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MESSAGE:

2 America 2000 versions
+ Bush speech

all mention American Achievement
Tests and "New World Standards"

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A Message from the Secretary

The national education goals adopted by President Bush and the governors in 1990 are ambitious—but worthy of a great nation. The AMERICA 2000 Education Strategy described in the pages that follow is a bold, complex, and long-range plan to move every community in America toward those goals.

The AMERICA 2000 Education Strategy has a language of its own. One good way to begin reading this booklet is to turn first to the Glossary of Key Terms. In time, these terms will become familiar to the millions of people who are needed to make America all that it should be.

Lamar Alexander
Secretary of Education
April 18, 1991



AMERICA 2000: An Education Strategy

Overview

AMERICA 2000 is a long-term strategy to help make this land all that it should be—a nine-year crusade to move us toward the six ambitious national education goals that the president and the governors adopted in 1990 to close our skills-and-knowledge gap.

The strategy anticipates major change in our 110,000 public and private schools, change in every American community, change in every American home, change in our attitude about learning.

This strategy is bold, complex and long-range. It will start quickly—but results won't come quickly. It will occupy us at least for the rest of this decade.

We already know the direction in which we must go; the AMERICA 2000 strategy will help us get there.

It will spur far-reaching changes in weary practices, outmoded assumptions and long-assumed constraints on education. It will require us to make some lifestyle changes, too. Yet few elements of this strategy are unprecedented. Today's best ideas, dedicated education reformers, impressive innovations and ambitious experiments already point the way. We already know the direction in which we must go; the AMERICA 2000 strategy will help us get there.

AMERICA 2000 is a national strategy, not a federal program. It honors local control, relies on local initiative, affirms states and localities as the senior partners in paying for education and the private sector as a vital partner, too. It recognizes that real education reform happens community by community and school by

school and only when people come to understand what they must do for themselves and their children and set about to do it.

The federal government's role in this strategy is limited as—wisely—its part in education always has been. But that role will be played vigorously. Washington can help by setting standards, highlighting examples, contributing some funds, providing flexibility in exchange for accountability, and pushing and prodding—then pushing and prodding some more.

The AMERICA 2000 strategy has four parts that will be pursued simultaneously. They can be visualized as four giant trains—big enough for everyone to find a place on board—departing at the same time on parallel tracks on the long journey to educational excellence. All four must move swiftly and determinedly if the nation is to reach its destination:

1. **For today's students**, we must radically improve today's schools, all 10,000 of them—make them better and more accountable for results.
2. **For tomorrow's students**, we must invent new schools to meet the demands of a new century—a New Generation of American Schools, bringing at least 535 of them into existence by 1996, and thousands by decade's end.
3. **For those of us already out of school and in the work force**, we must keep learning if we are to live and work successfully in today's world. A "Nation at Risk" must become a "Nation of Students."
4. **For schools to succeed**, we must look beyond their classrooms to our communities and families. Schools will never be much better than the commitment of their communities. Each of our communities must become a place where learning can happen.

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**Four big trains, moving simultaneously down four parallel
tracks: Better and more accountable schools; a New Genera-
tion of American Schools; a Nation of Students continuing to
learn throughout our lives; and communities where learning
can happen.**

I. For Today's Students: Better and More Accountable Schools

Goals served: All six, but especially #2 (90 percent graduate from high school), #3 (competence in core subjects) and #4 (first in the world in science and mathematics).

Strategy: Through a 15-point accountability package, parents, teachers, schools and communities can all be encouraged to measure results, compare results and insist on change when the results aren't good enough.

Specifics:

New World Standards: Standards will be developed, in conjunction with the National Education Goals Panel. These New World Standards—for each of the five core subjects—will represent what young Americans need to know and be able to do if they are to live and work successfully in today's world. These standards will incorporate both knowledge and skills, to ensure that, when they leave school, young Americans are prepared for further study and the work force.

American Achievement Tests: In conjunction with the National Education Goals Panel, a new (voluntary) nationwide examination system will be developed, based on the five core subjects, tied to the New World Standards. These tests will be designed to foster good teaching and learning as well as to monitor student progress.

Encouragement to use the tests: Colleges will be urged to use the American Achievement Tests in admissions; employers will be urged to pay attention to them in hiring.

Presidential Citations for Educational Excellence: Citations will be awarded to high school students who do well on American Achievement Tests. Until those tests become available, Presidential Citations for Educational Excellence will be awarded based on

Advanced Placement tests.

Presidential Achievement Scholarships: Once enacted by Congress, these scholarships will reward academic excellence among needy college and university students.

Report Cards on results: In addition it reports to parents on how their children are doing, report cards will also provide clear (and comparable) public information on how schools, school districts and states are doing, as well as the entire nation. The national and state report cards will be prepared in conjunction with the National Education Goals Panel.

Report Card data collection: Congress will be asked to authorize the National Assessment of Educational Progress regularly to collect state-level data in grades four, eight and twelve in all five core subjects, beginning in 1994. Congress will also be asked to permit the use of National Assessment tests at district and school levels by states that wish to do so.

If standards, tests and report cards tell parents and voters how their schools are doing, choice gives them the leverage to act.

Choice: If standards, tests and report cards tell parents and voters how their schools are doing, choice gives them the leverage to act. Such choices should include all schools that serve the public and are accountable to public authority, regardless of who runs them. New incentives will be provided to states and localities to adopt comprehensive choice policies, and the largest federal school aid program (Chapter 1) will be revised to ensure that federal dollars follow the child to whatever extent state and local policies permit.

