

have to pay taxes, and that would make it prohibitive."

Mr. Stewart said he had asked the Ramaz people, "Where would you like me to move?" Mr. Stewart founded York Prep in 1969 with his wife, Jayme, on the 85th Street site, which formerly housed the New York College of Music.

"It's not an ideal building," he said. "There's no auditorium and no gym. I have to rent a gym and bus the students to it. But where should I go? Then, in January of 1995, Richard Born called and said, 'Let's have breakfast.'"

"We met one on one, and he said, 'We really do need your building, and we'll find you a much better building.' And I said, 'O.K., let's look.' And the first place he showed us was the 68th Street building. And it was fabulous."

The building seemed natural for a school, since until 1979 it was been the home of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, which moved to 1 West Fourth Street. So Ramaz bought it for \$4 million from its most recent owner, the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, which moved its offices to 132 West 31st Street and its senior center to 122 West 76th Street.

"We closed on the deal a couple of weeks ago," Mr. Born said. "And we swapped the building for his. And he doesn't have to pay income tax on the transaction, which is really what drove the deal."

Under Section 1041 of the Internal Revenue Code, he said, the transaction is considered a like-kind exchange and is tax free for York Prep.

The price of the fourth brownstone, Rabbi Lookstein said, was a little more than \$1 million. "We agreed to participate in the renovation of the West Side building," he said, "bringing the total transaction to about \$6 million." The new Ramaz middle-school building, he said, will cost about \$20 million.

York Prep's new building will have a gymnasium, a large library, an art center, science laboratories, music rooms, computers for every classroom and a media center. The school is spending almost \$1.5 million on the renovation, Mr. Stewart said.

"The smallest room on 68th Street is larger than our largest room on 85th," he said. "It's a great block, and it's right near Lincoln Center."

Both York Prep's renovation and

Ramaz's new building are being designed by Horowitz/Immerman architects, which also did Ramaz's upper-school building. Robert Immerman, the principal architect, said the new Ramaz middle school would include classrooms divided by movable partitions, a science laboratory, an art studio, a library and media center, a music studio, a large chapel, a gymnasium and an auditorium.

"We got the location we wanted, and they got a superior building," said Rabbi Lookstein, who is the son of the school's founder, Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, and the great-grandson of the school's namesake, Rabbi Moses Zevulun Margolies, who was rabbi of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun from 1906 to 1936 and was known as the Ramaz, from the Hebrew acronym for his name.

Rabbi Lookstein said the school had raised \$19 million for the project. "We have a ways to go," he said. "We're looking forward to the new building, more students and more space. But we're also looking forward to raising a heck of a lot of money."

04:34 EDT May 21, 1997■

TRADE

19. CongressDaily/A.M.

05/21/97Section: BANKING;

Student Loan Agencies Take Modest Hit In Budget Plan

Banks and other guaranteed student loan lenders dodged a bullet in the budget agreement after Republicans rejected President Clinton's plan to cut federal loan subsidies to private lenders by \$3 billion, aides and industry sources said Tuesday.

The biggest losers from the budget deal in the student loan industry are the 36 state student loan guarantee agencies, which will have \$1 billion worth of reserves taken back by the federal government to help close the budget deficit.

But it could have been worse for the government-chartered guarantee agencies: Clinton in his original budget proposed the federal government recall all \$2.5 billion in reserves held by the state loan guarantee agencies.

The proposal to recall all the reserve funds is part of a larger administration

plan to make the federal government the sole guarantor of student loans, meaning the government would pay for all defaults.

By removing the guarantee function of the state guarantee agencies, and leaving them to only administer the loans, the Clinton administration argued it would allow the government to recall for deficit reduction the \$2.5 billion the agencies hold in built up reserves.

While the guarantee agencies will lose \$1 billion in reserves from the budget deal, the remaining \$1.5 billion is still enough to continue their guarantee function, and thus does not require any policy changes in the student loan program, aides and industry sources said.

Instead, Republicans and the administration will fight over the future of the guaranteed and direct student loan programs when they begin debate next

fall on reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

Republicans said the administration's plan to remove the guarantor role of the guarantee agencies would be a direct assault on the guaranteed student loan program, which uses private lenders.

The private lenders in the guaranteed program are now competing with the direct loan program set up by the Clinton administration, in which the federal government directly loans money to students, eliminating banks as the middleman.

As part of the compromise reached in the budget deal, the guaranteed program will contribute the \$1 billion in guarantee agency reserves to deficit reduction over 10 years, while the direct loan program will contribute \$996 million to deficit reduction over 10 years through administrative and fee cuts.

Direct loan administrative fees will be cut by \$603 million over five years, and the \$10-per-loan fee the federal government pays to schools will be eliminated for a savings of \$160 million

over five years.

The 10-year savings total for both of those cuts will add up to \$996 million.

The guarantee agencies do not have to make the \$1 billion return payment on

their reserves until FY2002, which gives them time to prepare, or, according to some sources, more time to derail the proposal. ■

20. Education Daily

May 21, 1997

BALANCED BUDGET HEADED FOR PASSAGE IN THE HOUSE

The House was expected to pass, without change, a nonbinding five-year budget blueprint late last night that could lead to increased education funding.

The plan, which sets broad spending outlines for the next five years, would make room for most major initiatives President Clinton proposed for fiscal 1998 (ED, May 19).

House members were expected to reject a pair of amendments that would affect the education funding pool.

An amendment offered by conservatives would cut domestic spending by \$109 billion over five years

and boost tax cuts.

By contrast, Rep. Joseph Kennedy, D-Mass., was planning an amendment to increase school spending by \$25 billion over five years, including incorporating Clinton's \$5 billion school construction plan dropped in prior budget negotiations.

The Senate is expected to pass its budget resolution, S. Con. Res. 27, today.

Killer 'B's

During budget negotiations, Clinton dropped his demand that students maintain a "B" average to qualify for new tuition tax credits. White House

Budget Director Franklin Raines announced the agreement on Saturday.

Clinton originally wanted students who got the \$1,500 Hope Scholarship tax credit to maintain a "B" average to continue receiving the benefit.

Democrats, some Republicans and higher education groups opposed the "B" provision, arguing it could involve the IRS in education policy and lead to grade inflation (ED, Feb. 26).

Budget documents are available on the Internet at <http://hillsource.house.gov/budget.html> —Laureen Lazarovici ■

21. Education Daily

May 21, 1997

'TINKER' TOYS LURE GIRLS TO MATH, SCIENCE

A national group shows how girls can get a better math and science education by rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty.

The Hockaday School for girls in Dallas, for example, encourages students to tinker in the school's "take-apart" room. Students bring appliances such as hair dryers, radios or tape players and explore their workings in a friendly atmosphere.

At the Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, Md., girls in third through fifth grade build small dwellings, cars and other structures using a five-step plan to solve problems and test ideas in the school's design technology class.

"Getting girls engaged early on with hands-on activities illustrates the relevance that these subjects have in their

lives," says Whitney Ransome, co-director of the National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS).

A recent study on gender gaps in standardized tests found that after-school tinkering with gadgets helped boys edge out girls in math.

Learning By Doing

Formed in 1991 and spread to 23 states, the coalition sponsors conferences for teachers at either all-girl or co-ed schools. A recent forum in Troy, N.Y., showed off some of the techniques teachers can use.

Workshops have included dismantling a bicycle to demonstrate the basics of engineering concepts such as force and torque.

using Legos to design, build and test catapults; and building a solar car to learn about engines, chassis, wheels and

bearings.

NCGS plunged into its program on the heels of such groundbreaking work as the American Association of University Women's 1992 report on gender bias in the classroom (ED, Feb. 12, 1992). That group found that girls were discouraged from doing math and science.

Further study showed the students learned far more about math and science in an atmosphere of high expectations and hands-on learning.

For more information, contact Meg Moulton or Whitney Ransome, National Coalition of Girls' Schools, 228 Main St., Concord, Mass. 01742, (508)287-4485; e-mail, ncgs@ncgs.org.

or on the Internet, <http://www.ncgs.org>. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

66. Philadelphia Inquirer

May 21, 1997

Strong standards are exactly what Philadelphia schools need

By Ted Hershberg

Proponents of charter schools and vouchers — whether confined to public schools or open to schools of any type — believe they would give children a better education than they receive now. They may be right. Among the attractive qualities of these educational options is that they encourage competition. Any challenge to monopoly — whether in the public or private sectors — is a good thing.

But before embracing charter schools and vouchers, a warning is in order. If we move in this direction now — before first adopting rigorous academic standards and assessment — we may win the battle and lose the war.

We've already witnessed how bloody the political debate over vouchers has been. Imagine going through all this again, winning and still ending up with schools that are only marginally better.

Charter schools and vouchers may give parents what they want, but they will not, in themselves, give America what it needs: a school system capable of raising the performance of all students to the levels needed to succeed in the fiercely competitive and technologically driven global economy of the 21st century.

For America to succeed, all our schools must produce students with the requisite skills.

Charter schools and vouchers are means. Our first order of business should be an agreement on ends. We should begin with a consensus that we want performance-driven schools that produce students whose work meets world-class standards. We need schools where the student work ethic is strengthened, where problem-solving is at the heart of the curriculum.

Those who care about the future of Philadelphia must understand that because of profound economic changes, the city's future is inextricably tied to the quality of its schools.

Last November, at the annual meeting of the Urban Land Institute — the nation's largest organization of real estate developers — David Birch, CEO of

Cognetics and a former MIT economist, flatly advised his audience not to invest in cities.

Among his key reasons: Big-city school systems are not educating their students. As a result, cities will lack labor forces capable of performing the work of the new economy, and without skilled workers, cities have no future.

It is in this context that I am at a loss to understand why Philadelphians of all stripes are not flocking to David Hornbeck's Children Achieving banner.

I am particularly at a loss for why the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers is not a strong supporter of this remarkably thorough reform agenda. The PFT and individual teachers must know that their refusal to embrace this standards-based, problem-solving curriculum will doom Hornbeck's efforts. Don't teachers also recognize that if this happens, vouchers will quickly follow? Don't they believe this will place their jobs at great risk?

Contrast the views of the PFT with those of the National Education Association's new president, Bob Chase. While the traditional agenda — salaries, benefits, working conditions — remains important, Chase argues that it is "utterly inadequate" for the challenge of the future. NEA, he says, must become the "champion of quality teaching and quality public schools in the United States." Either we "revitalize them from within, or they will be dismantled from without."

Hornbeck may have made political errors of omission as well as commission in his dealings with the teachers' union. But why should the teachers cut off their collective nose to spite their face?

Surely, their interests and those of the city as a whole warrant a strategic reconsideration of the PFT's opposition. It's not too late to use the occasion of the yearlong "Education Summit" to reverse their position.

Everyone must understand just how big the stakes are in the successful reform of our schools. Income data make clear that only the top fifth of American workers are doing well and that education is largely responsible for their

success. The end of the manufacturing era — and with it well-paying jobs for people with limited skills — means that a have/have-not ratio of 20 percent/80 percent will grow increasingly unsustainable.

It won't support an economy driven largely by consumption. It won't preserve a democracy anchored by a large and stable middle class. It won't work for leading corporations who have long employed only the most talented because the remaining workers won't be able to buy the product and services these elite companies provide. It won't serve the interest of the upper fifth because their children will grow up in an uncivil society. And it certainly won't meet the needs of all the rest.

If the PFT fails to embrace reform, then let's move with all haste to charter schools and vouchers. If we can't save the city's schools, then let's at least give more families a chance to give their children access to better education.

But given everything that's at stake, let's not move in that consequential direction without first fighting with complete resolve to put high standards and internationally benchmarked assessments in all our schools.

Besides, once we have these clear ends in place, we will have a genuine standard against which to measure whatever means are best to achieve them.

Efforts now underway with suburban school districts, chambers of commerce and the Pennsylvania State Education Association suggest that employers, civic leaders and parents outside the classroom, and teachers' unions, school boards and superintendents inside them are uniting to support critically needed standards-based reforms.

It would be a real tragedy if Philadelphians failed to rally around Children Achieving — the most promising, comprehensive and systemic education reform underway in any city in America.

Ted Hershberg is professor of public policy and history and director of the Center for Greater Philadelphia at the University of

67. Baltimore Sun

May 20, 1997

Why teachers burn out

JOHN OVERMYER

Anne Werps, a seventh-grade student who had been receiving special education services since his early elementary years became increasingly difficult to manage, and a parent conference was needed.

Al's mother, a single parent, was hard to contact. The phone had been disconnected and there was no response from the pager number. When Al was questioned by the special-education teacher, he couldn't recall who the emergency contact person was. The teacher checked the records in the school office, where a woman was listed. Al said, "That's Aunt Nancy."

When "Aunt Nancy," a friend of his mother's, was contacted, she promised to give Al's mom the message that the school needed to speak with her. Days passed with no word from Mom. Al spent a lot of time in time-out. He took up a great deal of the teacher's time and energy, though many other students needed her attention. Al was also encumbered by the fact that he cannot read or write, and had been diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

After talking to Al, the teacher concluded that he was not receiving his medication. She conferred with the school nurse. They continued trying to contact Al's mother. Aunt Nancy did not follow through on the school's request that she contact Mom.

A week or so later, Al's mother appeared in the nurse's office. The nurse immediately called the teacher to join them. The mother was holding a small baby and sharing her take-out coffee with her toddler. She complained to the nurse that it was hard to pay for Al's medicine.

No good with numbers

The teacher asked for a phone number, and Mom responded that they had just moved and the phone would be connected in two days. When asked for the number, she said she couldn't remember it; it was a new number. When asked for the new address, she replied vaguely that it was either 24-something or 42-something; she just wasn't good

with numbers. When asked if the pager number was correct, she responded that the pager was broken and she had not been able to get it repaired.

Mom wanted to talk about Al's difficulty adjusting to the new baby. She said she was considering getting Al a dog. Did the teacher think that a Rottweiler would be a good idea?

As the conversation proceeded and Mom continued to share the coffee with the toddler, the pager went off. For a moment, no one spoke. Then Mom returned to talking about Al and his need for a dog. She appeared unaware that the pager in her bag was beeping. The astonished teacher and nurse didn't mention it either. Eventually the beeping stopped, and as the parent left she promised to get the medicine and to let the school know her new address.

Some improvement

Two weeks passed with no word from Al's mom. His teachers and school administrators were concerned because they couldn't contact the mother, but Al seemed to be getting his medicine and his behavior had improved a bit. Gradually, things began to deteriorate again.

After Al threatened a student teacher with a knife, he was referred to the assistant principal, who ordered a residency check. Mom still couldn't be reached by phone, and no address could be verified. Al was suspended from school pending a parent conference. The residency officer reported that no one was living at the address the office had on file.

Several days passed before Mom appeared with Al and the toddler. The toddler's face was swollen and Mom reported that he had been attacked by her sister-in-law's German Shepherd. The infant was in the neonatal unit at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Mom insisted that she lived in the district but couldn't remember her address. She became agitated when told that she must prove where the family was living. She was having a hard time, she said; recently she had been incarcerated for attacking someone — in

self-defense, she said. The assistant principal ended the conference by informing Mom that she had to show proof of residency before Al could be reinstated at our school. We have not seen him since.

Al is a composite of many children I've seen during the past five years of teaching. Teachers worry about Al and others like him. His mother had three children by three fathers, all now absent. Drug or alcohol abuse often are factors, leading to neglect of all the children in a family, not just the ones sitting in our classrooms.

A simple procedure

Our school district is becoming more urban. Parents cross the city line in great numbers to enroll their children in our schools. All one needs is a notarized statement by an adult stating that the child resides in the adult's home in the county. Custody or a family relationship are not required.

The problems these students bring with them create a burden for teachers, and the state is considering new laws on residency and school districts. The issue has inflamed some county citizens. The local chapter of the NAACP, already disenchanted with the recent choice of county school superintendent, claims that African-American children who live outside the district but attend county schools are put to more scrutiny when behavior become a problem than Caucasian children.

Disruption and dysfunction have no color. When teachers try to contact parents and the signs show that the child may not really live in the district, it is just another symptom that a child may be in trouble.

