

Teachers' feelings of preparedness

Reform initiatives, new technologies, and changing student populations have required teachers to learn new ways of presenting material and managing their classrooms. Teachers' initial professional training may not have prepared them adequately to meet current expectations, so continuing professional development is important. Teachers' self-assessments provide one indication of the extent to which preservice and on-the-job learning prepare them to meet the new demands.

- In 1998, the majority of public school teachers (71 percent) felt that they were very well prepared to maintain order and discipline in their classrooms.
- Fewer teachers felt that they were very well prepared to meet certain instructional requirements, including implementing new teaching methods (41 percent), implementing state or district curriculum and performance standards (36 percent), or using student performance assessment techniques (28 percent).
- Teachers were least likely to report that they felt very well prepared to integrate educational technology into their teaching methods (20 percent), or to address the needs of students with disabilities (21 percent) or of students with limited English proficiency or from diverse cultural backgrounds (20 percent).
- Teachers who spent more than 8 hours in professional development in the content area of a specific activity in the previous 12 months were generally more likely than other teachers to feel very well prepared in that area. The exception was the area in which teachers felt most prepared: maintaining order and discipline in the classroom.

Percentage distribution of public school teachers according to how well prepared they felt to perform various activities in the classroom, and the percentage of teachers who felt very well prepared, according to the number of hours spent in professional development in that content area in the last 12 months, by activity: 1998

Activity	How well prepared teachers felt				Very well prepared		
	Very well prepared	Moderately well prepared	Somewhat well prepared	Not at all prepared	Hours of professional development		
					0 hours	1-8 hours	More than 8 hours
Maintain order and discipline in the classroom	71	24	4	1	74	68	68
Implement new methods of teaching (e.g., cooperative learning)	41	41	16	2	34	38	51
Implement state or district curriculum and performance standards	36	41	20	3	30	33	44
Use student performance assessment techniques (e.g., methods of testing, applying results to modify instruction)	28	41	26	4	20	27	45
Address the needs of students with disabilities*	21	41	30	7	17	20	41
Integrate educational technology in the grade or subject taught	20	37	34	9	11	17	33
Address the needs of students with limited English proficiency or from diverse cultural backgrounds*	20	33	30	17	14	21	41

* Percentages based on teachers who teach such students.

NOTE: Details may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, Teacher Survey on Professional Development and Training, 1998.

Students who took Advanced Placement (AP) examinations

The Advanced Placement (AP) program is associated with a demanding academic curriculum and illustrates the desire of high schools to offer college-level courses to high school students. By participating in the AP program, high school students may acquire college credit for their knowledge of college-level subjects. The number of students per 1,000 12th-graders who participated in AP examinations each year shows the level of importance that students, schools, and colleges place on the AP program and how that importance has changed over time.

- Between 1984 and 1997, the number of students who took AP examinations increased dramatically, rising from 50 to 131 students per 1,000 12th-graders. The number of examinees increased for both sexes and all racial-ethnic groups during this period.
- In 1984, equal proportions of male and female students took AP examinations. Between 1984 and 1997, the number of females who took the examinations rose at a faster rate than did the number of males who took the examinations. In 1997, 145 females compared with 117 males per 1,000 12th-graders took AP examinations.
- In 1997, whites were more likely than blacks or Hispanics to take AP examinations in all subject areas, with the exception of foreign languages. Hispanics were at least three times as likely to take a foreign language AP examination as whites.

Number of U.S. students¹ who took AP examinations (per 1,000 12th-graders), by sex and race-ethnicity: 1984-97

Sex and race-ethnicity	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Total²	50	59	64	66	81	88	100	103	109	117	115	125	131	131
Sex														
Male	50	61	65	68	76	86	101	96	102	108	101	111	117	117
Female	50	58	63	65	85	90	98	111	117	127	129	140	144	145
Race-ethnicity														
White	48	60	62	63	82	92	103	107	112	115	116	125	133	132
Black	8	11	12	13	21	20	26	25	26	31	32	37	32	37
Hispanic	24	21	27	30	48	54	54	67	68	80	63	75	74	85

Number of AP examinations¹ taken in the United States and the number of examinations with scores of 3 or higher (per 1,000 12th-graders), by subject area, sex, and race-ethnicity: 1997

Sex and race-ethnicity	Number of AP examinations taken						Number of examinations with scores of 3 or higher					
	Social studies	English	Foreign language	Calculus	Computer science	Science	Social studies	English	Foreign language	Calculus	Computer science	Science
Total²	59	55	17	33	3	35	35	38	12	20	1	23
Sex³												
Male	62	42	13	36	5	41	40	28	9	24	3	28
Female	70	70	23	30	1	34	40	48	17	17	0	20
Race-ethnicity												
White	61	58	12	33	2	34	38	41	7	21	1	22
Black	15	17	3	7	1	8	5	6	1	2	0	2
Hispanic	26	27	41	12	1	12	11	12	36	6	0	5

¹ Includes all participation by 11th- and 12th-graders. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

² Included in the total but not shown separately are students from other racial-ethnic groups.

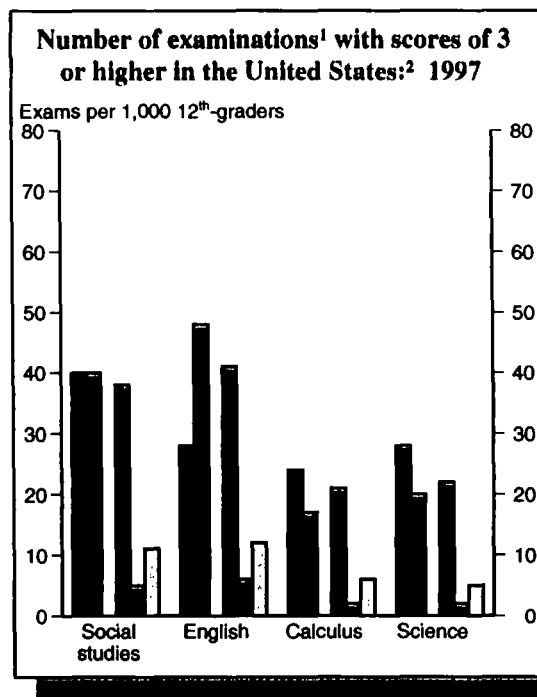
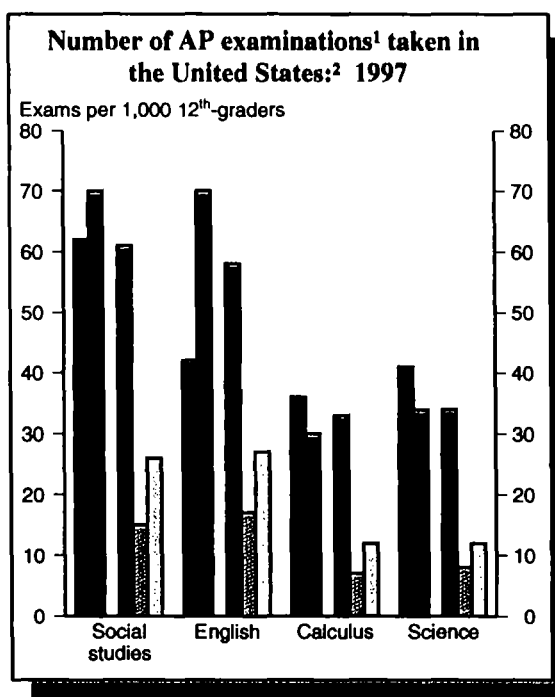
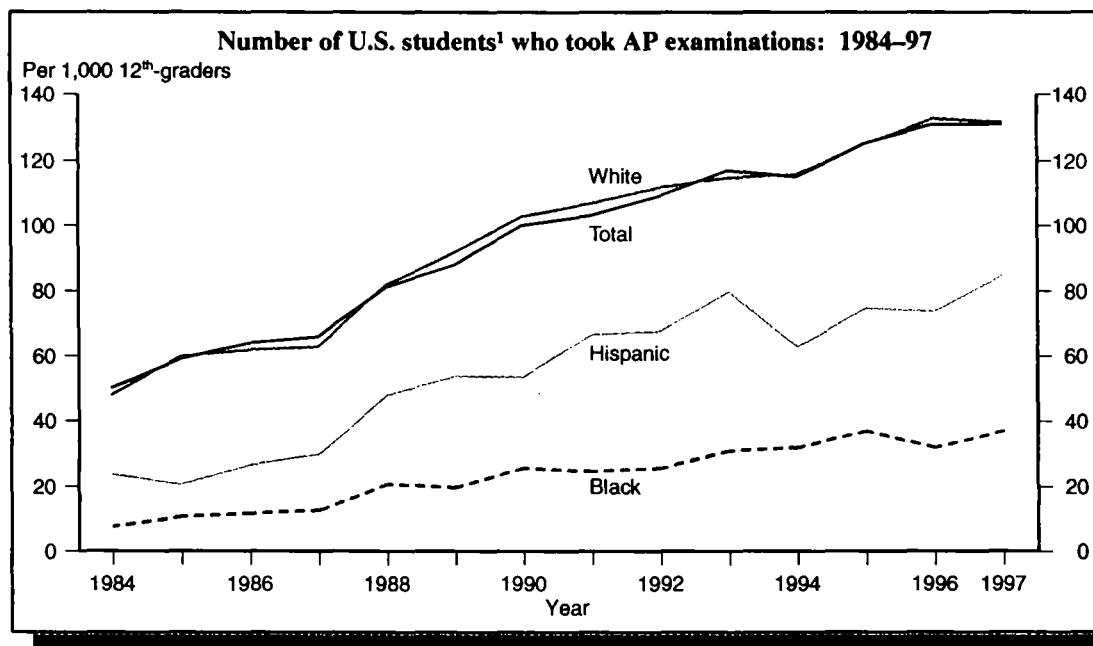
³ The number of examinations taken by males and females includes a small number of examinations taken by 9th-graders, 10th-graders, college students, and others (9 percent of all students who took AP examinations in 1997).