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Scholarships: Once enacted by Congress will reward academic excellence for university students.

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Congress will be asked to authorize National Progress regularly to four, eight and twelve in all five. Congress will also be asked to implement tests at district and school level.

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Port cards tell parents and voters what gives them the leverage to act. Schools that serve the public and private, regardless of who runs them. to states and localities to adopt and the largest federal school aid to ensure that federal dollars at state and local policies permit.

The school as the site of reform: Because real education improvement happens school by school, the teachers, principals and parents in each school must be given the authority—and the responsibility—to make important decisions about how the school will operate. Federal and state red tape that gets in the way needs to be cut. States will be encouraged to allow the leadership of individual schools to make decisions about how resources are used, and Congress will be asked to enact Education Flexibility legislation to remove federal constraints that impede the ability of states to spend education resources most effectively to raise achievement levels. The Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and other private groups representing the private sector are to be commended—and encouraged—in their important efforts to create state and local policy environments in which school-by-school reform can succeed.

Merit Schools Program: Individual schools that make notable progress toward the national education goals deserve to be rewarded. Congress will be asked to enact a new program that will provide federal funds to states that can be used as rewards for such progress. States may "bank" those funds over several years to create even more incentives for successful schools and teams of school professionals.

Governors' Academies for School Leaders: Academies will be established with federal seed money, so that principals and other leaders in every state will be able to make their schools better and more accountable.

Governors' Academies for Teachers: Academies will also be established with federal seed money, so that teachers of the five core subjects in every state will be ready to help their students attain the New World Standards and pass the American Achievement Tests.

Differential teacher pay: Differential pay will be encouraged for those who teach well, who teach core subjects, who teach in

dangerous and challenging settings, or who serve as mentors for new teachers.

Alternative teacher and principal certification: As part of the AMERICA 2000 Excellence in Education Act of 1991, Congress will be asked to make grants available to states and districts to develop alternative certification systems for teachers and principals. New college graduates and others seeking a career change into teaching or school leadership are often frustrated by certification requirements unrelated to subject area knowledge or leadership ability. This initiative will help states and districts to develop means by which individuals with an interest in teaching and school leadership can overcome these barriers.

Honor teachers: The federal government will honor and reward outstanding teachers in all five of the core subjects with Presidential Awards for Excellence in Education.

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Glossary of Key Terms

American Achievement Tests: The anchor for a new system of voluntary national examinations at the fourth, eighth and twelfth grades in each of the five core subjects, tied to the New World Standards.

AMERICA 2000: An Education Strategy: An action plan to move America toward the six national education goals through a populist crusade, by assuring accountability in today's schools, unleashing America's genius to jump-start a new generation of American schools, transforming a "Nation at Risk" into a "Nation of Students," and nurturing the family and community values essential to personal responsibility, strong schools and sound education for all children.

AMERICA 2000 Communities: Communities, designated by the governors, that meet the president's four-part challenge: that (1) adopt the six national education goals for themselves, (2) create a community-wide plan for achieving them, (3) develop a Report Card to measure their progress, and (4) demonstrate their readiness to create and support a New American School. 535+ such communities will open New American Schools by 1996.

Better and More Accountable Schools: A 15-part improvement package for today's schools, designed to move America toward the six national education goals, including New World Standards, American Achievement Tests, Report Cards and school choice.

Federal Role: While the federal government's role in education is and should remain limited, the administration is committed to providing R & D, assessment and information, assuring equal opportunity and, above all, leading the nationwide effort to achieve the six education goals.

535+ by 1996: At least 535 New American Schools will be up and running in AMERICA 2000 Communities across the country—at least one in each congressional district—by 1996, as well as in Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories.

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2000 Communities, these schools will reach the national education
goals at operational costs not exceeding those of conventional
schools.

New World Standards: Definitions of what American students
should be expected to know and be able to do upon completion of
schooling, meant to function as benchmarks against which student
and school performance can be measured.

Populist Crusade: A national crusade led by the president—
school by school, neighborhood by neighborhood, community by
community—to transform American education and to spur
fundamental changes in the ways we educate ourselves and our
children. It also will be a restoration of what we think is important,
a homecoming in sound values and community attitudes.

R & D Teams: Partnerships of corporations, universities, think
tanks, school innovators, management consultants and others,
selected through a competitive process by the New American
Schools Development Corporation to receive up to \$30 million
each over three years to conceptualize and invent New American
Schools.

Report Cards: A public reporting system on the performance of
education institutions and systems, providing maximum informa-
tion at the school, district, state and national levels.

School as the Site of Reform: The individual school is
education's key action-and-accountability unit. The surest way to
reform education is to give schools and their leaders the freedom
and authority to make important decisions about what happens,
while being held accountable for making well-conceived efforts at
improvement and for achieving desired results.

Skill Clinics: Just as health clinics diagnose health and refer
people to appropriate care, skill clinics will be centers in every

Version 2



An Education Strategy

***"...making this land all
that it should be."***

George Bush

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Track I

For Today's Students: Better and More Accountable Schools

Goals served:

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Strategy:

Through a 15-point accountability package, parents, teachers, schools and communities will be encouraged to measure results, compare results and insist on change when the results aren't good enough.

Specifics:

World Class Standards. Standards will be developed in conjunction with the National Education Goals Panel. These World Class Standards—for each of the five core subjects—will represent what young Americans need to know and be able to do if they are to live and work successfully in today's world. These standards will incorporate both knowledge and skills to ensure that, when they leave school, young Americans are prepared for further study and the work force.

