

INDEPENDENT BOARD ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPING NATIONAL TESTS

November 21, 1997

Tonight, I issue a challenge to the nation: Every state should adopt high national standards, and . . . every state should test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met.

President Bill Clinton
1997 State of the Union Address

In his weekly radio address, President Clinton today commended the bipartisan, independent National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) for its plan to develop and pilot the new voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. The President also announced new appointments to the Board, including Diane Ravitch, former Assistant Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration and a strong supporter of national standards and tests.

NAGB Assumes Control for National Tests. As proposed by the President, the recently enacted Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Bill places the bipartisan, independent NAGB in complete control of further work in developing the voluntary national tests. NAGB currently oversees the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a sample test of core subjects that tracks the progress of the nation as a whole and of 43 participating states, but does not provide individual student, school, or district level results.

The new national tests will be modeled on the NAEP content frameworks in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics, but unlike NAEP, will provide results for individual students. The NAEP standards reflect a national consensus of what students should know and be able to do when they reach these crucial stages of learning.

Under the legislation, NAGB is now responsible for formulating policy for the voluntary national tests, just as it does for NAEP. The law charges NAGB with reviewing and modifying, if necessary, the contract to develop the tests. NAGB also can review, modify, and approve test specifications. This week NAGB formally assumed control over the tests and adopted a detailed plan and timeline for test development.

New Appointment Underscores Bipartisan Commitment to National Tests. The President announced Secretary Riley's appointment of three new NAGB members, including Diane Ravitch, a long-time supporter of national standards and tests. Ravitch, former Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement under the Bush Administration, supported the President's proposal to ensure independence of the national tests by giving control to NAGB.

Work Will Proceed in Key Areas of Test Development. Under its newly approved plan, NAGB will begin this month to establish specifications for the national tests to ensure that the tests are based on the same content in NAEP. The board hopes to approve specifications in March 1998. Test items will then be developed for and approved by NAGB based on those specifications. Approved items will be used to prepare pilot tests and to plan for field tests. In addition, the Board will oversee development of guidelines for testing students with disabilities, appropriate test use, and test reporting, and will guide preparation of materials to inform states and school districts, as well as parents, teachers and students, about the tests.

A Strategy to Master the Basics and Reach High Standards. The voluntary national tests will provide students, parents, and teachers with meaningful scores to compare individual student performance to widely accepted national and international standards, and to identify students and schools that need extra help. These standard measures of excellence will help teachers and principals improve curriculum and instruction, give students a guide for charting their own progress, and help parents hold schools accountable for improved performance.

LOWELL A. WEISS

11/21/97 05:40:05 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Michael Cohen/OPD/EOP

cc:

Subject:

Draft 11/21/97 3:45pm

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL TESTING
November 21, 1997**

Good morning. Today I would like to speak with you about a breakthrough for education -- our agreement to move forward with national tests to make sure that every school child masters the basics.

The best way to give our children the world-class education they need to thrive in the 21st century is by setting high standards of academic achievement. When we fail to encourage our children, we encourage them to fail. And that is why I called on America to join me in raising education standards -- and adopting national tests to measure our progress at meeting them.

We have now taken a significant step forward in this effort. Last week I signed an education bill that supports high national standards and the development of the first-ever voluntary national tests of 4th-graders in reading and 8th-graders in math. And, as I had recommended to Congress, we have put control of the tests in the hands of the independent, bipartisan National Assessment Governing Board -- often called NAGB. Congress created NAGB a decade ago, and it includes governors and legislators of both parties, business leaders, parents, and teachers.

I am pleased to be joined in the White House by the NAGB board members, who have just convened for the first time since taking on their new responsibilities. They have just presented me with their plan for developing national tests -- including a pilot test next fall. And several new members have been appointed to help, including Diane Ravitch, an assistant secretary of education under President Bush; Lynn Marmer, the President of the Cincinnati school board; and Jo Ann Pottorff [POT-ter-off], a member of the Kansas legislature. I am grateful they have agreed to take on this important role.

I am confident that the board will ensure that the new tests measure what they should --

the basics, nothing more and nothing less. These tests will be national, not federal. And, as Diane Ravitch has said, they will be a yardstick not a harness. They are a vital measuring tool to help parents, teachers, and school officials demand accountability and excellence.