But teachers must worry also about finding the time for the orderly students. They worry about the time taken from the stable families in the school community who feed and clothe their children, help them with their homework, encourage them and teach them right from wrong.

Teachers don't know how to repay the growing time debt — time spent dealing

Crew Wants National Standards To Be Used in New York Schools

By PAM BELLUCK

Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew yesterday proposed that New York City adopt national education standards that would change what schoolchildren are expected to learn and how their achievement would be measured.

If the plan is approved by the Board of Education, New York would be the largest district to embrace the standards, which were developed over the last few years for English, math and science by national panels. The various proposals have been drawn together and refined by New Standards, a privately financed educational organization in Washington.

The standards, which would go into effect next fall and be phased in over the next three years, would concentrate on raising students' level of achievement, teaching academic

skills that can be applied in real life, and encouraging logic, analysis and expression rather than simply asking multiple-choice questions.

"I am proposing adoption of the standards developed by the New Standards project," Dr. Crew said yesterday, "because they are the best available national standards, because teachers can use them, because they are based on common sense as well as academic excellence, and because they are ready now."

Dr. Crew's proposal consists of benchmark achievement tests to be given in the fourth, eighth and 10th grades in math, English, science and "applied learning," which consists of using skills like writing and arithmetic in exercises relevant to the business world.

The standards would also mean changes in what is taught in the classroom, to make sure that instruction is consistent within schools and local districts and to make sure that children are learning what is asked on the new tests.

For example, the standards for English in each grade require that each student read 25 books a year, either at home or as part of class work, and keep track of them in a logbook. There is a sample reading list, but teachers can substitute books or even magazines they consider appropriate.

English exercises emphasize writing and creativity, often relating works to modern situations.

In math, tests would involve very few multiple-choice questions. The emphasis would be on problem solving using examples drawn from actual situations. For example, a sample math problem listed in the guidelines for eighth graders asks stu-

dents to "analyze a state lottery game to see how many number combinations there are and how many weeks, months or years it will take for all of them to be drawn."

National standards are a revolutionary departure for American education, which has historically stressed local control, and the phrase itself has become an emotionally charged one that raises the hackles of politicians and school officials.

Indeed, officials with New Standards, the Washington organization that has developed the standards Dr. Crew is hoping to adopt, were careful to say that their programs were not technically national standards because they were developed with input from several states and cities and they could be adjusted and adapted by local school districts.

Across the country a handful of cities, including San Diego, Pittsburgh, Fort Worth, and Rochester and White Plains in New York, have recently come up with their own sets of standards, which borrowed ideas from the New Standards program. But New York City is the first school district to propose to adopt the New Standards program outright, according to Kate Nolan, a senior associate in the office of state and local relations for New Standards. Dr. Crew, while saying that the New Standards program would be tailored for New

York City's large and diverse school population, did not shrink from calling them national standards.

"Our students should not have to wait while we re-create the wheel," Dr. Crew said. "They should be taught to aim for success, and we need a system that can deliver it."

Dr. Crew said the standards were necessary because there is currently no consistency in what is taught in New York City's 1,100 schools. Two elementary schools in the same district may have entirely different curricula, making it difficult for children when they get to middle school. Even classes in the same grade in one school may be learning lessons so different that the children are not

at the same level when they enter the next grade. Systemwide, about 70 percent of students are below grade level in math or reading.

Board of Education officials said the proposed new standards were unprecedented in their breadth and comprehensive approach.

Previous efforts to impose curriculum changes on schools were unsuccessful. Dr. Crew's proposal appears to have a greater prospect of being implemented for several reasons.

First, Dr. Crew plans to impose new tests, in addition to existing ones, something that is designed to force some teachers to change what and how they teach.

"What you test has an awful lot to do with what teachers teach," said Robert Tobias, director of assessment and accountability for the Board of Education. "Once you do that testing, it's going to drive instruction in the classroom."

Second, Dr. Crew's proposal dovetails with changes planned by the

more...

Crew Wants National Standards To Be Used in New York Schools continued...

State Education Commissioner, Richard P. Mills, and the State Board of Regents. In April, the Regents, pressed by Mr. Mills, voted to require every public school student in the state to pass Regents examinations to earn a high school diploma. Mr. Mills also plans to revise the Regents exams, making them more rigorous, a move that would prompt curriculum changes in high schools.

Mr. Mills, who until recently was on the board of New Standards, which is a consortium of 14 states and 7 cities and is financed by grants from major foundations, said that Dr. Crew's plan would be consistent with the statewide changes and the new Regents tests.

"This is all part of a coherent strategy," Mr. Mills said. He said the strategy included several recent developments, including proposals now before the State Legislature to increase the Chancellor's control of local New York City districts, and threats by Mr. Mills to close failing

city schools if the Chancellor does not get them to improve.

"State authorities are trying to do what they can and city authorities trying to do what they can," Mr. Mills said. "Everyone knows that the expectations are now high and the clock is ticking."

The city proposals are subject to the approval of the Board of Education, which has generally supported Dr. Crew's efforts in other areas.

In January, the Chancellor will present to the board details of the proposed English standards, which will be tailored to New York City, with examples of student work that reflect the city's diversity and books that are a part of the state's approved list of reading materials. He said he hoped to implement the English standards in September. The standards for science and math will be retooled with the goal of introducing them in the 1998-99 school year. The standards for applied learning are scheduled to begin in 1999-2000.

Job Standards Board Sets Skill Guidelines

A national panel has finished building the framework for how it will judge voluntary work skill standards that industry groups will develop.

The National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) last week specified 16 industry categories for which panels of trade and community groups will create standards (*see list, right*).

The board "will **not** set skill standards, but rather establish guidelines used to endorse standards" created by voluntary industry partnerships, says the proposal it released last week.

NSSB's criteria for skill standards set only nine broad parameters, including that they be consistent with civil rights laws, benchmarked to the best international standards, and include a plan for updating standards and certificates.

Educators and trainers preparing people for work can use the standards to better meet business requirements, and to improve the school-to-work systems, NSSB says.

Within the next week, the board expects to publish its plan in the *Federal Register*, and will issue grants for skill standards projects by June 30.

Most of the 16 sectors align with traditional industry categories used by trade associations and national classification systems, says NSSB, a group whose members represent businesses, labor, education and community organizations.

The board wants to start with the three sectors it says employ about half of the nation's workers: manufacturing, installation and repair; wholesale/retail sales; and business and administrative services

NSSB says it will work with partnerships in those areas and use the lessons learned from them to improve the national skill standards system.

What It Wants

The proposed framework for the standards covers three knowledge and skill areas, ranging from the broad to the specific: core, concentrations and specialties.

Core knowledge and skills are those deemed essential to the entire sector. For example, in manufacturing, the core might include understanding what quality control is and having the ability to apply it.

Concentrations cover a broad area within the sector. For example, in manufacturing, this may include product assembly.

Specialties target particular jobs, such as the knowledge and skills needed for a specific occupation in steel production.

Breaking It Down

The plan also calls for the industry groups to describe each standard in terms of the academic, occupational and employability skills required to carry out "critical functions" at each level.

For example, a critical function for a metal worker may include setting up computer-controlled milling machines.

more...

Job Standards Board Sets Skill Guidelines (Cont.)

NSSB defines and gives an example of the three skill categories:

- **Academic:** skills in areas such as speaking, reading, writing, math, physics, biology and chemistry.
- **Occupational:** technical skills and knowledge specific to a trade or a group of trades. For example, someone who repairs and maintains small engines might need to know how two-cycle engines work, how to diagnose their troubles, fix them and find and order parts.
- **Employability:** a broad category that includes the ability to work with others and to solve problems as they arise.

For more information, contact National Skill Standards Board, 1441 L St. NW, Suite 9000, Washington, D.C. 20005-3512, (202)254-8628. —Matthew Dembicki

Skill Standards Categories

The 16 economic sectors the National Skill Standards Board set for broad voluntary skill standards are:

- Agriculture production and natural resources management;
- Mining and extraction operations;
- Construction operations;
- Manufacturing, installation and repair;
- Energy and utilities operations;
- Transportation operations;
- Communications;
- Wholesale/retail sales;
- Hospitality and tourism services;
- Financial services;
- Health and social services;
- Education and training services;
- Public administration, legal and protective services;
- Business and administrative services;
- Property management and building maintenance services; and
- Research, development and technical services. ###

Saving Public Education

Jonathan Kozol

*his newest book, **Amazing Grace**, was recently released in paperback by HarperCollins.*

Recycled slogans sometimes seem to be the curse of education policy discussion in this nation, and there is no set of slogans more neurotically reiterated these days than "the need for goals and standards" and "criteria" and "measurements of outcome" in our public schools.

The ritualistic repetition of these phrases started under George Bush when a list of manifestly insincere objectives was advanced and codified under the pretentious banner of "America 2000." All children, we were told, would enter school "ready to learn." All children would be given skills required for participation in "the workplace of the future," and all would graduate from high school fully literate. Best of all, we were assured, these goals would be attained not by such seemingly essential strategies as spending money to deliver preschool education to poor children, lowering class size or rebuilding the decrepit schools in which so many inner-city children are concealed, but solely by the cost-free exercise of "raising expectations," holding children and their teachers "more accountable" and penalizing those who measurably fail.

As the eighties ended with no evidence that goals like these were ever going to be reached, there was a noticeable panic in some quarters; but politicians and the pundits who advise them seem to grow addicted to their lists and incantations. Instead of revising them in light of evident defeat, they decorate their lists and add new promises, new "instruments of measurement" and new demands. It is not surprising, therefore, that the White House now has added several fashionable buzzwords from the world of cyberspace to modernize the rhetoric of insincerity — but once again, with not the faintest whisper about equity.

To speak of national standards and, increasingly, of national exams but never to dare speak of national equality is a transparent venture into punitive hypocrisy. Thus, the children in poor rural schools in Mississippi and Ohio will continue to get education funded at less than \$4,000 yearly and children in the South Bronx will get less than \$7,000, while children in the richest suburbs will continue to receive up to \$18,000 yearly. But they'll all be told they must be held to the same standards and they'll all be judged, of course, by their performance on the same exams.

Slogans, standards and exams do not teach reading. Only well-paid and proficient teachers do, and only if they work under conditions that do not degrade their spirits and demean their students. Education Secretary Richard Riley is a thoughtful and sophisticated man who understands this just as well as any teacher in New York who has to struggle to get forty kids to pay attention in a classroom that has only thirty books and thirty chairs, or any teacher in Ohio working with her pupils in a basement corridor because the district lacks the money to build schools. The President surely understands this too. If political considerations silence him from saying what he knows, they need not silence those of us who teach and work with children.

Money, as the rich and powerful repeatedly remind us, may not be "the only way" to upgrade education, but it seems to be the way that they have chosen for their own kids, and if it is

good for them — and for the daughter of the President — it is not clear why it is not of equal worth to children of poor people. A useful strategy for activists, therefore, would be to take the rhetoric of goals and standards at face value but to insist that it be wrapped in the same package as the equity agenda. "If all our kids are to be judged by equal standards," we might reasonably say, "then every one of them deserves an equal opportunity to meet them. Anything less will merely add humiliation to defeat and further stigmatize those who were cheated in the first place."

This argument, we may assume, will not be heard from anyone in Congress; but at the state and local levels it could fuel the efforts of a growing number of determined organizers who are now in court attempting to compel their legislatures to rewrite the funding formulas that rig the game of education almost everywhere in favor of the children of the orchestrating class. That class will never willingly give up the power it possesses to defend its children against honest competition from the children of the poor, but a grass-roots struggle for equality in education finance has been percolating now for several years, and advocates and lawyers may decide that this is a good time to seize upon the rhetoric of standards to put teeth at last into the fight for simple justice. As odious as it may seem to use the language of our adversaries, it may be the best weapon we have.

Amy Stuart Wells

*associate professor at U.C.L.A.'s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, and author (with Robert L. Crain) of **Stepping Over the Color Line** (forthcoming from Yale).*

There is at least one domestic policy issue on which President Clinton has remained consistent — an issue he has used as a bridge, if you will, to his second term: charter schools. Now passed in twenty-five states and the District of Columbia, charter school laws allow groups of parents, educators, community activists and entrepreneurs to start publicly funded schools free of most state and local regulations. From Boston to San Diego, approximately 450 charter schools have begun operating since 1991.

Charter schools in themselves do not have a clear political agenda. With diverse roots — from the urban community activism of the sixties to the conservative pro-market reform rhetoric of the eighties and nineties — charter schools promise to be all things to all people by granting disparate groups the power to create schools distinct from the traditional public education system. As a result, a wide range of activists — from born-again Christians to civil rights leaders — who are dissatisfied with public schools have embraced the charter school concept.

-more-

Standards

Save Public Education cont. (2)

Policy-makers from both sides of the political aisle have vaulted onto the charter school bandwagon, for very different reasons.

Pro-voucher conservatives, for instance, see charter school legislation as a way to shake up public education by forcing competition into a "monopolistic" and over-regulated system. They see charter schools as one step down the road toward dismantling the public system and funding schools (public or private) based on per-pupil calculations, or vouchers.

For progressives, charter school reform promises to empower poor communities to wrestle control of their schools from the uncaring and hegemonic state. Publicly funded Afro-centric and Chicano-centric charter schools are the left's answer to the myth that equal opportunity exists within the current public system. Moderate Democrats like Clinton applaud charter schools for providing divergent groups with autonomy while holding all schools accountable to high academic standards.

Thus the definition of charter school reform — what it stands for and its implications for the future of public education — will be contested in the next few years. To the extent that Clinton wants to leave his imprint on this popular reform, he needs to go beyond his call for 3,000 charter schools by the year 2000. He also needs to help clarify the purpose and the promise of these schools.

He could, for instance, argue that a certain percentage of the \$51 million in federal charter school grants to states must be earmarked specifically for transportation costs for students from low-income communities who want to cross school district lines and attend a charter school in a more affluent area. If the President really believes the assertion in his inaugural speech that "great rewards will come to those who can live together, learn together, work together, forge new ties that bind together," why not target federal funds specifically to charter schools that are racially and socioeconomically diverse — that help lessen the vast chasm between the ethnic groups and social classes that our housing patterns reinforce? Including state-funded urban-suburban transfer programs as a component of charter school reform would help alleviate racial segregation while providing greater educational opportunities. And targeting federal funds toward the lowest-income and most disadvantaged communities would help realize the goal of community empowerment through charter school reform.

Currently, the federal guidelines for state applications for charter school grant money and the President himself have not addressed these critical issues, allowing voices on the right to dominate the national policy debate. Government has a role to play in standing up for our values and our interests and giving Americans the power to make a difference in their lives. Clinton tells us. He can demonstrate that by working to shape the charter school reform movement to democratic ends.

Norm Fruchter

director of N.Y.U.'s Institute for Education and Social Policy, was an elected school board member in Brooklyn

The critical task for urban education is to improve our poorly performing city schools. In contrast to conservative strategies that trickle down resources or cream the best students, raising the floor of academic performance in city school systems can improve outcomes for all our students.

How prevalent are poorly performing urban schools? The

Chicago Schools C.E.O. recently put 20 percent of that city's schools on probation. The New York State Commissioner and New York City Schools Chancellor have identified 100 city schools that desperately need improvement. If, as the Chancellor has indicated, another hundred could easily be added, at least 20 percent of New York City schools need immediate intervention.

Since most city schools serve poor students of color, these lowest 20 percent serve the poorest students. In many cities, newspapers publish school rankings based on standardized test scores. If those newspapers ranked schools on a poverty index, the results would be substantially the same. As a nation, we get the schooling results we pay for, and we don't pay enough for the education of poor kids of color in cities.

How can urban systems improve the schools that fail to serve these students? Unfortunately, there are no magic bullets. Poorly performing schools are cultures of failure developed over many years. Richard Elmore, in a recent Harvard Educational Review article, argues that successful reform must change "the core of educational practice," the deep structure of how teachers think about knowledge and how students learn, as well as how teachers organize their classrooms, group and assess students, work with other teachers and effectively communicate student outcomes. If this deep structure of belief and practice needs to change in at least 20 percent of our urban schools, radical intervention is required. Yet most urban systems' bureaucratic response is to require poorly performing schools to design their own improvement.