American Achievement Tests. In conjunction with the National Education Goals Panel, a new (voluntary) nationwide examination system will be based on the five core subjects and tied to the World Class Standards. These tests will be designed to foster good teaching and learning as well as to monitor student progress.

Encouragement to use the tests. Colleges will be urged to use the American Achievement Tests in admissions and employers will be urged to pay attention to them in hiring.

AMERICA 2000

Track I Accountability Package

- ▲ World Class Standards
- ▲ American Achievement Tests
- ▲ Test results used by colleges, universities and employers
- ▲ Presidential citations for educational excellence
- ▲ Presidential Achievement Scholarships
- ▲ Report Cards
- ▲ Changes in National Assessment of Educational Progress
- ▲ New choice incentives and choice applied to Chapter 1
- ▲ Educational flexibility legislation to support the school as the site of reform
- ▲ Merit Schools Program to reward schools that move toward the goals
- ▲ Governors' Academies for School Leaders
- ▲ Governors' Academies for Teachers
- ▲ Differential pay for teachers
- ▲ Alternative certification for teachers and principals
- ▲ Honoring outstanding teachers in the five core subjects

decides to transform itself. It's true, of course, that the AMERICA 2000 strategy can do the greatest good for troubled, rural and inner-city areas, and we all need to be sure that they get whatever help they need to take part.

Q: Will the American Achievement Tests compete with the work of the National Education Goals Panel?

A: No, we expect to follow the panel's lead in developing the World Class Standards and the American Achievement Tests.

Q: Do national tests mean a national curriculum?

A: No—although surveys and polls indicate that most Americans have no objection to the idea of a national curriculum. The American Achievement Tests will examine the *results* of education. The tests have nothing to say about how those results are produced, what teachers do in class from one day to the next, what instructional materials are chosen or what lesson plans are followed. The tests should result in *less* regulation of the means of education, because they focus exclusively on the ends.

Q: When will the new tests be ready?

A: In 1994, we will have available a system of high quality individual tests, at least in reading, writing and mathematics—education's traditional "three R's"—for states and localities that want them. Because the new American Achievement Tests probably cannot be perfected that quickly, we will ask Congress to authorize the rapid deployment of an individual version of tests used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Q: Do we really need another test? Aren't tests biased against minorities?

A: A nationwide system of high quality national exams—more than one version, but calibrated to the same standards—will probably begin to take the place of some of today's numerous testing schemes. As for bias, the new tests will be screened to eliminate it. Bear in mind that minority parents also want to know how well their children—and the schools their children attend—are doing in relation to the National Education Goals and World

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Class Standards: Sometimes less-than-satisfactory news serves to catalyze needed change.

Q: Can all six National Education Goals really be reached?

A: They are all ambitious. Some, like literacy for *all* adults, and leading the *whole world* in math and science, are very challenging. But each is a worthy national objective, and we should not rest until all are achieved. The AMERICA 2000 strategy will give us the tools we need to achieve them.

Q: How much of this is just politics?

A: Better education benefits the entire nation, not one particular political party. AMERICA 2000 is a nonpartisan education reform strategy. There is plenty of room on these four trains for every American, and we begin with the assumption that everyone will want to climb aboard. Sure, we'll argue about the details in the formal political process and elsewhere, and the strategy will doubtless be improved through those arguments. But let's talk them through in a spirit of wanting a first-rate education for all our children, in every corner of this great land.

*It's another of those historic
American challenges—and it
starts in every community,
every school, every household.*

Q: What's the single most important part of the AMERICA 2000 strategy?

A: The most controversial may be school choice—at least until it's well understood. The knottiest is probably standards and testing, which is technically quite complex. The most dramatic is the design effort for New American Schools. But the most important may be the AMERICA 2000 Communities! Washington cannot achieve the six National Education Goals for the nation; that has to happen at the local level. It's another of those historic American challenges,

Appendix II

Remarks by the President Announcing AMERICA 2000*

Thank you all for joining us here in the White House today. Let me thank the Speaker for being with us, and the Majority Leader, other distinguished members, committee heads and ranking members and very important education committees here with us today. I want to salute the Governors, the educators, the business and the labor leaders, and especially want to single out the National Teachers of the Year. I believe we have 10 of the previous 11 Teachers of the Year with us here today, and that's most appropriate and most fitting.

But together, all of us, we will underscore the importance of a challenge destined to define the America that we'll know in the next century.

For those of you close to my age, the 21st century has always been a kind of shorthand for the distant future—the place we put our most far-off hopes and dreams. And today, that 21st century is racing toward us—and anyone who wonders what the century will look like can find the answer in America's classrooms.

Nothing better defines what we are and what we will become than the education of our children. To quote the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, "It is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education."

Education has always meant opportunity. Today, education determines not just which students will succeed, but also which nations will thrive in a world united in pursuit of freedom in enterprise. Think about the changes transforming our world.

* The White House, April 18, 1991

The collapse of communism and the Cold War. The advent and acceleration of the Information Age. Down through history, we've defined resources as soil and stones, land and the riches buried beneath. No more. Our greatest national resource lies within ourselves—our intelligence, ingenuity—the capacity of the human mind.

Nations that nurture ideas will move forward in years to come. Nations that stick to stale old notions and ideologies will falter and fail. So I'm here today to say, America will move forward. The time for all the reports and rankings, for all the studies and the surveys about what's wrong in our schools is passed. If we want to keep America competitive in the coming century, we must stop convening panels to report on ourselves. We must stop convening panels that report the obvious. And we must accept responsibility for educating everyone among us, regardless of background or disability.

The days of the status quo are over.

