compared to children in other jurisdictions," said Anthony Carnevale, vice president for public leadership with the Educational Testing Service, a Princeton, N.J., firm that will advise the government on administering the exams, which will not be mandatory.

Said Detroit school board President Irma Clark, "Any attempt to derail the voluntary national testing initiative would be extremely unfortunate."

Clinton announced the National Standards and Testing Initiative during his State of the Union speech in February. The exams would gauge fourth-grade reading skills and eighth-grade math skills because these are critical junctures in the development of those skills. The exams would be available nationwide in 1999.

The expansion of the U.S. economy means American children must do better in certain areas in school, exam advocates said. For example, the 1994 national assessment exam of fourth-graders showed 40 percent of American children rated below basic reading skills.

"I think the important thing here is to really highlight the importance of children learning how to read independently and learning enough mathematics so they can be prepared to go on to college," said Marshall Smith, acting deputy education secretary. "The test is important for a number of reasons, but the most important reason is it will make them aware of what they need."

But two of the four U.S. representatives from Michigan on Goodling's committee said Friday the cost didn't justify the means for such an exam.

"The country already spends billions of dollars on testing," Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., said Friday in a telephone interview from his hometown, Holland. "A new, national standardized test run by the federal government will not give us any more information than what we already have."

"I think there's a need to have reliable standards so we can measure how our kids are doing in school, but I have some concerns about the federal government being the operative in establishing test standards," Rep. Joseph Knollenberg, R-Mich., said from his district office in Farmington Hills.

The other two Michigan representatives on the committee, Democrat Dale Kildee and Republican Fred Upton, couldn't be reached.

It is not clear how far Goodling's efforts will travel once Congress resumes Sept. 2. So

far, no one in the Senate has stepped forward to offer a similar challenge.■

1. Associated Press

08-26 5:10p

Administration, opponents claim public support for tests

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Large numbers of Americans want national standardized tests to measure how well children do in school, according to a poll released Tuesday.

And more than half the parents of children in public schools support using tax money to send students to private and parochial schools, the survey by the Gallup Organization found.

National tests rank high on President Clinton's list of educational goals, and he'll be touting school issues when he returns to Washington in September. He also must fight an effort in the House to deny funding for voluntary national tests.

Opponents and supporters of voluntary national tests claimed the survey results showed the public leaning in their direction.

"We think that not only does it have the support of the American people, but we believe that those standards and establishing national tests will improve students' performance in the long run and prepare our kids for the challenges of the 21st century," said White House spokesman Barry Toiv.

The poll was conducted for Phi Delta Kappa, a professional society for educators.

Seventy-seven percent of the people surveyed in June believed that "establishing national standards for measuring the academic performance of the public schools" would help students "a great deal or quite a lot."

A smaller number, 67 percent, supported using "standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students."

Yet a smaller number, 57 percent, said they favored Clinton's specific proposal to have students tested at "two different grade levels." Clinton wants fourth-graders to be tested on reading and eighth-graders to be tested on math.

A lead opponent of the Clinton plan, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said the poll shows public support is dropping.

"Just last week the White House and the U.S. Department of Education indicated that more than 80 percent of the public support national tests," said Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee. "This new poll, however, shows that public support has dropped to 57 percent."

He says national measures of educational progress already exist, and states already give standard tests. The current measures of national progress don't grade individual students.

Goodling noted the survey reflected greater public support for school choice, with 55 percent of parents with children in public school agreeing that the government should help pay tuition at private and parochial schools. That number is up from 49 percent in 1996 and 48 percent in 1994.

Republicans support broader use of vouchers to help poor children attend different schools. Clinton opposes such use of tax dollars.

The pollsters interviewed 1,517 adults, including 1,017 parents of public school children. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. ■

1. Detroit Free Press

August 26, 1997

U.S. role in school testing challenged

BY MELANIE EVERSLEY

Free Press Washington Staff

WASHINGTON — A debate over whether American children are learning what they need for the global marketplace is boiling down to a showdown between big-government foes and education advocates.

Some Republicans in Congress, led by Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., are promising that when lawmakers return from their summer recess next week, they'll do what they can to kill new national reading and math tests for fourth- and eighth-graders that are advocated by President Bill Clinton.

Goodling, who chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, says the national exams would give the federal government too much influence in the classroom. He has introduced a resolution and an amendment to a House appropriations bill to stop the testing initiative.

Students are "tested over and over at the national, state, school district and classroom levels. Just ask any parent," Goodling said in a recent letter to House colleagues. "We simply don't need any more tests."

The debate over the national tests is particularly important to Detroit Public Schools, one of 15 urban school districts that have volunteered to serve as pilot sites next year.

Clinton, backed by the **U.S. Department of Education**, has been touting the exams as effective tools for parents to assess their children's performance. Tests now administered nationwide — the National Assessment of Educational Progress and Third International Mathematics and Science Study — survey only samplings of students.

"The whole purpose of this test is to empower parents, to give them information about how their children are doing compared to children in other jurisdictions," said Anthony Carnevale, vice president for public leadership with the Educational Testing Service, a Princeton, N.J., firm that will advise the government on administering the exams, which will not be mandatory.

Said Detroit school board President Irma Clark, "Any attempt to derail the voluntary national testing initiative would be extremely unfortunate."

Clinton announced the National Standards and Testing Initiative during his State of the Union speech in February. The exams would gauge fourth-grade reading skills and eighth-grade math skills because these are critical junctures in the development of those skills. The exams would be available nationwide in 1999.

The expansion of the U.S. economy means American children must do better in certain areas in school, exam advocates said. For example, the 1994 national assessment exam of fourth-graders showed 40 percent of American children rated below basic reading skills.

"I think the important thing here is to really highlight the importance of children learning how to read independently and learning enough mathematics so they can be prepared to go on to college," said Marshall Smith, acting deputy education secretary. "The test is important for a number of reasons, but the most important reason is it will make them aware of what they need."

But two of the four U.S. representatives from Michigan on Goodling's committee said Friday the cost didn't justify the means for such an exam.

"The country already spends billions of dollars on testing," Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., said Friday in a telephone interview from his hometown, Holland. "A new, national standardized test run by the federal government will not give us any more information than what we already have."

"I think there's a need to have reliable standards so we can measure how our kids are doing in school, but I have some concerns about the federal government being the operative in establishing test standards," Rep. Joseph Knollenberg, R-Mich., said from his district office in Farmington Hills.

The other two Michigan representatives on the committee, Democrat Dale Kildee and Republican Fred Upton, couldn't be reached.

It is not clear how far Goodling's efforts will travel once Congress resumes Sept. 2. So far, no one in the Senate has stepped forward to offer a similar challenge. ■

Schools to get their own grades

Each will get a report card to stress accountability

By JACQUELINE CHARLES
Herald Staff Writer

Students won't be the only ones getting report cards this school year. Come this fall, the Broward School District will make history, by rating its own schools. Each of the district's 195 schools and centers will receive a local school report card, letting each one know how it is faring.

Parents will be able to see the reports.

The initiative is part of the district's overall plan to make teachers and principals more accountable, Superintendent Frank Petruzielo said Monday.

"This is not designed to intimidate or scare anybody," he said. "We are looking to reward schools that have done well."

The reward for schools that have made "exceptional progress" is \$3,000 cash. The money which would go to the schools' improvement teams — committees of parents and educators involved in the decision making at schools.

It could be used for technology or whatever little extra is needed but unfunded.

Winning the money, though won't be easy. While the state already issues its own school-by-school report card, based on how well students performed on tests, Broward will be relying on more than students' test-taking abilities.

Among the factors that will be considered: the attendance rate of teachers and students; the dropout and graduation rates; student portfolios; and partnerships.

"We want for schools to work hard," Petruzielo said.

Some other initiatives the district will pursue this year:

The continuation of the pool substitutes program, begun last year; 186 substitutes are paid \$90 a day, and report to the same school every day.

The continued emphasis on choice, where students will be able to take advantage of magnet programs. Currently there are more than 60,000 students opting to take advantage of magnets and other programs within the district.

Involvement in President Clinton's plan for national testing.

Introduction of reading coaches to middle schools, to train teachers on how to help students improve their reading skills. ■

1. Associated Press

08-26 8:09a For release 8:45 a.m. EDT

Poll: Opposition to vouchers diminishes

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Most parents with children in public schools support using tax money to send students to private and parochial schools, according to a survey released today.

The Gallup Organization survey commissioned by a group of educators also found strong public support for putting computers in school classrooms and for national tests to measure academic performance. Standards and computers rank high on President Clinton's list of educational goals.

But Clinton opposes using public money to support private education. Still, 55 percent of parents with children in public schools told Gallup pollsters they would agree with a broad school-choice proposal that would have the government pay all or part of the tuition to private or church-related schools.

That number is up from 49 percent in 1996 and 48 percent in 1994 when the question previously had been asked in the same poll conducted for Phi Delta Kappa, a professional society for educators.

Support was largest among women, blacks, other nonwhites, the young, the poor and Southerners.

However, support was tempered by opposition among people with no children in school, especially older Americans, suburban residents and those earning \$50,000 or more a year.

As a result, the public is divided nearly 50-50 on the issue. The public was 43 percent in favor and 54 percent opposed in 1996.

The questions, though, did not use the term "vouchers," the tuition certificates issued to parents. The main question had two parts, asking about both the broad issue of choice and government support.

"It's a factor you have to look at as you try to interpret it," said Lowell C. Rose, an author of the report, referring to the element of choice.

The pollsters asked:

"A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing nonpublic schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal in your state?"

Other questions on the same topic limited the range of choice to a "private school" at "public expense," or a "private school" at "government expense." When "government expense" was used, the public was divided and public school parents were opposed. But blacks and other nonwhites, the poor and the young were in favor.

A poll earlier this year by the Joint Center for Political Studies, which emphasizes studies affecting black Americans, found that support for vouchers among blacks had grown while whites were split.

Congressional Republicans, with a few Democratic allies, are pushing a bill that would support vouchers. But the movement suffered a blow last week when a state appeals court struck down a proposal to use vouchers to let poor Milwaukee children attend church-run schools.

In other results, the survey found strong support for putting computers in every classroom. Eight of 10 people said doing so would improve student achievement "a great deal or quite a lot."

Roughly the same numbers felt the same about "national standards for measuring the academic performance of the public schools."

When the survey asked about specific proposals by President Clinton to wire classrooms, two-thirds were in favor. And nearly 60 percent favored his plan for national achievement tests.

But the proposed tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math face opposition from the chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, some conservatives and critics who worry about who will decide what goes into the test.

The pollsters interviewed 1,517 adults, including 1,017 parents of public school children, during June. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. ■

1. LRP Publications

Aug. 26, 1997

Poll Offers Clinton a Mixed Bag

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 — Most parents of children in public schools endorse President Clinton's national test initiative, but disagree with his stand on vouchers, according to a survey released today.

A Gallup Organization poll, commissioned by Phi Delta Kappa International, shows public support for many of Clinton's ideas for improving student achievement, such as putting computers in every classroom and creating national tests to measure academic performance. Clinton's support dries up, however, when it comes to barring use of tax money to send students to private and parochial schools.

About 55 percent of parents of public school students told pollsters they generally agree with a school choice proposal, up from 49 percent in 1996 and 48 percent in 1994. Despite support for school choice, the poll shows 71 percent of Americans believe improvement efforts should focus on existing public schools rather than finding alternative systems.

Sandra Feldman, president of the 950,000-member American Federation of Teachers, said the results mean the public wants schools fixed, not abandoned. "Advocating vouchers and other experiments — instead of focusing on what works — amounts to swimming against the tide," she said. "This poll shows clearly that Americans believe in their public schools."

Education Department officials were quick to point out that the poll also shows strong support for Clinton's plan for voluntary national tests.

"The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll shows conclusively that the American people support voluntary national tests by a wide margin," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. Two out of three said national tests would improve student achievement a great deal or quite a lot."

Some critics of the tests say the poll does not indicate the public backs the proposal, but rather shows dwindling support for the tests.

"Just last week the White House and the U.S. Department of Education indicated that more than 80 percent of the public support national tests," said William F. Goodling, chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. "This new poll, however, shows that public support has dropped to 57 percent ... The administration is trying to set national standards by hastily developing new tests in Washington. This is a huge folly."

Top-rated reforms include:

Placing computers in every classroom (81 percent endorsement); Establishing national standards for measuring performance (77 percent); Moving persistent "troublemakers" to alternative schools (75 percent); and Allowing families to choose public school (73 percent)

Pollsters interviewed 1,517 adults for the survey, including 1,017 parents of public school students. The margin of error for questions of the total sample is 3 percent, and is larger for questions posed to smaller segments of the total sample.

Reprints of the poll report can be ordered by calling Phi Delta Kappa at (800)766-1156. A minimum order is 25 copies for \$10, with additional copies available at 25 cents each. ■

1. TIME

August 25, 1997

THIS IS MATH?

SUDDENLY, MATH BECOMES FUN AND GAMES. BUT ARE THE KIDS REALLY LEARNING ANYTHING?

BY ROMESH RATNESAR

It is math time for the fifth-graders at Fernangeles Elementary School in Sun Valley, Calif., and everyone is stumped. The students have spent close to an hour puzzling over the question at hand: "What if everybody here had to shake hands with everyone else? How many handshakes would that take?" While the children, seated in small groups, debate and frown and scribble notes—and devise alternatives to the dread act of actually touching classmates of the opposite sex—their teacher, Kathy Pullman, roams the room. When the hour ends, no group has an answer. "This happens to be a particularly difficult lesson," Pullman says, unfazed. The class will dive in again after lunch.

To peer into Pullman's classroom is to glimpse why math has once again become a battleground in America's education wars. This school year, nearly half of all American elementary students are expected to learn math the way children do at Fernangeles Elementary: not in neat rows of desks, repeating times tables and memorizing theorems, but through trial-and-error problem solving, often in groups with little direct instruction and almost always with a calculator nearby. Advocates call it "interactive" or "inventive" math and insist that it sets American schoolchildren on the way to becoming "mathematically powerful."

When opponents of these currents are being polite, they call that kind of talk nonsense. And they have labels of their own. One is "whole math," a pejorative reference to "whole language," the controversial method of reading that emphasizes learning entire words and phrases over mastering phonics. Another is "new-new math," recalling the ill-fated New Math fad of the 1960s and '70s, which introduced millions of students to math arcana like set theory and congruences. (Remember those? Didn't think so.)

Resistance has resulted in pitched battles at school-board hearings and within academia over the future of U.S. math education. Educational scholar E.D. Hirsch Jr. says opposition to the newest math is "suddenly making people wake up and say, It doesn't work, it doesn't comport with reliable theories, and we're making a mistake."

It all started in 1989, when the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, in response to the consistently poor math scores of U.S. children, issued new standards overhauling math education. Out went the stalwarts of traditional math: the rote memorization drills, the droning chalkboard lectures. In came the cool stuff: calculators and geoboards, hands-on, open-ended problems, exercises that encourage kids to discover their own route to the right answer. "The standards emphasized that you had to pay attention to how kids think," says Gail Burrill, president of the council.