NOTE: Included in this analysis are students who participated in the United States only. Students scoring 3 or higher on an AP examination

usually receive college credit. Since, on average, AP candidates take more than one examination, there is not a 1:1 ratio between candidates and examinations. See the supplemental note to this indicator for a description of AP course categories and a discussion of the calculations for this analysis.

SOURCE: The College Board, Advanced Placement Program, *National Summary Reports* (Copyright © 1984-97 by the College Entrance Examination Board. All rights reserved.). U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

Students who took Advanced Placement (AP) examinations



■ Male ■ Female ■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic

¹ Includes all participation by 11th- and 12th-graders. See the supplemental note to this Indicator for further explanation.

² The number of examinations taken by males and females includes a small number of examinations taken by 9th-graders, 10th-graders, college students, and others (9 percent of all students who took AP examinations in 1997).

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Student computer use

Computers have become an essential tool in our society. Early exposure to computers can help students gain the computer literacy that will be crucial for future success in the workplace. Access to computers allows students to retrieve information, manipulate data, and produce results efficiently and in innovative ways. Examining the extent to which students have access to computers at home and at school may be an indicator of how well prepared students will be to enter an increasingly technological workplace.

- The percentage of students who used a computer at home was higher in 1997 than in 1984 (45 versus 13 percent). In addition, the percentage of students who used a computer at school was also higher in 1997 than in 1984 (76 versus 30 percent).
- The percentage of white, black, and Hispanic students in grades 1–6 and 7–12 who used a computer at school and at home was higher in 1997 than in 1984. For example, 18 and 19 percent of black and Hispanic 1st- through 6th-graders, respectively, used a computer at school in 1984, compared with 73 and 71 percent of their black and Hispanic peers, respectively, in 1997.
- Between 1984 and 1997, white students in grades 1–6 and 7–12 were consistently more likely than their black and Hispanic peers to use a computer at school or at home. However, when computer use by students was broken out by location of use, there was similar computer use by blacks and whites in grades 7–12 at school but not at home in 1997.
- In 1997, students in grades 1–6 and 7–12 were more likely to use computers at home for school assignments or word processing than for graphics/design, Internet, or e-mail access (see supplemental table 18-1).

Percentage of students who used a computer at school and/or home, by current grade level, race-ethnicity, and family income: 1984, 1989, 1993, and 1997

Current grade level, race-ethnicity, and family income ²	1984 ¹			1989 ¹			1993 ¹			1997		
	Used a computer at:			Used a computer at:			Used a computer at:			Used a computer at:		
	School	Home	Home or school	School	Home	Home or school	School	Home	Home or school	School	Home	Home or school
Total (Grades 1–12)	29.7	12.6	36.2	48.0	18.4	54.6	62.0	25.2	68.3	76.4	45.2	84.0
Grades 1–6												
Total	30.5	11.8	36.2	52.4	16.1	56.9	66.6	23.0	70.7	79.1	41.3	83.8
Race-ethnicity												
White	35.5	14.4	42.3	58.9	20.4	64.5	71.6	29.2	76.6	84.4	52.3	89.9
Black	15.1	5.1	18.3	34.3	6.0	36.2	54.1	8.3	56.5	70.1	19.3	72.9
Hispanic	16.4	3.5	18.5	41.1	5.1	42.3	55.1	6.8	56.8	67.7	17.9	70.5
Family income												
Low income	18.5	2.5	20.0	39.4	5.7	39.0	57.4	3.9	58.1	70.9	12.4	71.9
Middle income	29.5	9.7	34.5	52.3	17.0	49.9	66.2	18.0	69.5	78.6	36.4	82.8
High income	42.2	24.4	53.0	62.5	38.3	63.9	74.0	48.5	82.4	86.5	74.6	95.0
Grades 7–12												
Total	28.9	13.4	36.2	43.0	21.1	52.1	57.0	27.7	65.6	75.5	60.9	89.0
Race-ethnicity												
White	31.9	16.2	40.8	45.5	25.6	56.7	59.6	34.7	70.2	75.5	60.9	89.0
Black	18.4	4.9	20.8	36.5	8.5	39.7	50.5	10.2	53.5	74.2	22.3	77.9
Hispanic	21.2	3.6	23.2	34.4	9.0	38.3	52.6	9.5	56.1	65.4	21.5	69.4
Family income												
Low income	20.0	3.3	22.3	36.7	5.7	39.0	49.0	5.6	50.4	67.6	14.9	70.7
Middle income	28.4	10.1	33.6	42.6	17.0	49.9	57.3	22.2	64.1	74.1	44.2	83.5
High income	34.1	24.8	48.1	47.2	38.3	63.9	60.7	51.2	77.0	75.4	78.6	93.3