If we want America to remain a leader, a force for good in the world, we must lead the way in educational innovation. And if we want to combat crime and drug abuse, if we want to create hope and opportunity in the bleak corners of this country where there is now nothing but defeat and despair, we must dispel the darkness with the enlightenment that a sound and well-rounded education provides.

Think about every problem, every challenge we face. The solution to each starts with education. For the sake of the future, of our children and of the nation's, we must transform America's schools. The days of the status quo are over!

Across this country, people have started to transform the American school. They know that the time for talk is over. Their slogan is: Don't dither, just do it. Let's push the reform effort forward. Use

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each experiment, each advance to build for the next American century. New schools for a new world.

As a first step in this strategy, we must challenge not only the methods and the means that we've used in the past, but also the yardsticks that we've used to measure our progress. Let's stop trying to measure progress in terms of money spent.

We spend 33 percent more per pupil in 1991 than we did in 1981—33 percent more in real, constant dollars—and I don't think there's a person anywhere who would say—anywhere in the country—who would say that we've seen a 33 percent improvement in our schools' performance.

Dollar bills don't educate students. Education depends on committed communities determined to be places where learning will flourish; committed teachers, free from the noneducational burdens; committed parents, determined to support excellence; committed students, excited about school and learning. To those who want to see real improvement in American education, I say: There will be no renaissance without revolution.

*To those who want to see real
improvement in American
education, I say: There will
be no renaissance without
revolution.*

We who would be revolutionaries must accept responsibilities for our schools. For too long, we've adopted a "no fault" approach to education. Someone else is always to blame. And while we point fingers out there, trying to assign blame, the students suffer. There's no place for a no-fault attitude in our schools. It's time we held our schools—and ourselves—accountable for results.

Until now, we've treated education like a manufacturing process,

assuming that if the gauges seemed right, if we had good pay scales, the right pupil-teacher ratios, good students would just pop out of our schools. It's time to turn things around—to focus on students, to set standards for our schools—and let teachers and principals figure out how best to meet them.

We've made a good beginning by setting the nation's sights on six ambitious National Education Goals—and setting for our target the year 2000. Our goals have been forged in partnership with the nation's Governors, several of whom are with us here today in the East Room. And those who have taken a leadership role are well-known to everyone in this room. And for those who need a refresher course—there may be a quiz later on—let me list those goals right now.

By 2000, we've got to, first, ensure that every child starts school ready to learn; second one, raise the high school graduation rate to 90 percent; the third one, ensure that each American student leaving the 4th, 8th and 12th grades can demonstrate competence in core subjects; four, make our students first in the world in math and science achievements; fifth, ensure that every American adult is literate and has the skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and sixth, liberate every American school from drugs and violence so that schools encourage learning.

Our strategy to meet these noble national goals is founded in common sense and common values. It's ambitious and, yet, with hard work, it's within our reach. And I can outline our strategy in one paragraph, and here it is:

For today's students, we must make existing schools better and more accountable. For tomorrow's students, the next generation, we must create a New Generation of American Schools. For all of us, for the adults who think our school days are over, we've got to become a Nation of Students—recognize learning is a lifelong process. Finally, outside our schools we must cultivate communities where learning can happen. That's our strategy.

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People who want Washington to solve our educational problems are missing the point. We can lend appropriate help through such programs as Head Start. But what happens here in Washington won't matter half as much as what happens in each school, each local community and, yes, in each home. Still, the federal government will serve as a catalyst for change in several important ways.

Working closely with the Governors, we will define new World Class Standards for schools, teachers and students in the five core subjects: math and science, English, history and geography.

We will develop voluntary—let me repeat it—we will develop voluntary national tests for 4th, 8th and 12th graders in the five core subjects. These American Achievement Tests will tell parents and educators, politicians and employers, just how well our schools are doing. I'm determined to have the first of these tests for 4th graders in place by the time that school starts in September of 1993. And for high school seniors, let's add another incentive—a distinction sure to attract attention of colleges and companies in every community across the country—a Presidential Citation to students who excel on the 12th grade test.

We can encourage educational excellence by encouraging parental choice. The concept of choice draws its fundamental strength from the principle at the very heart of the democratic idea. Every adult American has the right to vote, the right to decide where to work, where to live. It's time parents were free to choose the schools that their children attend. This approach will create the competitive climate that stimulates excellence in our private and parochial schools as well.

But the centerpiece of our National Education Strategy is not a program, it's not a test. It's a new challenge: to reinvent American education—to design New American Schools for the year 2000 and beyond.

The idea is simple but powerful: put America's special genius for invention to work for America's schools. I will challenge communi-

ties to become what we will call AMERICA 2000 Communities. Governors will honor communities with this designation if the communities embrace the National Education Goals, create local strategies for reaching these goals, devise Report Cards for measuring progress, and agree to encourage and support one of the new generation of America's Schools.

We must also foster educational innovation. I'm delighted to announce today that America's business leaders, under the chairmanship of Paul O'Neill, will create the New American Schools Development Corporation—a private-sector research and development fund of at least \$150 million to generate innovation in education.

*The idea is simple but
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This fund offers an open-end challenge to the dreamers and the doers eager to reinvent—eager to reinvigorate our schools. With the results of this Design in hand, I will urge Congress to provide \$1 million in start-up funds for each of the 535 New American Schools—at least one in every congressional district—and have them up and running by 1996.

The New American Schools must be more than rooms full of children seated at computers. If we mean to prepare our children for life, classrooms also must cultivate values and good character, give real meaning to right and wrong.