Changing the core structures of belief and practice in failing schools depends on new leadership and the support of other professionals skilled at helping failing cultures change. (For how to recruit, prepare and support such professionals, see the recent report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, directed by Linda Darling-Hammond.) Such change also needs time for the change processes to develop, as well as funding to support the collaborations and professional development involved. Where will the necessary resources come from?

Protracted political struggles in New Jersey, Texas, Alabama and Connecticut demonstrate both the potential and the difficulties of one approach to resource provision — attacking school financing through the courts. (As the current challenge by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity against funding inequity for New York City schools gathers momentum, New York State will become another site for fierce school finance struggle.) If such efforts do not ultimately resolve urban funding shortfalls, they do reduce the inequalities, produce more funding for the entire state system and force confrontation about how much we are prepared to tolerate public schooling that underfunds other people's children.

Parents are another resource for improving poorly performing schools. In spite of all the pieties about parental involvement, parents are still marginalized in most urban schools. Yet contrary to the relentless national press assault on the Chicago reform that mandated significant parent decision-making through local school councils, research indicates much promise in such efforts. Studies by the Consortium on Chicago School Research demonstrate that Chicago schools with strong democratic councils also generate deep structures of schoolwide reform, and that such reform efforts eventually produce significant academic improvement.

Local organizations could provide other crucial resources. Community development corporations, neighborhood improvement associations and youth-serving organizations are increasingly realizing that school failure limits the effectiveness of their own work. These organizations have strong

-more-

Save Public Education cont. (3)

neighborhood roots, active memberships, full-time staffs and well cultivated political connections. Such organizations have often been viewed with suspicion by urban systems; if collaboration could replace hostility, critical new support for school improvement could result.

Improving the lowest-performing schools in urban public systems can help to improve academic achievement in all our city schools. Investing the necessary resources is not impossible; what's required is the political will to transform the life chances of our nation's most imperiled children.

Herbert Kohl

author of I Won't Learn From You and Should We Burn Babar? (both New Press).

President Clinton will soon formally announce a national literacy program, calling for more than a million volunteers to teach reading to underachieving children from poor communities. The emphasis will be on catching the children when they're young, before the third grade. This is an instance of the Administration recognizing the right problem while proposing the wrong solution.

There is no doubt that an outrageous number of poor and particularly African-American and Latino children never learn to read on a fundamental level. This failure begins to show up dramatically in the fourth and fifth grades. Despite Sesame Street, Head Start, Upward Bound and volunteer reading programs, not to mention the efforts made by teachers and reading specialists, the problem remains intractable. There is some disconnection between children and texts that takes place at school, and there is no reason to believe that sending volunteers into the early grades on an episodic basis will be more useful than any of the other efforts made at increasing literacy among the poor.

However, there is another approach to tackling the problem that might, if implemented on a large scale and in a qualitative way, make a difference in developing literacy and at the same time lead to a partial solution to other social problems that the Administration and the legislature created during the last session of Congress. At this point there are no literacy workers in the schools — people whose sole purpose is to develop and implement reading programs based on continuous personal contact with children over their entire school careers. In fact, the teaching of basic reading skills disappears from the classroom after the fourth grade, and there is certainly no direct reading instruction in high school other than in specifically remedial classes. However, adult literacy programs have succeeded throughout the world, and it is clear that it is never too late to learn how to read well. The actual skills needed to teach reading are no more complex than the skills needed to repair a car or renovate a house.

A new category of school workers whose specialty is literacy can be created. The prerequisites for such people might be as simple as decent reading skills, a sensitive knowledge of the culture and strengths children bring to school, and a level of comfort within poor communities that would allow literacy workers to function in parks, apartments, churches and social service centers, as well as within the relative security of the school building.

Many people who live in poor communities have these skills and, more to the point, many people about to be required to

work have them. I suggest that the President propose a federally developed, state- and federally supported program lodged at junior colleges to train people to become literacy workers, with a special emphasis on reaching out to people currently on welfare. This would provide dignified work with the potential for future advancement. A new Associate of the Arts degree in literacy education could lead to work within schools and community organizations. Clinton's volunteers can also have a role. Since they have time to donate, they can use it to raise funds to create permanent jobs for this new category of teachers.

The President should also offer two additional years of college free for five years of literacy work in the schools and put such people on a fast track to getting B.A.s and full teaching credentials. This would create a pool of potential African-American and Latino teachers, solving a major problem facing public schools these days — a decline in the number of teachers of color at the same time as an increase in the number of students of color.

Looking to the volunteer sector to improve education is like looking to the generosity of corporate leaders to keep their workers employed. What we need is new people in the schools, committed not so much to the world-class standards mouthed by educational professionals as to world-class children.

Deborah W. Meier

author of The Power of Their Ideas (Beacon) has worked in public schools for the past thirty years.

Contrary to popular wisdom, America's schools are not an utter failure. When I was a kid in the thirties, fewer than half our fellow citizens even started high school, much less finished it. The United States still ranks at the top in international tests of literacy. And we remain one of the world's most productive nations.

But our schools are not good enough. Most of them are far too big, impersonal and factorylike; they're too standardized — trying to satisfy everyone by never taking a stand on anything — and they leave too little power in the hands of the families and teachers who know the kids best. The most sought-after schools defy all three of these — they're mostly small, self-chosen and self-governing.

Meanwhile, the more we complain about our schools the bigger, more standardized and less powerful they become! Every complaint produces a new level of bureaucracy, a new mandate. Policy-makers from left to right want to make sure that all schools teach their brand of truth, and academics have always wished kids came to them already knowing more about their particular speciality. Between them they are busy designing high-stakes national tests to make us all more like them. What they can't seem to tolerate is that there isn't a single definition of being smart and never will be — especially in a democratic society.

The policy-makers also forget that education depends on relationships between people, and nothing they invent in their ivory towers will work if we don't get those right. We won't grow thoughtful adults in thoughtless schools. And thoughtful adults don't all subscribe to the same version of the perfect school.

-more-

Save Public Education cont. (4)

There are five things we need to do immediately to turn our schools around:

1. We need schools that are human-sized—a few hundred kids in each. Small enough for everyone to know and be known well; for adults to gather together to make decisions that they agree on. Where families and teachers can get to trust one another, over time. We don't have to get rid of all the big buildings. Big buildings can house separate small schools. The cost? Minimal.
2. As far as possible, parents, kids and staff should have choices among schools. No two schools should or can be alike. Even where they start alike, over time they develop different styles, priorities and ways of organizing themselves. Some have mixed age groups, emphasize phonics, have put their resources into instrumental music instead of camping, are more or less formal, etc. To parents and teachers these differences are matters of importance. Not having a choice means people waste precious time fighting over such matters or water down their ideas to get a consensus.
3. If we want schools to be responsible for results, they need to have sufficient power over the factors that help produce success — like staffing, spending money, scheduling, curriculum and assessment. There's no point in knowing one another well if we don't have the power to make decisions based on that knowledge.
4. Small, self-governing schools of choice are necessary but not sufficient. We need to design ways for parents, teachers and the public to have access to credible and user-friendly information and to create places for them to talk. This takes time and access to expertise. It can be helped by enlightened public policy, for example, requiring employers to give parents time off, encouraging teachers to visit other schools, using public television to share public stories, developing peer and school accountability.
5. Finally, it takes a fair distribution of resources. Having advantages is an advantage; we're fooling ourselves if we ignore the inequalities it produces. But to make matters worse, we provide less public funding for those already in communities of poverty. The resource gap is shameful—whether we're talking personnel, technology, books or physical facilities. Changing people takes money just as much as changing machinery.

Two currently popular nostrums, school vouchers and a national testing system, head us in precisely the wrong direction. Vouchers will subsidize the abandonment of public education, mostly in ways that will hurt the most needy. National testing—sometimes called national standards—will take away even more authority from local school communities. Teachers and communities shorn of the capacity to use their own ideas, judgments and initiative in matters of importance can't teach kids to do so. Producing responsible citizens is best done in places where responsible citizenship is at the heart of the school's life.

Lisa D. Delpit
professor of urban education at Georgia State University and author of Other People's Children: Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom (New Press).

On Dr. King's birthday, I watched, riveted, the PBS special on the civil rights movement. The filmmakers accomplished an amazing feat: The smooth-skinned, bright-eyed, idealistic faces of the young civil rights workers, Bob Moses and Endesha Mae Holland among them, faded into the same faces, forty years older — lined, deeper-eyed, voices less strident but somehow more intensely determined — reminiscing about the past and talking about the present. I was moved to tears by the commitment that these heroes have kept alive so long, as well as by the powerful struggle that occurred when I was too young to participate.

How strong these young people were, but how little the nation cared. Those valiant boys and girls in Mississippi were humiliated, beaten, even killed. The local "law" was the evil killing machine that tore their flesh and offered their spirits to snarling dogs. The federal government said there was nothing it could do. Before the media arrived citizens throughout the nation watched Ed Sullivan and Leave It to Beaver in their suburbs, with little thought given to those polite black children who were stirring up so much trouble.

Coming to terms with this sobering reality led the civil rights workers to a unique strategy. They could be spared only if they brought young white people into their struggle, young white people whose well-heeled families could call senators and judges — and get their calls returned. Young white people whom the nation watched and fretted over, ready to usher them into their rightful futures as doctors, lawyers and nuclear scientists. The black children were so despised, so hated, so...unnecessary, that nothing could protect them except the presence of the young white "freedom riders" from the North.

So often I feel that the African-American children of poverty today are in similar straits. No one cares about them, really. They are viewed as despised "others" whose families are pathological, whose mothers want to bilk the system, whose language is termed "guttural ghetto speak," whose intelligence is constantly questioned. And who are stuffed away in forgotten neighborhoods into ramshackle buildings called schools, with faulty plumbing, malfunctioning heating systems, peeling paint and questionable electricity — reminiscent of the sharecropper shacks in Mississippi. Pizza Hut won't even deliver to the "dangerous communities" in which these schools are located. As I visit many of these urban schools, I cannot but wonder, Who cares? Who can protect them? There are no more white children to ride in and force the nation's attention.

There is one difference between today's children and the children of Mississippi's past. Despite the nation's neglect, the Mississippi children knew who they were. They knew that their work was important, that they were right and righteous and, whether they lived or died, their actions would be writ large on history's pages. Today's children, like Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, look at themselves with the loathing of the nation that despises them. But unlike Pecola, not only do they turn the hatred inward but their rage bursts forth as they seek to snuff out the lives of those who provide mirror images of themselves in an effort to obliterate their own perceived ugliness and unworthiness. You cannot seek to kill your image if you value yourself.

But why has this country heaped neglect and hatred upon these children? Why do middle-class white audiences give standing ovations to the author of *The Bell Curve* when he insists that black children are genetically inferior to white, when he recommends limiting the schooling of poor black children to menial job training, when he suggests that poor black children be taken from their parents to be raised in state institutions?

-more-

Save Public Schools cont. (5)

Why is it so popular to deny children food stamps or housing or medical treatment? Why do I so often see fear or only thinly veiled stares of hatred when groups of boisterous African-American youngsters enter a store or restaurant or bus?

I don't know why America still finds its brown children so despicable and dispensable. And I don't know what to do about it. Somehow the thousands of African-American children who failed to dodge successfully one of the bullets regularly fired in their neighborhoods fade into oblivion. But when one white child dies horribly from a gunshot because her parents turned into the "wrong" street one night, the entire nation is in an uproar. Why is it that so many people in this country don't care about children who look like mine? How can I make them?

What can Bill Clinton do? Still haunted by the civil rights documentary, I'm tempted to ask for a public service campaign to value African-American children. I see brown children's bright-eyed faces with disheveled hair and unkempt clothes fade into the adults they can become if we allow it — doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers. I want to shove in a resistant nation's face the humanity, the vulnerability, the neediness of those babies who need our protection, who need us to hold visions for their futures so they do not destroy themselves and one another as they bask in our, at best, "benign neglect."

But I know that will serve no purpose. What I want of Bill Clinton is that he value black children — or at least act as though he does. There should be a law that says no children should have to live in a neighborhood deemed "too dangerous" for pizza delivery. He can push policy to insure that all children are fed, have shelter and receive medical attention. He should insure funding to repair the school buildings falling down on our children's heads, and insist that state and local authorities make them welcoming havens. He can push for systems that reward teachers who are willing to teach those children who are least well served, and who do so in ways that the children, their parents and their communities value.

What can I say? He can value the children. He can protect them. He can care. We all can.

Randall Cole

works at the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York City, a social service, education and advocacy organization serving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.

Today's youth face social problems ranging from substance abuse, violence and poverty to HIV/AIDS. These problems are compounded for gay and lesbian youth, many of whom live in fear and secrecy. Without role models and support networks, 80 percent of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth report severe isolation. In addition, gay and lesbian young people face violence in school perpetrated by both students and teachers. Frequently, they drop or are pushed out of school. Most alarming is the study conducted by the Health and Human Services Department that found that gay and lesbian youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people, and that approximately one-third of youth suicides are carried out annually by gay youth.

Of the estimated 20,000 youths who find themselves without a permanent residence in New York City, more than a third self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Many of them are kicked out by their families or flee because of abuse. Moreover, gay and lesbian youth are at a higher risk for contracting H.I.V.

because of their isolation and lowered sense of self-esteem.

Since the founding in 1985 of the Harvey Milk School, the nation's first high school designed specifically for gay and lesbian youth, sponsored by the New York City Board of Education, the number of applicants has steadily increased. We can now accept only about 30 percent of the 100 students who apply each year. The school was founded in recognition of the fact that many students drop out rather than face abuse from teachers and classmates. However, our objective is not to segregate gay and lesbian students from their straight peers, but to change the way we all think about education. Hetrick-Martin staff and youth educators go to classrooms from kindergarten to high school to educate students and their teachers about the issues faced by gay and lesbian youth. This sets up a model for dialogue both in the classroom and at home that helps to combat homophobia.

From the President to the local school boards to families, we must demonstrate our commitment to educating all young people regardless of class, gender, race, sexual orientation and language or cultural background. We must make our schools places where all children feel safe and valued. Until then, the need for organizations such as the Hetrick-Martin Institute and its Harvey Milk School program will continue. Our goal is to one day make ourselves obsolete.

Mike Rose

professor at U.C.L.A.'s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies and author of His Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America, recently released in paperback by Penguin.

I have been thinking a lot lately about the way we talk about school — public school in particular.

What do we hear on talk-radio, see on the evening news, read in the paper? How do education issues get shaped in legislative debates? How is school depicted in popular culture and how is it characterized in "highbrow" media, of left, right or center persuasion? I think it's fair to say that, with some exceptions, the talk and imagery about public school tends to be negative, bleak, often cynical, at times vicious. Here are some examples that I read or heard in a two-day period: "America's schools are the least successful in the Western world"; "Face it, the public schools have failed"; "The kids in the Los Angeles School District are garbage."

God knows, there is a lot wrong with our schools — from the way we educate teachers to the often patronizing curriculums we offer our students, the tangles of school politics and the terrible things we assume about the abilities of kids from poor communities. I don't dispute that, have taught in the middle of it, have tried to write about it. And I surely don't dispute the legitimate anger of people who have been betrayed by their schools. But the scope and sweep of the negative public talk is what concerns me, for it excludes the powerful, challenging work done in schools day by day across the country, and it limits profoundly the vocabulary and imagery available to us, constrains the way we frame problems, blinkers our imagination.

This kind of talk fosters neither critique nor analysis but rather a grand dismissiveness or despair. It plays into equally general and troubling — and equally unexamined — causal claims about the schools' responsibility for our economic woes and social problems. And this blend of crisis rhetoric and reductive models of causality yields equally one-dimensional proposals for

-more-

Save Public Education cont. (6)

single-shot magic bullets: Standards will save us, or charter schools, or computer technology, or the free market. Each of these can have merit, but careful, nuanced reflection about education gets lost in such fall-from-grace/redemption narratives.