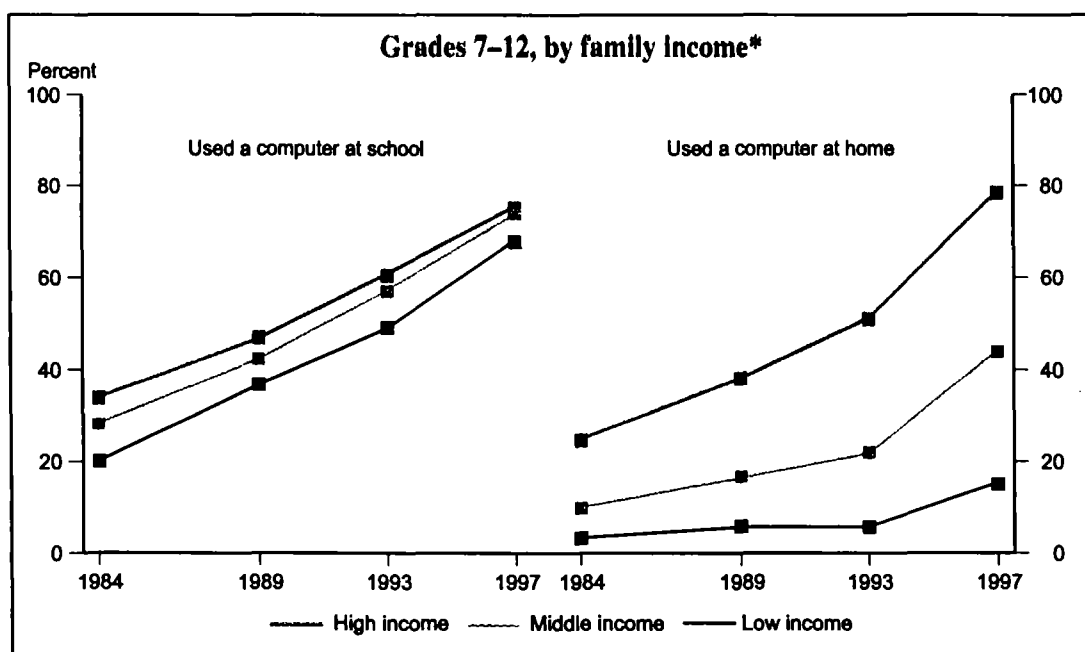
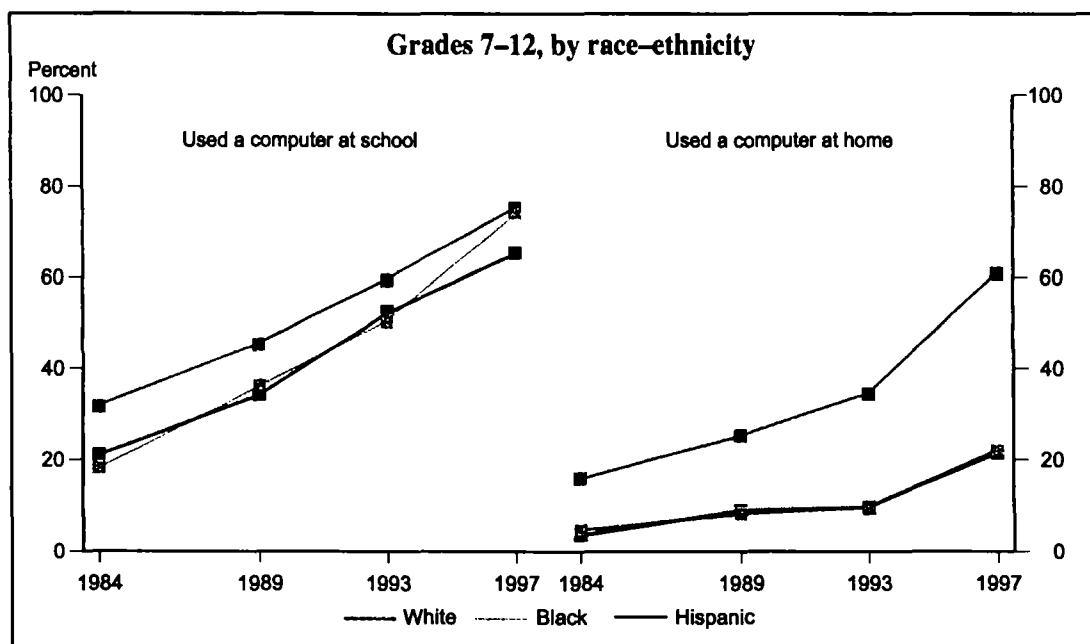
¹ Data are revised from previously published figures.

² Low income is the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes; high income is the top 20 percent of all family incomes; and middle income is the 60 percent in between. See the supplemental note to Indicator 53 for further discussion.

NOTE: Data for 1984, 1989, and 1993 are revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.

Percentage of students who used a computer at school or home, by selected characteristics: 1984, 1989, 1993, and 1997



* Low income is the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes; high income is the top 20 percent of all family incomes and middle income is the 60 percent in between. See the supplemental note to Indicator 53 for further discussion.

NOTE: Data for 1984, 1989, and 1993 are revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys.



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Washington, D.C. 20036-3290

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February 2, 2000

Letters to the Editor Department
Roll Call
50 F Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20001

To the Editor:

Morton Kondracke writes (*Roll Call*, Jan. 20) that I am part of a “backlash against higher [academic] standards.” Not so. I have criticized the haphazard, on-the-cheap implementation of standards-based reform precisely because I want to head off that backlash – an incipient backlash from millions of parents, especially in poor and minority communities, who are concluding that their children are being set up for failure.

I strongly support standards-based reform. But we urgently need a strategy for making one-size-fits-all standards work in a world of “savage inequalities” (that’s Jonathan Kozol’s apt term for the disparities between inner-city and suburban schools). Poor and minority kids are far more likely to attend schools with overcrowded classrooms, crumbling facilities, inadequate resources, and under-qualified teachers.

Instead of an honest discussion of these resource issues, we have heard mostly happy talk about how high expectations for disadvantaged children will surely translate into high achievement. This is delusional.

It is intellectually dishonest – no, it is a fraud – to raise the bar for all students to a level that is currently being reached by only a relative few, unless governments at all levels are willing to undertake an unprecedented effort to prepare teachers and students to meet this extraordinarily ambitious challenge.

Sincerely,

Bob Chase
President

Standards: Let's Do Them Right

by Bob Chase
President, National Education Association

Your "Idea of the Week: Standards Mean Standards" (*The DLC News*, Jan. 30) grossly misrepresented my position on standards. Let me set the record straight.

I strongly support high academic standards. Indeed for a teacher such as myself, the standards movement represents a glorious, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the quality of K-12 education. In the absence of standards, underperforming students, schools, and school districts will continue to slide by. Likewise, politicians and educators will continue to avoid accountability.

But in their hurried and haphazard implementation of standards, elected officials could derail the whole standards-based school reform effort. Parents and teachers are rebelling. Why? Because these new state standards are not in alignment with curricula and tests. The rebellion isn't a retreat from standards—it's plain common sense. If there is not alignment—if we are testing students on material they haven't been taught—that's just a totally cynical exercise. It's nothing more than political grandstanding.

What's more, too many politicians who talk tough about raising standards are AWOL when it comes to providing extra resources and interventions. It is intellectually dishonest and immoral to challenge students to achieve, but not provide the quality teachers, smaller classes, and one-on-one assistance that will enable them to rise to that higher level.

Poverty imposes a special burden on students. Every teacher knows this. But I never said, as you suggest, that we should lower our academic expectations for children from poor families. To the contrary, to deny such children high academic standards is to

deny them a basic civil right. It is to deny them surest and straightest route out of poverty.

I did, however, note that most poor children attend schools that are overcrowded, crumbling, and critically short of books, computers, and science material. Worse still, poor children are far more likely to be taught by teachers who are inexperienced, uncredentialed, or teaching outside their field. The fact of the matter is our society invests more—thousands of dollars more per pupil annually—in the education of middle class children than poor children.

It is a lot easier for politicians to talk tough about higher standards than confront the de facto educational apartheid that exists in America today.

I refuse to be complicit in this act of abandonment. We are rich enough as a nation to give every child at least a chance to achieve high academic standards.

Academic Standards: a Matter of Civil Rights

By Bob Chase

Without credible benchmarks that apply everywhere, many US schoolchildren will remain trapped in educational backwaters

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

After all, the United States already boasts far and away the most competitive economy in the world. And our best public school districts – most of them in affluent suburbs – are already performing at world-class levels. For example, last year a consortium of 20 school districts in suburban Chicago participated in the prestigious Third International Mathematics and Science Study. If those 20 districts had been a separate country, they would have ranked second in the world (behind Singapore) in science and among the top five nations in math.

Johnny competes just fine

So the issue isn't whether Johnny can compete academically with Johann, Yoko, and Yuri. The real issue is whether kids in rural and inner-city schools will be challenged and enabled to achieve at the same high levels as their best suburban counterparts. The most pernicious inequality

is not necessarily in funding, but rather in academic expectations, goals, and requirements – in a word, standards. Schools without even minimal standards – schools that pass kids who can't read or compute – flunk a basic moral test. Says E.D. Hirsch of the University of Virginia: "A systematic failure to teach all children the knowledge they need in order to understand what the next grade has to offer is the major source of avoidable injustice in our schools."