We ask only two things of these architects of our New American Schools: that their students meet the new national standards for the five core subjects and that outside of the costs of the initial research and development, the schools operate on a budget comparable to

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conventional schools. The architects of the New American Schools should break the mold. Build for the next century. Reinvent—literally start from scratch and reinvent the American school. No question should be off limits, no answers automatically assumed. We're not after one single solution for every school. We're interested in finding every way to make schools better.

There's a special place in inventing the New American School for the corporate community, for business and labor. And I invite you to work with us not simply to transform our schools, but to transform every American adult into a student.

Fortunately, we have a secret weapon in America's system of colleges and universities—the finest in the entire world. The corporate community can take the lead by creating a voluntary private system of World Class Standards for the workplace. Employers should set up skill centers where workers can seek advice and learn new skills. But most importantly, every company and every labor union must bring the worker into the classroom and bring the classroom into the workplace.

We'll encourage every federal agency to do the same. And to prove no one's ever too old to learn, Lamar, with his indefatigable determination and leadership, has convinced me to become a student again myself. Starting next week, I'll begin studying. And I want to know how to operate a computer. Very candidly—I don't expect this new tutorial to teach me how to set the clock on the VCR or anything complicated. But I want to be computer literate, and I'm not. There's a lot of kids, thank God, that are. And I want to learn, and I will.

The workplace isn't the only place we must improve opportunities for education. Across this nation, we must cultivate communities where children can learn. Communities where the school is more than a refuge, more than a solitary island of calm amid chaos. Where the school is the living center of a community where people care—people care for each other and their futures. Not just in the



school but in the neighborhood. Not just in the classroom, but in the home.

Our challenge amounts to nothing less than a revolution in American education. A battle for our future. And now, I ask all Americans to be points of light in the crusade that counts the most: the crusade to prepare our children and ourselves for the exciting future that looms ahead.

*Our challenge amounts to
nothing less than a
revolution in American
education.*

What I've spoken about this afternoon are the broad strokes of this National Education Strategy: Accountable schools for today, a new generation of schools for tomorrow. A nation of students committed to a lifetime of learning and communities where all our children can learn.

There are four people here today who symbolize each element of this strategy and point the way forward for our reforms. Esteban Pagan, Steve, an award winning eighth grade student in science and history at East Harlem Tech, a choice school.

Mike Hopkins. "Lead Teacher" in the Saturn School in St. Paul, Minnesota, where teachers have already helped reinvent the American school.

David Kelley. A high-tech troubleshooter at the Michelin Tire plant in Greenville, South Carolina. David has spent the equivalent of one full year of his four years at Michelin back at his college expanding his skills.

Finally, Michelle Moore, of Missouri. A single mother, active in Missouri's Parents as Teachers program. She wants her year-old

son, Alstor

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So, to sum it up, for these four people and for all the others like them, the revolution in American education has already begun. Now I ask all Americans to be points of light in the crusade that counts the most: the crusade to prepare our children and ourselves for the exciting future that looms ahead. At any moment in every mind, the miracle of learning beckons us all.

Between now and the year 2000, there is not one moment or one miracle to waste.

Thank you all. Thank you for your interest, for your dedication. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.





GardenD @ aol.com
08/25/97 08:42:00 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Michael Cohen

cc:

Subject: Re: NAGB and national tests

Dear Mike,

I got a message from Checker, who did watch the program, that the Secretary had said something about giving NAGB governance. I think it is a crying shame that you didn't give NAGB governance before creating a whole apparatus--a reading committee, a math committee, and awarding the contract. This is like making up the recipe and then bringing in a cook and telling him to use your recipe, not his. Why was it so important to be sure that the national tests had creators who were distinct from the usual NAEP mechanism?

I will send you an e-mail I got this morning alleging that the math committee has "slanted" the test unacceptably. The process that the administration followed has seriously undermined the credibility of the tests.

I am glad the Secretary is finally doing the right thing. By the time it is done--with the test specifications already written and contracts already awarded--it may be too late to regain lost credibility.

An excellent idea very badly handled, in my view.

But at least you have held the line on not testing reading in 4th grade in Spanish.

Diane



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Below are excerpts from a September 8, 1997 memorandum sent by William J. Bennett to select United States Senators.

As you know, I have been (in principle) a strong supporter of voluntary national testing. However, I have real concerns about the specifics of the current Clinton proposal -- which, in my opinion, would do more harm than having no test at all. Let me state in the strongest possible terms that the current National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) proposal made by the White House is inadequate to prevent mischief in these tests and the Congress should not delay in fixing it. Waiting until 1998 and the "regular" National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reauthorization cycle will allow seriously flawed national tests to go forward without needed correction from a strengthened NAGB.

It is my strong impression that the Administration is willing to go quite a distance this week to accommodate a Congressional initiative concerning "governance" of the testing program. Indeed, I am told that the White House is awaiting a counter-proposal from Republicans and reform-minded Democrats. *Now is the time to make a solid counter-proposal* (it is also a chance to strengthen NAGB's independence vis-à-vis NAEP itself).

Where does the situation now stand? Apparently the Senate leadership has already agreed to accept an amendment from Senator Harkin which is, from my perspective, quite problematic (the Harkin amendment is simply the Administration's flawed proposal). If this agreement has, in fact, been irrevocably made, it seems to me that the best course of action is that in the forthcoming Senate-House conference committee, Republicans and reform-minded Democrats should insist that these important changes be made:

1. Give NAGB "policy direction" or "policy control" of all aspects of both NAEP and the national tests, not just policy guidance. Otherwise the Department of Education remains in control.
2. Give NAGB explicit authority to review and change the national test specifications, development contract and advisory committees that have already been launched by the Education Department. Otherwise, the bad decisions already made, and the contracts already awarded, will stay in place.