When was the last time you heard extensive, deliberative public talk that places school failure in the context of joblessness, urban politics, a diminished tax base, unequal funding, race and class bias? Or heard a story of achievement that includes discussion of curiosity, reflectiveness, uncertainty, a willingness to take a chance, to blunder? How about accounts of reform that present change as alternatively difficult, exhilarating, ambiguous, promising -- and that find reform not in a device, technique or structure but in the way we think about teaching and learning? And that point out how we need a language of schooling that, in addition to economy, offers a vocabulary of respect, decency, aesthetics, joy, courage, intellect, civility, heart and mind, skill and understanding? For that matter, think of how rarely we hear of a commitment to public education as the center of a free society. We need a richer public discussion than the one we have now.

Deliberation about school funding and teachers' salaries, about charter schools and national standards, about multicultural education and school-to-work programs and which method of reading instruction to adopt -- all take place within a discourse of decline. This language has been with us for so long -- at least since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 -- that we accept it as natural and miss the ways it affects our thinking about what public schools should accomplish in a democracy and why and how they fail.

An important project for the left -- and though I focus on schools, this applies to a range of social issues -- will be to craft a language that is critical without being reductive, that frames this critique in nuance and possibility, that honors the work good teachers do daily and draws from it broader lessons about ability, learning and opportunity, that scrutinizes public institutions while affirming them.

the district will attempt to go ahead and form School Governance Councils at the eight pilot schools, Puckett said.

Hardiman said that while he did not rule out a settlement, the plaintiffs had no reason to go along with the plan. The parties in the desegregation case have scheduled an informal meeting this week to discuss the issue.

"I'm always open to peaceful resolution," Hardiman said. "But as we speak, parents have taken the position not to commit to the School Governance Council concept."

Even without the governance councils, most school officials agree the eight pilot schools have made important reforms this school year.

But the councils remain the key to changing the district from a centralized school system to a decentralized system of schools, said Michael Charney, co-chairman of the districtwide committee overseeing school reform.

"The jury will always remain out until these mini-governments have exercised their decision-making powers and have actually carved out their own

decentralized schools," Charney said. "Without these mini-governments, true reform is still in a holding pattern."

The failure of the district to get the governance councils going is surprising because it is one of the few things on which administrators and the Cleveland Teachers Union agree.

Richard A. DeColibus, president of the union, said some form of governance councils had been in the teachers' contract since 1990. Last fall, the district and the union included a new provision defining the makeup and duties of the councils in a new contract.

The contract calls for the councils to include the principal, two parents (one who is the school's SCC chairman), four teachers, one noncertified school employee, one nonparent community representative, a representative from the school's business partner and, in secondary schools, two students.

At the time, district negotiators called the provision the single most important part of the new contract.

DeColibus said he was disappointed that the district had not pushed harder for

the governance councils, and uncertainty about who will be running the district next year helped slow the decentralization effort. On Thursday, the Ohio House approved a bill that would give Mayor Michael R. White control of the city schools. The measure will now go to the Senate.

"To me, there isn't any reason why they can't move forward with the SGCs," DeColibus said. "They just choose not to."

Puckett and Boyd said that was not the case.

"We plan to go forward," Puckett said. "I really believe this will work."

Charney also is hopeful that SCC parents and teachers will work together to make SGCs into strong, decision-making bodies.

"All we need is a spirit of cooperative willingness to move ahead," Charney said. "It's a missed opportunity, but decentralized change is a journey and not an end point. Effective school governance councils can still take place." ■

33. Columbus Dispatch

May 13, 1997

Board pushes tougher standards for schools

By Catherine Candisky Dispatch Statehouse Reporter

State legislators will be asked to approve higher academic standards for Ohio students, including tougher graduation requirements.

The State Board of Education yesterday approved in principle the 103-page proposal, sending it to the Ohio General Assembly for further consideration. The vote was 13 to 4.

"Student achievement is the most important thing, and we've got to know that our students are achieving at higher levels — that is what these standards do," said Martha W. Wise, board vice president.

Wise, of Avon, will explain the proposal to members of the House Education Committee tonight.

"We need to let legislators know what's in the standards and reduce the scare tactics out there," she said.

The Ohio Department of Education has estimated it will cost \$13 million to implement the plan, but says most of the money can be re-allocated from current

funding.

The proposed standards require every district to have a plan for continuous improvement, and set new graduation requirements and new performance standards for schools.

To graduate, students would have to demonstrate competency in the six subject areas in which they now must earn credits — English, health, physical education, mathematics, science and social studies — as well as arts, foreign language and technology.

Competency levels that are consistent across the state will be determined later.

Under new performance standards, schools would be required to have passing rates of 75 percent or better on student proficiency tests; a maximum dropout rate of no more than 3 percent; a minimum graduation rate of 90 percent; and average daily attendance of 93 percent.

Districts that fall below the requirements and fail to show progress

toward the goals would be subject to intervention by the Department of Education. Intervention could involve state officials reviewing a district's finances, curriculum or other aspects.

Based on statistics from last year, 82 of Ohio's 611 school districts would meet all criteria.

"I don't see standards. I only see goals, objectives and philosophies," said board member Oliver Ocasek of Northfield, explaining his vote against the standards.

He also said that without defining competency levels, the board was presenting only half a plan.

Diana M. Fessler, a board member from New Carlisle, said she objected to requiring student competency in health, physical education and arts for graduation. She also said the standards will undermine local control of schools.

During more than 2 1/2 hours of public testimony before yesterday's vote, support for the plan was evenly split. Supporters applauded efforts to increase

student performance and to boost the importance of the arts in education. Of the concerns cited, most focused on the gifted education program and loss of local control.

If the legislature approves changes in state law needed to implement the standards, the board will hold public hearings before voting on the proposal. If approved, it would be sent back to the General Assembly for ratification.

While implementing the plan has been

pegged at \$13 million, an amendment approved by the board yesterday asks the state to provide another \$95 million for educating gifted students.

The amendment, approved 11 to 6, would require the state to pay for all programming for the 250,000 gifted students in Ohio schools. The state now pays only a fraction of those costs, with the proposed two-year budget calling for \$30 million for gifted education. The rest is paid by local districts, or in many

cases, programs are simply not provided.

Ocasek said a parent complained to him that their child was simply sent to the library one hour a day for "gifted education."

"I doubt the money will be made available," Ocasek said, adding, "This is something we should have done long ago."

Paul Marshall, the department's lobbyist, agreed that additional money will be hard to get. ■

34. Boston Globe

May 14, 1997

Bilingual education research debated: Report says most studies slanted

By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff

The debate over bilingual education, brought to the fore by the state Board of Education's call Monday for a strict limit to the time students spend in the program, is fueled by heated arguments from both sides, with both waving research to back their points of view.

But researchers and analysts, including supporters and critics of bilingual education, say that after nearly three decades of it, we know little about what works and what doesn't in teaching non-native students to speak English. There is research to support arguments on either side, but little of the research is reliable, they say.

In a January report, the federally run National Research Council criticized research on bilingual education for being too political. What studies have been done were done by proponents or opponents of a particular method of teaching, the council said, and looked only at programs that would support their views.

"We don't know a lot about what works," acknowledged state Education Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci. "We know that kids at younger ages learn more quickly than those who are older, but beyond that, the research is conflicting."

There are 44,000 bilingual students in Massachusetts, and 2.3 million nationwide. Advocates and scholars tend to support one of two methods for

teaching them: immersing non-native speakers in English or teaching them all subjects in their native language, gradually including more English.

The changes in a bill proposed by Governor William F. Weld, which the state Board of Education endorsed Monday, would encourage the English immersion model, by requiring schools to teach in English after the first year in a segregated bilingual education class and forbidding students to stay in bilingual education for more than three years.

Now, students here spend about six years in bilingual education, according to the state Department of Education, but those numbers are not considered reliable, because a student who spends three years in one district's bilingual program and then three years in another is counted as two students, each spending three years in the program.

Making changes to the regulations governing bilingual education on Monday, Board of Education chairman John R. Silber cited a report from the Washington-based Center for Educational Opportunity, run by a former Reagan administration official. That report gave Massachusetts a D-minus for its bilingual education law, which was the first in the nation when it was passed in 1970. It argued that the most successful programs are the ones in which teachers use more English.

But critics of the board's changes in bilingual education say that report was not based on hard research. The authors visited schools and commented on what appeared to be working. And indeed, the report is based largely on interviews with educators.

Critics of the board changes point instead to studies saying that students whose first language is not English catch up to their English-speaking peers after five to seven years of being taught in their native language in all subjects, with some English. If they are taught in English only, it takes seven to ten years to catch up, according to the study, done by researchers at George Mason University in Virginia.

"We do know what works," said Maria Brisk, a professor of education at Boston University, and an opponent of the board changes and the Weld bill. "There's no research saying you're going to learn the desired level of English in three years."

Antonucci argues that a three-year limit would put pressure on schools to teach children to learn English, which he said is the goal of bilingual education.

But critics say the goal is academic performance. Bilingual education should not just focus on teaching English, they say, it should make sure students also learn other subjects. And that, they say, demands that students be taught for some time in their native language. ■

60. Los Angeles Times

* 05/14/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Zones Desk; Page B-4

Talks Between Orange Teachers, Board Again Stall Over Contracts

By LESLEY WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

ORANGE — A state-appointed mediator wants to give it one more shot, but teachers and administrators in the Orange Unified School District appear to be hopelessly deadlocked over a year-old contract dispute.

The breakdown of talks comes at a crucial time, as school districts around the state recruit each other's teachers to fill spots in newly downsized classrooms.

Last spring, a dozen teachers left Orange, and another 27 tried to get out of their contracts so they could take new jobs in higher-paying districts. Union officials said as many as 300 teachers, one-quarter of the staff, may leave or retire early over the contract issue.

That potential exodus hung like a pall over the latest mediation session, which broke up Monday evening with little progress.

Both sides say they desperately want to raise teacher salaries in the county's lowest-paying district. But the fate of retiree health benefits for older teachers is proving to be a nearly overwhelming obstacle.

The district's chief negotiator, Malcolm Schuelt, said Tuesday that the school board is considering "all options," and eventually may impose a unilateral contract on its teachers.

Union officials and many teachers, some of whom have begun wearing black ribbons to class, are threatening to

withhold their "Letters of Intent to Return"—which are treated as one-year contracts—until just hours before year-round school begins July 1.

Schuelt said that would be a difficult situation.

"In the worst-case scenario, that would give me 15 hours to know who is with me and who is not with me," he said. "The association is using this time to the distinct disadvantage of the community."

David Reger, president of the union, said the district can expect more acts of pressure from teachers in the weeks to come.

The crux of the dispute involves the lifetime health benefits that teachers could expect to receive until that program was canceled for anyone hired after 1992.

The district contends that the "unfunded liability" of these outstanding benefits could be as high as \$195 million, a figure that eventually could lead to bankruptcy.

As a result, district negotiators have proposed a three-tiered salary schedule that would raise entry-level pay from \$23,825 to \$29,829 and more by the second year of the contract. But raises for older teachers would be little to none unless they agree to a voluntary buyout of their retiree benefits.

The district also offered a single-tier schedule with large entry-level raises that again made more money for older

teachers contingent on giving up the retiree health benefits.

The union has consistently rejected a multitiered salary. Instead, leaders proposed a single pay raise of about 5% immediately, with an additional 6% raise for all levels of teachers. The voluntary buyout of benefits would remain a separate issue.

"Our proposal cuts well over half of the unfunded liability," Reger said. "We're upset with their proposal, because they're making teachers pay for any salary increase. They're making them try to fund any increase by giving up benefits."

District officials countered that if they raised everyone's pay, then the older teachers would have no incentive to give up their retirement benefits. They have asked the union to put both district proposals up to a vote of the rank-and-file, but union officials have refused.

"That would be akin to me asking if you would like to be hung or electrocuted," Reger said.

Reger insisted that the district is trying to divide younger and older teachers.

"They've been trying all along to drive a wedge between teachers," he said. "They have not succeeded and will not succeed."

A last mediation session has been set for June 2, but neither side holds out much hope. ■

61. The Cincinnati Enquirer

05/11/97; Edition: FINL; Section: News; Page A01

The Education Revolution

STANDARDS RAISING THE SIGHTS OF OHIO'S SCHOOLS

State set to boost requirements; local schools fear costs

By MARK SKERTIC
The Cincinnati Enquirer

North College Hill schools Superintendent Stanley Wernz doesn't mind that the state wants to make it

tougher to earn a high school diploma. But he gets angry about new state rules he says could usurp local control and cost his district money.

"I applaud the concept, but I believe

the process needs to be done differently," he said. "They're talking about requiring us to do a lot of things that don't really make a lot of sense."

On Monday, the State Board of

59. Los Angeles Times

* 05/14/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro Desk; Page A-1

Wilson Urges Statewide Test Plan for Schools

By LUCILLE RENWICK; RICHARD LEE COLVIN

TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Saying that California needs to measure the effectiveness of its billion-dollar investment in smaller classes, Gov. Pete Wilson on Tuesday proposed immediate implementation of a statewide testing system to compare the performance of students—and schools.

Under Wilson's \$83-million proposal, the State Board of Education would buy already developed standardized tests and pay schools to give them to students from grades two to 11 next spring. Now, school districts throughout California are giving 65 different tests, the results of which cannot be compared accurately with one another.

"We need new standards to help bring the kind of accountability that our schools have long been lacking," Wilson said during an appearance at Camellia Avenue Elementary School in North Hollywood. "We need to be able to measure each student's individual skill levels."

Wilson has long pushed for such tests. He helped kill the state's CLAS test in 1994 partly because it gave scores only for schools and not for individual students.

California is one of the few states that does not administer statewide tests. Some states, such as Kentucky and Michigan, have developed their own testing systems. But others, such as Iowa, Ohio and Florida, contract with private firms to develop the tests.

In 1995, Wilson signed a bill to create statewide tests that would be designed to measure students against a set of academic standards. But the process of creating those examinations is expected to take several more years while a state commission develops standards in math and reading—and an outside firm writes tests based on them.

In the interim, local districts are receiving a \$5-per-student subsidy for giving basic skills tests, much as they always have. Although such tests produce scores for individual students,

they do not allow comparisons among schools or districts.

State Board of Education member Janet Nicholas of Sonoma said Wilson's proposal was "fabulous" because it would mean that "a parent in Los Angeles and a parent in Sonoma can both equally know how their fourth-grader is doing."

She said the proposal would not derail the work of creating standards that detail what students ought to know at each grade. "That process will continue, but we just can't afford to have today's children waiting on standards and then waiting for tests to be developed to begin having accountability," she said.

Wilson said he would ask the Legislature to spend the \$83 million to give school districts \$10 for each student tested in grades two through eight and \$40 for each one tested in grades nine through 11.

Although he must persuade the Legislature to go along, one analyst predicted that the proposal has a good chance of passage because many state leaders have been frustrated by the lack of information about how well the state's schools are performing. Moreover, the test could bolster several pending pieces of legislation.

State Senate President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer (D-Hayward) has a bill that would provide students who are falling behind at low-performing schools with money to take buses to schools outside their neighborhoods. At the same time, Assembly Republican Leader Curt Pringle (R-Garden Grove) is proposing that students from the lowest-performing schools be given vouchers that would allow them to attend private or other public schools.

Both bills have been stymied by the lack of any way of measuring which students or schools would qualify.

Though initial reaction to Wilson's plan was generally positive, a spokeswoman for the California Teachers Assn. questioned why the governor was in such a rush to test students, and not content to wait a few years for the state's

customized testing system.

"You need some connection between the curriculum and a test," said CTA spokeswoman Tommye Hutto. "If you pull something off a shelf, you have no guarantee this is happening."

The second in command at the state Department of Education also expressed concern "whether the test can be aligned to the standards and customized to California."

But Chief Deputy Supt. Ruth McKenna said her boss, state Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, "has been saying for a while that we need to push standards, assessment and accountability to the next level, which is a mandated test with individual results . . . and on the surface, this is what this gets us."