Indeed, Professor Hirsch correctly characterizes the struggle for equality of educational opportunity as "the new civil rights frontier." This gives rise to a disturbing historical parallel: In the 1950s and 1960s, elected officials literally stood in the schoolhouse door to deny the civil rights of minority children. They did so in the name of "states' rights." Today, many governors are engaged in a new "massive resistance." In the name of "local control," they have steadfastly rejected all efforts to create nationwide academic standards.

In recent months, however, this wall of resistance has shown cracks. Fed up with struggling school districts, the same govern-

ors who give lip service to "local control" are imposing statewide academic standards and, in some cases, taking over management of local school districts.

Virginia Gov. George Allen is a remarkable case in point. No one has more flamboyantly opposed the Goals 2000 effort to develop voluntary national standards. He has staked his resistance on the Jeffersonian ideal that local folks

ernment to take over school districts that are underperforming. Said Governor Engler: "I defend local control, but I can't defend failure." Exactly.

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

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

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

A crying national need

In the quest for higher standards, no one wants to trample on the tradition of local control of schools. But there is a crying need for minimum but ambitious national benchmarks against

which every school and school district in America can be measured and held accountable.

However, to avoid the same old fights about federal meddling, I propose that we leave Washington out of the standards-setting process and avoid a repeat of the voluminous and mostly unusable "standards" created under Goals 2000. Instead, let the National Governors Association (or some comparable state-based group) convene the best educators from all 50 states to set broad national benchmarks in the basic subject areas of reading, grammar, math, science, and history.

Local school districts would be free to supplement the national benchmarks and to set even more ambitious standards. And, of course, how to meet the national benchmarks – for example, decisions about textbooks, instructional methods, and the details of curriculum – would be left entirely to local discretion.

America's challenge is to bridge our traditional deference to local control with our new demand for higher standards. This bridge can guarantee every child's civil right to a quality education. It can also serve as President Clinton's much talked about bridge to the 21st century.

■ Bob Chase is president of the National Education Association.

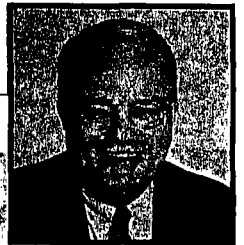
America's challenge is to bridge our traditional deference to local control with our new demand for higher standards.

know best. In February, however, Governor Allen proposed requiring all 133 Virginia school districts to conform to a strict, grade-by-grade curriculum guideline drafted in Richmond. Schools that refuse to comply would be denied accreditation.

In Michigan, Gov. John Engler has fiercely opposed federal meddling in local school affairs. But earlier this year he proposed a new law to allow the state gov-

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE



Tests and Sensibility

Taking a stand on standards and high-stakes testing

According to psychologists, many people have the same two recurring nightmares. In one dream, we're walking down the street naked. In the other, we're in school and suddenly have to take a test for which we're utterly unprepared.

Unfortunately, this second nightmare is becoming reality for thousands of children caught in the push for higher standards and high-stakes testing. Though noble and necessary, new "accountability" reforms are too often being implemented in a haphazard, break-neck fashion across America—and wrecking havoc.

In the mad dash to raise the bar, high-stakes tests have been formulated that are often not aligned with curricula or standards. In many states, teachers are not taught how to incorporate new standards into their lessons, and many districts don't have resources in place to make such reforms successful.

The results are almost Kafkaesque. In New York City, for example, children are taking do-or-die exams on material they've never been taught. Regrettably, in order to raise test scores, some teachers have resorted to cheating.

In Massachusetts, statewide tests designed to fortify public education have boomeranged.

High-performing schools like Cambridge High are modifying ambitious curricula to "teach to the test."

In Virginia, the state's once-lauded new standards—created without input from teachers—have

created a backlash. Among other things, these standards require third graders to "explain the term 'civilization' and describe the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, in terms of geographic features, government, agriculture, architecture, music, art, religion, sports and roles of men, women, and children." Is it any surprise that only 7 percent of Virginia's schools are living up to state testing standards?

All across the country, I'm hearing similar reports from NEA members. Reports about teachers required to adopt a new curriculum without new textbooks. Reports about standards that read like a wish-list concocted by thinktanks. Reports about test results stigmatizing underprivileged and minority children. What do we do?

When I attended the governors' Education Summit last fall, I made it clear that, yes, NEA members support high standards. Yes, we believe that all children are capable of learning. And, yes, schools should be held accountable for student achievement.

But I stated unequivocally that applying one-size-fits-all standards to a world full of "savage inequalities" is grossly negligent. If we truly want to educate all children to high standards, we need to make unprecedented investments in our schools. We need to prepare teachers to teach new material. And we need to ensure that teachers help determine what expectations are appropriate and realistic.

Standards and testing may be the greatest challenge facing public schools in this new millennium. We in NEA need to use our collective voice to ensure that a more carefully thought-out approach is taken. And parents are natural allies in this effort.

Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." By working together on this issue, we have a unique opportunity to strengthen both public education and our relationship with America's families. These, to me, are dreams worth pursuing.

Comments? You can E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org. If you would like a response, please be sure to include your name and NEA local affiliate.

FREEDOM

I am an active member of the Georgia Association of Teachers for 16 years. I have been reading your article, "Academic Freedom: A Hit." I cannot imagine a higher priority of the use of produced films in America's

that people think like we are glad we have some sense on these practices going people are concerned I don't have to worry about it to be too much about Americans have to wait once we graduate school.

Students don't start teaching it is right and good, going to end up with students whose lives have been seared—and might become your problems!

The Holy Bible is right to raise up children in the world to go, and they will do it.

I believe it, too.
D.S. Wesson
Doraville, Georgia

t's Talk

Ideas, comments, with NEA of five ways:

to Letters, NEA
6th St., N.W.,
W.C. 20036
Web: Go to
neatoday and click
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to
neatoday.org
202-7206
1/822-7201
typed for length

CONTROL

The November issue of the Iowa teacher commission of guns to that of the comparison of guns owned more closely. A person must pass a background check, many people, is the test they will ever take. It would do the same for the state must be registered with the state, and must pass inspection before that to guns. Safety devices are not available, many. The NRA will not allow a safety device to be on guns. Thousands of laws exist of the use of

motor vehicles, and hundreds of thousands of law enforcement officers spend much of their time enforcing these laws. By comparison, the laws governing the use of firearms are miniscule.

Every vehicle owner must pay hundreds of dollars per year for insurance, in case the vehicle is in an accident or is misused.

Shouldn't we do at least as much for guns?

A more complete comparison would also include the basic purpose, or function, of motor vehicles and firearms and their relative contribution to society.

Eugene Carlson
Mitchell, South Dakota

OUT OF PLACE

While I wish the best for all people, the article about sweatshop child labor (News, November) was incomplete and misplaced. As my daughter asked, "But what will 12 cents buy in China? Perhaps a lot."

Please don't try to apply American standards to other countries. And the article, while compassionate, does not belong in a publication that serves American professional educators. Perhaps the editorial section of the Sunday *New York Times* would be a more appropriate place.

Gary Wilson
Northeast, Maryland

FAULTY COMPARISON

Keith Ensminger's comments about the meaningless comparison between American and Asian school systems (Letters, November) were right on the money as far as homework and instructional duties are concerned, but there is much more to be said about cram schools and other factors.

Over half of all Japanese junior high and high schoolers attend cram schools (private, for-profit test-preparation institutions) on evenings and weekends, in hopes of achieving higher scores on high school and college entrance examinations.

Cram schools teach students how to take standardized tests and instruct them in accelerated versions of the national curriculum for math, science, and language arts. The Japanese invest tremendous amounts of time and money in cram schools because, in Japan, one's alma mater determines one's career choices to much higher degree than in the United States.

Anne Hooghart
Battle Creek, Michigan

NEAT REDESIGN

As I read magazines, I find that *NEA Today* is too tall, a little flimsy, and more difficult to control (on the order of a newspaper). Have you noticed?

Donna Fredrick
Grand Island, Nebraska

LETTERS

Are Public Schools Really That Bad Off?