Eight years later, 40 states have instituted some "standards-based" math programs in their schools, and the National Science Foundation spends \$10 million a year on development of comprehensive instructional materials. California has become a leader: one cutting-edge curriculum called MathLand is used, its publishers claim, in 60% of the state's K-6 classrooms—including those in Fernangeles, where MathLand is taught in both English and Spanish. It even has its own Website: 192.216.191.114/. "These kids will be better problem solvers," says Pullman. "They will think more."

But talk to opponents—including newly aroused parents—and you'll hear horror stories of reformers dumping the most basic algorithms, or first-graders turning to a calculator to subtract 4 from 6, or "math" textbooks featuring lessons on endangered species and the Dogon people of West Africa. "Whole math," says molecular biologist Michael McKeown, "means less material covered in less depth with less rigor." Early last year, McKeown co-founded Mathematically Correct, a Website based in San Diego (ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mathman/) that has become the nerve center for the counterinsurgency. Here parents like Marianne Jennings of Mesa, Ariz., share dispatches from the front. Not long ago, Jennings watched her daughter Sarah, a straight-A algebra student, reach for a calculator to find 10% of 470. "It made my blood boil," says Jennings. In response, she and other parents pressured the school district to offer traditional math as a choice.

Similar small-scale revolts have erupted from San Diego to Sonoma Valley, and the state board of education is expected soon to release a new, more traditional math framework for California schools. Meanwhile, McKeown and whole-math detractors like Lynne Cheney, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, darkly warn that President Clinton's voluntary national test for eighth-graders, set for 1999, is being used to promote a whole-math agenda. Says Cheney: "Every single member appointed to the math [exam's] panel is a whole-math advocate." **Department of Education** officials bristle at the charge, saying the exam will test both fundamental math skills and high-order problem solving.

Is whole math really that bad? Few question the reformers' motives: to inject some much needed juice into American math education. But though the approach can certainly stimulate kids, it can just as easily leave them adrift. While the fifth-graders at Fernangeles were mulling over their handshake problem, a nearby fourth-grade class was fiddling with green and red tiles, trying to figure out how many green gates fitted into how many sections of red fence. "If there were 48 green doors," the teacher implored, "how many red fences do we need?" After a few minutes, one student incorrectly ventured, "Eighty." A

few others tapped their calculators, with little success, and after 20 minutes, the solution seemed no nearer.

Of course, the most convincing defense of whole math would be evidence that it works. In a few states that have emphasized new-new math, such as Connecticut, there are early indicators of improved student performance. Critics in California, on the other hand, point to test scores in cities like Santa Barbara and Palo Alto that show at least temporary drop-offs after whole math has been introduced. One thing's certain: lukewarm results won't cut it. In the most recent worldwide comparison, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, U.S. eighth-graders fell below the international average and miles behind Singapore, Korea and Japan.

Be patient, advocates argue. Says Thomas Romberg, a University of Wisconsin professor who helped write the revolutionary 1989 math standards: "We knew there needed to be a fair amount of research and teacher training. We knew it would take 20 or 25 years to pull this off." Parents whose 12-year-olds still can't count on their fingers may not want to wait that long.

—Reported by Melissa August/Washington, Margot Hornblower/Sun Valley and Elizabeth Rudolph/New York■

1. **Kansas City Star** August 22, 1997

Bill Graves, education governor

By LAURA SCOTT

Assistant Editorial Page Editor

Gov. Bill Graves clearly is willing to use the bully pulpit of the governor's office to protect education in Kansas.

Well, bully for him.

The governor's response to the State Board of Education's attack on the testing of Kansas student learning is the latest example of that.

But there have been others. Significantly, the governor has held fast against the social conservatives in the state Legislature who have tried to do away with a major source of funding for schools -the property tax.

(From a 1996 debate over dramatic tax cuts that could have hurt schools came the often-quoted Graves remark to legislators, "Which part of 'hell, no,' don't you understand?")

In the recent debate over continuing the state tests to determine student abilities in reading, math, social studies, science and writing, social conservatives on the State Board of Education succeeded in throwing out the performance portion of the tests.

Their action means that students will be tested on what they have learned rather than whether they can solve problems and apply critical thinking skills.

An obviously irritated Graves, when asked about the board's decision, responded that he had a "fundamental disagreement over this notion that the only thing we ought to test . . . is whether 2 plus 2 equals 4."

Graves served notice that he had no intention of recommending the funding to pay for the new tests the conservatives want -tests without measurement of problem-solving or critical thinking skills.

Of course, that leaves once again in question whether there will be any Kansas assessments at all, if the Board of Education doesn't find the money to pay for its new versions.

But Graves is right -what is the point to test only the minimum of knowledge rather than how far students can reach in putting on their thinking caps and working through problems?

The governor's steadfast position for education has not made him friends with members of his own Republican Party who have been hard at work trying to cut taxes beyond what the governor has agreed to do.

Some of them do not care what impact this will have on education because they are so intent on downsizing government, they are willing to let the schools deteriorate. Others, however, use the anti-tax rhetoric as a way to camouflage their real intent, which is to undermine public education and build support for private school vouchers and religion in the schools.

Rep. Phill Kline of Shawnee, a leader of the anti-property tax movement, might mount a campaign against Graves next year. The thought of Kline in the governor's chair is scary to people who worry about the effect on the schools if he is successful in dramatic tax cuts that go far beyond the compromises the governor and legislators made last session.

As tax revenues decline, they fear, the Legislature will cut programs wherever it can to save money. And one of the biggest ticket items of the Kansas budget is state aid to schools.

Although the governor has been known to pursue politics of his own when it suits him, he has given no indication that he will support something that hurts the schools in order to appease potential reelection opponents.

And in that regard, citizens of Kansas who care about their schools ought to be bolstering his position with letters and chats with their elected representatives in the Legislature. (The Senate generally has been a supporter of the governor in the debate over cutting school finance funding.)

Bill Graves has been a pleasant surprise as governor, showing more backbone than he was perceived to have during his first gubernatorial election campaign.

At that time, the then-secretary of state did not seem to have a strong vision for state government. He once said he hadn't even studied the state budget. His opponent, Jim Slattery, seemed more the type to stand his ground over principle.

Graves has been a refreshing turnaround from that election campaign. Or maybe we are just seeing the real stuff he is made of. If he keeps it up, Kansas education will be the winner.

The House of Representatives, and now the state Board of Education, are two powerful forces working against educational improvements. Without the governor holding fast, Kansas would be retreating from its proud position of being among the first in the nation for schools and progressive education.

1. Richmond Times-Dispatch August 22, 1997

***Delay in new standards put forth* State school superintendent suggests fall of 1998**

BY PAMELA STALLSMITH
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

The state Board of Education should wait until the fall of 1998 to set the standard schools must meet to become accredited, the state superintendent of public instruction suggested yesterday.

A 56-page proposal made public by Richard T. La Pointe suggests numerous technical and procedural changes to the proposed Standards of Accreditation, which the board plans to vote on Sept. 4. The standards govern how the state's public schools operate.

Part of the board's sweeping proposal includes tying a school's accreditation to how well students perform on new statewide tests. For a school to remain accredited, 70 percent of the students who take the tests in grades three, five and eight and in high school would have to pass. The new tests will be based on tougher academic learning standards approved by the board two years ago.

Students across Virginia took "a test of the test" this spring, the results of which were not publicly released. Students will officially take the test in the spring of 1998.

La Pointe suggested that the board should wait until the results come out and are analyzed to establish a passing rate. He made the same proposal in February, when the accreditation standards were first announced.

"Once the passing scores are established, we will have a picture of how well students are performing in these tests," the proposal said.

La Pointe also lays out two other approaches: keeping the proposed 70 percent requirement and basing the standard on a moving three-year average or current year performance, whichever is higher.

State board members received their copies late last week.

John W. Russell, a member from Fairfax, said he prefers to keep the proposed 70 percent rate and adjust it later if need be.

"If you expect little, you get little," he said. "If you expect more, you get more. I don't know if 70 percent is high enough."

The proposal also urges clarifying the time frame for the new accreditation process. Under the board's plan, schools would be rated as fully accredited, accredited with warning, or accreditation denied.

La Pointe's recommendation calls for schools deemed accredited with warning to be given more than the proposed three months to develop "a corrective action plan." It also calls for delaying that requirement until the 2003-04 school year.

"The time frame is too short for a school to develop a plan that would adequately address the needs of the school," La Pointe's proposal says.

Other highlights include clarification of programs affecting students with limited English proficiency and the contents of the report cards.

No changes were made to proposed tougher high school graduation requirements, which call for one more credit each for standard and advanced diplomas. The recommendations also made no changes to the board's proposal to make family life education and elementary guidance counselors local options.

La Pointe said he hadn't received any response from board members.

"It's an idea we've laid out," he said. "What we are doing is giving all the board members the opportunity to think about it."

1. Sacramento Bee August 22, 1997

Accord on school testing: Wilson reportedly backs off on evaluating teachers

By Jan Ferris
Bee Staff Writer

A tentative deal has been struck on Gov. Pete Wilson's statewide public school testing proposal, clearing the way for the release of \$203 million Wilson had vetoed from the state budget to leverage support for his controversial plan.

"We have come to some mutual understandings with regard to the test," Wilson spokesman Sean Walsh said Thursday. "We are very hopeful we will have this issue resolved when the Legislature returns on the 25th."

Late Wednesday, Wilson and Senate President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer reportedly reached agreement on the last contentious element of his proposal: teacher performance.

The only remaining hurdle involves consulting with Assembly Speaker Cruz Bustamante, and Walsh said the governor would be meeting with the speaker before the Legislature reconvenes Monday.

For several months, Wilson and Democratic legislators have been at odds over the governor's proposal to buy a test to assess whether a series of costly public school reforms — including smaller classes and revised reading instruction — are making a difference.

The testing issue reached a stalemate just before Wilson was to sign the final state budget. Wilson said he would restore the \$203 million in vetoed programs if the Legislature agreed to his test proposal.

The final holdup was over Wilson's request that the new statewide test also be used to measure classroom performance — and thus hold teachers accountable.

Wilson had called for a uniform basic skills exam that would produce and publicize student scores all the way down to the classroom level, instead of simply providing district and campus results.

The proposal had been scorned by the California Teachers Association, many educators and Democrats who claimed the classroom scores might not be a reliable barometer and, instead, could be unfairly used to punish teachers.

Senate sources confirmed Thursday that Wilson has agreed to back down on the classroom test scores.

Wilson had already conceded on another major issue in his \$82 million testing proposal, that it be solely administered in English. The tentative plan would allow students to take the exam in Spanish, Chinese and a few other foreign languages that are already used in some standardized tests.

Many educators and interest groups — from state schools chief Delaine Eastin, a Democrat, to the California School Boards Association and State PTA — were early and vocal critics of the proposal.

Eastin said the state should not use an off-the-shelf test, but wait to create a new test after a state commission finishes developing a set of uniform learning standards for California students.

The classroom scoring has been the last issue to resolve.

"I think you're creating a situation that's really open to abuse," said Bob Cheery, an associate executive director with the California Teachers Association, the state's largest educators' union.

Many Sacramento-area teachers and administrators have also said that singling out classroom scores could be misleading, at best, not to mention potentially damaging. But others, particularly parents, believe schools should be fully accountable to the public.

"I think it's essential," said Rebecca Baumann, the parent of a

Sacramento City middle-school student. "If you're ever going to develop a system where you can truly look at the quality of classrooms and the quality of teaching . . . you have to look at the test scores at the classroom level."

Because of strong opposition from teachers unions, neither of California's prior statewide tests — the California Assessment Program (CAP) nor the ill-fated California Learning Assessment System, or CLAS — provided classroom scores.

Wilson said classroom scores are not intended to single out bad teachers as much as to highlight effective instruction, according to his spokesman Walsh.

"It's regrettable the California Teachers Association is deathly afraid of having any accountability," Walsh said. "But we know there are many teachers out there who relish the opportunity to take on children who are not quite as advanced as their classmates (or fellow schoolmates) and we fully believe that should be taken into account when assessing classroom and school site performance."

State law prohibits districts from evaluating teachers on the basis of results from publishers' tests similar to the one Wilson hopes to put in place.

And many educators believe it isn't the state's role to keep such a close watch on classrooms. Besides, individual class scores don't provide the most reliable data because of the small numbers involved, as well as the socioeconomic and linguistic factors, they say.

It makes more sense to review results from multiple grades or some more varied student grouping, said Nancy Law, Sacramento City Unified School District's accountability administrator.

1. Chicago Tribune August 22, 1997

Envelopes seal students' fates

By Michael Martinez
TRIBUNE EDUCATION WRITER

Principal Christ Kalamatas of Von Humboldt Elementary School entered the 8th grade summer school classroom Thursday with a stack of sealed envelopes.

The anticipation was unbearable.

The ensuing moments marked a major event in the young lives of these pupils. And it also marked the end of Von Humboldt's bittersweet yearlong journey on academic probation, an epilogue with disturbing results — but also hope that next year will be better.

After being told just last June that they were barred from graduation, the 8th graders enrolled in summer school were about to receive their math and reading scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills taken earlier in the week.

As the pupils opened their envelopes, Room 102 erupted in elation — and devastation.

Yvonne McCoy, 14, bearing a family burden of trying to become the first child among four siblings to graduate from high school, burst into sobs as teachers consoled her. She will repeat 8th grade.

"It's just that my mother was expecting me to graduate," Yvonne said. "I tried to my hardest, to do my homework and everything. The only thing I can think right now is, Lord, why me? I didn't get into no fights. I didn't cuss. I don't do drugs. I don't drink."

"Yes-s-s-s!" shouted Monique Clark, 14, as she leaped from her chair and danced in the aisle. She passed.

"Yeah, I got it!" blurted out Otrrella Dotson, 14, as she jumped into the air and twirled around.

"Finally! I ain't got to go to the library anymore," exclaimed Eddie Padilla, 14. He was the only 8th grader who played by school rules last June and sat in the school library during regular graduation ceremonies as all failing 8th graders were supposed to do. He passed on Thursday also.

"I'm going to get me clothes today for graduation," he said, referring to ceremonies Tuesday for 8th graders in the Chicago school system's summer programs.

But most 8th graders didn't pass.

Pupils with reputations as class clowns or troublemakers suddenly turned silent. Others stared at the paper, as if hoping the ink would change before their eyes. A few just left the building.

Meanwhile, some pupils who were headed for transition centers — for those who were turning 15, too old to return to elementary school — were acting as if they'd passed. "It's time for celebration!" said Carlos Martinez, who will be 15 next month.

In the year that the Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees placed Von Humboldt on probation, putting on the line the jobs of its principal, assistant principals and 80 teachers, the school has learned some tough lessons: Perhaps the most difficult is that pupils can fall dangerously behind as early as preschool, which explains why so many 3rd graders failed summer school systemwide.

School board officials are now considering adding summer school next year for failing 1st graders, joining sessions for poor performing 3rd, 6th, 8th and 9th graders.