Wilson's plan would require major changes in local testing programs. The Los Angeles Unified School District just this year began using the Stanford Assessment Test and has been training teachers in how to employ the results in their classrooms. If the state were to adopt another test, Los Angeles would have to change again.

Wilson's testing proposal is the latest in a series of initiatives to improve California's dismal performance in education, timed to the release of his revised budget today. On Tuesday, he formally unveiled his plan to give a \$230-million boost to the state's effort to reduce the size of classes in kindergarten and grades one through three to no more than 20 pupils.

Overall, Wilson is asking for \$1.5 billion for that program, an amount he says should make it possible for 1.9 million students to be in the smaller classes.

Also on Tuesday, Wilson pledged to add \$50 million to the state's Digital High School program, designed to provide Internet-linked computers in high schools throughout the state. That money would boost the program's funding to \$100 million, enough to offer grants to up to 200 high schools for technology projects. ■

Education will meet in Columbus and likely approve in principle sweeping changes for what is required of the state's public and nonpublic schools. With new rules, Ohio will join the growing list of states that have made standards the nucleus of school improvement efforts.

The new rules would be among the most sweeping school reforms the state ever has adopted, with new performance levels for students and new rules for district superintendents to follow.

Ultimately, if student performance doesn't improve, the penalty would be among the most severe the state can impose: wresting control of the district from the local school board.

Nationally, Ohio is among the last states to embrace standards as the basis for school improvement. More than 40 states and much of the world already have developed standards, said Christopher Cross, president of the Council for Basic Education. Based in Washington, D.C., the council is a non-profit organization that advocates education reform through standards.

"The U.S. is probably unique in having so diffuse a system," he said. "Almost all U.S. states are doing standards, but they're not all doing them well."

If the current proposal is accepted by the state board and the General Assembly, work will begin on determining the specific content students must know in different subject areas to demonstrate competency.

The standards would replace rules adopted in 1983 that specified the minimum number of minutes in instruction for each subject students took. Instead, students would be required to demonstrate competency in 10 areas, including foreign language and the arts.

New rules on schools

Schools would also have new responsibilities. Among them: ensuring the person supervising special education is licensed in that area - a requirement many districts currently don't meet. School boards also would have to provide at least a dozen vocational education classes, eight of them with in-school laboratories.

Those kinds of mandates worry school officials, who don't expect more state money will be available to cover the cost of additional responsibilities.

"I'm disappointed they are so prescriptive in some areas," said Kathleen Ware, Cincinnati Public Schools director of quality improvement.

"I'd hoped they would be more results oriented, instead of prescribing the process by which we're supposed to achieve some results."

Mrs. Ware oversaw the development of CPS's strategic plan. Released last year, that report detailed current levels of student performance and the district's five-year goals. While she expressed concern about increased mandates for services in areas like vocational education, the state's efforts to increase general student performance with standards is overdue, she said.

"What a student needs to know, in math, from the smallest hamlet to the largest city in Ohio is really the same," she said. "Actually, I think it's the same all over the country."

A fiscal report done for the State Board of Education projects the new standards will initially cost \$13 million statewide, with most of the increase coming in special education services.

Hidden costs

But some superintendents find that estimate laughable. It doesn't account for the districts that will have to hire special education specialists to supervise those programs, or meet other requirements such as adding vocational programs or hiring a librarian who can be available throughout the day.

Schools will have to develop ways of assessing whether students are meeting new standards in art, business, family and consumer sciences, foreign language, health and physical education and technology. And they will have to find ways to increase planning time for all teachers, which may require hiring additional staff.

Performance requirements will also be pumped up, with the state telling schools to get the dropout rate down to 3 percent and the passage rate for freshmen on the Ninth Grade Proficiency exam to 50 percent the first year the plan is in place and eventually up to 75 percent.

That will be a challenge, given that the dropout rate statewide is now 5.4 percent and that just 54 percent of ninth-graders pass all sections of the proficiency exam. It will be even tougher in places like Cincinnati, where the annual dropout rate is 11 percent and only 29 percent of freshmen pass all sections of their proficiency exams.

"There are a lot of new things this requires us to do," said John Varis, superintendent of Reading Community Schools. "It's pretty scary that no one had costed out what it would take to do all

this."

Mr. Varis teamed with North College Hill's Mr. Wernz and the superintendents from Lockland and Madeira to take their concerns to the state. Emphasizing they support standards, accountability and testing, the school leaders told state officials they were worried about hidden costs in the special, vocational and gifted-and-talented education sections.

"We can talk about what is mandatory for a district to do, but let's also talk about what it's going to cost and who's going to pay for it," said Roy Hill, superintendent of the Lockland City Schools.

Uncertainty over the price tag is one of the reasons state board member Diana Fessler gives when explaining why she won't support the standards proposal. Even if funding were clear, she is opposed to adopting a system that is based on performance requirements set at the state level.

Loss of control feared

"What are we saying about local control?" said Mrs. Fessler, who has been the revised standards' most vocal critic. "We're telling you what to do, and if you don't do it, come up with a corrective action plan. And if you don't do that right, the state is going to come in and do it for you."

A member of the board for the past three years, she represents a district that includes Butler and Montgomery counties. The state allowed its standards efforts to lie dormant for several years, but the expanded board approved by the governor last year moved the effort to a fast track, she said. Now she worries the effort will usurp the authority of community school boards to meet the needs of their students.

"We're going to require everyone to be competent in foreign language in high school," Mrs. Fessler said, noting the difficulty many students have on the English and writing portions of the state proficiency exams. "Foreign language is a stretch, particularly in some of our urban areas."

A national movement

Clearer, tougher state standards is one of the reforms a coalition of educators and business, labor and community leaders wants state lawmakers to consider.

BEST - Building Excellent Schools for Today & the 21st Century - recently unveiled its plan, presented as a response to the recent Ohio Supreme Court decision that declared the present

school-funding system unconstitutional.

"We've got to say to the people of Ohio, 'Stop doing what doesn't work,'" said Robert Wehling, senior vice president for Procter & Gamble Co. and a BEST co-chair. "We need high standards, good assessment strategies and a minimum level of funding for all students."

Other states have made standards an integral piece of their education reform efforts, including Kentucky, Virginia and Delaware.

In many Ohio schools, the requirements of the state's proficiency tests - given at fourth, sixth and ninth and 12th grades - have essentially become a substitute for standards.

For example, since fourth-graders need to know how to add and subtract decimals to pass the test, schools have made sure that task is covered before the test is given.

Standards set a tone

Development of standards is a chance for a community to ask itself what it values about education, said Patte Barth, senior associate at the Education Trust in Washington, D.C., a group that has worked to promote adoption of standards in the nation's schools.

"Decide what the standards mean," she said. "What standards will students be required to meet to graduate from an Ohio school and be admitted to an Ohio university? Because they should be the same."

Involve a range of educators, parents, community leaders and others in discussion of how the standards are eventually written, she suggested. "This really gets to the heart about what a community values about itself," Ms.

Barth said. "What do you want your children to know when they go out into the world?"

While the standards proposal is very specific in some areas, such as special and vocational education, it intentionally avoids detailing exactly what some areas will require, said Gene Harris, the state assistant superintendent of public instruction who has overseen development of the new standards.

If the general framework is approved by the state board and lawmakers, work will begin detailing exactly what, for example, competency in foreign language or art entails, she said. Then, in most cases, the assessment of whether children are meeting that standard will be something each district develops on its own, she said.

"The focus now will be on what's learned, not the amount of time in a math class," she said. "We want to provide a system that will allow schools and school districts the opportunity to improve student performance."

Approval seen likely

The state board is likely to approve the standards because members believe schools need to be producing higher-caliber students, said Dwight Hibbard, an at-large board member from Cincinnati and retired chairman of Cincinnati Bell Inc.

He dismissed the complaints by some superintendents that the standards are essentially new, unfunded mandates. "The real issue is how do you manage the money you have," Mr. Hibbard said.

He called the latest effort a natural follow to last year's decision not to grant teachers permanent certification. Now, teachers must renew their license every

five years.

"We've increased our standards for teachers, now we've got to put higher challenges on students," Mr. Hibbard said. "We can't excuse inability. If you go to school, you're expected to learn. And if you can't do fourth-grade work, you don't get passed on to the fifth grade."

Proposed standards

The State Board of Education may require that:

Students demonstrate intermediate skill in math, science, social studies and English - language arts to earn a high school diploma.

Students have basic skills in a foreign language, the arts, technology, business, family - consumer sciences, and health - P.E.

Schools boost to 50 percent the first year the plan is in place the percentage of ninth-graders passing the Ohio Ninth Grade Proficiency Test or face a state evaluation. Eventually, it would rise to 75 percent by spring.

Districts lower the dropout rate to 3 percent and raise the average daily attendance rate to 93 percent.

Comparing states

Text not available. See paper or microfilm copy.

About this series

Throughout the nation, education dominates debate. The Enquirer worked with Gannett News Service on The Education Revolution.

Coming

Monday: Early childhood education is key to raising student performance.

Tuesday: Teacher quality has become a priority for many school districts. ■

62. The Tampa Tribune

05/12/97; Edition: METRO; Section: PINELLAS; Page 1

Schools trying to clear the smoke

By LESLEY COLLINS
of The Tampa Tribune

DUNEDIN - It's pretty much a given.

Step inside most high school restrooms and chances are you'll find a teen trying to sneak a couple drags from a cigarette behind a stall door.

But with nonsmoking students raising stronger complaints, officials said some Pinellas high schools are taking a more vigilant approach to the problem.

Dunedin High has led the assault on

restroom smoking this school year, to the delight of some and the consternation of others.

Money donated by a school advisory council parent was used to install smoke alarms in student restrooms last semester.

Entry doors to student bathrooms are bolted open during lunch when most student smokers have a better opportunity to take a few puffs.

Parent monitors patrol two boys' bathrooms near the cafeteria where

school officials have had the most smoking problems.

And in a move one student called an invasion of privacy, the tops of the stall doors in the two boys' bathrooms have been hacked about six inches from the top - something at least three other high schools have done in recent years.

"These are new things principals are trying," school operations director Nancy Zambito said. "Students who don't smoke are really sick of it. And it's such a

Jones, the district's chief financial officer. Wilson's latest proposal would increase state funding from \$666 to about \$800 per student.

Uncredentialed teachers have been hired in droves to fill the openings created by class-size reduction, leading some board members to advocate that additional revenues be spent on teacher training.

In the past year, half of the 4,400 new Los Angeles Unified teachers lacked teaching credentials.

"Before just grabbing at the pot to

fund 100 different initiatives, we should look at teacher preparation," said board member Mark Slavkin.

"Otherwise, it's like running fast to stay in one place—if there's not [teacher] quality there, I don't expect us to post [student] achievement gains."

Board member David Tokofsky, who for the second consecutive year criticized the budget's format for being divided into vague categories and programs instead of tangible targets—teachers, books, buildings—recommended that the district

use its windfall to build numerous kindergarten through third grade "primary centers."

Such small schools can be built relatively quickly and cheaply, he said, and solve many of the crowding problems.

Advised that such a financing decision might prevent the expansion of other programs, such as teacher training, Tokofsky said: "I'm in favor of getting kindergartners off the buses before I do staff development." ■

39. Los Angeles Times

* 05/13/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-2

COMMUNITY NEWS FOCUS

Middle School Plan Toughens Standards

By LESLEY WRIGHT

Life may become a little tougher for middle school students in Orange Unified School District next year.

Administrators and parents at the four schools have banded together to stiffen graduation requirements and force failing students to face some consequences.

"The leadership team of the middle schools is determined to improve the academic experience," said Fran Roney, principal of Cerro Villa Middle School.

Roney presented a plan to the school

board Thursday night that would change grading schedules, create new programs for academic underachievers and hold back students who fail classes.

If the trustees approve the plan May 22, parts of the program could begin next school year.

First would come new report card periods, with 12-week trimesters instead of the current quarter system. Parents would be informed that their child is failing during the fifth week and would

still have seven weeks to get the student help, Roney said.

Students now enroll in a total of 56 classes during seventh and eighth grades. If they pass at least 48 of these courses, they are promoted to ninth grade, even with failures on their report cards. They can fail eight of their science classes and still graduate.

Those who do not meet the new requirements would have to make up classes. ■

40. Boston Globe

May 13, 1997

Silber gives a lesson on the limits of 'fun'

By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff

Are they having fun yet? John Silber doesn't care.

In neat, polite letters with lots of exclamation points, the sixth graders in Mr. Shea's class in Plymouth wrote to the state Board of Education chairman to tell him their idea for improving the "C" given Massachusetts schools in a recent national study: Make them more fun.

Someone might have warned them they were writing to the wrong person.

Silber responded with a letter instructing the students that not everything in life is fun. He also read the student letters aloud at a Board of Education meeting yesterday to point out

errors in spelling and sentence construction, as well as errors in thinking.

Silber suggested to the students that if they want to improve the state's mediocre schools, they should look to the nations that scored higher than the United States in recent studies. Nations, he said, where they haven't embraced touchy-feely new concepts like fun.

"It is important to remember that there are many things in life we have to do, and not all of them are necessarily amusing," he wrote to the students at Plymouth Community Intermediate School. "Entertainment in the classroom

can play a valuable role, but it can also become a substitute for academic effort and hard work. In addition, it can do students a grave disservice by creating the impression that throughout their lives, someone will be there to make things fun for them.

"Unfortunately," he wrote. "That is rarely the case."

In part, this is just typical Silber. But it also touches on a simmering debate in schools over the best way to teach children. Critics of traditional education argue that it is too much memorization and lecture—in their lingo, too much drill and kill, too much chalk and talk. They

two to three hours a week since then, visiting schools and hosting job shadows.

Of course, not everyone can be a model business partner like Mr. Blaise.

But every business in Central Florida can do more. It's easy to make the next move. School-to-work contacts in each school district are provided in the accompanying

chart. Now it's up to the members of the business community to call and ask, "What can I do?" ■

37. The Financial Times

05/13/97; Edition: London Edition; Section: NEWS: UK; Page 9

Public schools face up to test

By Simon Targett
Education Correspondent

Public schools are planning to launch a programme of "major scholarships" in an attempt to mitigate the impact of legislation — to be outlined in this week's Queen's Speech — to scrap the assisted places scheme, it emerged yesterday.

Some are also likely to throw open their doors to bright pupils in state schools, offering them occasional classes in minority subjects such as Russian or Greek as well as specialist training for entry to Oxford and Cambridge. This is intended to respond to the government's warning that independent schools could lose their charitable status unless they contribute more to the education of the local community.

Figures published yesterday by the

Independent Schools Information Service show that independent schools are more popular than ever. Some 473,816 pupils are studying in 1,310 schools across the country, and a year-on-year comparison suggests there has been an increase of 7,640 since 1996, a rise of 1.7 per cent.

But the Conservative-backed increase in the assisted places scheme — founded in 1981 to allow children from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend fee-paying schools — was largely responsible for this growth in popularity. This year, there are some 37,183 pupils on the assisted places scheme, compared with 33,352 in 1996.

The figures from Isis show that schools already offer scholarships and bursaries to nearly 90,000 pupils, up nearly 4 per cent from last year.

Mr Michael Mavor, headmaster of Rugby School and chairman of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, which represents the top public schools, said several schools were looking to establish an appeal for funds towards "a major scholarship scheme".

The scholarships would be targeted at state school pupils and designed for sixth form entry.

Mrs Jackie Lang, president of the Girls' Schools Association, confirmed the plans, adding that many parents and former pupils were likely to contribute to the appeal, even though they may have to face increased fees.

Independent schools were not "Lord Snooty schools" and were keen to remain accessible to a cross section of society, she said. ■

38. Los Angeles Times

* 05/13/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-1

School Board, in Welcome Change, Gets Fatter Budget

Education: Economic recovery fuels growth and could add even more funding. But superintendent cautions against spending spree.

By AMY PYLE TIMES
EDUCATION WRITER

In its first glimpse of next year's budget, the Los Angeles Board of Education on Monday reviewed a \$5.3-billion spending plan, lifted to unprecedented levels by California's economic recovery.

And, when updated state budget estimates are released later this week, funding for the Los Angeles Unified School District is expected to grow.