To the Editor:

Tom Mirga's recent article ("Creating Accountable Schools," *TND*, November/December 1997) brings to mind H.L. Mencken's famous remark: "For every complex problem there is a simple answer—and it's wrong."

He praises *A Nation at Risk*, the watershed 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, but argues "we still have nothing to show" for the education reform efforts launched since the report's release.

Nothing to show?

In 1982 only 14 percent of high school graduates had taken the basic curriculum recommended by *A Nation at Risk*—four years of English and three years each of hard science, math, and social studies. Today more than 50 percent of high school students take this more rigorous course load.

Today, 42.4 percent of all high school graduates ages 18 to 24 attend college. This is a record high and an increase of nearly 9 percentage points from 1982. Moreover, the College Board has reported that the students who entered college for the first time last year were "better prepared academically" than their predecessors in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Indeed, SAT scores have risen since 1982, even though the number of high school students taking the

test has grown dramatically. In 1997, the average SAT mathematics score was 511—18 points higher than in 1982. The average SAT verbal score was 505, one point above the 1982 score. Most interestingly, the proportion of students scoring 650 or above on the verbal or math section of the SAT has risen 74 percent since 1981. In addition, ACT scores have improved throughout the 1990s.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the closest thing we have to a national report card for K-12 education. Seven of the nine trends in reading, mathematics, and science tracked by NAEP are at all-time highs. Since 1982, the biggest gains have come in the math and science scores of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds.

A Nation at Risk made a strong link between the competitiveness of our economy and the quality of our schools. Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence have become the new raw materials of global competition, the report said. Throughout the 1980s, we heard a lot from public school critics about the supposed superiority of the German and Japanese educational systems over ours. Now that the German and Japanese economies are mired in recession and the U.S. economy is enjoying a robust and long-running recovery, one would expect that American public schools might be given some credit for educating the world's most productive and innovative work force. Such is not the case, however. Apparently, public schools deserve only blame, never credit.

To acknowledge the solid academic progress we have achieved would of course be inconvenient for Mirga. He is proposing a radical scheme—the recharacterization of all public schools and all private schools that take public funds as "contract schools." To buy it, one must assume that public education, as currently constituted, is beyond hope.

Public education's complex reality does not lend itself to such broad-brush generalizations. Some of the 85,393 K-12 public schools in America are topnotch, some are respectable but still underachieving, and some are a national disgrace. We do not need the one big technical fix that fits all. We need to do what we know will work: Put a high quality and caring teacher in every classroom, increase parental involvement in children's education, level up funding for schools in economically ravaged communities, and establish ambitious intellectual expectations for all students.

Hard work? Sure. Impossible? No way.

— Bob Chase

President

National Education Association
Washington, D.C.

Continued on page 25

The New Democrat welcomes correspondence from readers. Address typewritten letters for publication to: Editor, The New Democrat, 518 C Street N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. You can also e-mail them to: tnd@dlcppi.org. Please include your full name, address, and a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for space and style.

Getting Fast Track Back on Track • Digital Environmentalism

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THE MYTH OF THE RESURGENT LEFT

MARK J. PENN
EVERETT CARLL LADD
FRED SIEGEL
JONATHAN MAHLER
AL FROM
THE EDITORS

Remarks by
Bob Chase, President, National Education Association

To the
NEA Western Regional Leadership Conference

January 15, 2000
Houston, Texas

Good morning!

Well, here we are, two full weeks into the new millennium – and I’ve still got a Y2K problem. The fact is, I’m disappointed. I checked my Webster’s, and definition No. 2 for the word “millennium” is the following: “a period of great happiness and perfection.” Perfection! But as far as I can see, this new millennium looks disturbingly like the last one.

Listen, this may be the 21st century, but – I’ve checked – most teachers *still* do not have telephones in their classrooms! The Kansas Board of Education *still* thinks evolution is some kind of hoax! The kids in our classrooms are *still* hormonally challenged...and dogs still, allegedly, eat their homework! And on a personal note, I *still* have more pounds and fewer follicles than I’d like – no different from last year!

So sure, I’m disappointed with this millennium thing. But I’m not exactly surprised.

After all, America’s public schools are filled to the brim with 46 million amazing young people – reflecting all the diversity and turbulence and, yes, inequities of our great nation. More than one in five of our students lives in poverty. Millions are learning disabled or otherwise handicapped. Millions more are struggling to learn English.

The work of teachers and other school employees – our work – is not for the faint-hearted. In the coming year, as in years past, we confront exciting challenges – cleverly disguised as unsolvable problems.

And this is where leadership comes in. My leadership as NEA president. Your leadership at the state and local levels. Our collective leadership as a powerful association of educators.

It means nothing that people introduce me as “president” – or that I occupy a Washington office. My friends, our leadership is not about position, it is about action. It’s about articulating a vision for change. And most importantly, it is about making change happen.

We need leaders – at every level of our Association – who are open to new ideas...who are not afraid of taking risks...who are willing to break some china in order to do the right thing for our members and for the children we teach.

On that score, let me tell you something that might catch you by surprise: As you know, our membership has grown rapidly. It now stands at 2.5 million. But think about what this means. It means that, today, *nearly one out of every 100 Americans is a member of the National Education Association*. Let me repeat that: Nearly one out of 100 Americans is a member of our Association.

By any measure, this is power. We have the responsibility to use this power wisely and – I believe – much more assertively and ambitiously.

Our late, beloved colleague, Christa McAuliffe used to say: “I touch the future. I teach.” She literally reached for the stars.

Well, we are 2.5 million teachers and other educators. And we have the power to touch the future in extraordinary ways.

Not only can we do big things, we must do big things.

Literacy is one of those big things. This may be the vaunted Year 2000, but in crucial respects, we remain in the dark ages. In reading, 38 percent of American fourth-graders still do not score at the basic level on the NAEP test. That's more than a third!

Many of those kids are on a fast track to academic failure – or worse. Here's a wake-up call: The state of Indiana bases projections for future prison construction, in part, on the number of second-graders who can't read at grade level!

And so I ask, what can we – one in 100 Americans – do to change this, to demand change, to make change happen?

Another big, big challenge is today's mania for high-stakes testing. Let me be clear: We want high standards. But when it comes to standards-based reform -- in state after state -- the politicians and policymakers have botched it. As a result, teachers are demoralized – and students and parents are terrified.

So I ask, what can we – one in 100 Americans – do to rescue standards-based reform. What can we do to propose change, to demand change, to make change a reality?

Arguably, the biggest challenge of all is teacher quality. In the city of Los Angeles – to take just one example – three out of four teachers hired this year did not have certification. Across the country, teachers are underpaid. We often work in harsh conditions. Increasingly, we are denigrated and blamed. For most education support personnel, the situation is even worse.

My friends, this is our profession we are talking about. What can we – one in 100 Americans – do to propose change, to bargain for change, to make change happen for our members?

And finally, a challenge that has huge consequences for our classrooms: Campaign 2000. All around us, we see the strength of those who are hostile to public education -- specifically, politicians who are pushing vouchers. These folks already are nearing critical mass in Congress. This year, they aim to take the White House and, thereby, the Supreme Court.

So I ask: What can we – one in 100 Americans – do to mobilize for change in the political arena? What can we do to ensure the right kind of change...change that is good for children and good for public education?

Let me turn first, this morning, to Issue No. 1 on the minds of many, many of our members: standards-based reform and high-stakes testing.

Forty-nine states are setting tougher academic standards. Twenty-six states – including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado – have introduced, or plan to introduce, tests that high school seniors must pass in order to get a diploma.

At the risk of getting run over by this testing juggernaut, it is time to raise some very pointed issues.

But let no one misunderstand me: I strongly support standards-based reform. This is nothing short of a revolution: successfully educating all children – rich and poor – to the same high standards. And it is a revolution we embrace.

After all, it is morally wrong to hold poor and minority children – it is wrong to hold any child -- to lower expectations and lower standards.

But it is no less morally wrong to hold children to high standards, to threaten them with retention and failure unless...unless we are willing to give students and teachers the tools to succeed.