"I don't believe these kids come to kindergarten with the necessary skills," Von Humboldt Principal Kalamatas said. "The kids we start at kindergarten are behind because of a lack of home teaching that used to be present in a lot of homes."

In addition to pedagogical improvements, such as lengthening reading periods during the school day — including adding one for kindergarten — and more after-school math and reading classes for flunking pupils, Kalamatas said he has confronted the human dimensions of probation: Schools cannot easily correct years of automatic promotions for pupils who should have received remedial attention a long time ago. Similarly, officials need time to turn around the attitudes of everyone associated with a big institution

like Von Humboldt, at 1,300 pupils one of the largest elementary schools in Chicago.

"I don't think you can put a number on it, 10 years or 8 years," Kalamatas said. "In terms of staffing and things like that, it's going to take a little bit longer, getting the staff focused on, 'We can do it' — and it's happening here and people are buying into it. But with the scores being so far behind for so many years, that's going to take some time to turn it around."

"It wouldn't be like comparing it to the corporate business world," he added, "where a company is failing and you can go in and clear house. That's not what it's about. We can't do that. We can't take back what the kids did or did not learn three or four years ago. You just can't erase the past."

At Von Humboldt, among the 109 schools on academic probation in the 557-school system, the numbers of 3rd, 6th and 8th graders failing summer school was below systemwide averages. Last spring, the figures also fell behind most probation schools, which largely posted substantial test score gains.

Whereas 56 percent of all summer school 3rd graders failed and will be forced to repeat their grade, the figure at Von Humboldt, at 2620 W. Hirsch St. in East Humboldt Park, was 71 percent: Only 18 of 62 passed.

While 43 percent of all 6th graders enrolled in summer school in Chicago flunked, Von Humboldt saw 66 percent fail to make the cut: Only 15 of 44 passed.

And for 8th grade summer school, the systemwide failure figure was 38 percent, compared to 58 percent at Von Humboldt. That is, of the 38 pupils in 8th grade attending summer school, 16 met promotion standards and will go to high school. Two failing kids received waivers to go to high school; 14 other failing kids will be retained in 8th grade. The remaining six failed to post required scores, but because they will be 15 years of age by Dec. 1, they will be sent to transition high schools and can enter regular high school only after posting required test scores.

Despite home visits by school officials, four 8th graders never even showed up to summer school, including a girl who became pregnant and a boy whom 8th grade teacher Daniel Snyder would see on the streets in the morning as he drove into the school parking lot. He was unsuccessful in persuading the boy to attend classes. All four pupils, apparently resigned to failure, will be sent to transition centers because of their age.

"There were really not many surprises about the 16 (who passed)," said Snyder, 37. "They were hard workers. They showed up almost every day and had no attendance problems. But some of them who didn't make it had behavior problems."

Visits to 6th and 8th grade classrooms during the summer showed that those behavior problems included shouting obscenities, throwing paper wads at the teacher, ignoring practice tests, and, in the 8th grade classes, drawing gang symbols or cartoons — leading to many trips to the principal's office. A few 8th graders were suspended.

One boy wore slippers with a stuffed gorilla on the front; a girl had some in the shape of bulldogs. The girl passed summer school, the boy didn't.

Then there was the 6th grader who just before summer school began was grazed by a bullet one evening. That pupil, though hard working, didn't pass.

Still, the Von Humboldt test figures are by no means the worst in the Chicago school system. Some probation schools had a failure rate as high as 80 percent.

Kalamatas finds consolation in that fact. He said he is also encouraged by how many pupils posted big improvements, even if not enough to meet the Chicago school board's new promotion criteria (which does not even require a child to be at grade level, but rather only a year or two behind, depending on grade).

"If you broke it down to summer schools at probation schools, I bet you we did pretty darn good," Kalamatas said. "The 16 who passed (promotion standards), they wouldn't be entering high school if they weren't in the summer program. I've got 16 success stories."

He also noted that his 6th graders' reading scores grew on average by 6 1/2 months and their math scores by 4 1/2 months.

"That to me was really encouraging," Kalamatas said. "I'm real happy with that. The board is putting so much emphasis on these scores, and I'm starting to find some positive things in them."

While last spring's test scores influenced the removal of some probation managers and consultants at a few probation schools, summer school results are not expected to have a great impact on how the board proceeds at probation schools, said Paul

Vallas, the school board's chief executive officer.

Vallas said he recognized that probation schools like Von Humboldt "are digging themselves out of a deeper hole" because they have more pupils severely behind grade level.

"We will adjust the ways we do things in the school based on the summer school results. We look at the what the school has accomplished during the regular school year and during summer school. This is an organic progress," Vallas said.

"What gets schools off probation is overall results. Summer school is part of the school year, but it's the smallest part of the school year. To the degree that the summer school results help the academic performance of the pupils, to that degree it will help the school get off probation," Vallas said.

The board's use of uniform curricula this summer has led to an initiative to begin creating a uniform curriculum for each grade level during the regular school year, school officials said.

Observations of summer school classes at Von Humboldt were intensified by the smaller learning environment, where a total of 214 pupils were enrolled in various summer school programs.

On one day, in a hot, non-air-conditioned 6th grade classroom, two boys began fighting over the sole fan in the back of the room. One boy named Robert began shouting obscenities at the other, and a girl joined the action.

Teacher Cheryl Mackey, 41, sent Robert into the hallway, but he later disappeared and Mackey called security. He was eventually found.

In an interview later, Robert was asked why he became disruptive.

"To bring my anger out — what else am I supposed to do?" said Robert, who took two buses and a rapid transit train to arrive at Von Humboldt because his family moved to the South Side shortly after summer school began. "I know what I did was wrong."

Robert passed summer school.

Federal Appeals Court Clears the Way for Affirmative-Action Ban in California

By DOUGLAS LEDERMAN

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on Thursday declined to reconsider an April ruling by three of its judges that upheld California's ban on the use of racial and gender preferences by state and local agencies, including public colleges.

The court's decision not to rehear the case means that the ban will take effect next week unless the Ninth Circuit or the U.S. Supreme Court acts to stop it.

The appeals court's action leaves opponents of the California measure with only one avenue for derailing it: a potential hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court, which has viewed affirmative action with increasing skepticism.

California's voters last November approved an amendment to the state constitution to ban the use of preferences based on race and gender. Last December, a U.S. district judge blocked enforcement of the amendment, known as Proposition 209, after finding "a strong probability" that its opponents would be able to prove that it violated the U.S. Constitution's equal-protection clause and federal laws. But a three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit overturned the judge's ruling in April, finding that the amendment actually mirrored the Constitution's equal-protection guarantees.

Opponents of Proposition 209, led by the American Civil Liberties Union, asked that the full Ninth Circuit review the ruling of the three-judge panel. But an order issued by the appeals court Thursday said that a majority of its judges who were eligible to vote on whether to rehear the case had voted not to.

A court order that had prohibited the state from enforcing the constitutional amendment is set to expire seven days after appeals are exhausted. A lawyer for the A.C.L.U., Mark Rosenbaum, said the organization would ask the Ninth Circuit and, failing that, the Supreme Court to continue to block enforcement of Proposition 209 until the Supreme Court decides whether to hear an appeal of the case.

If and when Proposition 209 takes effect, all affirmative-action programs at the University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems that have not already been altered to drop race and gender as factors will have to conform to the constitutional amendment.

ED TOUTS NATIONAL TESTS' FLEXIBILITY, 'PATRIOTISM'

Meeting with state leaders this week to promote voluntary national tests in reading and math, Education Department officials stressed the flexibility localities would have if they sign on to the assessments.

"This is your test and your rules," declared Gary Phillips, executive director of the national testing program, at the Tuesday conference attended by about 100 state education agency officials and governors' representatives.

States also would have wide latitude in running the testing program, ED officials said.

For instance, states would decide whether they will require districts to take it, said Mike Cohen, President Clinton's education adviser. And districts would be allowed to decide whether to take the fourth-grade reading test, the eighth-grade math test, or both.

"Voluntary means voluntary," Cohen said in response to a query from Betty Twomey, New Hampshire's education commissioner, who noted that in her state, "the word 'national' is tantamount to invasion."

Appeal To Patriotism At the same time ED officials were stressing local control, Education Secretary Richard Riley exhorted states to join a national push for higher standards.

He called a crusade for higher standards "almost a patriotic belief" and described how 1983's "A Nation at Risk" report jump-started stalled education reform efforts in South Carolina when he was governor.

"The people of South Carolina got the feeling that what they were trying to do was part of a national movement," Riley said, departing from his prepared remarks. "That was a very important part of moving us forward. These tests will serve both a state and national purpose."

"Education is — and ought to be — a state responsibility and local function. We must maintain that, but it must be a national priority," Riley said.

So far, only six states and 15 urban districts have signed up to administer the tests, starting in 1999 (ED, Aug. 21).

Many state assessment directors have expressed concern that the national tests will intrude on state reform efforts and testing programs (ED, March 4).

Call To Action ED's argument that the national tests should be used to mobilize parents and communities to improve education seemed to resonate with participants at the meeting.

For instance, during small group discussions about the tests, officials from Massachusetts, Alabama, Kentucky, Rhode Island and Minnesota veered off into spirited debates on professional development, accountability and accommodating different learning styles.

"If some data comes back and your child or your school isn't doing as well as you thought, that would be a powerful thing in some communities," said Michael Sentance, education adviser to the governor of Massachusetts, which has signed up to administer the national tests. "That's what parents and teachers respond to, and that's where change happens."

Pat DeVito, Rhode Island's assessment director, agreed. The state is preparing to release data showing some districts that traditionally rank high on state tests have students with low proficiency scores. "I hope that provokes discussion," DeVito said.

Rhode Island hasn't decided whether to sign on to the national testing program.

Sentance said just after Clinton chided governors for "dragging their feet" on the initiative, he got phone calls from three other governors' advisors asking why Massachusetts joined the testing program (ED, July 29).

When Congress returns from its August recess, the House is scheduled to consider a proposal by the chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee to put the brakes on the national test (ED, Aug. 11).

In response to a request by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) to be more involved overseeing the new national tests, Riley wrote in an Aug. 1 letter that governance of the exams could be addressed during reauthorization of NAGB and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (ED, Aug. 4). That won't occur until next year when field tests for the new exam are scheduled. --Laureen Lazarovici

ED: NO STATE-BY-STATE NATIONAL TEST SCORES

The Education Department will not compare states' scores on voluntary national reading and math tests scheduled to begin in 1999, officials said Tuesday.

"We are not going to do state-by-state comparisons," Mike Smith, ED's acting deputy secretary, told state education agency officials and governors' representatives at a meeting on the national tests. States and localities will decide how to report the results, with ED guidance.

Smith said ED already compares state scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, tests in various subjects that are given to samples of students in most states.

So far, six states and 15 urban school districts have signed up to give the tests in reading to fourth-graders and math to eighth-graders (ED, Aug. 13).

Some districts in some states may not take the tests, which would skew state results, Smith said. In contrast, NAEP provides a snapshot of student achievement by sampling a large number of students with different questions, yielding "valid and reliable" comparisons.

Emerson Elliott, ED's former commissioner of education statistics, agreed with Smith's analysis. "With a new test, you have to control the conditions and the sample," he said.

"With [these] individual tests, those controls aren't there."

No New Wall Chart Just because ED won't provide state comparisons doesn't mean other organizations won't.

The news media and researchers would likely compare scores from different states, Smith acknowledged. "It will happen because a lot of people will want to do it," added Mike Cohen, President Clinton's education adviser.

Other observers say politics likely played at least some role in ED's decision.

"It softens the blow a bit" for states that are suspicious of federal intrusion, said Chris Pipho, director of state relations for the Education Commission of the States.

At the same time, Pipho questions whether state-by-state comparisons are valuable. "Is the goal to highlight the top state and then try to be more like it? Is it to highlight the bottom state and try not to be like it? Making states all alike undercuts the [state control] basis on which we run education systems," he said.

In addition, Smith said ED wants it to be clear that the federal government won't be collecting individual test scores and information, a concern of conservative groups and politicians.

ED's reluctance to provide state-by-state comparisons also may be a reaction to the highly unpopular "Wall Chart" the department abolished in 1991. It compared states' graduation rates, college entrance exam scores, spending and other statistics, but state leaders said the data was calculated differently among states (ED, March 27, 1996).

"The Wall Chart left a bad taste because it was a very crude measure," remembers Jack Jennings, executive director of the Center on Education Policy and a former congressional staffer.

The Wall Chart exposed the need for more reliable ways to compare states and led to NAEP comparisons, Smith and Jennings agreed.

Jennings said ED's refusal to compare states is a crucial development in education reform based on standards. "The whole idea ... is to get away from comparisons of groups of kids and about seeing if they meet a certain level," said Jennings. Examining whether students can reach various proficiency levels, which NAEP and the national voluntary tests do, "is at the heart of standards based reform." — Laureen Lazarovici

1. Education Daily

August 19, 1997

SUPERINTENDENT PANEL OPPOSES NATIONAL TESTS

A group of school superintendents is recommending that their colleagues oppose President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests.

The American Association of School Administrators' (AASA's) 16-member platform and resolutions committee said other education priorities are more pressing.

"While AASA supports current national testing and assessment to promote learning and provide accountability, we do not believe that the use of limited federal funds for additional federal tests is a wise investment," panel members said in an AASA newsletter last week.

"We don't want to see a big bureaucracy developed, which would be almost inevitable with a national program," said Freeport, Ill., Superintendent Richard Olson, who chairs the AASA committee.

Clinton has proposed voluntary national testing of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math starting in spring 1999. So far, six states and 15 urban school districts have volunteered (ED, July 28).

Olson said opposition to Clinton's proposal does not mean superintendents want to avoid accountability for student achievement. Many states and districts issue school-by-school "report cards" on student test scores, an AASA official noted.

Superintendents "don't think the test will make anything better," said a participant at the resolutions meeting.

"They think better teaching is the key."

AASA's 160-member delegate assembly will vote on the resolution next winter at AASA's annual conference.

The Council of Chief State School Officers endorsed the tests this spring (ED, March 20).

ED plans to meet today with state policymakers about the national tests. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

August 19, 1997

ED NATIONAL TEST CONTRACT GOES TO D.C.-BASED AIR

The Education Department yesterday tapped the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to oversee national voluntary tests in reading for fourth-graders and math for eighth-graders.

Based in Washington, D.C., AIR in January opened the Center for Education Assessment to help states better address assessment shortcomings, partly through audit services (ED, Jan. 24). That center is headed by Archie Lapointe, a former director of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, on which the national tests are to be based.

The five-year, \$13 million contract also calls for other test publishers and education groups to develop specific parts of the program.

For instance, Riverside Publishing will help develop the reading test, Educational Testing Services will assist with data analysis, and the Council for Basic Education will help coordinate the tests' national advisory committee meetings.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, hopes to thwart ED's further funding of the tests with an amendment to the education appropriations bill Congress plans to take up in September after it returns from its summer recess.