Although the budget—up from \$4.9 billion last year—allows the district some breathing room for the first time in nearly a decade, administrators cautioned school board members against a spending spree.

"While we're doing better, we're not doing that well," said Supt. Sid

Thompson. School board proposals for increasing teacher training, raising salaries and building new schools all have merit, Thompson said, but he added: "You're going to be torn because you'll want to do all of those."

Several additions to the budget this year cost more than they bring in. There will be 13,000 more students, increasing enrollment to 681,000 and bringing in more revenue, but the district needs to find a place to put them.

The statewide effort to reduce class size in kindergarten through third grade—which also carries additional funding—puts more strain on classroom space.

Furthermore, some portions of the budget increase are reserved for

particular uses, such as the first \$359 million expected from the \$2.4-billion Proposition BB approved by voters last month.

All of the bond proceeds must go toward school repair and construction and the purchase of computers.

Gov. Pete Wilson promised over the weekend to help more schools decrease class size, pledging \$1.5 million to support the initiative during the coming year.

But in a crowded district like Los Angeles, the level of reimbursement would be far below costs.

Adding the portable classrooms needed to take on the overflow from smaller classes costs the district an estimated \$1,118 per student, said Henry

WHOSE NATIONWIDE STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION WILL BE ADOPTED?

By Lynne V. Cheney

A GROUP OF business leaders gathered at the White House last month to endorse President Clinton's effort to establish national education standards. Shouldn't we have learned by now the danger of embracing national standards when we have no notion of what form they'll take?

Not long ago, President Bush and the ambitious head of the National Governor's Association, Bill Clinton, emerged from an education summit in Charlottesville, Va., with what seemed to many a terrific plan: "world-class standards" for U.S. schools. But several years and millions of taxpayer dollars later, when the experts came forth with the details, standards no longer seemed like such a good idea. Ninety-nine members of the U.S. Senate voted to reject history standards that would have students learning more about Joseph McCarthy than George Washington, more about the Indian chief Speckled Snake than Thomas Edison.

So how is it that today President Clinton's plans for national standards for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics are proceeding so smoothly? Otherwise-sensible politicians are backing the proposal even though the details are unknown and the few things one can speculate about are not reassuring.

The president has given his proposal an aura of specificity by promising to model the new standards on the respected National Assessment of Educational Progress. But because the NAEP tests are not intended to measure every child in the nation, they will have to be overhauled. The Department of Education intends to award contracts worth some \$9 million a year over the next few years to groups outside the government to rework the tests. Therein lies the danger: If those groups are so inclined, they can turn out a product that differs significantly from the model, just as outside groups did in the last round of standard-setting.

Clinton tries to allay such concerns by suggesting that in reading and math — as opposed to controversial subjects like history — universal agreement prevails

about what students should know and be tested for. "From Maryland to Michigan to Montana," he said recently, "reading is reading and math is math." Apparently the president has not heard of "whole language" instruction, an approach to reading and writing that has created firestorms in several states, most notably California. Whole-language teachers focus on student "empowerment." They prefer not to talk about student errors, but about "approximate spelling." They also don't talk much about phonics, one of those dreaded instructional techniques requiring drill and memorization.

ALTHOUGH COMMON sense and recent research argue against whole-language instruction, it has powerful advocates, including the National Council of Teachers of English, a group sure to have influence in the development of a reading test. Since it is impossible to imagine the process going forward without the NCTE, it is quite possible to imagine a national reading test in which it matters not a whit to students' scores if their answers are full of spelling and grammatical errors.

Even mathematics is vulnerable to such fashionable nonsense. In 1989, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics set forth standards embodying what one might call "whole math" instruction. As powerful in its field as the NCTE is in English, the NCTM lambasted "a long-standing preoccupation with computation and other traditional skills," which makes students into "passive receivers of rules and procedures rather than active participants in creating knowledge." The council's standards urged that drill, practice and memorization be downplayed in favor of "number sense," "operation sense" and "cooperative work." Parents in at least four states have blamed the NCTM standards for inadequately fostering math literacy. Given the NCTM's likely role in developing a national test in eighth-grade mathematics, parents across the country could soon be irate. Worse, in the absence of other tests, a national examination that downplayed skills like computation might well disguise student inadequacies, which would be very bad

news indeed.

A third group that could play a role in developing tests is the National Center for Education and the Economy. With \$20 million from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the NCEE has been at work for the past few years on standards and assessments for fourth-, eighth- and 10th-graders. Thus it is very well positioned to influence any new standards — and well connected too. Hillary Clinton and Ira Magaziner are among those who have served on its board. Mike Cohen, formerly NCEE executive director, is now chief education adviser at the White House.

UNDERSECRETARY OF Education Mike Smith has worked closely with the NCEE. Like Robert Schwartz, then head of educational giving for the Pew Foundation, Smith was among those whom NCEE president Marc Tucker brought together right after the 1992 election to advise Mrs. Clinton. After the meeting Tucker wrote an 18-page letter to "Dear Hillary" advising that the Clintons aim to "remold the entire American system" of education and training. Crucial to spinning a "seamless web" of education and labor policy that would envelop all Americans "from cradle to grave," Tucker wrote, are "clear national standards of performance."

Tucker's letter offers vivid support to those who worry that the Clinton reading and math tests are merely the first step on a path toward central control of all aspects of education. Many of those who have come out in support of the Clinton proposal would no more approve of this idea than they would of approximate spelling; but, as the last round of standard-setting showed, what is proposed in the beginning may bear little relationship to what results in the end.

Reprinted with permission from the Wall Street Journal

(C) 1996 Dow Jones & Co., Inc.

All rights reserved

CAPTION:

Los Angeles Times illustration / John MacDonald

Standards

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
EDITORIAL, P. A18
WHOSE STANDARDS AGENDA?
02/07/97

It was heartening to hear the President's enthusiastic call for national school standards this week. But what the Administration envisions as "pursuing standards" may well be something different than the push for excellence usually associated with that phrase. There are other education agendas out there that are normally associated with the Clinton camp. Consider, for example the sight of New Jersey's Christine Todd Whitman reeling under a court order to enforce "spending equalization" statewide -- essentially redistributing tax revenues across the state so that all schools spend the same per child.

It would be good to know just which hymnal the Clinton

Administration's New Democrats are singing from on this subject. We're thinking, specifically, of Marshall "Mike" Smith, the acting deputy secretary of education, who spoke on the new standards policy in Thursday's Wall Street Journal, sounding there like a single-minded crusader. The Administration, he

said, was expecting a high failure rate and signaled challenges ahead: "To do well in the national test, curriculum and instruction would have to change."

A look back suggests Mr. Smith has done some shifting himself on this topic. In 1992 a bipartisan group of educators known as the National Council on Education Standards and Testing presented a report recommending national content standards to Congress. Its members included Stanford's then-Dean of Education, Marshall Smith. On the same day the report appeared, 50 members of the educational establishment slammed it, saying "any policy to establish benchmarks for achievement without creating equity in the educational resources available to children would be a cruel hoax." Among the signatories were Marian Wright Edelman, Donna Shalala, and -- Marshall Smith.

We spoke with Mr. Smith about these inconsistencies yesterday. He said he well may have

signed the dissenting statement, adding, of the equity policy, that "I don't disagree with it." Then he went on to argue the importance of standards at the state level in line with the President's. But perhaps someone could clarify just what the Administration's thinking is. If the subject is the relationship between outcomes and resources, we're happy to address it. But this is a matter of infinitely greater complexity and political volatility than mere benchmarks for reading and arithmetic. So which is it? If the Clintonites intend to use the wide support for standards as a cover to push these other, long-standing liberal spending-equalization goals, we wish they'd lay their cards on the table. Someone should ask the President about it, or lacking that opportunity, the First Lady.

State Capitals

Wis. Governor, Chief Spar Over Standards

By Millicent Lawton

When Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin gives his State of the State Address this week, the decibel level in the debate over statewide academic standards may be turned up a notch or two.

And the arguing could get even louder next month when a primary election has the man responsible for the standards, state schools chief John T. Benson, opposed by six people who think they can do his job better than he can.



John T. Benson

The Republican governor is expected to use his speech to try to show up an ongoing standards-writing effort by one of his favorite targets, Mr. Benson and the state education department that he heads. Mr. Thompson may propose his own set of model standards.

The education department just released its second draft version of standards for what students in grades 4, 8, and 12 should know and be able to do in mathematics, science, English, and social studies. The standards are voluntary.

But the governor thinks he can write better standards and plans to say so in his speech, Lt. Gov. Scott McCallum said last week.

Mr. McCallum, also a Republican, shares the governor's complaints. "The first draft [of standards] I said was fuzzy, feel-good. What I want are knowledge-based or fact-based standards that can be objectively tested."

Specific Standards

Mr. McCallum said that the standards are too focused on the process by which students should learn and not enough on the facts they need to know. He said the standards fail to mention Abraham Lincoln and World War II, for example. A copy of the standards does list World War II as one event students should know in the period 1920 to 1945.

The second draft tried to address those kinds of criticisms, Superintendent Benson said in a letter accompanying the document. "You will find a considerably greater degree of specificity without usurping the curricular control of local districts," he wrote.

A counterproposal would pose no problem, said Steven B. Dold, the state's deputy superintendent. "We welcome the governor's involvement in trying to develop a set of standards of which we can all be proud."

Mr. Dold played down differences between Mr. Benson and Mr. Thompson. "They may disagree on some of the details," he said, "but by and large they share a similar vision."

Lt. Gov. McCallum also criticized what he

said was the closed nature of the standards-writing process—despite numerous public forums and wide dissemination of the standards. "Instead of being open and listening," he said of education department officials, "they're trying to justify their approach."

But the process so far has been "a very open discussion," Mr. Dold said.



Gov. Tommy G. Thompson

A History of Animosity

It's no surprise that the governor is finding fault with an effort headed up by Mr. Benson. Mr. Thompson lost an effort to effectively gut Mr. Benson's nonpartisan post when the state supreme court last year nullified a law that would have altered the constitutional of

fice. Mr. Thompson said he wanted to be able to appoint his own Cabinet-level education commissioner. (See *Education Week*, April 10, 1996.)

"There is a history of Thompson and Benson having a fairly acrimonious relationship," said Michael Apple, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "It is very hard to sort out what part of it is the long-term animosity between the governor's office and the department of public instruction and what part of it is political."

The good news about standards

By William J. Moloney

By devoting nearly half of his State of the Union address to education, President Clinton once again demonstrated the power of the "bully pulpit." Regardless of what one thinks of his ideas, the president assuredly has everyone from pundits to politicians talking about education and many sensing the onset of a sea change in how America reforms its troubled schools.

Amidst the president's too numerous to list proposals for bettering education, what is real and what is not? Which might happen, and more importantly, which should happen?

By far the most important element of the president's message was his clarion call for national standards, reinforced by a specific summons to the states to test fourth grade reading and eighth grade math by 1999.

Before liberals and conservatives alike leap to attack these notions, they should carefully understand what is being proposed and more critically, what is not.

Properly understood, national standards are not a federal mandate but rather a consensus benchmark of educational quality for voluntary adherence. The best precedent for this voluntary system of standards is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which

since 1969 has produced what we call "The Nation's Report Card." Over time most states but not all have freely chosen to participate in NAEP and in doing so have given America its only reliable baseline indicator of educational quality as well as a chance to see how their

The most important element of the president's message was his clarion call for national standards.

own student achievement levels stack up against other states and nations. An illustration of the value of such information is the recently released "Quality Counts," the massive state-by-state analysis jointly sponsored by Education Week and the Pew Foundation Charitable Trust in which NAEP data was used to hammer home the disgraceful but instructive truth that less than 30 percent of American children are proficient in either reading or math.

Make no mistake, selling the idea of national standards will not be easy; disparaging attacks from left and right have already begun. Reflexively, conservatives see a federal power grab, and the looming specter of a "national school board" out to micro-manage every classroom in America. Liberals reach essentially the same conclusion albeit from a different direction by

invoking their visceral distaste for anything that smacks of conformity or that might suppress the inalienable right of freelancing teachers to do their own thing once the classroom door is closed. Both sides thus distort national standards into straw men they find easy to demolish. In doing so they ensure that America's reform efforts will continue to flail about in chaotic and wasteful fashion while yet another generation pays the awful price for their ideological shortsightedness.

Amidst this liberal/conservative obtuseness, oddly it is our chameleon-like president — constantly baffling friend and foe alike — who seems to have got the thing right. Skeptics will see this as some poll driven Morrisism served up by the greatest retail politician of the age, but the fact is that on core cultural issues Mr. Clinton has better instincts than any Democrat and as the election showed, he can articulate GOP issues better than any Republican.

In truth, America desperately needs voluntary national standards. 14 years after "A Nation At Risk," education reform remains a bedlam of 50 states and 15,000 school districts independently striving yet unable to even decide what Algebra is, let alone how to test for it. The Ebonics farce was but an extreme example of the ludicrous curricular controversies that rage within every discipline: phonics versus whole language in reading, "Euro-centric" versus multicultural in history, academic versus "hands-on" science, and old versus new math. As the recent TIMSS report showed, the main reason U.S. kids do so poorly in math and science is the highly inconsistent content found in American classrooms.

For over a generation, the Lake Wobegone variety of testing wherein all the kids were literally "above the national average" hid from the American people the tragic extent of their children's achievement deficit. Together with rampant grade inflation (62 percent of all grades are now B or better) these tests validated the widespread denial of America's educational dysfunction. Add to this the unofficial open admissions policy prevailing at 85 percent of America's financially strapped colleges and universities and it is no surprise that accountability has virtually disappeared.

The time for honest testing — however painful — has come. Simply put, without national education standards, there will be no national education revival.

William J. Moloney is Calvert County Superintendent and a member of the Governing Board of the National Assessment of Education Progress.

If Everyone Writes Standards, Who Will Teach?

To the Editor:

Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) wants to leave development of academic standards up to each state. He would further divide the process by passing the job to individual school districts. I wonder if he has any idea of the wasted time and money that result from such buck-passing.

To produce good standards, the best teachers and supervisors must spend long hours, neglecting their responsibility to teach students, as they discuss, argue and revise separate sets of standards for each major subject area. After a set of standards is established, teachers are faced with the daunting task of finding and adapting educational materials to fit the standards.

A proliferation of education standards fails to give students moving from state to state any common educational background. But with national standards, a student moving from Wisconsin to New Mexico could pick up where he or she left off.

CYNTHIA B. ZILLIAC
Evanston, Ill., Feb. 21, 1997

To the Editor:

The tirade against national education standards by Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) is one more example of bad educational policy dictated by someone far removed from the classroom.

No other industrialized country in the world has such a muddled mess of arbitrary curriculums and subjective vision. Governor Thompson should look at Britain, with its very strong national curriculum. In fact, a few savvy schools and educators are emulating it here. How different need a

cooperative activity on chemical bonding in New York be from one in Racine?

MARC ALAN ROSENBERG
Yonkers, Feb. 21, 1997

The writer is a science teacher.

To the Editor:

Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) objects to President Clinton's call for raising education standards because standards, he writes, should be set "from the ground up."

The states are still in charge of

setting standards. What the President has offered is a new opportunity to use accepted national benchmarks in reading and math against which states, school districts and parents can judge student and school performance. The tests are voluntary.

The President's Goals 2000 initiative has provided resources over the last three years to states to develop and implement school standards.

School districts in Wisconsin have used Goals 2000 funds to write more rigorous standards, train teachers to teach more challenging content and design new curriculums. This was a grass-roots process, but Washington helped provide the resources.

Information from national tests will empower parents, teachers and communities, who will know where they stand, leading to more local control, not less.

RICHARD W. RILEY
Secretary of Education
Washington, Feb. 25, 1997

To the Editor:

Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin is right to argue (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) that academic standards should be developed "from the ground up — by parents, teachers, administrators, businesses and local taxpayers." This is ironic, coming from someone who lifted his proposed standards from the Hudson Institute, an Indiana think tank.