Yet the prevailing mind-set of most politicians and policymakers is something right out of Field of Dreams: "If we set high standards, students will magically achieve." And this is a dangerous delusion.

At the National Education Summit last October -- attended by the governors and President Clinton -- I apparently upset some of the attendees. I upset them by asking what I consider to be entirely fair and appropriate questions:

- What is your game plan, governors, for making one-size-fits-all academic standards work in a world of "savage inequalities?"
- What is your plan for attracting quality teachers to low-performing schools where their talents are most desperately needed?
- What new resources are you allocating to give every child – every child – the individual support he or she needs to reach the high standards?

Because – let me speak bluntly -- without these interventions it is intellectually dishonest, no it is a fraud, to raise the bar for all children to a level that few can reach today.

Without these interventions, we are setting up millions of children – and their teachers -- for failure.

Indeed, one observer predicts that, if we stick to the current course, "failing students will pile up at the exits like steam building in a boiler...As a result, standards-based reform will suffer a serious setback and loss of credibility."

My friends, it is our challenge – at the national level, and especially at the state level -- to rescue standards-based reform. We owe it to our members – and to the children we teach – to insist on a reality check.

For starters, the haphazard, on-the-cheap implementation of high standards must stop. We must insist on a rigorous alignment of standards, curricula, and assessments. This is just common sense: Because if there is not alignment – if we are testing students on material they haven't been taught – that's just a totally cynical exercise.

Second, we must demand – now here's a brilliant idea – that classroom teachers be involved...in more than a token fashion...in setting the standards, designing the curricula, and selecting the assessments.

Third, we need turn up the heat under politicians who talk tough about raising standards but are AWOL when it comes to extra resources and interventions.

Winston Churchill once remarked that “Americans always do the right thing – after they've tried everything else.”

My friends, we need to push our fellow Americans to do the right thing. And let the cornerstone of our advocacy be this: Every teacher must receive quality training geared to the standards...and every student – every student – must receive the individual support he or she needs to succeed.

One more point before I leave this topic of standards. Out of frustration and fear, some folks – many of them parents – are saying, “It's too hard. Let's abandon this quest for high standards.”

But this is exactly the wrong reaction. And to see why, look at literacy. As educators, we know that any child who advances beyond fourth grade without basic competency in reading faces a bleak, bleak future – both in school and out. Yet we see these kids all the time. There are literally millions of them. And without standards...without interventions to rescue these kids...this bankrupt status quo will continue.

As an association, we must refuse to be complicit in this status quo. We must refuse to be silent. We have begun by creating Read Across America – now stronger than ever in its third year. We have begun by championing smaller K-3 class sizes, plus interventions expressly aimed at the quality teaching of reading.

But our single best hope is to have – in each state -- a clear and absolute standard for reading...a standard for every child to reach...a standard against which every school can be held accountable.

We owe this to the children. This is just one reason why standards-based reform is so important – and why we cannot allow the standards movement to collapse because of wishful thinking and shoddy implementation.

Which brings me directly to the issue of teacher quality. Because it is absurd for school districts to raise the bar for student achievement at the same time they are lowering the bar for teacher quality. Yet this is happening all across the country.

Amazingly, this assault on teacher quality is getting support from smart people who really ought to know better. Case in point: Several months ago, the conservative Fordham Foundation came up with a brainstorm for boosting teacher quality. Their solution?: Get rid of most teacher certification requirements!

When I heard this proposal, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Because, as a practical reality, the Fordham Foundation's policy already exists in hundreds of urban school districts across America. In order to get enough warm bodies for their classrooms, these school districts routinely waive certification requirements – with disastrous results.

My friends, we cannot be silent while the work of teachers is debased and denigrated. I repeat, we are one in 100 Americans – what can we do? This is our profession. We must take the lead in prescribing change, demanding change, making change happen.

Zero tolerance is what's in vogue these days. Fine. Let NEA and each of our affiliates go on the record:

- We demand zero tolerance for the hiring of non-certified teachers.
- Zero tolerance for out-of-field teaching.
- Zero tolerance for absurdly low salaries for first-year teachers and other school employees.
- Zero tolerance for schools that lack quality mentoring for teachers new to the profession.

Our goal is to have a qualified, competent, caring teacher in every classroom. Texas has the right idea – and I salute TSTA for making it happen: Under a new Texas law, if a child is being taught in public school by a teacher who is unlicensed or has only emergency credentials, then the parents of that child must be formally notified by the school.

In short, if there is an unqualified teacher, the parents get notified. This is basic consumer protection – and it's a terrific idea.

Every day, it seems, we hear or read another story on the teacher shortage across the United States. But, in fact, there is no shortage of people who want to enter the teaching profession. The shortage is in people who choose to stay.

Because of gross professional neglect, some 20 percent of new public school teachers drop out within three years – and, in urban areas, nearly half drop out within 5 years. It is the brightest teachers – as measured by college-admissions tests, at least – who are most likely to leave.

There is not a teacher shortage so much as there is a respect shortage.

Respect means providing teachers with high-quality mentoring and professional development.

Respect means ending the classroom isolation of teachers – giving them a larger role in organizing their schools for excellence.

And yes, respect means paying teachers competitive, professional salaries.

My friends, my fellow leaders, we must not be reluctant or inhibited in talking about the “S word”: Salaries. It is a disgrace that starting teachers in Kansas make as little as \$18,350, and that many starting teachers in Nebraska make even less. It is a crazy that, in states across the Western Region, many teachers with 20 years' experience and a master's degree make less than \$30,000.

And what about South Dakota, where many first-year teachers make \$15,000? That is simply a national embarrassment. So is the fact that tens of thousands of

education support personnel work for minimum wage or only slightly above – and that their children qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

Just this week, the trade journal *Education Week* published a startling analysis of the huge salary gap between teachers and other college-educated professionals – a gap that widens as teachers get older.

According to *Education Week*, teachers ages 22-28 earn nearly \$8,000 less per year than other college-educated adults the same age. For teachers ages 44-55, the gap was *three times greater*, with teachers earning nearly \$24,000 less than their counterparts in other occupations.

The salary gap is even worse for teachers with master's degrees. Teachers ages 44-50 with master's degrees earn an average of just above \$43,000 compared to nearly \$76,000 for nonteachers – a difference of more than \$32,000.

And get this: From 1994 to 1998, the average salary for master's-degree holders outside teaching increased 32 percent – more than \$17,000, adjusting for inflation. The average salary for teachers with master's degrees increased less than \$200.

Let's be clear: Salaries are a respect issue. But even more, salaries are a quality issue. Competitive salaries are the key to attracting and retaining the best into public education.

Now, speaking of salaries, let me briefly broach the issue of “pay for performance.” On this topic – especially here in the Western Region – I am on my own personal “listening tour.” I have come here to learn from you.

But let me offer several observations. First, I respect our colleagues in the Denver Classroom Teachers Association for having the courage to take on “pay for

performance.” Denver’s two-year pilot project was jointly bargained, and then ratified by the membership. This must be respected.

Moreover, what Denver is doing is the essence of New Unionism. They are taking risks, collaborating in creative ways, trying new ideas to boost student achievement.

At the same time, let’s be frank. All of us are wary of “pay for performance.” We remember past experiments with “merit pay” – compensation schemes that pitted teacher against teacher. We know that every one of those merit pay schemes was a counter-productive disaster.

By contrast -- at its best -- “pay for performance” is about teachers cooperating, not competing. It is about improving teachers’ skills – and boosting student achievement. And it is about expanding and improving compensation for our members – as a supplement to the single-salary schedule, not a replacement.

So my counsel regarding “pay for performance” is for all of us to keep an open mind, to listen, and to learn from local affiliates that are trying new things. Certainly, I want to hear from you on this topic during my time here in Houston.

Let me raise one final subject, this morning. I’ve talked about high-stakes tests for children. But in the months ahead, we face the ultimate high-stakes test. It’s called Campaign 2000.

At the national level, up for grabs is every seat in the U.S. House...one third of the Senate...and the presidency, bearing in mind that the next president likely will nominate three to five new Supreme Court justices. This is huge. And so is our challenge: to keep children and public education front and center in this election.