Both the House and Senate education appropriations committees want the National Academies of Science to evaluate the planned 1998 field tests before spending any more money on the initiative (ED, July 25).

So far, six states and 15 urban school districts have signed up for the exams, slated to be given in spring 1999. —
Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The Washington Post

August 19, 1997

House Republicans Fail to See the Need for Clinton's National Test Plan

By Rene Sanchez

Washington Post Staff Writer, page A11

President Clinton's struggling campaign to create new national tests for students in reading and math is about to hit its next obstacle: House Republicans.

As soon as Congress returns from its summer recess, one of the first priorities of some Republican lawmakers will be to try to derail, even abolish, the groundbreaking testing plan by prohibiting the **Education Department** from spending any money on it.

The department, which is moving swiftly to develop the tests, has paid little heed so far to congressional skepticism about the idea. But now it has to contend with Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, who is rallying support for legislative proposals designed to stop the tests.

"We already have plenty of testing," Goodling said recently. "Nearly all of the states have their own testing programs. Why another measurement instrument to tell us what we already know?"

Last month, Goodling sent his House colleagues a letter detailing how the federal government is already spending more than \$500 million this year to help states develop their own achievement exams. Creating the national performance tests that Clinton envisions would cost roughly another \$22 million.

Battles over student testing are hardly new in American education, but Clinton's idea has ignited vehement debate because it would represent the first time the federal government set academic benchmarks by which all of the nation's schools could judge their performance. Beginning in 1999, the president wants all fourth-graders to take a new national exam in reading and all eighth-graders to do the same in math.

Clinton and many education and business leaders say the tests would help create a better national picture of what schools are doing right and wrong. Currently, states give students proficiency exams, but what they expect them to know varies so much that drawing national conclusions about the quality of schools is often difficult.

Clinton's testing plan is voluntary and so far only six states, including Maryland but not Virginia, are on board. Also, 15 of the nation's largest urban school districts — including New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles — have agreed to use the tests. The District's public schools have not.

Some of the reluctance is practical: State leaders say they want to see the tests before committing to use them. But others have serious philosophical reservations about Clinton's plan, calling it another potentially costly example of unnecessary federal intrusion into local classrooms.

For all of those reasons, Goodling contends that the testing plan should be halted until congressional hearings are held, or until lawmakers explicitly vote to authorize it. That view is winning support from an array of politically conservative groups, such as the Christian Coalition and Family Research Council.

Also, some Democrats are worried that poor students in schools with limited resources could be at a disadvantage taking the tests.

Goodling has introduced a resolution and an amendment to a House appropriations bill to try to stop or delay the testing program.

But the administration's framework for the tests is already taking shape, six months after the president introduced the idea during his State of the Union address.

At this point, each test is to last 90 minutes and be based partly on an exam known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is highly regarded by many educators for its rigor. Samples of students across the country have been taking versions of that test every few years since 1969. The Education Department is also on the verge of awarding contracts to write the new tests.

Clinton, meanwhile, has not shown any interest in delaying the tests, which have long been a fixture in the schools of most other industrialized nations. He pleaded with the nation's governors at their annual meeting last month to embrace the idea, arguing that it will give American schools a powerful incentive to be more consistent and rigorous in what they demand of students in such vital subjects as reading and math. Many top business executives also are campaigning for the president's testing plan.

"We think having a sense of urgency is important," said acting Deputy Education Secretary Marshall S. Smith. "We've been sitting back on this issue too long, tolerating curricula that do not adequately prepare many of our students."

Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has testified before congressional panels several times this year about the tests, and the department has held briefings with governors.

Administration officials also say Clinton has tried to be sensitive to Republican concerns about federal meddling in

schools by making the tests voluntary, relatively short, and focused only on two core subjects in two pivotal grades.

And today, Education Department officials will meet with state leaders to discuss the tests.

"We are addressing basic skills in the grades where there are generally agreed-on goals for students," Smith said.

"There's substantial public support for that."

To date, the Education Department has fared well in most of its political wrestling matches with the Republican-led Congress. Republican talk of abolishing the department has vanished, and Clinton's most prominent education initiatives — a new lending program for college students and Goals 2000 grants for school reform — are largely intact.

But the emerging debate over the national tests may be the most sensitive yet, because they would expand the federal government's role in education.

Republican alarm about that change, particularly if it comes without congressional approval, is growing. One lawmaker, Rep. Robert W. Schaffer (R-Colo.), recently sent a letter to his House colleagues that denounced Clinton's plan as "the first step to a top-down, national curriculum" — exactly the image the White House does not want of the new tests.■

Education picks team to develop tests Consortium gets \$13 million start

By Carol

Innerst

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Despite GOP attempts to stall President Clinton's drive for national tests, the Education Department yesterday awarded a \$13 million first-year contract to a consortium of major testing firms to develop voluntary fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics tests.

The tests will be based on the congressionally mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress and, for math, will be linked to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study to facilitate comparisons.

"For the first time, the tests will inform parents, teachers and students themselves about what it takes to reach national and even international standards of achievement no matter where they live in this great country -something no other test currently does," Education Secretary Richard W. Riley said in a statement.

To award the contract to the sole bidder, American Institutes for Research, the Education Department tapped its Fund for the Improvement of Education in the budget of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

That allows the administration to bypass Congress -a sore point with Rep. Bill Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, who has made several attempts to stop the testing initiative or force the administration to seek congressional approval of its plans.

"When Congress reconvenes in 16 days, we will take immediate steps to stop the development of these tests and suspend federal funding for them," said Rep. Frank Riggs, California Republican and chairman of the committee's subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families.

"Chairman Goodling will offer an amendment . . . that would prohibit the U.S. Department of Education from spending any {fiscal year}1998 funds for new tests until Congress gives authority," he said. "Chairman Goodling will also offer a resolution to stop the development of the tests. Finally, we will look at how the contract was awarded and to whom."

The overall costs of the five-year project will be around \$90 million, Mr. Riley said last winter when the initiative was announced.

The contract awarded yesterday was competitively bid, but there were no other bidders besides the alliance of major testing firms, an Education Department spokeswoman said.

"It's not illegal, but it smacks of a kind of informal collusion," said Chester E. Finn Jr., former assistant secretary of education and head of the Office of Educational Research in the Reagan administration. "If it happened in the private sector, you might wonder if the antitrust people would look into it."

Mr. Finn and Diane Ravitch, who headed the same office in the Bush administration, support voluntary national tests but are opposed to giving the Education Department oversight.

Both believe the bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or another independent organization, should oversee the new tests.

The contract winner is a nonprofit organization that does education-related research and evaluation. It has offices in the District, Palo Alto, Calif., and Concord, Mass.

Subcontractors and their portion of the pie are: Riverside Publishing of Itasca, Ill., reading test; Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement of San Antonio, Texas, mathematics test; Westat of Rockville, pilot and field tests; California Test Bureau/McGraw Hill of Monterey, Calif., and National Computer Systems of Iowa City, Iowa, field test scoring; Educational Testing Services of Princeton, N.J., data analysis and technical issues; the Washington-based Council for Basic Education, coordinating National Advisory Committee meetings.

So far, six states, 15 cities and Defense Department schools have agreed to participate in the tests. Hoping to boost those numbers, the Education Department today will host chief state school officers, governors' aides and other officials from 47 states at an all-day discussion of tests at L'Enfant Plaza Hotel

1. Associated Press

August 16, 1997

Clinton, Minn. governor offer rival education messages

WASHINGTON - As President Clinton promoted new college scholarships and tax breaks on Saturday, his refusal to spend public money on private school tuition drew tartly personal Republican criticism.

"We want every child in America to have the same choice as Chelsea Clinton," Minnesota Gov. Arne Carlson said in the weekly GOP radio address. The president's 17-year-old daughter recently graduated from Sidwell Friends, a private prep school in Washington.

"What are Democrats so afraid of when it comes to choice, competition and accountability in our schools? ... a few more national tests, a few more summits and a truckload of tax dollars will not solve the problem," Carlson said.

His comments reflect Republican strategy for the 1998 midterm elections: Try to undercut Democrats' strength in polls on education matters by making school choice a wedge issue.

In his own broadcast, Clinton looked ahead to the new school year and urged parents to telephone the **Education Department's** toll-free hot line, 1-800-USA-Learn (1-800-872-5327), to find out how they can take advantage of higher education programs just signed into law as part of the balanced-budget package.

He, too, mentioned his only daughter. "From the day I took office, I have been working on a simple idea: when my child is my age, I want our country to be a place where every person who works hard has a chance to live out his or her God-given abilities and dreams."

He listed the administration's initiatives, including tax credits for college, access to Individual Retirement Accounts for tuition payments, new IRA's for tax-free college savings, and expanded Pell Grants.

In the Republican response, Carlson touted Minnesota's program of tax deductions for tutoring, summer enrichment camps, private or parochial school tuition and other educational purposes.

"Whether public, private or parochial, every family in America should have the right to send their children to the school that best serves their child's needs," Carlson said.

The Clintons, he added, "chose private schools, and I believe they have that right. But we want every child in America to have the same choice as Chelsea Clinton, regardless of family income."

The president supports steps toward public school choice and charter schools but opposes using public money for private school tuition.

The Education Department hot line is 1-800-USA-Learn (1-800-872-5327).

Variations of this Associated Press story appeared in The New York Times and The Washington Post. ■

Daily Education News

Tuesday, August 12, 1997

Nothing on the tests.

Daily Education News

Wednesday, August 13, 1997

1. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

August 13, 1997

Georgia educators debate merits of national testing

By Diane Loupe,
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

President Clinton's call for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and for eighth-graders in math stirred mixed feelings among Georgia educators.

Some argue that the state needs to know how its students compare with students around the nation and such a test would help schools improve. Others say the federal government has no business monkeying around with education standards.

Today, a federally appointed committee developing the fourth-grade reading test meets at the Westin Peachtree Hotel, 210 Peachtree St. NW to take public comment on its efforts to prepare a voluntary national test for fourth grade reading. The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Atlanta Superintendent Ben Canada has signed up his system to take the voluntary tests because he thought they would help the urban system gauge where its students rank nationally and help them overcome any deficits, said Betty Strickland, Atlanta's assistant superintendent for instruction.

"We're committed to adopting a set of standards that would assist our student in becoming competitive with students across the nation," Strickland said.

Fifteen urban school systems, including New York City, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles, as well as six states, have signed up for the tests. According to Clinton's goals, students should be able to read independently by the beginning of fourth grade and eighth-graders should know algebra.

But some conservative groups oppose the tests, arguing that they will fall prey to partisan politics. Susan Cable, a former Bibb County School Board member and member of the state committee revising Georgia's curriculum, says that though she knows few specifics about the national test, she's inclined to oppose them.

"As a conservative, I do not believe the federal government has the constitutional right to set education standards," said Cable. "It is a state constitutional right." Assessment drives curriculum, she argues, and if there's a national test "what that means is there's got to be a national curriculum."

State Superintendent Linda Schrenko says she is reserving judgment about the national tests.

"It depends on which national test," she said. "They haven't defined this thing yet. I'm very reluctant to say it's good or bad. I haven't seen it."

But she has agreed to have Georgia participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, the only nationally representative, continuing test of what U.S. students know and can do in core subjects.

The NAEP has been given since 1969 to a sample of students at fourth and eighth grades, and will be used to draw up the national tests.

Proponents of a national test argue that students and schools need a fair way they can measure themselves against the rest of the nation. Mark Musick, president of the Southern Regional Education Board, an Atlanta-based, publicly funded think tank looking at 15 Southern and mid-Atlantic states, points to his own analysis showing a huge disparity between state and national performance standards.

The disparity between state and national standards may be driven by political considerations that tend to lower expectations.

"Let's face it, if the idea is to have an assessment test and a large number of students fail, it's pretty tough to sell" politically, Musick said.

A national test would give every student and school a "common measuring stick," said Gary Henry, a Georgia State University researcher and director of the Council for School Performance, which collects and analyzes test scores and other information about how well Georgia's schools are doing.

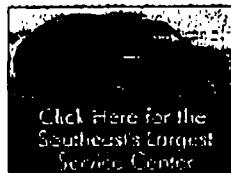
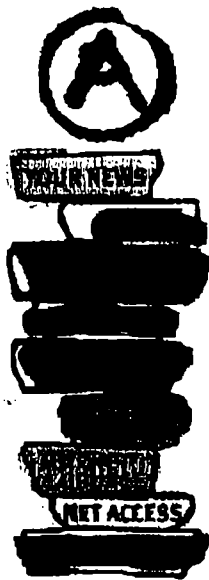
"You have to be very careful of not having local control override strong educational performance objectives," Henry said. "The discussion ought to be around standards and what students ought to learn. Kids all across Georgia are going to compete against all students for jobs."

Barbara Christmas, executive vice president of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, the state's largest teachers organization, said her group thinks the state ought to set education standards.

"But there's nothing wrong with voluntary national standards," Christmas said. "As we talk about developing voluntary tests, we need to remember there's no such thing as Georgia math and Georgia English. These are basic skills we want students to achieve."

Kay Pippin, a government relations specialist with the Georgia Association of Educators, the local affiliate of the National Education Association, says she would be concerned about comparing the achievement of students in Georgia, where the average per-pupil expenditure is about \$4,000 per child, with states where the spending is double that.

"We don't need another layer of testing for the sake of testing," said Pippin. ■



What do you want to be when you GROW UP?



Georgia educators debate merits of national testing

By Diane Loupe, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

President Clinton's call for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and for eighth-graders in math stirred mixed feelings among Georgia educators.

Some argue that the state needs to know how its students compare with students around the nation and such a test would help schools improve. Others say the federal government has no business monkeying around with education standards.

Today, a federally appointed committee developing the fourth-grade reading test meets at the Westin Peachtree Hotel, 210 Peachtree St. NW to take public comment on its efforts to prepare a voluntary national test for fourth grade reading. The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Atlanta Superintendent Ben Canada has signed up his system to take the voluntary tests because he thought they would help the urban system gauge where its students rank nationally and help them overcome any deficits, said Betty Strickland, Atlanta's assistant superintendent for instruction.

"We're committed to adopting a set of standards that would assist our students in becoming competitive with students across the nation," Strickland said.

Fifteen urban school systems, including New York City, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles, as well as six states, have signed up for the tests. According to Clinton's goals, students should be able to read independently by the beginning of fourth grade and eighth-graders should know algebra.

But some conservative groups oppose the tests, arguing that they will promote partisan politics. Susan Cable, a former Bibb County School Board member and member of the state committee revising Georgia's curriculum, says that although she knows few specifics about the national test, she's inclined to oppose it.

"As a conservative, I do not believe the federal government has the constitutional right to set education standards," said Cable. "It is a state constitutional right. Assessment drives curriculum, she argues, and if there's a national test, what that means is there's got to be a national curriculum."



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How have you helped your child take more responsibility for school?

State Superintendent Linda Schrenko says she is reserving judgment about national tests.

"It depends on which national test," she said. "They haven't defined this yet. I'm very reluctant to say it's good or bad. I haven't seen it."