ROBERT ALLEN
Middleton, Wis., Feb. 21, 1997

To the Editor:

"Education is a local issue," says Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin (Op-Ed, Feb. 21), because "local taxpayers are the ones who pay for schools." This argument is hardly compelling. The current system of financing education creates one of the most glaring inequalities in our society: Children in wealthy areas enjoy public schools far superior to those in poor areas. It would be much better to pay for education with a Federal tax and spend the same amount on each student nationwide.

TOM WEISS
Boston, Feb. 23, 1997

To the Editor:

Gov. Tommy G. Thompson (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) argues that Wisconsin standards are "rigorous." However, a report this past weekend showed that Wisconsin students performed more

poorly on the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress tests than New Hampshire's students — with 35 percent of fourth graders scoring at "proficiency" levels versus 36 percent in New Hampshire — although an amazing 88 percent of Wisconsin students passed the state's weak current standards and only 29 percent of students passed New Hampshire's far tougher standards.

While overly detailed national standards are not desirable, the nation needs minimum standards in at least math and English, at several grades. This would allow the flexibility Mr. Thompson desires for states and localities to set higher, broader standards. Minimum prerequisites, however, should not be negotiable, and social promotion must be stopped.

THOMAS O'BRIEN
Charlottesville, Va., Feb. 24, 1997
The writer is director of research, Horizon Institute for Policy Solutions.

To the Editor:

The argument against national academic standards made by Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin (Op-Ed, Feb. 21) is based on the flawed assumption that "education is a local issue." Mr. Thompson holds that local initiatives would reflect community needs, so a community with a strong computer industry, for instance, could tailor its math requirements accordingly.

But in the global economy, job markets and industries are not insulated from external factors, and President Clinton's call for national standards reflects this. The well-being of our businesses and workers increasingly depends on the ability of our schools to prepare students to compete in an international context. National standards are an important first step to insure that they do not slip further behind.

CLIFF BROWN
Durham, N.H., Feb. 22, 1997
The writer is an assistant professor of sociology, U. of New Hampshire.

Hopeful

To the editors:

I'm not sure whether Michael Kelly is immoderately cynical or wildly partisan ("Rope-A-Hope," February 10). In either case, his dismissive treatment of President Clinton's vision of hope for the country generally and education specifically misses two remarkably obvious points. First, Americans *want* their president to envision for the country that which they may not or cannot—a better day, a brighter future, a reason to hope. Second, this president has championed some of the most progressive efforts to date to better our public schools and to help provide the opportunity of higher education to everyone. And he will do more still.

In 1995, Clinton launched one of the biggest budget fights over issues like education and crime in presidential history. Clinton's commitment forced an embarrassed Republican Congress to revisit the extreme cuts that forced two government shutdowns and to produce the biggest education budget to date.

Kelly goes out of his way to point out that the education picture for black students is catastrophic with, he says, "nearly half of all black high school seniors in Bill Clinton's America . . . functionally illiterate." But, in FY 1997, President Clinton got a \$464 million increase over 1996 funding for Title I, the Department of Education's primary education program to help low-achieving students—particularly those in high-poverty schools—meet the same challenging academic and content and performance standards

expected of all children. Clinton's 1998 education budget calls for a \$347 million increase in Title I. Clinton has helped raise the maximum Pell Grant by \$400, or 17 percent—from \$2,300 in 1993 to \$2,700 in 1997. On February 6, Clinton announced a 25 percent increase in Pell Grants, up \$1.7 billion, to help raise the maximum award to \$3,000 and provide grants to an additional 348,000 needy students. His "America Reads Challenge" will provide individualized and small-group assistance after school, on weekends and during the summer for K-4 students who are behind in reading.

Kelly is right about one thing—Clinton's visions *are* noble goals. But they are worthy goals, even critical. And it should not be for Kelly to tell us we should not strive for safer schools, higher standards for our children, better access to college. It is for our nation's leader to tell us that we can and that we should.

LESLIE T. THORNTON

U.S. Education Department
Washington, D.C.

February 12, 1997

NEWS BRIEF: KORNFELD AT ED A FEW MORE WEEKS

Leo Kornfeld, the Education Department's leading force behind implementing the Direct Student Loan (DSL) program, has extended his stay at the department through March 1.

Kornfeld had planned to leave office Feb. 10. But since he was out sick for three weeks, Kornfeld said, he will remain longer as the department's chief

information officer, overseeing the computer systems (ED, Dec. 11, 1996).

When Kornfeld announced his resignation in December, he said he wanted to reach a quota of 10 job offers. He didn't get 10, he said in an interview Friday, but has three solid prospects.

Kornfeld would not specify what offers he is considering, but said he's

looking at a group of banks. "I like the shock of it," he said, referring to the fact that DSL cuts lenders out of the student loan business.

Before becoming ED's information officer, Kornfeld served as a senior advisor to Education Secretary Richard Riley for the DSL program. --Rebecca S. Weiner ■

February 12, 1997

CLINTON HITTING THE ROAD FOR STANDARDS PROPOSAL

With an address before the National PTA next week and visits to Georgia, Illinois and Maryland behind him, President Clinton has been busy pushing his education agenda.

The president met with Maryland state lawmakers Monday to lobby for state support of standardized tests that would measure fourth- and eighth-grade students' performance nationally and internationally (ED, Feb. 5).

He stressed that his agenda isn't meant to carve more federal control of education, but aims to set higher benchmarks for basic skills. "From Maryland to Michigan to Montana, reading is reading and math is math," he said.

Clinton plans to mark President's Day by continuing his education "crusade" at the National PTA's legislative meeting in Washington, D.C. That event is to be the sixth in a series of education-related appearances since Clinton's second inauguration Jan. 20.

He has traveled to Chicago to discuss testing standards with school officials and parents.

He also laid out his 10-point education agenda during his State of the Union address Feb. 4, followed by a trip to Georgia to promote his plans for \$1,500 non-refundable tax credits for the first two years of postsecondary education, called Hope Scholarships.

Last Saturday, during a national radio address, Clinton touted his

technology plan for schools by announcing the first recipients of Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grants (ED, Feb. 11).

He proposed an 11 percent increase for Education Department appropriations next year, but that is only the third-largest raise a president has requested for ED in the past decade.

Just before Clinton took office in 1993, President Bush proposed an increase of 14.3 percent for fiscal 1994, not including mandatory spending, according to an ED staffer.

Clinton's fiscal 1997 budget request was a 12.3 percent increase over the prior-year appropriations, which Congress hadn't completed at the time. --Rebecca S. Weiner ■

The Education Beat

Md. doesn't need to add achievement standards

■ *Testing: President Clinton's call for national standards would give Maryland students another layer of tests they don't need.*

By MIKE BOWLER
SUN STAFF

BOB SOMERBY, a Baltimore comedian, is one of the few people on the planet who makes a living telling jokes. But Somerby is deadly serious about education. He taught fifth grade in Baltimore for a dozen years and knows something about the multiple problems facing city schools. One of them is not a lack of standards, Somerby believes. President Clinton's call for "national" standards is a joke, he says. And Somerby knows from jokes.

He also makes a good point. There is no shortage of education standards in Maryland, or in Baltimore. Nor is there a shortage of tests to measure how far students are from meeting the standards. In embracing the president's call for national fourth- and eighth-grade tests in reading and mathematics, Maryland education officials have committed the schools to still another layer of testing on top of the thick sediment already in place.

In Baltimore, this will make another major test — the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program exams required by the state, the Baltimore Quarterly Assessment (a MSPAP-like test launched last fall without consultation with teachers) and now the new national tests.

Let us count three ways this is a bad idea:

- The majority of states have standards for student

achievement. Maryland's MSPAP, as Clinton said Monday in Annapolis, is held up as a national model. It's true that the states' standards are dramatically different from one another. A national "report card" issued a couple of weeks ago by the trade publication *Education Week* made that clear, but that's to be expected in a nation in which education is so deliberately decentralized.

- We already have a National Assessment of Educational Progress — or lack of it. It's almost 30 years old. It tests reading and math and other disciplines and allows states to compare themselves with one another. Forty-five states participate. The results, issued periodically, are always dismal. For example, Maine had the best score in the nation on the 1994 NAEP fourth-grade reading test, yet 59 percent of its fourth-graders could not read proficiently.

Here's a sample problem from the NAEP eighth-grade math test, on which 80 percent of Maryland 13-year-olds could not demonstrate proficiency two years ago: Tracy said, "I can multiply 6 by another number and get an answer that is smaller than 6." Pat said, "No, you can't. Multiplying 6 by another number always makes the number 6 or larger." Who is correct? Give a reason for your answer.

If four-fifths of Maryland eighth-graders aren't able to discern that Tracy is correct, is the solution to set the bar still higher? Isn't the solution to teach youngsters to multiply at a younger age than 13?

- Math is probably the easiest field in which to set standards and perhaps the only one in which it would be possible to get agreement on a set of national goals. (The mathematicians already have agreed on common standards.) NAEP has managed to avoid controversy by making state participation voluntary

(which Clinton says his tests also will be) and by allowing score comparisons only at the state level. There's huge disagreement on standards in fields other than mathematics, as the historians proved in trying to set history standards a couple of years ago. Why waste the time and money?

This isn't to say that the federal government has no legitimate role in helping schools. But why not assist students in meeting the standards that are already in place? There's no need for a "national test testing the standards," as the chief standard-bearer put it in Annapolis on Monday.

Clear national standards could improve academics

If $X+Y=Z$ in Philadelphia, does it equal Z in Los Angeles? If it does, shouldn't students in both cities reach that answer when confronted with the same problem?

That's what national educational standards would require. President Clinton, in his State of the Union address last week, urged Americans to embark on a "national crusade for educational standards."

The Democratic president's imprimatur may, however, be enough to kill Americans' taste for standards. Many critics decry national educational standards as a liberal-elfist-teachers plot. But that's a misplaced, ideological reaction to specific problems in past proposals.

As a concept, national educational standards are as common-sensical as carrying an umbrella in the rain. Algebra is algebra in Kentucky or Kansas. Sentence fragments in Georgia don't spontaneously unite into complete sentences in Nevada.

Americans are highly mobile, and our educational systems are extremely decentralized. Right now, students moving from state to state — or even transferring within a district — can find themselves completely lost in their new classes. Employers and colleges don't know what to expect from recent high school graduates. And the nation's young people can't compete with students from other countries.

National educational standards are not "federal" standards anymore than the National Football League is a federal agency. Teachers, parents and employers can work together to set reasonable standards.

The National Center on Education and the Economy has done just that. It created remarkably jargon-free, noncontroversial standards for math, science and language arts. For example, all children would have to read 25 books per year — but each district would devise its own reading list.

"New Standards" guidebooks also include examples of student work, culled from thousands of samples, that meet requirements. Teachers, parents and students can look

at the samples to understand the level of performance expected. Fort Worth is experimenting with New Standards in a dozen schools this year.

National standards should be viewed, one supporter said, as "a floor, not a ceiling." Every district can try to exceed them. For instance, President Clinton and Texas Gov. George Bush emphasize that children must read at grade level by at least fourth grade to succeed in school. Why not also require every child to study a second language well before starting high school? America's children will not achieve unless they know what they are expected to do. National standards will make that clear.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, continued...

Last action: H.R. 656 was introduced Feb. 10 by Rep.

Spencer Bachus, R-Ala.; referred to the House Ways and Means Committee. S. 285 was introduced Feb. 6 by Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala.; referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

Next action: None scheduled.

*Tax Exempt Scholarships H.R. 553: Would exclude scholarships and fellowships from federal income tax calculations, restore the deduction for interest on education loans, and permit

penalty-free withdrawal from individual retirement plans to pay higher education expenses.

Last action: Introduced Feb. 4 by Rep. David Price, D-N.C.

referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Next action: No action scheduled.

*English As Official U.S. Language H.R. 622: Would declare English the official language of the United States by amending title 4 of the United States Code. H. J. Res. 37: Would do the same

by proposing an amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

Last action: H.R. 622 was introduced Feb. 5 by Rep. Bob Stump, R-Ariz.; referred to the House Education and the Workforce Committee and to the House Judiciary Committee.

H.J. Res. 37 was introduced Feb. 4 by Rep. John Doolittle, R-Calif.; referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Next action: None scheduled. --V. Casey Gonzalez, Laureen Lazarovici

EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

February 18, 1997

ATTITUDES SETTING STANDARDS TOO LOW, URBAN LEADERS SAY

Efforts to drive students to higher achievement with national standards may be suffocated by their negative attitudes, researchers and school administrators agreed Friday.

If students continue to equate being smart with selling out, achievement will stagnate, said panelists at a National Urban League forum on school reform in Washington, D.C.

"Pressure from peers not to achieve can undermine their ability to succeed," said Hugh Price, president of the group.

Yet the panelists agreed that some form of national standards and assessments, which President Clinton has been promoting as part of his education agenda, also could play a role in reforming students' attitudes.

Laurence Steinberg, a psychology professor at Temple University, said minimum national standards and performance-based examinations for grade promotion and graduation would show students that working hard pays off. He also said remedial courses should be eliminated at colleges and universities because they reward failure.

Down On Learning

"We must recognize that the anti-achievement attitudes held in many peer groups come in part from socializing students within an educational system that neither rewards

excellence nor punishes failure," he said.

Steinberg said his research has shown students cannot succeed in school unless both parents and peers value academic achievement. But he added that "parental irresponsibility" is only part of the picture.

One in five high school students say their friends make fun of people who try to do well in school. Steinberg found in interviewing more than 20,000 students. He added that one in six students deliberately hides their intelligence or interest in school because they are "worried what their friends might think."

Steinberg said anti-education attitudes show up at all socioeconomic levels. "Much of the good work that many black and Latino parents are doing at home is being undone by countervailing pressures in their youngsters' peer groups," he said.

"In many minority peer groups, scholastic success is equated with selling out one's cultural identity, as some sort of surrender to the control of white, middle-class America," he added.

Afraid Of Books

Michael Johnson, principal of the Science Skills Center High School in New York City, said one of his students asked for two sets of books, so he wouldn't be seen walking between school and home with them.

"We have young men who are afraid

to carry books," he said.

"They have to walk through a gauntlet to get to school."

Panelists accused media images that glorify sports and material goods of adding to students' negative perceptions of learning. "We have to stop talking about basketball and sports," Johnson said. "Education is the road that will lead to success."

Steinberg said businesses that complain about unskilled workers, yet market to teenagers, are part of the attitude problem: "I find it ironic that many of the very same companies that work so hard to draw youngsters' attention away from school and into shopping malls are those that complain the loudest about the poor quality of the American workforce."

Support To Succeed

Vinetta Jones, national director of Equity 2000, a program sponsored by the College Board to encourage higher math standards in poor areas, said raising expectations works.

Jones said that by requiring all students in the Equity 2000 program to take algebra and geometry by the 10th grade, students are encouraged to take other advanced and college prep courses (ED, Nov. 15, 1996). --Rebecca S. Weiner

Crew to Add Performance Standards to Superintendents' Contracts

By JACQUES STEINBERG

Saying he was deeply disturbed by state reports that showed New York City schools trailing well behind the rest of the state in reading and math achievement, Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew said yesterday that he would use the findings to help develop performance goals that district superintendents would have to meet or risk losing their jobs.

Dr. Crew said that under the authority the State Legislature granted him last month to hire and dismiss superintendents, he intended to write performance standards directly into the administrators' contracts, committing them to raise achievement by a specified percentage over a particular period of time.

He also said that he would begin a sweeping examination to determine which schools are spending their money well — and which are not — before he considers asking the state or city for additional resources.

And he said he would soon convene a series of boroughwide meetings for parents to discuss the results of the state tests, as well as those of city-

administered reading and math tests, which he released yesterday and which largely mirrored the state findings. The parents, he said, need to know that their role is crucial to turning the results around.

"You will not hear us being defensive about this," the Chancellor told reporters at Board of Education headquarters in downtown Brooklyn. "This can't stand. This can't be the way that New York City schools operate."

For the schools in the system, and around the state, yesterday was a day of discussion, introspection and, in many cases, confusion, as teachers, principals and parents began examining the findings.