This year in particular, our involvement must be very, very focused and aggressive.

In the last election cycle, NEA showed its bipartisan clout as never before. We supported pro-public-education stalwarts in the Democratic Party. We also helped to elect 18 Republicans to Congress, plus three Republican governors – among them Jane Hull of Arizona.

I hope and fully expect that we can build on this bipartisan record in Campaign 2000 – this will depend on where the candidates stand on the issues.

However, at the presidential level, we have already suffered one major disappointment. Not one of the GOP candidates chose to participate in the NEA recommendation process – despite our repeated efforts to encourage them to take part.

Looking ahead to the Democratic primaries, as you know, we voted in October to recommend Vice President Al Gore. That recommendation – virtually unanimous by the Board of Directors – was not just political, it was also personal.

It was about returning loyalty to a man who has been loyal to children and public education. Loyalty to a man who has fought hard for those issues. Loyalty to a man who has been there for us time and time again.

For example, take just one issue: vouchers. It's not just that Al Gore has the right position on vouchers. For Gore, vouchers are a visceral issue, a core issue, a defining issue. No wavering. No wobbling. In every voucher fight with Congress, Al Gore has been there with us, shoulder to shoulder.

Leadership is the key. For example, both Al Gore and Bill Bradley support the E-Rate to bring the Internet into public schools. But it was Al Gore who pioneered

the E-Rate, who took the heat for it, who fought for it in the trenches. In short it was Al Gore who provided leadership.

Likewise, both Al Gore and Bill Bradley support school modernization. But it is Gore who has helped to shape Administration policy, fought the bureaucratic fights, and tirelessly lobbied this issue in Congress and before the American people. In short, what Gore has given us is not passive support...but tough, outspoken leadership.

In the most hard-fought policy battles, Al Gore has always been there for us.

On a personal note, I'll never forget three years ago. I had just become NEA president and, right away, we faced a crisis: Congress was on the verge of passing a tuition voucher bill, and some of our White House friends were wavering...signaling that some sort of compromise might be worked out. But it was Al Gore who said no. He drew a line -- stood very, very tough. And he prevailed.

Let me tell you: Others claim to see stiffness in Al Gore. I see spine.

In the Western Region, every state but one has voted to concur with NEA's recommendation of Al Gore in the Democratic primaries. It's time now -- in the weeks and months immediately ahead -- to back up that recommendation with a vigorous get-out-the-vote effort.

And looking ahead to the summer and fall, our threefold task is clear: (1) Keep a laser focus on our priority interests: children and public education; (2) identify the candidates -- Democrats and Republicans -- who measure up strongest on those interests; and (3) do everything in our power to see that those candidates are elected on November

Let me leave you, this morning, with a final observation. All of us know that this has been a tough year for teachers and for other public school employees. The year ahead looks to be even tougher – with more tests, more pressure, more finger-pointing.

With that in mind, it is incredibly important that each one of us – as Association leaders – take every opportunity to remind our members of the vital work that they do. Our members do important work, noble work, work that makes a tangible difference in the lives of children.

We must never lose sight of who we are as public educators. Yes, we live in an age that wants to quantify and count, test and evaluate, label and categorize. All around us are folks who want to reduce our work to numbers and statistics.

But I would remind them of the words of a great teacher and great spirit: Albert Einstein. Some remember Einstein for his formula “ $E=mc^2$.” I remember him for the sign he displayed prominently on his office wall at Princeton University. The sign said: “Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted counts.”

Smart guy, that Einstein!

I know of one teacher who would especially appreciate that sign in Einstein’s office. Her name is Margaret Edson. She teaches kindergarten at Centennial Place Elementary, a public school in Atlanta.

Last spring, Margaret Edson won the Pulitzer Prize for drama -- for a play she wrote titled “Wit.” But the Pulitzer Prize is not what impresses me about this woman. What impresses me is that she has the true heart and soul of a teacher.

The day the Pulitzer was announced, chaos took over at Centennial Place Elementary. Colleagues were congratulating Margaret. News reporters were clamoring for interviews.

But Margaret kept her balance. She calmly explained the hubbub to her 5- and 6-year-old pupils. She said (and I quote): "I wrote a play that's in New York and I won a prize for it. But I don't want to be in New York. I want to be here with you, because you all are so smart and you work so hard."

That evening, ABC's "World News Tonight" did a story on Margaret's prize. The reporter asked her what she was going to do now – now that she had won the prestigious prize and, presumably, could leave teaching.

She said – and I again quote – "I love teaching. This is my seventh year at teaching....I'm not interested in leaving teaching for anything."

The reporter just didn't seem to get it. He asked her again, why she was a teacher. Finally, exasperated, Margaret answered: "*Because these children are going to change the world.*"

My friends, those children -- our children -- are going to change the world. And they will do so by standing on the shoulders of Margaret Edson and all the wonderful, dedicated educators who make up the National Education Association.

Acting as individuals, you and they are changing the world in small but vital ways. Acting collectively -- 2.5 million strong, nearly one in every 100 Americans -- we can change the world in big ways.

Ours is an ambitious agenda. It is a worthy agenda. And because of the kind of people we are -- with the spirit and dedication exemplified by Margaret Edson -- I know that we will succeed.

Remarks by
Bob Chase, President, National Education Association

At the First Annual
Conference of State Standards Boards

October 30, 1998
Raleigh, North Carolina

Let me begin by stating what I hope you already know: the National Education Association is an ardent, longstanding champion of the work you do. And you can count me, personally, as one of your biggest fans. Because if we are truly going to professionalize the craft of teaching, it is obvious that we must begin with objective, rigorous professional standards. To that end, I wish you every success here in Raleigh as you attempt to create a national organization to advance your work.

As you know, in state after state -- going back several decades -- NEA and its affiliates have lobbied for the creation of independent professional standards boards. Here in North Carolina, for instance, the North Carolina Association of Educators was the first to propose a state standards board -- way back in 1978. NCAE lobbied and pushed and cajoled until -- 18 years later -- Governor Jim Hunt signed legislation creating the North Carolina Professional Standards Commission. And, I assure you, NEA will continue pushing until there is a professional standards board in every one of the 50 states.

However, precisely because we support your work so enthusiastically, it strikes me that I can best contribute to your deliberations not by preaching to the choir, but by focusing on the challenges and obstacles that stand before us.

One big challenge is for us to make sure that the standards-setting process is thoroughly grounded in the real world of public schools -- and in the real world of a highly competitive job market.

There is nothing I want more than the highest standards for incoming teachers. I want every high school teacher to have a college major in their teaching field. I want every teacher to be in the top quartile of their graduating class. I want every prospective teacher to be required to take and pass rigorous licensing exams. Moreover -- if I could wave a magic wand -- I would love for every veteran teacher to complete National Board Certification. You would, too!

It is easy for me to say all this -- just as it is easy for politicians to say they want top-quality teachers. But will all of this talk actually produce a cadre of 100 percent qualified, competent, caring teachers? The answer is no.

I'm reminded of that wonderful line in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. Glendower boasts, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep!" To which Hotspur responds: "Why, so can I, or so can any man. But will they come when you do call them?"

Or to take a more contemporary analogy, think of the Kevin Costner movie "Field of Dreams." Remember, the voice-on-high tells Costner to build a baseball diamond out in the middle of a cornfield. The voice says, "If you build it, they will come." And they do come: the players, the crowds, the happy ending.

Unfortunately, public education is already rife with "Field of Dreams" thinking. Nine years ago, then-President George Bush and the nation's 50 governors, including Bill Clinton, convened an education summit in Charlottesville where they promised "world class" academic standards for America's public schools. To cite one

specific: they pledged that U.S. students would be first in the world in math and science by the year 2000.

Likewise, in the wake of that summit, national groups and state boards drafted an array of academic standards documents. Now, many of these documents are elegant. They are comprehensive and rigorous. They are voluminous. For example, in math, history, and science, the standards boldly called for *every* American student to achieve at a level that, today, is reached by only an elite fraction of students.