But she has agreed to have Georgia participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, the only nationally representative, continuing test of what U.S. students know and can do in core subjects.

The NAEP has been given since 1969 to a sample of students at fourth and eighth grades, and will be used to draw up the national tests.

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1. The NewsHour (PBS)

August 12, 1997

HIGHER LEARNING?

In an effort to increase test scores, the Chicago Public Schools are taking a hard look at the current curriculum. The mayor is concerned with skyrocketing dropout rates, and is looking into mandatory summer school to bring the scores up to par.

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: Now, the Chicago school shake up. It began two years ago, and the results are starting to show. Elizabeth Brackett of WTTW-Chicago reports.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: This is not the way Quantina Washington had planned to spend her summer. But when her scores on national tests showed that her reading and math skills were two years below grade level, she was told she could try and bring up her scores in summer school or repeat eighth grade. The policy was a blow to Quantina. Since her grades were good, she and her family thought she would graduate with her eighth grade class.

QUANTINA WASHINGTON: My mother and my grandmother was helpin' out a lot. They paid \$75 for the graduation fees, and all of it got sent back.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: These third graders thought they would be playing outside for most of the summer until they got their test score.

VRYLON CASTON: I said, "What? I don't want to go to school." And I had to. So I just went.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Across town at the Brintano School Karen Neace had her eighth graduation plans put on hold.

KAREN NEACE: My mom bought me my dress, my graduation dress. And it's yellow. And it's really beautiful. And my dad, he was planning some surprise party he told me about.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: One hundred and fifty thousand students are in Chicago's expanded summer school program, making it the largest in the country. Summer school is now mandatory for third, sixth, eighth, and ninth graders, who scored two years below grade level on nationally norm tests. Those are the critical transition grades, according to school administrators. The policy makes sense to Chicago's mayor.

MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY, Chicago: Historically, you socially promoted people because of age, and, well, just get 'em ahead, who cares, get 'em in high school, maybe they'll drop out; get 'em out of the system. And so what we had to do was we said there are no more social promotions.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: A lot of promotion policy comes from the mayor's office. Two years ago the state legislature dumped the control of the long-troubled system in the lap of the mayor. His first goal: Make the schools accountable.

MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY: Some students were at 70 percent dropout rates. Some only read at third or fourth grade reading levels. So everybody kind of gave up and walked away. It was like a ship that was sinking, and everybody was getting away from it. It was just sinking each year. And so I knew the accountability. And I'm going to be held accountable, which I wanted to. As mayor, you should be held accountable.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Daley immediately put in his own management team; at the top, a former city hall staffer, who understood what the mayor meant by accountability.

PAUL VALLAS, CEO, Chicago Public Schools: I will tell you this. If we don't continue to move the system forward, the mayor will just, you know, find another CEO and find another education team to turn it around. The bottom line is failure is not an option for us.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: The mayor and the new school officials see test scores as the clearest measure of success or failure. Scores have improved slightly in each of the first two years of the new administration, but 109 schools were put on probation last fall when less than 15 percent of their students tested at or above grade level. As the school year ended, Vallas removed 16 principals from schools on probation. The move shocked Beverly Tunney, the head of the Principals Association.

BEVERLY TUNNEY, Principals and Administrators Assoc.: We have not been able to equate removal with the criteria that has been established for why a principal should be removed. All of these principals wrote corrective action plans, were following corrective

action plans. In all but three schools there were improvements in reading scores. All the schools improved in math scores. All the schools improved in attendance, so these are our concerns. You know, did they have a fair chance, were they evaluated fairly?

PAUL VALLAS: We don't remove a principal unless that —unless the removal of that principal is based on a very strong and very documented recommendation on the part of the probation manager. In fact, we probably could have argued for the removal of another dozen principals, but the bottom line is —if anything —I believe that we've probably moved too cautiously.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: For seven high schools on probation the changes went beyond the removal of the principal. The schools were told they were to be reconstituted. Every job in the school was on the line. Last month the notices went out. One hundred and eighty-eight teachers in the seven schools were to be replaced.

At the Paul Robeson High School 26 teachers, 1/3 of the school's teaching staff lost their teaching jobs. Robeson students are 100 percent African-American. 73 percent come from families living in poverty. Only 4.7 percent of the students are reading on grade level. 8 percent are at grade level in math. 60 percent of the students failed to graduate last year, just the kind of school the mayor says needs to be rebuilt from the ground up.

MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY: The private school that's been in the 70/75 percent dropout rate for five years. And their reading rate is at 3 or 4 or 5 percent at a national norm. Anyway, let's wake up, you know, let's wake somebody up in that school. You just think of all the service we've done to children who have failed, who have dropped out, who've been in the system, who got a degree, or can't read today. You have to shake that system up, especially in the high school system you have to.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Robeson did not lose its principal under reconstitution. But there's no doubt that the school has been shaken up. Standing in front of a mural designed by students to commemorate the life of the school's name sake, actor and civil rights pioneer Paul Robeson, principal James Breashears vowed that the school would be different.

JAMES BREASHEARS, Principal: We use that kind of theme and Robeson as a backdrop to say to the students there's nothing you can't do. You can do it. And, again, if he could do it 50 years ago —

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: How many of your teachers here do you think believe that those students can do it?

JAMES BREASHEARS: I think the old Paul Robeson maybe 60 percent; the new Paul Robeson 85/90 percent.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Breashears says replacing 1/3 of the faculty has been painful, but he sees it as the best chance to turn the school around.

JAMES BREASHEARS: Expectation is often low here. I think that's a big factor. And, of course, with the new opportunity to re-staff the school, to bring in new blood, new ideas, new expectations. I believe that that is the strongest tool in the entire restructuring effort. And I think it will show a difference.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Veteran teacher Stuart Switt is one of those who won't be part of the new Robeson. He was stunned and angered by the principal's new power.

STUART SWITT, Replaced Teacher: Does that mean he has the right to say, well, your 30 years of experience doesn't mean anything? The fellowships, the grants, the awards that you've received don't mean a thing; your relationship with the students isn't important; your standards are not important. The fact that the students come back and talk to you, say thank you, that's irrelevant. If that's the way he wants it, this is his building, and I will —I will survive.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Switt and the 187 other displaced teachers have 10 months at full pay to try and find another school that will hire them. But Teachers Union President Tom Reece says that won't be easy.

TOM REECE, Teachers Union: Now, if you're a principal, they've got a brand on their forehead and it says I was thrown out of the seven schools that are being reconstituted. Who's going to hire them? So this is —that's —it's absolutely unfair to those people.

MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY: It's not an assault upon teachers. It's an assault upon the quality of education that we're producing in various schools.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: The remaining faculty at Robeson is struggling to rebuild the school with help from educators at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The school has decided to divide the 1350 students into seven small schools. Project coordinator Mike Klonsky says that should change the entire climate of the school.

MIKE KLONSKY, University of Illinois, Chicago: They've chosen a program that they

can feel a part of. And it's small enough so that they get to know the teachers, and the teachers get to know them. A small group of teachers, no more than can fit around a good sized table, stay together with a group of kids for four years.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Robeson and the other high schools should get some help at raising their test scores from the mandatory summer school program. No longer will students be coming through their doors in the fall reading at a second or third grade level.

Now, students must be reading at least a seventh grade level to get out of grammar school. The summer program is specifically designed to raise scores. Classes are small, each teacher has an assistant; only reading and math are taught. And the curriculum is highly structured. Eighth grade teacher Michelle Evans.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: Do you feel like you're just teaching for a test?

MICHELLE EVANS, Teacher: They really are learning. They really are learning because we're not teaching problem one, section two. We're teaching skills.

QUANTINA WASHINGTON: In summer school the teacher goes step by step and she like give you notes and things and problems on the same activity that you are doing, so you can understand more on what you're doing.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: There's a lot more homework too. Quantina brings books home every day, but as one of seven, it's sometimes hard to find a quiet time to study. Despite her disappointment at seeing her daughter's graduation plans ruined, Quantina's mother likes the changes at school.

LAQUITTA WASHINGTON, Parent: Once upon a time they weren't held responsible for their grades, and if they failed or not failed. And now they're being held accountable for it. And I think that's better.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: That is the kind of change the mayor is looking for.

MAYOR RICHARD M. DALEY: I go to these schools and I can pick the poorest kid in the school and he or she is achieving. And they come from a dysfunctional family; they have environmental problems, you name it, but they're succeeding. There's a lot of success stories in both the elementary and high schools.

ELIZABETH BRACKETT: And Daley wants the success measured. He has been one of the first elected officials to sign on to President Bill Clinton's plan to administer a new nationwide test to measure student achievement. That, says the mayor, is the clearest way to bring accountability to the schools.■

Daily Education News

Monday, August 11, 1997

1. Los Angeles Times

* 08/11/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Foreign Desk; Page A-5

WASHINGTON OUTLOOK

Call for Academic Standards Could Face Test From Civil Rights Law

By RONALD BROWNSTEIN

WASHINGTON — President Clinton's education agenda revolves around a simple proposition: that all students should be held to uniform standards through stiff national tests. "We must demand high standards of every student," he insists.

Meanwhile, his Education Department seems to be moving toward an interpretation of civil rights law that could challenge the entire concept of objective academic standards as a threat to racial equity.

Even for a president accustomed to accommodating contradiction, that's a daunting chasm. The time may be coming when Clinton has to choose between common standards in education and a civil rights community uneasy about their implications. It's an either/or question for a president who usually prefers multiple choice.

"This administration has never dwelled too long on philosophical clarity and consistency in anything it has done," said Chester Finn, an education expert at the conservative Hudson Institute. "But you would think one of these would eventually have to yield."

This conflict entangles the priorities of divergent decades. Education reformers are trying to extract higher performance from students by subjecting them to tests with teeth. About half the states now require students to pass standardized exams to graduate from high school. At the cutting edge, Chicago now requires students to pass tests for promotion from the third, sixth, eighth and ninth grades.

But this standards movement is approaching a collision with the spreading reach of the "disparate impact" doctrine—a cornerstone of early 1970s civil rights law. Disparate impact holds that seemingly race-neutral standards—like tests—can violate the federal civil rights statutes if they have a disproportionate effect on minorities or women.

Disparate impact analysis has been applied primarily to hiring decisions; typically, an employer might be compelled to drop a requirement for high school diplomas if that standard tends to exclude minorities and he can't demonstrate a clear business necessity for demanding it.

Now, however, the Education Department is hinting at widening the use of disparate impact analysis in education. Last month—in response to a petition from a coalition of civil rights groups—the department agreed to investigate the University of California's process for admitting students to its three law schools now that the state regents have banned the use of racial preferences.

With preferences barred, the UC law schools rely primarily on grades and test scores. Since minority acceptances have plunged at the most exclusive campuses this year, the civil rights groups argue that those traditional academic standards are having a "discriminatory effect" and thus violate the civil rights laws.

In a recent interview with David Savage of The Times, Judith Winston—until last week the Education Department's chief lawyer and now the director of Clinton's racial advisory panel—wouldn't comment directly on the California investigation. But, echoing the groups' complaint, she said the government could challenge universities basing admission on "race-neutral criteria" such as grades and test scores if the use of those measures reduces minority opportunities and cannot be justified as an educational necessity. In other words, holding all applicants to the same standard could still constitute discrimination if it produces racially unequal results.

That argument has enormous implications not only for higher education, but the very push for standards in primary and secondary education that Clinton has championed. If the Education Department rules that objective educational standards can violate civil rights law because they disadvantage minority students, the door would be flung open for racial challenges to the proliferating use of tests for graduation and promotion in lower grades.

Already, civil rights groups are watching with suspicion the higher failure rates for minority students—especially those from low-income areas—in many communities that have imposed high-stakes testing. Last week, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund sought an injunction against a North Carolina county that has required students to pass tests to advance to the next grade. More lawsuits are likely as more communities adopt tests with consequences.

So far, the Education Department has moved cautiously in this area. It hasn't prevented any states from imposing tests. But in 1994, it exhaustively investigated whether Ohio's new high school graduation exam had a "disparate impact" on

minorities, before finally approving the test—amid sharp criticism of the probe from House Republicans. Last month, the department negotiated an agreement that allowed Texas to continue its testing program, but required greater monitoring to ensure that minority students were being taught the material on the exams.

Civil rights groups are justified in demanding such protection—and careful examination of the tests that states are imposing. All levels of education can rely too heavily on standardized tests; as more communities condition promotion or graduation on an exam, minority parents are unlikely to be the only ones with second thoughts. "These tests shouldn't be the sole determinant of whether a student has mastered a particular area," said Stephon Bowens, an attorney in the North Carolina case.

But the answer can't be to repudiate standards as a form of discrimination: To do so is to declare society incapable of effectively educating minority and poor children.

Ultimately, closing the racial gaps in educational performance will require a reconstruction of social order, economic opportunity and family structure in America's most blighted neighborhoods. More immediately, it calls for aggressive school reform and greater efforts to reclaim the students drifting behind—like the \$50 million Chicago has poured into summer school this year for the nearly 44,000 kids who flunked its promotion tests.

But in graduate school admissions and grade school testing alike, attacking high academic standards amounts to shooting the messenger. The standards "put the spotlight on the problem," said Chris Pipho of the Education Commission of the States. "Now the question is, what are we going to do about it?"■

1. Education Daily

August 11, 1997

LEP ADVOCATES CRITICIZE NATIONAL TESTING PLANS

Advocates for children with limited English skills want the Education Department to expand President Clinton's national test framework to include a fourth-grade reading test in Spanish.

Representatives of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) argue that, if the voluntary test is designed to measure students' ability to read, then it should be given in their native language, since reading skills are transferable from one language to another.

ED steadfastly refuses to budge on the reading exam, which will be given only in English, though accommodations—such as allowing extended time—will be made for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students.

"This is a test in reading in English," said Gary Phillips, ED's executive director of the testing program.

ED does plan to offer the eighth-grade math test in Spanish, however.

Six states, as well as 15 large urban school districts with high percentages of LEP students, have signed up for the exams, scheduled to start in spring 1999 (ED, July 28).

Local Options

Generally, students lacking even rudimentary English skills will be excluded from the tests, although the precise parameters still must be worked out by school districts.

Advocates worry that if LEP students don't take the test, schools won't have the information necessary to address their education needs.

"How will school districts be held accountable to LEP students if they are excluded from the test?" wondered Patricia Loera, legislative staff attorney for MALDEF. "The children that they plan to exclude are the most vulnerable and have the highest dropout rate."

A recent ED report found that Hispanic dropout rates were much higher than other ethnic groups, especially among youths with limited English skills (ED, Aug. 1).

While he didn't criticize the tests, Luis Laosa, a principal research scientist at the Educational Testing Service, said "if a policy leaves out a segment of the population, then that segment becomes invisible. If their needs are not identified, they won't be addressed."

ED officials say the reading test will accommodate LEP students by offering extended time and bilingual aides.

Schools also could allow bilingual dictionaries.

MALDEF also wants ED to require districts to keep track of the numbers of students who do and don't take the test by race, gender, disability and LEP status.