This is a landmark step toward putting high standards in the classroom and keeping politics out. And it builds on what is clearly the best year for American education in more than a generation.

This year, we have made great progress on our pledge to ensure that every 8-year old can read, every 12-year old can log onto the Internet, and every 18-year old can go on to college. In the bill I signed last week, we helped build a citizen army of reading tutors, nearly doubled our investment in education technology, expanded public school choice and competition, and provided the largest increase in Pell Grant college scholarships in two decades.

As we raise standards for our children, we are also providing them with the tools they need to meet to the challenge and seize the opportunities of the 21st century. Working together, we are lifting our children's sights, raising their hopes, and honoring our obligation to improve education today in order to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

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National Assessment Governing Board

National Assessment of Educational Progress

FOR RELEASE
Friday, November 21, 1997

Contact: Lawrence Feinberg
202-357-6942 or
(11/21-22) 703-412-0053

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD PLANS TO DEVELOP NATIONAL TESTS BASED ON NAEP ASSESSMENTS

Statement by Mark D. Musick

**Chairman, National Assessment Governing Board;
President, Southern Regional Education Board**

The National Assessment Governing Board today outlined plans to handle its new responsibilities to develop the tests for the voluntary national test program. As you know, the Board was given "exclusive authority" over the test development contract in a law passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton last week.

Our aim will be to carry out the intent of Congress, which is clear in the House-Senate conference report, that these new tests, designed for individual students, "will be based on the same content and performance standards as are used for NAEP," which is a survey of how groups of students perform. The Congress also directed that the tests be "linked to NAEP to the maximum extent possible," which the Board will try to make sure is done.

The Board plans to act deliberately and fairly. Our plans include the following:

- A special committee will review the test development contract previously awarded by the Department of Education and make recommendations to the full Board. Under the law, the Board has until February 11 to approve, amend, or terminate the contract.
- A special meeting of the Board will be held in mid-January to deal with national test development issues.
- The Board's two academic committees will review the proposed specifications for the tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. The Board will hold public hearings on the test specifications and aims to act on them at its March meeting;

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Suite 825, Mailstop 7583
Washington, D.C. 20002-4233
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- The Board will review all of the test questions prepared by the contractor to make sure they cover the same content and meet the same standards of being appropriate and free from bias that are used in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- The Board will meet with representatives of the National Academy of Sciences, which will be conducting Congressionally mandated evaluations related to development of the national test.
- The Board will seek to complete all of the work directed by Congress by September 30, 1998 so that there can be pilot testing and field testing later.

The National Assessment Governing Board was established by Congress in 1988 as an independent, bipartisan board, composed of state and local officials, educators, lay citizens, and business leaders. Our new responsibilities for the voluntary national tests are not the first challenges that the Board has been given.

Congress directed the Board in 1988 to change an assessment that had surveyed only national samples of students into a program that could give individual states a fair and independent measure of academic achievement. The Board was asked to develop "appropriate" standards of student achievement for each grade and subject tested. Since 1990, 48 states have participated in the state-by-state National Assessment program, which has been carried out in mathematics, reading, and science.

Now President Clinton and Congress have directed the Governing Board to take an assessment that has been used voluntarily by nearly every state to get a state-level measure of achievement and develop an individual version of NAEP that will give information to parents, teachers, and students.

At the Board's regularly quarterly meeting today we have created a special committee to review the test development contract. As the new law requires, the contract will be carefully reviewed, but under the law, the Board has only 90 days--until February 11--to make any contract changes or decide to terminate it. As chairman of this special committee, I have appointed a former chairman of the Board, William Randall, who for many years was state Commissioner of Education in Colorado. The other members include the Board's Vice Chair, Mary Blanton, a general public member of NAGB, and James Ellingson, Thomas Fisher, Edward Haertel and Deborah Voltz. I have also appointed one of the newest members of the board, Diane Ravitch to the committee. She is a distinguished scholar who has written extensively on education standards, and she also was an Assistant Secretary of Education under President Bush.

In mid-January the Governing Board will hold a special meeting to consider the Committee's recommendations and take up other matters pertaining to the national test development.