Such standards sound great. They make us feel good. But in the real world -- let's be honest -- they are next to worthless. They are pure "Field of Dreams."

The problem, obviously, is that standards are neither self-executing nor self-enforcing.

In most states, we have not significantly raised academic achievement. But we *have* raised the cynicism level when it comes to pie-in-the-sky academic standards.

So the challenge for you as standards board members -- and for me and other leaders of teacher associations -- is: How do we avoid "Field of Dreams" thinking as we strive to forge rigorous professional standards for America's teachers?

For starters we have to honestly reckon with the disconnect between the ideal and the real. With the best of intentions, you and I propose to significantly increase the credentials we will require of newly hired teachers. But there's a problem. As you all know, we have just completed a summer hiring season that saw school districts across America scrambling to find even marginally qualified people to fill out their teaching rosters.

In other words, while you and I aim for a *world class teacher* in every classroom, many school districts consider themselves lucky to have a *warm body* in every classroom – regardless of credentials.

Think of it: In the state of Louisiana, today, a prospective teacher can be fully licensed without even a college minor in the field in which he will teach. The state does not require that he have studied curriculum, teaching strategies, classroom management, uses of technology. These are appallingly low requirements. Yet even with these *substandard standards* – to coin an oxymoron – Louisiana still cannot find enough prospective teachers that meet them. As a consequence, 31 percent of new teachers in Louisiana are hired with no license whatsoever, and another 15 percent with substandard licenses. Now, is it any wonder that Louisiana students score at the bottom of most national assessments of student achievement?

And we don't have to pick on Louisiana. In Fairfax County, Virginia – a highly respected school district in suburban Washington, D.C. -- fully 25 percent of new hires come with only provisional licenses. In Prince Georges County, Maryland – another Washington suburb – 43 percent of new teachers are not certified in the subjects they will teach. The hiring crunch has produced a whole parade of problems: new teachers with emergency certifications, partial certifications, non-certifications – not to mention rampant out-of-field teaching.

And my point is this: Even if Louisiana were to set up a professional standards board tomorrow, and if that board were to set new teacher standards that match the excellent standards of, say, North Carolina or Minnesota, would that – *in*

and of itself -- magically transform the caliber of folks entering the teaching profession in Louisiana? Unfortunately, the answer is No.

OK, so what do I propose? How do we escape from the “Field of Dreams” into the promised land of a qualified, competent teacher in every classroom?

By all means, we need sound professional standards. But if we are going to attract – *and retain* – teachers who meet those standards, then we have to create the proper *context*, the proper *conditions*. To cite two obvious examples: we are going to have to make teaching more attractive financially, especially at the entry level...and we are going to have to provide teachers with professional development and support that will allow them to thrive in the classroom.

Let me briefly offer four suggestions:

Suggestion Number One: I am hardly the first to weigh in on this, but here goes: It is imperative that we beef up the admissions standards and academic quality at America’s schools of education. On this score, I salute the work of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, which now requires schools of ed to equip prospective teachers not only with the *how* of teaching, but also the *what*: a deep knowledge of content areas.

But we have to do a much better job of ensuring that schools of education are closely in touch with the real world of public schools. I recall reading in *Education Week* last year that the University of Chicago had decided to shut down its department of education, in part because it had not graduated a single teacher in two decades. Talk about “ivory tower!” How in the world can a school of education be in business for 20 years and not graduate a single teacher?

I have my own pet idea for strengthening schools of education and plugging them into the real world of today's classroom: Just as we require teachers to go back to college for continuing education, I'd like to require every professor in every school of education to have ongoing, on-site involvement with real public schools – ideally in a teaching capacity, or some other capacity that brings them into real classrooms.

Suggestion Number Two: Here is a truly radical idea for attracting top talent into teaching: Pay for it.

The fact is that, in most school districts across the U.S., starting teacher pay is not an incentive, it is an insult. In California, a first-year prison guard with a high school diploma makes many thousands more than a starting teacher. In Massachusetts, a first-year toll collector on the state turnpike makes \$7,000 more than a first-year teacher.

You may recall the uproar in Massachusetts this past summer when 59 percent of prospective public school teachers flunked a controversial entry-level exam. John Silber, chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, led the chorus of state officials who claimed to be “shocked, shocked” by the failure rate. This is the same John Silber who said recently (and I quote): “I don't see why a garbage collector shouldn't be paid more than a teacher. It's a very unattractive job, whereas teaching is very attractive.”

On that score, I take pride in the work that teacher unions do in the areas of school quality and teacher professionalism. But if I had to cite the single most important contribution that teacher unions have made to public education over the last

three decades, it would be our success in raising teacher salaries from the truly pathetic levels of the 1960s.

Certainly, it is no coincidence that, in Southern states that don't have teacher unions, the most successful "education governors" – governors such as Jim Hunt, Dick Riley, and Zell Miller – have put higher teacher salaries at the very top of their school quality agenda.

The bottom line is that, in teaching as in any profession, it is hypocritical – and futile – to expect to attract top talent unless you are willing to pay for it.

By the way, we can learn, too, from what has happened with the National Board Certification process. So far, only 912 teachers nationwide have received this highly rigorous form of certification. Another 800 to 1,000 Board Certifications will be announced this month. This is a mere trickle. However, it is very significant that interest has skyrocketed in states like Florida that have decided to offer major salary incentives to teachers who successfully complete Board Certification. Again, if we want quality, we have to be willing to pay for it.

Suggestion Number Three: As we succeed in attracting top talent, the next challenge is to *retain* it. And on that score, we have a long, long way to go.

I don't know of any other profession that treats first-year novices as callously – and as unwisely – as we do in public education. All too often, first-year teachers get the most difficult assignments in the most challenging schools – and most receive no mentoring whatsoever. It is a sink-or-swim initiation that produces miserable results. Twenty percent of new teachers drop out by the end of the first year; 50 percent within five years.

To address this crisis, we at NEA are advocating a new deal for first-year teachers – a new deal that would include high-quality mentoring for every new teacher; intensive professional development (as much as 20 percent of the new teacher's schedule), and assignments to classes and schools that give new teachers a chance to develop their sea legs and to thrive.

And, needless to say, veteran teachers also are starving for meaningful professional development and support. Quite frankly, on this score, I believe that NEA is in a race with relevance. Because it is clear to me that our members want more than a union that bargains and grieves. They want a union that addresses – in a creative, comprehensive fashion – the full range of their professional needs and aspirations, from professional development to peer assistance to classroom management, and much much more.

To that end – as many of you may know – I have advocated a New Unionism within NEA. And this New Unionism proceeds from a central organizing principle: our redoubled commitment to enhancing the quality and professionalism of teachers.

Finally, suggestion Number Four: If we are serious about professional teacher standards, then we have to get serious about *treating* teachers as professionals. Again, a reality check is in order. The real world of public school teachers includes not just overcrowded classrooms, but also lunchroom duty, bathroom patrol, monitoring the loading and unloading of buses, and so on.

Beyond that, in many schools, teachers contend daily with acts of disrespect, dishonesty, and outright aggression from students that would shock most middle-class Americans.

And then there is the small matter of telephones. Is there any other major profession where people have to forage to find a phone to make business-related calls or to request assistance during an emergency? Why in the world – in the year 1998 – doesn't every teacher have a telephone sitting on his or her classroom desk?

A couple final thoughts, and then I look forward to your reactions to what I have said: Let me reiterate my support – my respect – for the work you are doing. It's not easy being leaders. It's not easy stepping into uncharted territory – which is exactly what you are doing.

Frankly, at NEA we have faced much the same kinds of challenges and struggles as we push deeper into the uncharted territory of New Unionism.

But as professional standards boards and as teacher unions, our eyes are on the same prize: to professionalize the craft of teaching in the United States...to attract the very best people into the field...to give those people the professional support they deserve. And our bottom-line goal -- yours and mine -- is *to guarantee a qualified, competent teacher in every classroom.*

I encourage you to keep up your good work...your important work. And be assured that NEA stands ready to support you in every way we can.

Thank you.