Phillips said ED would issue guidance on how student data should be collected, but stressed that local districts will have some discretion.

ED will monitor districts to ensure they aren't inappropriately excluding students from the tests (ED, July 30).

Conservatives Gin Up Opposition

Meanwhile, conservative groups are also gearing up to oppose the test.

A coalition of 11 organizations, including the Christian Coalition and the Eagle Forum, wrote to House leaders indicating their support of GOP efforts to force ED to suspend the test program until it gets congressional approval.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, plans an amendment to the fiscal 1998 education funding bill that would slow ED's efforts. Congress plans to take up the bill next month after it returns from its summer recess.

Three months ago, Goodling tried to attach the amendment to a disaster relief bill but was thwarted by procedural rules (ED, May 15). He introduced a nonbinding "sense of the House" resolution, H. Res. 214, on Aug. 1, urging ED to hold up.

Both the House and Senate education appropriations committees want the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate the planned 1998 field tests before ED spends any more money on the initiative (ED, July 25).

A spokesman for the Christian Coalition said the group has asked its 1.9 million members and supporters to contact their congressional representatives and register their support for Goodling's efforts. Opposition from the Eagle Forum was instrumental in torpedoing a vocational training consolidation bill last year (ED, Sept. 30, 1996). — Laureen Lazarovici■

Daily Education News

Thursday, August 7, 1997

1. LRP Publications

Aug. 6, 1997 Category: Trade

Proposal Would Put Brakes on Clinton's National Tests

WASHINGTON, August 6 — A House Republican is calling President Clinton's plans for voluntary national tests a waste of money, and wants the president to get congressional approval for the plan before any funding is earmarked.

House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman William F. Goodling, R-Pa., introduced a resolution Friday to suspend planning, development, implementation and administration of national testing until Congress gives specific, explicit approval for the program.

If passed, Resolution 214 would suspend the Clinton Administration's development of national tests in fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics by barring use of federal funds for the initiative. Goodling said that Congress could more effectively help students by sending dollars directly to classrooms.

"We already have plenty of testing," Goodling said. "Nearly all of the states have their own testing programs. Why have another measurement instrument to tell us what we already know?"

The lawmaker also is concerned that the White House and the Education Department are moving too fast with the development of the tests and are not seeking appropriate congressional approval. Only six states have endorsed the department's testing proposal and 44 states have either not endorsed it or have not taken a position on it, Goodling said.

"The real issue here is that the development of individualized, national tests is too controversial and potentially divisive for the administration to act without congressional discussion, review or authorization," Goodling said.

The Education Department plans to administer the national tests beginning in 1999 without Congress' consent, Goodling said.

Rick Miller, a spokesperson for Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, said the department disagrees with Goodling's claim that national testing is a waste of money. He said Clinton wants testing to insure that students are learning the basics. The conflict between Congress and the administration is not insurmountable, Miller said.

"Secretary Riley and Congressman Goodling have a good relationship. [Riley] looks forward to working with him," Miller said.

The California State Board of Education and Washington Governor Gary Locke are among those who fear the tests will stifle local education control and are supporting Goodling in his fight. They say the tests won't be treated as voluntary once enacted, and that the states will be pressured into testing.

The Family Research Council is applauding Goodling for "his attempt to check the administration's plan to force a national testing agenda on the American public without approval from our elected representatives in Congress."

Miller said Clinton's supporters include Business Roundtable, National Alliance of Business, 240 hi-tech leaders and the governors of Massachusetts, West Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, Maryland and Kentucky.

Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretaries at the Education Department under Ronald Reagan and George Bush, also offer support for national tests. "Until now, there has been no way for parents or public officials to get good information about how students are doing. To those worried about 'local control,' we say these tests are a yardstick, not a harness," they said in a joint statement released by the department.

Goodling also plans to offer an amendment to the spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments when lawmakers return in September. His proposal would prohibit Riley from spending any fiscal 1998 funds for national tests until Congress gives statutory authority. Feds would not be barred from spending federal money for the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).■

1. Richmond Times-Dispatch

August 6, 1997

Abandon Hope of Tax Credits, Ye Who Enter Clintonized Schools. . .

Power to the Parents or Power to the State?

By Robert Holland

Should parents of all income levels be able to choose the education that they deem best for their children from the earliest ages onward? Or should more power be gathered in government agencies over the kind of education most children receive from kindergarten through high school?

Those will be the key questions for a showdown in Congress this fall. They arise from contention over (1) tax credits to support parental choice, and (2) projected national testing of the nation's fourth- and eighth-graders under the direction of the U.S. Education Department (USED).

As the champion of Big Education, President Clinton is forcing those issues as never before. Those who see individual freedom and local autonomy as essential to excellence in education had better be up to the challenge.

The tip-off to just how serious Clinton is about his agenda came behind the scenes last week as official Washington was going ga-ga over bipartisan agreement to cut (some) taxes (for some people) and balance the budget (maybe) by 2002.

Late in the evening of July 29, a Clinton letter delivered to Speaker Newt Gingrich threatened to veto the entire tax package unless the congressional leadership dropped something called the Coverdell Amendment — and never mind that it had received the blessing of a conference committee reconciling House and Senate versions of the budget/tax bill. The GOP leadership beat its well-worn path to retreat the next day.

And what heinous deed would this measure sponsored by Georgia Senator Paul Coverdell commit? Just this: It would allow parents to save up to \$2,000 per year per child in a tax-sheltered account, similar to an IRA. The interest built up in the account would be tax-free if used for a child's education. And parents could use the money to send the children to whatever schools they wished — public, private, parochial, or home-school.

Clinton asserted in his letter that, "I would veto any tax package that would undermine public education by providing tax benefits for private and parochial school expenses."

HOW revealing that statement is, given that the signature Clinton item in the much-ballyhooed tax package is the so-called Hope Scholarship, which provides a \$1,500 tax credit for the first and second years of college (which Clinton basically seeks to make the 13th and 14th years of vocationalized high school), and a \$1,000 "lifelong learning" credit for years thereafter. And, yes, the tax relief is available for those who choose private and church-affiliated as well as public colleges.

So if tax relief is in order for couples earning up to \$80,000 a year to send a child to any college in the land, why shouldn't it be available for parents of meager or modest income who wish to send their children to the best elementary and secondary schools available in their region?

Why? Because the National Education Association and other elements of Big-Ed (a/k/a The Blob) fear K-12 competition more than a supermodel fears wrinkles. In higher ed, there is no monopoly of labor such as the NEA effectively possesses — which helps explain why American universities are internationally esteemed and U.S. public schools aren't. The NEA, of course, has Clinton in its pocket; and the NEA vehemently opposed the Coverdell Amendment.

That amendment is likely to be revived by the House leadership as a free-standing bill after the August recess. And as Paul Steidler, senior fellow at the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, notes: The Clinton administration is likely to find its position of "opposing choice for poor children while promoting it for college students. . . quite embarrassing."

Increasingly, black notables and groups are expressing interest in expanded parental choice, to include private schools. Author/educator Alveda King, a niece of the late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., lauded the Coverdell provision as the only tax relief that "would address the profound crisis that confronts our elementary and high schools." Moreover, the voucher program in Milwaukee serving primarily poor, inner-city children has had documented success, despite the best efforts of The Blob to smother it in its infancy.

The Berlin Wall that is the public-education monopoly is developing fissures.

MEANWHILE, Clinton is continuing to "brazen it out" with his attempt to institute national testing of all fourth- and eighth-graders without congressional authorization. Critics on both the left and the right have condemned the move to develop tests on a fast track in 1997-98 without a national consensus in support. House Education Chairman Bill Goodling is pushing a measure to prohibit USED from spending any money for tests until Congress approves.

Goodling points out that the federal government in 1997 already is spending \$540 million to test students. That includes the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Math and Science Study, but by far the largest item is the \$476 million of Goals 2000 loot the feds distributed to the states to develop standards and assessments.

"It's not a matter that students aren't tested enough," Goodling says. "Right now they're tested over and over at the

national, state, school district, and classroom levels. Just ask any parent."

That's certainly true. How they are tested matters, too. In gung-ho Goals 2000 states like Kentucky and Kansas, testing has taken the form of performance-based assessment, which downgrades facts and accuracy in favor of opinions, feelings, politically correct attitudes, "problem-solving" (often performed in workgroups), and "guestimating," even in mathematics.

Parent-led, grassroots uprisings, however, have put that form of assessment under withering fire. In Kansas, an increasingly conservative state board of education is refusing to renew its performance-based assessments. In Kentucky, grave errors — confirming flaws that grassroots critics had denounced for years — finally prompted the state education agency to fire its assessment contractor.

Yet, the teams the Clintonites have assembled to oversee national tests are packed with advocates of the very same sort of fuzzy assessment common under Goals 2000 funding. Thus, if Clinton gets his way, parents lacking the money to vote with their feet will have no choice as to the school their child attends, nor any say as to how their child is assessed in that government school. They can expect school to be more about indoctrination than education.

That's "world-class education" the NEA/Clinton/totalitarian way. ■

1. San Diego Union-Tribune

August 6, 1997

The test standoff

Scholastic yardstick delayed by squabbles

Testing students from one grade to the next to measure what they have learned should be standard procedure in schools. But, sadly, this scholastic yardstick is the exception rather than the rule in California public schools.

Since a controversial statewide assessment system was scuttled four years ago, school districts have been left to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, the issue is being roiled by politicians and state bureaucrats. The upshot is a standoff between Gov. Pete Wilson, who wants to buy an existing standardized test so it can be administered as soon as possible, and opponents who are wary of any exams that do not dovetail with curriculum standards.

Many districts worry that the test results will be skewed and make them look bad. State schools chief Delaine Eastin echoes their concern, perhaps because subpar test scores might reflect poorly on her stewardship. The calcified state Department of Education opposes Wilson because it has a vested interest in dumbing down any evaluation process. Indeed, the department is riddled with personnel who believe students' self-esteem should take precedence over whether they are learning anything of consequence.

The opponents want to wait until the governor's 21-member commission on standards concludes its laborious deliberations into what students should be learning at each grade level. But that could take years. Meantime, the state is spending billions to reduce class sizes in the early grades. The continuation of that investment will hinge on whether the state gets its money's worth.

Which brings us back to Wilson's proposal to spend \$83 million on a test that will measure academic achievement for students in grades two through 11. It's galling enough that California, which used to pride itself on a topflight school system, doesn't have such a test in place. Further delay and indecision would only compound the problem.

That problem can be seen on the federal level, where President Clinton's call for voluntary national testing of fourth-graders for reading and eighth-graders for math has run into a snag. Conservative critics bristle at the prospect of Big Brother compiling test scores, while many liberals view such measurements as culturally biased and generally suspect. Combine this with the institutional resistance of the educational establishment, and it's little wonder nothing much is happening.

Only six states, excluding California, have agreed to participate in the national testing project, which was championed seven years ago when George Bush was president and Clinton was governor of Arkansas. Come to think of it, Wilson pledged seven years ago to produce a statewide test that would enable parents to determine how their kids are doing compared to other California students.

That both projects are in limbo speaks volumes about the glacial pace of reforming public schools — and the need for strong leadership to get something done for a change. ■

1. LRP Publications

Aug. 6, 1997 Category: Trade

Proposal Would Put Brakes on Clinton's National Tests

WASHINGTON, August 6 — A House Republican is calling President Clinton's plans for voluntary national tests a waste of money, and wants the president to get congressional approval for the plan before any funding is earmarked.

House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman William F. Goodling, R-Pa., introduced a resolution Friday to suspend planning, development, implementation and administration of national testing until Congress gives specific, explicit approval for the program.

If passed, Resolution 214 would suspend the Clinton Administration's development of national tests in fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics by barring use of federal funds for the initiative. Goodling said that Congress could more effectively help students by sending dollars directly to classrooms.

"We already have plenty of testing," Goodling said. "Nearly all of the states have their own testing programs. Why have another measurement instrument to tell us what we already know?"

The lawmaker also is concerned that the White House and the Education Department are moving too fast with the development of the tests and are not seeking appropriate congressional approval. Only six states have endorsed the department's testing proposal and 44 states have either not endorsed it or have not taken a position on it, Goodling said.

"The real issue here is that the development of individualized, national tests is too controversial and potentially divisive for the administration to act without congressional discussion, review or authorization," Goodling said.

The Education Department plans to administer the national tests beginning in 1999 without Congress' consent, Goodling said.

Rick Miller, a spokesperson for Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, said the department disagrees with Goodling's claim that national testing is a waste of money. He said Clinton wants testing to insure that students are learning the basics. The conflict between Congress and the administration is not insurmountable, Miller said.

"Secretary Riley and Congressman Goodling have a good relationship. [Riley] looks forward to working with him," Miller said.

The California State Board of Education and Washington Governor Gary Locke are among those who fear the tests will stifle local education control and are supporting Goodling in his fight. They say the tests won't be treated as voluntary once enacted, and that the states will be pressured into testing.

The Family Research Council is applauding Goodling for "his attempt to check the administration's plan to force a national testing agenda on the American public without approval from our elected representatives in Congress."

Miller said Clinton's supporters include Business Roundtable, National Alliance of Business, 240 hi-tech leaders and the governors of Massachusetts, West Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, Maryland and Kentucky.

Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretaries at the Education Department under Ronald Reagan and George Bush, also offer support for national tests. "Until now, there has been no way for parents or public officials to get good information about how students are doing. To those worried about 'local control,' we say these tests are a yardstick, not a harness," they said in a joint statement released by the department.

Goodling also plans to offer an amendment to the spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments when lawmakers return in September. His proposal would prohibit Riley from spending any fiscal 1998 funds for national tests until Congress gives statutory authority. Feds would not be barred from spending federal money for the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).■

Daily Education News

Wednesday, August 6, 1997

1. LRP Publications

Aug. 5, 1997

Lawmakers Prepare Amendments to House Spending Bill

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5 — When the House returns in September to debate the thorny spending bill that funds education programs, lawmakers are planning to offer amendments affecting special education, school reform, education technology and national testing.

Last week, House leaders aborted a standoff on the spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments after conservative Republicans threatened to filibuster the measure by offering more than 100 amendments and breathless debate.

Behind the dozens of amendments intended to halt the measure are a handful of proposals to change education-related provisions — amendments that likely will be offered despite the broader political battle.

Perhaps the most controversial of the amendments will be offered by Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif. Riggs wants to make it clear that the revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows feds to withhold only a proportionate share of funding for the total IDEA-eligible population when states opt not to provide services to youth in adult prisons. See D.C. Daily, July 30.

Riggs also intends to team with Rep. Tim Roemer, D-Ind., to increase funding for charter schools by \$25 million to a total of \$100 million. The plan calls for funding to be shifted from the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund. The lawmakers say charter schools have demonstrated ability to reform the nation's education system.

Rep. William F. Goodling, R-Pa., plans to offer two amendments to the bill. As chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee he played a major role in the reauthorization of IDEA, and now is pushing to increase the proposed appropriation for the program by \$155.5 million. Appropriators already agreed to a \$312.7 million over the fiscal 1997 appropriation, so the Goodling amendment would boost total special education spending to more than \$4.5 billion for fiscal 1998.