FOR RELEASE
November 21, 1997

Contact: David Thomas
(202) 401-1579

RILEY APPOINTS TWO NEW MEMBERS TO NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley has announced the appointment of two new members of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

New members appointed to three-year terms ending September 30, 2000 are:

- o Lynn Marmer, Cincinnati school board president and attorney, Dinsmore & Shohl;
and,
- o Jo Ann Pottorff, state representative, Kansas Legislature.

"Members of the National Assessment Governing Board provide the guidance and leadership our schools need to ensure that *all* students learn to high standards," Riley said.

"Determining what students know and should be able to do at key points in their k-12 education is an important responsibility. The people appointed to NAGB have the experience, knowledge, and the insight to develop and design future assessments for our nation's students."

The 25-member board formulates policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students should know and can do in various subjects.

The board is involved in a number of activities, including:

- o selecting the subjects to be tested;
- o identifying assessment objectives for each age and grade tested;
- o ensuring that all items selected for use in the assessment are free from racial, cultural, gender or regional bias; and,
- o identifying appropriate achievement goals.

--more--

The secretary appoints members from nominees in categories prescribed by law. The board must include governors or former governors, state legislators, educators, testing experts and curriculum specialists, as well as business and industry representatives, parents and persons representing the general public.

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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL
10:06 a.m. Saturday, November 22, 1997

Contact: David Thomas
(202) 401-1579

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF DIANE RAVITCH TO NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD

President Clinton today announced that U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley appointed Diane Ravitch to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). Ravitch is a Senior Research Scholar at New York University and Senior Fellow in Governmental Studies at the Brookings Institution.

Riley yesterday appointed Lynn Marmer, an attorney and Cincinnati school board president, and JoAnn Pottorff, a Kansas state representative, to fill additional NAGB vacancies. All three new members were appointed to serve three-year terms, ending September 30, 2000.

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Our aim will be to carry out the intent of Congress, which is clear in the House-Senate conference report, that these new tests, designed for individual students, "will be based on the same content and performance standards as are used for NAEP," which is a survey of how groups of students perform. The Congress also directed that the tests be "linked to NAEP to the maximum extent possible," which the Board will try to make sure is done.

The Board plans to act deliberately and fairly. Our plans include the following:

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- The Board's two academic committees will review the proposed specifications for the tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. The Board will hold public hearings on the test specifications and aims to act on them at its March meeting;

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Now President Clinton and Congress have directed the Governing Board to take an assessment that has been used voluntarily by nearly every state to get a state-level measure of achievement and develop an individual version of NAEP that will give information to parents, teachers, and students.

At the Board's regularly quarterly meeting today we have created a special committee to review the test development contract. As the new law requires, the contract will be carefully reviewed, but under the law, the Board has only 90 days--until February 11--to make any contract changes or decide to terminate it. As chairman of this special committee, I have appointed a former chairman of the Board, William Randall, who for many years was state Commissioner of Education in Colorado. The other members include the Board's Vice Chair, Mary Blanton, a general public member of NAGB, and James Ellingson, Thomas Fisher, Edward Haertel and Deborah Voltz. I have also appointed one of the newest members of the board, Diane Ravitch to the committee. She is a distinguished scholar who has written extensively on education standards, and she also was an Assistant Secretary of Education under President Bush.

In mid-January the Governing Board will hold a special meeting to consider the Committee's recommendations and take up other matters pertaining to the national test development.

The Board is also setting in motion a process to adopt specifications for the tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. The process will include a review of the test specifications that have already been proposed. We will hold public hearings. We will listen carefully. And we will carry out the job Congress has asked us to do—develop an individualized version of the National Assessment that will be able to show students whether they can meet NAEP's standards of basic, proficient, or advanced achievement.

We are confident that we can meet the timetable that Congress has laid out. We also will make sure that the Board takes care of its regular work of setting policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Since the Governing Board was established almost a decade ago, we have worked hard to develop high student performance standards on NAEP, which require the mandate and the commitment that only an independent, broadly-representative Board can give.

We are aware of the difficulties and challenges that are part of the directives from the President and Congress. We are not unaware of the complexity and controversy surrounding the voluntary national tests. We believe that this task was given to the Board because it has proven since 1988 that it is fair, bipartisan, deliberative and independent as it tackles complex and often controversial issues. We believe that we can do what the President and Congress have asked of us.



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