3. Charge NAGB with ensuring that the content and standards of national tests be the same as NAEP's and that the tests be "linked" to NAEP. Otherwise the public will not know whether the test results mean the same thing as NAEP results.

4. Make several key changes in the composition of NAGB itself so that it has greater bipartisanship and independence. (At present, just two of its 25 members need to be from the party out of power. Given the huge responsibility of national testing, and the need for bipartisan consensus, the current imbalance is simply wrong.)

5. Restore NAGB's pre-1994 authority to function as its own nominating committee, i.e. constraining the Secretary's appointees to people vetted by NAGB itself. (And perhaps stipulate that NAGB must consider candidates suggested by chairmen of the pertinent Congressional committees.) Otherwise, the Secretary will have a free hand to select whomever he wants -- as he does now.

6. Restore NAGB terms to 4 years (as was the case until 1994), with re-appointment permitted. (Today they last 3 years, which is a problem because it takes new members 1-2 years to get up to speed.)

Those are the essential statutory provisions.



In Brief...

August 26, 1997

National Tests: A Good Idea Going Wrong

By Diane Ravitch

Six months ago I was an enthusiastic supporter of the president's proposal for national testing. I wrote articles in this paper and elsewhere endorsing the idea of testing fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics. In March I had the privilege of meeting with the president, the first lady, and the secretary of education to discuss the president's education agenda. At that time, I urged the president to place the national testing program under the supervision of an independent, bipartisan agency, not the federal Department of Education.

Unfortunately, this did not happen, and now the Clinton administration is well on its way to destroying the credibility of its good idea. Instead of turning the testing program over to the National Assessment Governing Board, which is independent and bipartisan, the administration has kept the test development process under its own tight control. It chose a contractor and selected committees to design the tests who may or may not be bipartisan and who may or may not represent the diverse spectrum of views in the fields of reading and mathematics. A few days ago it awarded a \$13 million contract to a consortium of testing companies.

Now the Internet is humming with charges that the national tests will be stacked to favor "whole language" theories of reading and against phonics and to promote "fuzzy math" (where the process of problem-solving, not the right answer, matters most) and against computation. I do not know whether any of these fears are valid, but the administration's partisan control of the test development processing has inflamed such feverish concerns.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) should be in charge of the national tests. Appointed by the secretary of education, NAGB is required by statute to be bipartisan and broadly representative; its members include governors, legislators, business leaders, teachers, school board members, public members and testing experts. NAGB was created by Congress 10 years ago to set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This is the federal program that regularly tests national samples of American students in such subjects as reading, mathematics and science. NAEP has earned great credibility because it is supervised by an independent governing board. However, the Clinton administration plans to use the NAEP tests while bypassing NAEP's governing board.

This opinion piece was published in The Washington Post on August 26, 1997 and written by Diane Ravitch, nonresident senior fellow in the Brookings Economic Studies program.

The views expressed in this piece are those of the author and should not be ascribed to the trustees, officers, or other staff members of the Brookings Institution.

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Hudson Institute

Statement by Chester E. Finn, Jr.,
John M. Olin Fellow, Hudson Institute

BALGARD
V.P. Communications

September 10, 1997

Washington Office

If there are to be national tests, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) is the right body to be in charge of them. I served on NAGB from 1988 until 1996 and had the honor of chairing it for the first two of those years. I know it well. It's a hard-working, conscientious and sturdy bunch that isn't easily cowed. But it has some shortcomings that are a problem even without adding responsibility for something as sensitive as national testing. And the Administration's proposal to assign NAGB the task of "formulat[ing] policy guidelines" for national testing has inadequacies as well.

I will supply a little background, then itemize those two sets of shortcomings (all of which Congress could easily rectify).

Background

- Before 1988, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had no independent policy-making body. The Education Department's NAEP contractor (ETS then as now) appointed its own "assessment policy committee", which meant the contractor controlled the "policy" group and was in turn controlled by the Department.
- A blue-ribbon panel chaired by then-Governor Lamar Alexander (and including Hillary Rodham Clinton) recommended in 1987 that this arrangement be changed and an independent governing board be created to make policy for NAEP. The Reagan administration drafted a bill and the Democratic Congress enacted it in 1988. The Secretary of Education made the initial appointments but thereafter the Board was "semi-self-perpetuating", i.e. it served as its own nominating committee, giving the Secretary a slate of (at least 3) candidates for each opening; he could reject that slate and ask for another but he could not appoint anyone unless they were nominated by the Board itself. Terms were four years and could be renewed.
- Though ultimate control was divided between NAGB and the Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), NAGB had considerable authority and did not hesitate to assert it. By far the most controversial thing the Board did in its early years was develop "achievement levels" (AKA standards) by which to report NAEP results: the 3 now-well-known markers called "basic", "proficient" and "advanced". (It's those standards that President Clinton proposes to use for the national tests.

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But the administration plans to use "basic" as a satisfactory standard, whereas NAGB said "proficient" is what all kids should attain.)