The increase in special education funding would be offset by a \$35 million reduction in education reform, a \$6.9 million drop in higher education and a \$113.6 million decrease in education research, statistics and improvements, according to the amendment.

Goodling's other amendment would prohibit the Education Department from using appropriated funds for developing national mathematics tests for fourth graders and national reading tests for eighth graders. The lawmaker said he believes President Clinton shouldn't push the controversial national tests without congressional authorization.

The highly partisan Goals 2000 program could also be under fire again. Rep. David McIntosh, R-Ind., wants an additional \$21 million cut from the program, even after appropriators agreed to cut the \$491 million program by \$16 million. McIntosh's will propose to shift \$15 million to education and technology programs to offer more computers and other technology in classrooms, and the other \$6 million to the education, research, statistics and technology account for the Jacob Javits fund for gifted and talented students.

Reps. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., and Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., are planning to offer a plan to give the Education Department \$100,000 to develop an Internet site that would provide students with information about scholarships and financial aid. The amendment would offset the cost by taking funding from the educational technology fund.

A push by Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II, D-Mass., to increase elderly abuse prevention efforts would also have an effect on education funding, if approved. Kennedy proposes to find money for the program by reducing funding for the National Center for Education Statistics by \$14 million.

The House will consider the spending bill after returning from August recess on Sept. 3. ■

Student achievement // National standards are ...

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If Americans are really serious about educating all students well, they must get serious about setting strong academic standards, developing curricula that match, and stringently testing students' progress. That is why President Clinton is right to urge states and

- * school districts to participate in a national testing program.

His administration is developing tests that would assess performance in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. Being able to read independently by age 8 is a prerequisite for all other learning. Doing well in math at age 12 is a second crucial educational milestone; algebra and geometry are the gateways to high school and college courses.

- * Last week, Clinton criticized governors at their national
- * meeting for "dragging their feet" on national tests. So far, only six states and about 15 school districts have agreed to take part in
- * the voluntary program. All should sign on, including Minnesota and its school districts.

Some governors, as well as some educator groups, expressed concerns about excessive testing and fears about possible harmful uses of the results. Lamar Alexander, former education secretary, argued that governors should be setting rigorous standards and allowing more parents to send children to alternative and home schools.

Trouble is, states' standards are all over the map. A recent yearlong Education Week study found that state standards vary widely. Calling U.S. schools "riddled with excellence and rife with mediocrity," the report points out that fewer than half of all U.S. students can do challenging work in reading or math at their grade levels.

- * In addition, many of the tirades against national standards sound much like the tired arguments used a few years ago against statewide testing. Today they get a much less sympathetic reception

from a public dissatisfied with schools and demanding reform. The case for state standards and testing has been made.

- * The same case can be made in favor of national assessments. There need not be a complex maze of tests for students to take each year. As states design and refine their own tests, they can
- * coordinate them with national standards. With a complementary system
- * of local and national standards, students should be able to attend any U.S. school and be assured of learning to read well and do basic math.

To be sure, taking tests does not, in isolation, enhance learning or teaching environments. But it is a valuable tool to help teachers and parents understand the academic strengths and weaknesses of students.

In a global economy dominated by information, what you learn determines what you earn. U.S. students must know how they compare to their peers, not only in other states but in other countries. In order to do better, American schools and their students need to know

- * where they stand, and what they need to do to compete. National standards and tests can help.

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> EXAM SCAM

> The Latest Education Disaster: Whole Math

> The Weekly Standard, August 4, 1997

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> By Lynne V. Cheney

> Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

>

> They lied to me, says Madalyn McDaniel of Atascadero, California. They

> completely betrayed me. At a parents' night at the local high school,

> McDaniel was told about a great opportunity for her son: the Interactive

> Mathematics Program, in which he would learn everything taught in traditional

> math courses only in a more effective way. But after signing him up, McDaniel

> realized the program was not at all what was advertised. Instead of learning

> rules and formulas, her son and his classmates were presented with problems

> and expected to invent their own ways of solving them. He was very

> frustrated, McDaniel says. I'd say, Look in the book, it will explain.

> He'd say, Mom, there is no book.

> McDaniel had encountered whole math. Also known as fuzzy math or new-new

> math, whole math is an instructional scheme based on the idea that knowledge

> is only meaningful when we construct it for ourselves.

> Trying to understand what was going on, McDaniel spent three weeks in a

> class using the Interactive Mathematics Program. As a member of a cooperative

> learning group along with three 15-year-olds, she joined in activities like

> cutting out pieces of graph paper, some two units by two, others three by

> three, all the way up to 15 by 15. The group then played a game that involved
 > forming triangles with the edges of their graph-paper squares (known as
 > manipulatives in the whole-math trade). The object of the game was to see
 > when two sides of the triangle would win (that is, the number of units in
 > the squares forming the two sides would be greater than the number of units in
 > the square forming the third side), when one side would win, and when there
 > would be a tie. Since it turned out that ties always involved right
 > triangles, the class, after two days, had developed a right-triangle rule: a^2
 > + $b^2 = c^2$. Having thus discovered the Pythagorean theorem, students were
 > then given a single homework problem which, McDaniel reports, only two
 > students managed to get right.

> This could have been a great exercise, McDaniel observes, if it had
 > reinforced a concept students had understood and practiced. But among
 > whole-math advocates, she notes, there is a belief that if you work with these
 > manipulatives, you'll arrive at knowledge that you so truly understand that
 > you don't have to practice. This view fits rather neatly, she says, with
 > student inclinations, and with the realities of the whole-math classroom.

> Reinventing all of mathematics doesn't leave much time for practice,
 > particularly since whole-math enthusiasts feel driven to link classroom math
 > to real-world concerns and thus have students spend a good deal of time
 > writing about subjects such as traffic congestion and oil spills. One
 > Interactive Mathematics Program unit titled "Leave Room for Me" begins by
 > assigning a two- to five-page essay on the world population explosion. The
 > student might choose pros and cons to birth control, for example.

> Seeing danger ahead, McDaniel got her son out of the Interactive
 > Mathematics Program and into traditional math courses. Others were not so
 > farsighted. Debby Arnold, also of Atascadero, believed the teachers who told
 > her that, although the program might seem strange, she shouldn't be alarmed.

> It was the college track program after all, and it was going to work. But
 > when, after three years of getting A's and B's in math, her son Joey went off
 > to college, he, like many of his classmates in the program, was diagnosed as
 > significantly below grade level and put in a remedial program. Arnold
 > subsequently took her daughter, an eleventh-grader also enrolled in the
 > program, to a private tutoring center, where she was diagnosed as having
 > second-grade math skills. She couldn't accurately and with reasonable speed
 > add single digits, Arnold says. After a year of expensive private tutoring,
 > Michelle Arnold is now at the ninth-grade level, and her mother hopes that by
 > the time she graduates, she'll have caught up. We're upset, she says. We
 > are mad. Where is the common sense?

> The lack of candor that these parents encountered is not unique to
 > whole-math instruction. Many parents have been told that whole language, a
 > teaching approach that discounts phonics, is not being used in their schools
 > only to discover later that it is. But the whole-math people are taking a
 > giant step beyond offering false reassurances at parents' night. With help
 > from the Clinton administration, they are working to pull the wool over the
 > entire country's eyes about the most ambitious mathematical assessment the
 > nation has ever undertaken: the national test in mathematics to be
 > administered annually to eighth-graders beginning in 1999.

> The whole-math disaster began in 1989 when the National Council of
 > Teachers of Mathematics issued a set of standards declaring a new approach to
 > be in order. No more drill and kill, as whole-math people like to call
 > traditional teaching. Instead, from kindergarten on, there would be a
 > calculator in every hand so that young minds would be free of irksome chores

- > like addition and multiplication and thus able to take on higher-order tasks
- > such as inventing their own personal methods of long division. No more
- > teacher as sage on the stage, instructing a class of students; a teacher
- > would serve instead as a guide on the side, offering non-judgmental
- > questions and comments to groups of students working out their own
- > mathematical meanings.
- > The national council's standards have influenced teaching in many states,
- > but nowhere more than in California, and as various whole-math curricula have
- > entered the schools- Mathland in Davis and Petaluma, Quest 2000" in Brea,
- > College Preparatory Math in El Segundo parents have rallied in opposition.
- > The most sophisticated protest was mounted out of San Diego, where a small
- > group of parents established a Web site titled Mathematically Correct
- > (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mathman/>). Advocates of math
- > reform themselves they strongly favor teaching algebra in eighth grade, for
- > example the group's members came together out of concern that whole math would
- > deprive the next generation of crucial skills. We were worried, says Mike
- > McKeown, a molecular biologist and one of the founders, that our kids wouldn't
- > be able to do the jobs we do.
- > Mathematically Correct is a virtual history of the advance of whole math in
- > California and beyond. A report from Stockton tells of school administrators
- > throwing out traditional textbooks so that teachers would be forced to use the
- > Mathland curriculum. Parents in Illinois describe how they have been advised
- > to let their son work with a school counselor because he values correct and
- > complete answers too much. There are also success stories: the school board
- > in Sonoma Valley that has banned calculators in grades K-3; the school board
- > in Hemet that is requiring individual grades rather than the group grades
- > characteristic of many whole-math classrooms; parents in Cottage Grove, Oregon
- > who have gotten traditional math courses reinstated.
- > As Mathematically Correct demonstrates, the way math is taught has become a
- > matter of profound controversy. But this is apparently too awkward a fact for
- > an administration bent on national testing to be honest with the public about.
- > At a February meeting held in Washington, D.C., Reuben Carriedo of the San
- > Diego schools had a question for Mike Cohen, the White House point man on
- > education. What was all this talk about widely accepted math standards?
- > Specifically what was this about a consensus surrounding the views of the
- > National Council of Teachers of Mathematics? There are many battles being
- > fought right now, Carriedo observed.
- > Cohen responded: We've got a situation in math . . . where you can
- > assert that there is pretty wide agreement on the kinds of stuff that kids
- > ought to learn . . . and then act as though it's true and then use an
- > assessment . . . that will help make it more true in the future than it is
- > now. Pretend that everyone agrees with the whole-math approach, in other
- > words, and then build a test that makes sure they do.
- > The February meeting at which Cohen spoke was one of a half-dozen
- > gatherings to plan the national test that the Department of Education held
- > between January and June. Apparently concerned about being accused of
- > favoritism in awarding contracts to develop the tests, the department has
- > posted transcripts of these meetings on the Internet
- > (www.ed.gov/nationaltests), where they testify to another kind of bias:
- > favoring the controversial approach to math instruction that the math teachers
- > council represents.
- > Consider the fate of the Third International Math and Science Survey.
- > When the president first announced his plan for national tests in his January

> 1997 State of the Union address, the math assessment was to be based on the
 > international survey, which had been much in the news since it had shown U.S.
 > eighth-graders performing below average in mathematics in comparison with
 > other nations. The president called the survey a test that reflects the
 > world-class standards our children must meet for the new era. Pascal
 > Forgione, commissioner of education statistics in the Department of Education,
 > said it was a benchmark for what world-class performance is in math and
 > science.
 > But the survey is a test that pays attention to whether students know how
 > to multiply fractions and do long division. As a result, Thomas Romberg, a
 > University of Wisconsin education professor who led the development of the
 > math-teachers' council's standards, let Department of Education
 > representatives know that he did not think much of the international
 > assessment. To build a national test on the international survey, Romberg
 > said at a February 19 meeting this year, is to base it on a test that most of
 > us four or five years ago said, Hey, this really isn't what's important.
 > Later, he declared, I don't want to get boxed into a framework that I am less
 > than happy with.
 > At the conclusion of the February meeting, Mike Smith, acting deputy
 > secretary of education, made sure that representatives of the math teachers
 > council understood how important their views were to the administration. We
 > want to make you as close partners as you'll take us, he said. Within a
 > week, Smith was explaining to potential developers of the national test that
 > the math section would not be based on the international survey after all, but
 > on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is, he said,
 > a little more appropriate for the United States.
 > The administration subsequently named a committee to oversee the math
 > assessment. Its chair, John Dossey, is a past president of the National Council
 > of Teachers of Mathematics; its vice-chair, Gail Burrill, is the current
 > president of the council; and its membership is thoroughly supportive of the
 > council's views. In their discussions, committee members have made clear that
 > although the NAEP is better than the international survey, they still regard
 > it as a hindrance. It measures what's the status quo in the classroom, says
 > Dossey, instead of measuring where our students should be. It carries long
 > sets of items that are . . . curriculum dependent i.e., that judge what a
 > student has learned in the classroom rather than [evaluating] students
 > mathematical thinking.
 > Thus while Mike Smith of the Department of Education assures the public
 > that the math test will be based on the National Assessment of Educational
 > Progress, math-committee members are working to see how, within that
 > framework, they can manipulate the exam to reflect their views. They've
 > discussed at length, for example, targeting certain topics and subtopics so
 > that test developers will have to give them high priority. Since one
 > consequence of this will be to give low priority to basics like whole-number
 > computation (described by a committee member as the stuff that the man in the
 > street expects that most of us think is just a waste of time), members have
 > even put forth a proposal to counter charges that they are opposed to basic
 > skills: a preamble to the exam stating that basic skills aren't tested for
 > because those skills are assumed.
 > While test supporters are selling national assessments as a way to let
 > parents and teachers know how students are doing, math-committee members are
 > intent on creating a test that will encourage teachers to adopt the ways of
 > the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The council's president Gail

> Burrill, who is a math teacher, concluded early in deliberations that making
 > the exam a more powerful lever for change was in large part a matter of
 > molding perceptions. At the February 19, 1997, meeting, she said to Gary
 > Phillips, who heads the national testing project in the Department of
 > Education:
 >
 > It would be very easy to help me move beyond [the NAEP framework] because I
 > know that my superintendent will not go to look for this document. What he
 > will read is the document that you send that comes with the test. So if we
 > put forth some of the expectations that are not conflicting but maybe above
 > or different in a sense than what's in here, that would be fine because that
 > would be sending the message that I want to send to the teachers and to the
 > administration. But it wouldn't necessarily reflect the exact test they were
 > going to get.
 >
 > Burrill's suggestion has been translated by the Department of Education
 > into a requirement that the developer of the math test send to teachers in
 > advance of the exam a booklet of the extended open-ended problems that the
 > teachers' council favors. Teachers will thereby be duped into teaching more
 > in the whole-math mode.
 > Administration representatives at math-committee meetings encourage
 > committee members to think of the test as something that will continue to
 > evolve in their favor. In a May meeting, Gary Phillips told the math
 > committee that the math test is consistent with what the [National Council of
 > Teachers of Mathematics] wants us to do. . . . If we can't get there 100
 > percent in 1999, we need you need to feel and to be committed and to state
 > that we are moving in that direction.
 > Phillips' words are no doubt of special solace in the matter of
 > calculators. The public tends to think that classroom calculators hinder the
 > development of mental math skills. In a recent survey, 86 percent opposed
 > their early use. And so the math committee has concluded it must proceed
 > incrementally: a section on the first exam where calculators will be useful
 > but not necessary; then the next year a section where they are essential; and
 > finally the nirvana where any student can use any machine on any part of the
 > exam. Observes John Dossey, the most enthusiastic calculator advocate on the
 > committee: We know at this level, in a balanced program, that calculators
 > cause no harm to what are traditional basic skills.
 > He should tell that to Debby Arnold, who is convinced that her
 > eleventh-grader couldn't add because she'd never had to without a calculator.
 > Or to Marianne Jennings, an Arizona mother and business school professor, who
 > reports her eighth-grader using a calculator to figure 10 percent of 470.
 > Even during the math panel's deliberations, one committee member told about
 > students coming into university courses who, when confronted with numerical
 > problems, frequently have recourse to the calculator where it's literally
 > right on the surface.
 >
 > Whole-math advocates have a penchant for making it sound as though their
 > ideas are based on a solid body of research, but as Frank B. Allen, a former
 > president of the math-teachers' council, points out, Most of the major
 > recommendations in the [council's] standards have nothing to support them
 > other than the consensus of the authors and the conventional wisdom harbored
 > by some of our more vocal mathematics educators. Allen is appalled at what
 > his old organization has done. How dare these writers, he asks about the

> authors of the council's standards, propose sweeping changes including a
 > complete restructuring of the school mathematics curriculum on such flimsy
 > evidence?
 > The reason that whole math advocates declaim with such confidence seems to
 > be that they work in an environment where no one questions their assumptions.
 > Skeptics of whole math are as rare in colleges of education as opponents of
 > postmodernism in English departments. Indeed, as in English departments,
 > those most loyal to the prevailing mode of thought are most rewarded. John
 > Dossey was chosen to be the author of one textbook and is credited as
 > conceptualizer for another in Addison-Wesley's whole-math series. This
 > second book, *Focus on Algebra*, has been dubbed *Rainforest Math* by Marianne
 > Jennings, who observes that environmentalism and Third-World concerns seem to
 > loom larger in it than equations. Thomas Romberg, the education professor
 > who is so disapproving of the international math and science survey, is the
 > author of *Math in Context*, a whole-math program recently published by the
 > Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation. Romberg received \$1,702,780
 > from the National Science Foundation to develop the *Math in Context*
 > curriculum. The developers of Interactive Mathematics Program, the program
 > that Madalyn McDaniel and Debby Arnold encountered, have received \$9,059,941
 > in federal funds and more on top of that from the state of California.
 > One can understand why the whole-math people behave as they do, but what
 > about the Clinton administration? Perhaps it is inevitable when a president
 > has reaped significant political benefit from aligning himself with organized
 > education for his administration to line up with a group like National Council
 > of Teachers of Mathematics. But Bill Clinton will not be running again, which
 > ought to allow him and his appointees to put a certain distance between
 > themselves and the teachers' council. Moreover, the politics of the
 > whole-math controversy follow no party line. Although the education
 > establishment is given to calling those who oppose its ideas stooges of the
 > far Right, there are, in fact, liberals as well as conservatives leading the
 > charge against whole math. The most dramatic example is the group that
 > organized the Mathematically Correct Web site. Most of its members are
 > liberal Democrats.
 > But the administration seems to have decided that it needs the enthusiastic
 > support of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Mike Smith talks
 > repeatedly about the great campaigns that will be waged to encourage
 > participation in national testing. The president will talk up the tests for
 > two years, the Department of Education will launch initiatives. The Urban
 > League will help stir up excitement and so will education groups like the
 > teachers' council. This is going to be a test, Smith declared early in the
 > year, unlike any other test that there has ever been.
 > The plan may succeed. Once the test is ready and students can take it for
 > free, it may be difficult for governors to explain why they aren't signing up
 > their states' eighth-graders. And Congress, which should be the first line
 > of defense, seems to have little energy for taking the president on about
 > anything, even something as important as whether taxpayer dollars are going to
 > be spent, probably to the tune of \$100 million, to produce and deliver an
 > examination that will, in the opinion of many, accelerate the decline of
 > American education.
 > Meanwhile, out in California, Madalyn McDaniel and Debby Arnold continue
 > the battle against whole math. Even though the math curriculum of Atascadero
 > high school is no longer a matter of concern to their kids, they know it's
 > important to others. They're still going to parents' nights, and, armed with

- > experience and information, they try to make sure that the truth is told.
- > Too bad they re not in Washington, D. C.

Daily Education News

Monday, August 4, 1997

1. The New York Times

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Proposal for School Testing Is Facing Wide Opposition

By PETER APPLEBOME

While President Clinton has achieved most of his proposals for college tuition assistance, the road appears to be much tougher for the other truly striking element of his education agenda, a proposal for a voluntary national test of fourth graders for reading and eighth graders for math.

The proposal for the test, which is now being developed by the Education Department, is under attack from the left, right and middle.

A combination of liberals suspicious of standardized tests, conservatives wary of expanding the Federal role in education and advocates of national testing unhappy with the way Mr. Clinton has structured his plan have all attacked the proposal.

In Congress last week, the chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Work Force, Representative Bill Goodling, Republican of Pennsylvania, made two moves in an effort to block the test. On Wednesday he introduced an amendment to the Education Department's appropriations bill that would cut off Federal money for the test, and on Friday he introduced a resolution that would call on the department to stop planning for the test.

For the amendment to become part of the appropriations bill, it would require the approval of the Senate as well as the House. The resolution would simply state the position of the House. The House is scheduled to vote on both after it returns from an August recess.

The Administration said that neither the amendment nor the resolution would keep it from going ahead with the test.

The plan to develop a national test for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math is supported by many mainstream education groups, and in July, 15 of the nation's largest urban school districts offered their support when Mr. Clinton asked for it.

But so far only six states have agreed to take part, leading Mr. Clinton to accuse the nation's Governors of "dragging their feet" on overhauling educational.

Mike Cohen, special assistant to President Clinton for education policy, said that the states and cities supporting the test accounted for about 20 percent of the nation's students.

The process so far has been a vivid lesson in the difficulties of national initiatives to improve education in a country wedded to local, decentralized schools.

Chester Finn, a senior fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute, said: "I thought in January that maybe this was one of the odd Nixon-in-China moments when the Democrats could deliver the liberal critics and enough Republican Governors and Congressmen could deliver the conservatives for it to come together. But if this falls apart it will be because of liberals who hate the word 'testing' and conservatives who hate the word 'national,' and it looks like that's beginning to come true."

As support has grown for higher standards for the nation's schoolchildren, most education analysts say that a logical outgrowth is that something that is routine for other industrialized countries — a national test to measure how students perform from school to school and region to region.

When President Clinton unveiled his ambitious education agenda in his State of the Union Message in January, a central element was a voluntary national test. The hope was that it would be so widely used that it would become the country's first truly national test of student achievement. Currently, tests like the National Assessment of Educational Progress are given to large samplings of students, not to all.

The President's plan was greeted with a good deal of praise, particularly from business and mainstream education groups like teacher's unions. It seemed a logical, if ambitious, extension of a decade of discussion about national standards, beginning with the educational goals introduced in the Bush Administration.

And by limiting his proposal to tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, where there is consensus about what children should know, Mr. Clinton tried to sidestep the fractious debate about course content that has marked development of standards in subjects like American history and English.

But the plan also ran up against the fierce defense of a decentralized system of American education, and the reluctance of states and districts to cede a larger role to the Federal Government.

The proposal ran into a buzz saw of opposition from the left and the right. Conservative groups, like the Eagle Forum, saw the test as a huge step toward a national curriculum and a nationally mandated education policy.

Some liberal groups, who see standardized testing as stifling education, culturally biased and overdone, were also

critics of the proposal from the start.

Since then, some advocates of national testing have withdrawn their support from Mr. Clinton's version. Diane Ravitch of New York University, who headed the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the Bush Administration, resigned in July from the steering panel designing the test.

Dr. Ravitch said that what was evolving had the potential to become politicized and tainted, not an independent, nonpartisan test. And she said Mr. Clinton was making a major mistake by pursuing the development of national tests without Congressional support.

While the Administration officials concede that Representative Goodling's action in the House could be a major obstacle to the tests, they said they were also confident that they had the authority to go ahead without Congressional authorization.

And Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents the nation's 15 largest urban school districts, said the endorsement by the council reflected the belief that a national test was a crucial part of raising school performance.

"It's going to significantly spur performance over the long run," Mr. Casserly said. ■

1. Education Daily

August 4, 1997

NAEP BOARD PRESSING FOR NEW NATIONAL TEST ROLE

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) is trying to position itself to oversee new tests President Clinton is pushing.

While working on NAEP redesign and science achievement levels during their quarterly meeting Friday, members of the board also discussed how they could take the reins of the new exams of fourth-graders' reading skill and eighth-graders' math ability.

Only six states and 15 city districts have signed on so far for the exams, which are to be based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and congressional Republicans are trying to put brakes on the plan.

Because the national tests have the same "DNA" as NAEP, congressional leaders may favor NAGB guiding it rather than creating another bureaucratic layer, observed board member Mark Musick, president of the Southern Regional Education Board.

During NAGB's last meeting, a White House official said the board would at least be consulted about the plan (ED, May 12).

Critics of the national tests say allowing the Education Department to direct the test and permitting the contractor — the Council of Chief State Schools Officers — to pick the advisory panel that develops test specifications may compromise objectivity in adopting final tests (ED, July 21).

NAGB's executive board sent a letter in June to Education Secretary Richard Riley, spelling out why the board should manage the new tests as well. "For the sake of the integrity, effectiveness and coherence of both the National Assessment [of Educational Progress] and the voluntary test initiative, logic and experience argue for the Governing Board to be the policy body for the voluntary national test initiative," the letter says.

As of Friday, Riley had not responded.

The most profound question asked by board members is whether the national tests would replace NAEP as 'the nation's report card.' The governing board — an independent body of educators, researchers and politicians — is concerned the new tests could throw NAEP off track. If every student is taking the new test, a state may opt not to participate in the NAEP sample.

The NAEP reading test, given in grades four and eight, is scheduled for 1998, while the voluntary national fourth-grade reading test is scheduled to begin in 1999.

"When the question is asked how fourth-graders are doing in reading, it would be far more interesting hearing how 2 million fourth-graders are doing than to look at the NAEP fourth-grade sample," said board member William Moloney, superintendent of Calvert County, Md., schools.

Shot-Callers Abound

Since Clinton announced the national voluntary tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, various factions have vied for a hand in controlling it (ED, Feb. 5).

House appropriators questioned the legality of the administration's spending money to develop the test without congressional approval (ED, March 14). But Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the education committee, lost an attempt to prohibit spending for the test in fiscal 1997 (ED, May 15).

House and Senate appropriators are calling for ED to wait until the National Academy of Sciences reviews 1998 field test results before spending more money on them (ED, July 25).

If the NAGB gets the go-ahead to manage the national tests, it wants to be ready to insert that language into its federal authorization. NAEP's legislation expires in fiscal 1999 but could be extended through fiscal 2000. — Regina Lightfoot-Clark■

1. Asbury Park Press

August 4, 1997

Jury is still out on whether new standards are 'world class'

By BRIAN KLADKO
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Whitman describes the state's new academic standards as "world class" — so high, so rigorous, that students who meet those standards will be able to walk tall in the global marketplace.

Of course, you have a right to be skeptical.

For all the attention the news media give to politicians' proclamations about education, their ability to affect what happens in the classroom is diluted — for better or worse — by the power of school boards, superintendents, principals and, of course, teachers.

Reading the standards would likely deepen a person's doubts.

While the expectations in science seem fairly straightforward, the standards in social studies and language arts are frustratingly fuzzy, leaving a layman like me to wonder which authors an eighth-grader will read and which historical events will become part of a high school graduate's store of knowledge.

Assuming that Whitman could make a big difference, and assuming the standards are explicit, the notion that New Jersey's standards are "world class" still begs for some kind of reality check.

The best hope for such accountability comes from an effort called the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, also known as "TIMSS." The U.S. Department of Education describes it as "the largest, most comprehensive, and most rigorous international study of schools and student achievement ever conducted."

The project, which relies on a sample of students from 41 countries, goes to great lengths to ensure the comparisons are as fair as possible — trying to ensure, for example, that the sample of students in each country is equally inclusive.

So far, reports have been issued about 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds. (They can be read online at <http://www.ed.gov/NCES/timss>.) And the results, even among the smaller pool of nations that met international guidelines, are intriguing.

Among the younger group, the U.S. has reason to be proud.

In math, American 9-year-olds performed above average, about as well as those in Ireland and Canada. They were bested by students in just a few nations, including Singapore, South Korea, Japan and the Czech Republic.

Our 9-year-olds were downright impressive when the subject was science. In fact, they scored almost as well as those in Japan. The only country to score significantly higher than the U.S. was South Korea.

But according to TIMSS, American students lose ground as they grow older.

In math, the score for American eighth-graders was 500, compared to an international average of 513. A disturbing number of nations, including Russia, Canada, Hungary and Sweden, performed significantly better.

The situation in science isn't as bad. American eighth-graders scored 534 (out of a possible 1,000), above the international average of 516. But they were still outdone by students in at least five countries, including Japan (571), South Korea (565) and Singapore (607).

The bottom line, according to the U.S. Department of Education: "In both mathematics and science, our international standing is higher at fourth grade than it is at eighth grade." In fact, the drop-off in math is the only example of a nation's fourth-graders scoring above average in one subject and its eighth-graders scoring below average in the same subject.

Something happens in the four years between those mileposts, but don't expect any clear-cut answers.

The TIMSS project went beyond an examination of test scores and surveyed a range of factors: the focus of the curriculum, the amount of homework, the organization of classrooms, the experience level of teachers, even television-watching. But in none of these areas did the U.S. standing, relative to other countries, change significantly between the fourth grade and eighth grade.

"Further analyses will possibly shed more light on this question," the latest TIMSS report stated.

What does all this portend for New Jersey, and Whitman's claims about "world class" standards?

The governor's education officials are busy developing new tests to measure those standards, but because those tests will be home-grown, and will be used only in New Jersey, the results won't prove that students in this state are holding their own against those in Japan, the Czech Republic or Russia.

There might be a way, however, of checking Whitman's claims.

If President Clinton's vision of national tests comes to pass, each state will be able to compare its students with the rest of the nation. With some expert number-crunching, statisticians hope to take it one step further, comparing each state — and each district — with the rest of the world.

So far, only a few states have signed up for the national tests. New Jersey isn't yet one of them.

"We are watching the national effort with great interest," said Peter Peretzman, a spokesman for the state Education Department.

I could take the cynical view, and suggest that New Jersey officials are afraid a national test could undermine their claims



about "world class" standards. Or I could be charitable, and accept the explanation that state officials are too distracted by the task of implementing the standards and designing new tests.

For now, I'll be charitable. Eventually, however, a politician's boasting will start to wear thin. I'll want to see results.■