NAGB Weaknesses

To punish NAGB for asserting itself as it had done, curb its independence, and give the Department more control of NAEP in the future, the House of Representatives moved in 1994 to turn NAGB into a powerless advisory committee. The Senate resisted and a compromise was reached. But NAGB was still weakened in that year's I.A.S.A. legislation:

- additional "testing experts" were added to its membership, thus reducing the influence of members of the public and adding to the board the very people who are normally hired as staff and consultants;
- nominating authority was taken away, meaning that the Secretary could now appoint anyone. (Secretary Riley, himself a onetime NAGB member, has continued to invite the Board to suggest names as vacancies arose, and has taken many--though not all--of them, but there is no reason to assume that a future Secretary would do this.)
- board terms were shortened to 3 years (a problem considering that it typically takes at least a year for new members to "get up to speed" on complex NAEP issues); and
- important NAGB powers (involving the assessment design and reporting of results) were taken away and given to the Department.

Aside from its 1994 weakening, NAGB has inherent problems that are magnified when it's asked to take on something as volatile as national testing:

- under its current composition, as few as 2 of its 25 members (one governor, one legislator) could be from the party that doesn't occupy the White House. Thus it cannot truly be called a bipartisan board in any meaningful sense;
- its current composition assigns 16 slots to professional educators and other members of what some call the "education establishment" and just 9 to representatives of the "general public" such as elected officials and parents;
- in key areas, authority is blurred between NAGB and the Education Department, such that NAGB decisions may be ignored or reversed by Department officials. It's also important to note that the Department, not NAGB, writes the contracts with ETS and other organizations that actually conduct the assessment, which means those contractors view the Department, not NAGB, as their boss. With its authority so diluted and compromised, NAGB is not really an independent agency;

- the Department has other advisory committees (such as the Advisory Committee on Education Statistics) that it periodically invites to second-guess NAGB; ETS appoints still more advisory committees and expert panels that do much the same thing; and the Congress has had a propensity to assign "evaluations" of NAEP to the National Academy of Education and/or National Academy of Sciences that also have the effect of second-guessing and undermining while diverting resources and energy.

Problems in the Administration's Proposal

Even if NAGB had all the authority it needed with respect to NAEP, the Administration's proposal to assign the board partial responsibility for the new national tests is flawed in important particulars:

- The amendment drafted by the Administration invites NAGB to "formulate policy guidelines" for the tests, but does not give the board clear policy control. Given current language the Education Department would remain in charge of the tests themselves.
- The amendment does not empower NAGB to review and, as needed, rewrite the "test specifications" already drafted for the national tests, or to review and alter the large test development contract already awarded by the Education Department. (Many who have reviewed those specifications have serious reservations about them and they differ in important particulars from the NAEP assessments.)
- The amendment does not state that NAGB is expected to ensure that the standards used for the national tests will be the same as those used for reporting NAEP results. (The draft specifications indicate that the "basic" standard will be deemed "passing" rather than the "proficient" standard.)
- The amendment does not empower NAGB to decide whether the national tests will be given in languages other than English. (The draft specifications assume that the 8th grade math test will also be given in Spanish.)

Throw These Tests Out of School

By CHESTER E. FINN JR.

This week Congress weighs President Clinton's plan for national standards and tests, beginning with fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. But although national testing is in principle a good idea, the president's proposal will do more harm than good. If Congress is going to enact such a measure, it should do it right.

The House is likely to vote to block future funding for the program. A multimillion-dollar contract, however, has already been signed by the Education Department and work is now under way. Timid GOP Senate leaders, lacking the nerve to kill the program, will decide whether to accept the Clinton version or make last-minute repairs. House and Senate negotiators from the appropriations committees, who have scant expertise in education policy, will then work out the final version of the bill.

All the Stops

The administration has pulled out all the stops to keep its plan alive, including threats to veto the huge Health and Human Services appropriation in which it is embedded. Only in the past few weeks has its fate been in doubt. For six months, a passive GOP Congress simply allowed the executive branch to proceed unilaterally with the first-ever nationwide standards and tests in a country that heretofore left such things to states and local communities. The White House brashly asserted that it didn't even need authorization from Congress. The president has already signed up six states and 15 cities to participate. Congress merely yawned. My fellow alumni of the Reagan and Bush administrations agree that if a Republican White House had attempted a maneuver like this, it would have taken the Democratic Congress about 30 seconds to cut us off at the knees.

The reason the testing plan is now one of the hotter issues in Washington is not, alas, because Republicans in Congress took the lead but because outside opposition finally surfaced. On the left, groups such as FairTest (which has never seen a

Black Caucus are opposed on grounds that test scores may harm minorities and more dollars should instead be pumped into school programs. Conservative groups, such as the Christian Coalition and Concerned Women for America, protest this new federal intrusion into education. One influential congressman, Rep. Bill Goodling (R., Pa.), himself a former school superintendent, opposes national testing in principle. In his view, more tests wouldn't tell us anything we don't already know about what's wrong with U.S. schools, and comparisons among schools are invidious.

Many fellow Republicans think Mr.

sults from letting the Education Department run the project on behalf of its school-establishment and ivory-tower pals. No issue is more fundamental than who is in charge of the tests; Mr. Clinton opted to vest that control in his own appointees and contractors and experts of their choosing. That arrangement invites future manipulation of sensitive matters such as test content, standards and "accommodations" for influential groups. A dozen assistant secretaries can fiddle and meddle, and their machinations will shift with passing political winds and changing administrations.

Once the plan encountered opposition,

The Clinton administration has mangled a promising idea to the point that the GOP Congress should either make major repairs or scrap it altogether.

Goodling is wrong. Properly done, standards-based national tests would provide useful information to students and their parents and put pressure on schools to improve. The public-school establishment is opposed because it wants to continue obfuscating the truth about its dismal performance.

But the Clinton administration has mangled this promising idea to the point that the GOP Congress should either make major repairs or scrap it altogether. The past few weeks have brought bountiful evidence that the tests now in the works are sorely flawed, just the sort of exams teachers' unions would love. They won't tell us whether children can actually read or compute. Major problems include dumbed-down standards, "fuzzy" math (as Lynne Cheney calls it), universal use of electronic calculators, and assumptions about reading that partake of "whole language" and "deconstructionist" notions rather than systematic phonics, grammar and basic understanding. The Clinton tests will examine the things trendy experts wish the schools were teaching, rather than the skills and knowledge that parents, employers and state officials prize.

the White House made a sop to its critics. It hastily cobbled together a proposal to transfer jurisdiction partly from the Education Department to a body called the National Assessment Governing Board. That's the "deal" currently before Congress.

I served on the NAGB for eight years, and chaired it for two. It's a good group. If it were made truly independent and bipartisan, given unambiguous control over the tests and invited to fix the mistakes of the Clinton plan, it might be able to do this delicate job.

But that isn't what the administration proposed. Rather, the White House would hand very limited authority to the NAGB, a board that also remains vulnerable to second-guessing and foot-dragging by the Education Department. Its membership is anybody the secretary of Education wants to appoint. It could have as few as two Republicans out of 25 members. It includes plenty of educators and "testing experts" but just a few governors, parents and employers. As currently constituted, and with the meager authority proffered by the White House, the NAGB cannot be counted on to fix the errors in the Clinton scheme, much less safeguard the future integrity of national testing.

Congress, which created the NAGB in 1988 and weakened it in 1994, could easily set this right. It would take minutes to write good legislation to reconstitute the board and give it full control, and the Clinton White House is so hot for national testing that it would likely go along. But today it appears Congress is not up to that assignment. These are complex, technical issues that the president cares mightily about but few on Capitol Hill even understand. Indeed, the GOP leadership seems to have virtually abandoned education, apparently concluding that it cannot outgun or outmaneuver the White House and its powerful allies in the school establishment. On issues far larger than testing, the GOP has already yielded to the administration. The pending appropriations bill, for example, would more than double funding for the genuinely destructive bilingual education program.

Bad Advice

Pundits and business spokesmen, meanwhile, are giving bad advice, urging Congress simply to get on with the president's well-intended initiative. They evidently haven't read the test "specs" and they dismiss the governance issues as "details." Yet if we are to have national testing, it's precisely these details that matter most. The crucial questions about any test are who decides what's on it, and who sets the standards by which student performance is judged.

If the House and Senate cannot make sure that sound answers to such questions are enshrined in law, the country would be better off without the tests. But that's not apt to happen either. Keeping this project alive is hugely important to Mr. Clinton, and the GOP leadership would rather create a bad program than risk defeat on a showdown vote. So the president will likely have his way, or close to it. Bad national tests will proceed. A weak NAGB will provide political cover. And true education reform will again be dealt a setback by Uncle Sam.

Mr. Finn is a fellow at the Hudson Institute and a former assistant secretary of education.

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August 26, 1997

President Clinton
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your goal of introducing a national grade 8 mathematics exam as a way to stimulate improvement in mathematics education.

In developing such a national mathematics test, it is critical to get the details correct lest the goals be lost. We are seriously concerned that the development of the national mathematics test is flawed and in need of correction. Our concerns are in three areas: The underlying assumptions about what is important in mathematics; the composition of the committee which is writing the test; and the nature of the test itself.

It is clear that the authors of the exam are working under the assumption that there is, or will be, a national consensus that the 1989 Standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) are the appropriate guide for mathematics education in the United States. This is not true. Troublesome issues about the NCTM model are now being raised by committees of the Mathematical Association of America and of other mathematics professional associations. We and many others across the country feel strongly that use of the 1989 NCTM Standards as a guiding document is a serious error which will undermine the credibility and usefulness of the national test.

The committee which is drafting the exam specifications is biased. First, nearly all of its members are strong advocates of the NCTM Standards and of programs that reputed to be aligned with the NCTM Standards. There is not a balance of different viewpoints regarding mathematics education. Second, members of the committee have significant conflicts of interest as they are actively involved in the writing or promotion of particular mathematics curricula. Even the slightest suspicion that the authors would bias the test toward material covered in their programs, or that their authorship of the test would be used to sell their programs or to help them get grants, undermines the credibility of the exam. Conflict of interest protections should be in place for those writing a document as important as the national math test.

The exam itself, at least as represented in the examination plan, is not at all adequate. To be truly informative, the exam should be comprehensive and cover those topics that are important to the future of America. At the top end, it must be sure to meet your call for Algebra for all 8th graders. Thus, the national exam must extend from basic numerical operations (without calculators) through all of the content of a rigorous first year algebra program. The exam fails at both extremes. There is no plan to test

basic computational skills under the assumption that all students will know these things. Unfortunately, this is not true, as anyone who deals regularly with 8th graders can tell you. If we do not test basic skills we will hide from ourselves the extent and range of our weaknesses at the lowest levels. At the other end, in spite of calling 25% of the test "Algebra," the content addressed is not algebra at all - it is not even pre-algebra. By ignoring the demanding content of algebra, the design will fail to measure success at the level of our international competition and will fail to promote greater achievement as intended.

The emerging plan is therefore totally inconsistent with the very reasons for having a national mathematics exam, and is contrary to the needs of our country. As you have committed yourself and the country to the goal of a valuable, meaningful and useful examination of mathematical competence, it falls to you to correct the errors that are occurring in the development of this exam.

Sincerely,

• MATHEMATICIANS

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