Dr. Marlene Lazar, the principal of Louis D. Brandeis High School on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, which placed among the bottom 10 high schools in the state, said she welcomed the release of the report as setting a base line for future growth.

"This is something we all need," Dr. Lazar said. "We value the direction the state is moving us in. There

A message: Raise achievement levels or lose your job.

are obstacles to overcome."

But Hector Rivera, the principal of Middle School 136 in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, questioned why his school ranked among the lowest in the state on the ninth-grade mathematics Regents examination.

The school only runs to the eighth grade, he said, but administers the ninth-grade test to 13 high-achieving eighth graders as a preview of what they can expect the following year.

"What you've now dictated to me," said Mr. Rivera, "is that I cannot have high expectations, because if I do I'll be put on a list that says I am one of the 10 worst schools in the state."

Nonetheless, some principals were already vowing yesterday to change their strategies as a result of the

reports. Sheila Hurdle, the principal of Public School 113 on Morningside Heights in Manhattan, said she had erred by spending too much time last year preparing her students for the new city reading test, and not enough time for the older state test.

On the state test, only 7 percent of third-grade students in the school were found to be reading at grade level — one of the worst performances in New York.

"That will never happen again here," she said.

The reports by the State Education Department, for all 4,098 schools in New York State, found that only 30 percent of third graders in New York City read at or above grade level, half the statewide average. The gap narrowed, but did not disappear, when students from similar backgrounds in the city and the rest of the state, including those who speak English as a second language, were compared with each other.

Dr. Crew did not dispute the state findings. He said the results of a new standardized reading test administered in the city for the time last year

— one that replaced fill-in-the-blank questions with those requiring more thoughtful responses — showed that 43.3 percent of students in the third through sixth grades were reading at grade level.

And that, he said, was far from heartening.

"The issue of reading is the single most important issue in the school system right now," he said. "Nothing else moves to the front of the line."

He said he would be meeting, in the coming months, with all 32 community school board superintendents and their boards to discuss the results and the targets that each district would be expected to meet. Dr. Crew said the performance standards, which would be customized for each district, would be based on annual reports on achievement like those that he released yesterday.

And he said he was eager to open discussions on a new front: how technological advances, including sophisticated CD-ROM's that simulate standardized reading tests, might be incorporated into some classrooms to boost achievement.

Dr. Crew said he was more pleased with the results of the city-administered math tests. He said 61.8 percent of elementary school students were found to be achieving on their grade level last year, an increase of 4.1 percentage points over the 1994 school year.

more...

Performance Standards

continued...

Dr. Crew also said he intended to develop a system of incentives — he said he had not determined whether it would be monetary — to reward schools that had made great improvements or had performed substantially better than other schools with children of similar backgrounds.

To that end, he released an "honor roll" of more than a dozen such schools yesterday. They include Public School 308 in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, where 79.9 percent of elementary school students scored at or above grade level on the city reading test last year, although nearly all of the students live at the poverty level. The scores were almost double those at similar schools.

Behind the delay: Why the schools' standards are still low

Raising the bar means lower test scores. Parents, educators, even Realtors have a problem with that.

By Dale Mezzacappa

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

President Clinton says he wants them.

So do nearly all the nation's governors and its corporate titans.

School boards, principals, teachers and teachers' unions voice support. Parents agree it is high time.

Although at least two decades old, the call for rigorous academic standards has swelled in recent months to a thunderous anthem.

Too many children, the refrain goes, are sliding through the public schools learning too little. If the United States is to remain a global competitor, now is the time to raise the educational bar cross-country.

Extolling higher expectations and tougher testing is one thing. It is quite another to stomach the reality: that all but the very top students tend, at least at first, to come out looking pretty bad.

Consider the results from the New Standards Project at the University of Pittsburgh. After working for six years, with funding from as many as 23 states and seven cities, a team of educators there recently finished a set of prototype national standards based on the skill levels expected in industrialized countries.

The group also designed companion tests and, last May, gave them to 32,000 fourth, eighth and 10th graders around the U.S.

In the writing portion, which included essays, just 16.5 percent of the fourth graders, 20.4 percent of the eighth graders, and 7 percent of the high school sophomores met or exceeded the standard. In reading, the numbers were only slightly better.

In basic math skills, one-third of the fourth and 10th graders and one-half of the eighth graders tested at the standard or above, but when it came to using those skills to solve problems, there was a precipitous drop in scores. Only 11.7 percent of the 10th graders, for instance, met that standard.

Lauren Resnick, the New Standards

director, is not surprised.

"We know what's taught in the schools," she says, "and what isn't."

But dismal scores shock the daylights out of parents. There were fireworks in New York this year, for example, after the state education department administered new achievement tests using a tougher standard of assessment.

In such well-heeled suburban districts as Scarsdale and Roslyn, where 90 percent of the students typically test at or above grade level, only about 60 percent met the higher standard. Superintendents and principals found themselves scratching for explanations to appease parents, and real estate agents reported losing home sales.

Perhaps anticipating even more flare-ups, Clinton warned a Michigan audience this month that "some of our children will not do very well at first" on the national "voluntary" tests in math and reading that he has proposed for fourth and eighth graders. If so, he added, "it's probably more our fault than theirs."

The likelihood of exposing profound weaknesses in American education is just one reason why it has been so difficult to move academic standards out of the realm of rhetoric and into the real world. An Alpine range of obstacles, not the least of them political, looms in the way.

New Jersey wrote and, last May, adopted its own standards in seven academic subjects and five "workplace-readiness" skill areas. The effort took four years, spanned the administrations of two governors, and was attended by argument over everything from content to money.

Yet New Jersey's experience was a relative breeze compared to that of Pennsylvania, which started earlier but has not come nearly as far.

In Pennsylvania, the education department has tried since the early 1990s to write its own set of standards for commonwealth schools. Its first effort — outcome-based education, or OBE — was mired in protest.

The religious right claimed that OBE was a state plot to wrest control of students' minds. Other critics complained that the outcomes were vague and impossible to test. OBE eventually became part of the state's school code, but it has not been forced on districts.

Now Pennsylvania is crafting new — and, according to Gov. Ridge, improved — standards, but the wrangling has resumed. Originally due in December, draft standards in math and reading have yet to appear. An education department spokesman said the governor's standards commission expected to issue a report within the next few weeks, but he added that it would take much longer for any standards to go into effect.

Theodore Hershberg, for one, does not want to wait for Harrisburg. Over the last year, the University of Pennsylvania public-policy and history professor, best known as an ardent booster of regional cooperation through his Center for Greater Philadelphia, has led another crusade — to convince school officials in the suburbs around Philadelphia that, regardless of how highly ranked their districts are, they must begin to think seriously about raising standards.

Having beaten the drums at conferences and made the rounds of chambers of commerce and Rotary Clubs, Hershberg says he finds it "fascinating why people can't catch on to the need to change."

"There's a sedative at work," he says. "Suburban parents talk about how lousy the [city] schools are: 'We're OK; those are the problems.' There should be no comfort in those comparisons."

The more meaningful measuring stick, he says, is global. Looking at the rest of the world, and at the Pacific Rim in particular, "it's clear they're demanding more of their kids than we are."

Of the 60 districts in the region, 54 showed up at a meeting Hershberg hosted in October to introduce his New Standards in Education.

Nine — Upper Darby, Radnor, William Penn and Rose Tree-Media in

MORE...

Delaware County, Hatboro-Horsham and Methacton in Montgomery County, Great Valley in Chester County, and Palisades and Neshaminy in Bucks County — formed a task force to explore how they and other districts could develop common standards and tests.

Ultimately, Hershberg wants the districts to write their own standards or adopt those recently drafted by the Pittsburgh-based group, but before that, he says, they have to prep their communities for what could be strong medicine.

School officials "worry what it would mean in the press," he says. "If they list the results and people compare them, it could show a gap that would reflect badly on a district. People are struggling over what to do about it."

Indeed, many superintendents say it is risky even to admit that higher standards are in order. While they may concede privately that they are dissatisfied with students' achievement levels, they are loath to express it to parents paying top-dollar taxes to live in those districts.

"You can't really go out as a superintendent and admit you have developmental needs," says Frank Congdon, an assistant superintendent in the Methacton district. "Potentially, it gets you killed. You give your opponents an argument to defeat you."

The notion of demanding more from American students goes back a bit. It enjoyed a burst of public support when the Russians beat the United States into space with Sputnik in 1957, and again in the late 1970s, when SAT scores started to slide nationwide.

What really set the movement rolling, though, was "A Nation at Risk," a 1983 expose of public schools by the National Commission on Education and the Economy.

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war," the authors declared. "As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves."

Rigorous academic standards, enforced across the country, seemed an obvious answer, but that only gave rise to more questions, chiefly: Who should write them, and what should they contain?

The first to issue standards was the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which sought to refocus math instruction from basic skills and

memorization to real-world problem solving. That would have required serious classroom changes — such as introducing algebra much earlier, combining subjects traditionally taught separately, and concentrating on a few concepts rather than giving cursory coverage to many.

Similar efforts by teacher groups soon followed in other subject areas, from science and health to English, history and the arts.

In 1989, politicians and business leaders weighed in. At an education summit called by President Bush, the nation's governors and corporate leaders declared that American students would be "number one in the world in science and math" by the turn of the century. They set up Goals 2000, a federal program to funnel money to states for school improvement.

A panel convened by the governors, however, quickly concluded that goals were not enough. Only national standards, the members said, would allow the country to realize such grand ambitions.

In polls then and now, most Americans endorsed the idea, saying they want their children to be able to compete in a global economy. Scratch the surface, though, and the apparent consensus falls apart.

Conservatives say they do not like the idea of "big-brother" intrusion in local schools. Liberals complain that higher standards would discriminate against poor minority students, most of whom attend troubled schools. Both sides balk at the notion of creating a national body of knowledge.

Not surprisingly then, the standards written by teacher groups for English and history have bitten the dust, the former lambasted as too full of jargon and the latter denounced by the U.S. Senate for not sufficiently celebrating American heroes.

Those by the Mathematics Council have had somewhat more impact, influencing textbooks and spawning curricula, but they have not transformed the way math is taught in most classrooms.

Enter the New Standards Project. Shortly after the summit, the Pittsburgh-based group set out to write "user-friendly" standards.

Typically, standards are "extended narrative statements about what kids ought to know and be able to do," says Mark Tucker, head of the National Center on Education and the Economy, a sponsor of the New Standards Project,

"but at the end of the day, it's unclear how well kids have to do them."

Unlike any others, the New Standards offer examples of high-quality student work, as well as work that does not cut it.

The group also developed tests in four areas: English and language arts, science, math, and "applied learning" (the ability to solve problems, communicate, use technology, and work with others).

While the English tests contain some familiar multiple-choice questions, most of the exams require students to do much more, such as solve problems, write essays or fiction, and describe how they would plan an event. In the math tests, they must explain, in writing, how they arrived at their answers.

Because most of the grading cannot be done by machine, the tests are more expensive to use than traditional ones.

The group now is trying to interest states and school districts in its standards and assessments, as well as in a training program for teachers. Among potential customers, one of the most enthusiastic has been New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew, who has proposed adopting the New Standards wholesale for his district.

"They are the best available national standards," he says, so why try to reinvent the wheel?

Crew, however, is the exception. All but two of the states (Wyoming and Iowa), plus an untold number of school districts, have gone about drafting their own standards. Their reasoning is that parents and teachers are more likely to support homegrown standards than anything handed down from on high. Still, in many of these efforts, the New Standards have been a common resource.

While Bob Casey was governor, Pennsylvania chipped in as one of the original funders of the New Standards Project. Under Ridge, it dropped out, but now the chairman of Ridge's own standards commission, Alcoa CEO and Pittsburgher Paul O'Neill, says that he likes the New Standards and that his panel's work has been influenced by them.

Philadelphia borrowed heavily from them in writing its own, which David Hornbeck ordered shortly after becoming superintendent. The standards, put into effect this year, are not a curriculum, and they do not dictate to teachers how to meet them, but the district has contracted with the Pittsburgh group to provide guidance in two of its 22 clusters of schools.

Barbara Schiffman and her third graders at John Hancock Elementary are

MAKE...

pioneers of sorts. On a recent morning at the Northeast Philadelphia school, Schiffman asked her students what it takes to get an A in writing. Hands shot up.

"We need to come up with good ideas," said a boy named Ray.

"We have to put our sentences in order," Ashley chimed in.

"We have to stay on topic," Devon added.

"And have a beginning, middle and end," ventured Samantha.

"You guys came up with the exact same criteria I came up with!" Schiffman declared. "... It means you know what's expected of you."

Giving students specific goals — and believing that, with enough time and the right help, they all can meet them — is a hallmark of the "standards-driven" class.

Schiffman makes sure that her third graders — a racially mixed group, with African American children bused in from other parts of the city — know what constitutes quality work. It is part of the discussion every day.

Schiffman has abandoned much of the traditional script, the one in which a teacher presents a lesson, gives a test to produce a grade, then moves on to the next lesson, whether or not most of the students have learned the first.

She still uses tests but more as a diagnostic tool for figuring out who needs extra attention. Those children also get thick packets of homework, plus a letter to be signed by their parents.

"The test," she says, "is just a jumping-off point."

In math, her students use a textbook series from Houghton-Mifflin that incorporates the standards written by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in the 1980s. Instead of the

usual third-grade fare — work sheets of addition, subtraction and multiplication problems — her students are more likely to be analyzing data, making bar graphs, and figuring probabilities. They also must explain, in writing, how they solved a problem.

"Nothing is taught in isolation," Schiffman says. "It's not simply a matter of students learning a skill to be tested on. They realize they learn things that are going to be required of them later in life."

For teachers like Schiffman who are on the standards frontier, the future is a bit less clear. The set of citywide standards she now uses could change when Pennsylvania completes its own standards. And if Clinton's plan for national testing flies and the state buys in, it could all change again.

Having tough standards, advocates say, is only the beginning. Then you need to make them work.

And that process runs into resistance as "people begin to understand... that we're really talking about revolutionizing the way schools do business," says Kate Nolan, a former New Standards staffer who has helped write Philadelphia's set.

Those changes can include not only the retraining of teachers but also the restructuring of the school day. Another big step: withholding promotions, and ultimately diplomas, from students who fail to reach the bar. Some could end up having to stay in school until age 19 or 20, while others could be out at 15.

Virginia Gov. George Allen has been one of the few to venture into that minefield. His state's new standards are considered among the most clear and rigorous in the nation. Last month, he announced that, starting in 2001, students would be required to pass a graduation

test based on those standards. Immediately, the teachers' union urged a delay.

New Jersey plans to put teeth in its standards by at least 2002. Its students already have to pass tests in math, reading and writing to graduate, but those tests are not now tied to the standards. Over the next five years, tests based on the standards, including a foreign language, will be phased in. Students will get three chances to pass them in order to get a diploma.

The Milwaukee School District forged ahead with a similar plan two years ago. It also gave students three chances — once in their junior year and twice in their senior year — to pass a rigorous, standards-based math test. Those who flunked could not graduate.

The first year, 21 percent passed, which was worse than even cynics had expected. Later, the citizenry was outraged and humiliated when House Speaker Newt Gingrich cited that as proof that American education had gone into the Dumpster.

Instead of retreating from the test, however, the district beefed up its teacher training, teachers tried new classroom strategies, the city put more resources into the schools, residents volunteered to tutor, and students got serious.

When the tests were given again six months later, 55 percent passed. Eventually, 80 percent met the standard.

Milwaukee's experience, Nolan says, shows that standards cannot work unless almost everything about schools, and about their communities, changes.

"If we really believed that all students could learn to high levels," she says, "our schools would be very different places." ■

Set firm standards

State's public school students need goals

The onset of baseball season reminds us of a joke about a flustered manager who goes to the mound to talk with his feckless pitcher, who, during several innings, has given up a dozen or so hits. "Don't take me out, Skip," he pleads, "I feel great." To which the manager replies, "Got to son, 'your fielders are exhausted from chasing down balls.'"

That whimsical story came to mind the other day after the University of California Board of Regents endorsed tougher math and English standards for high school students. The board's action comes amid recent reports that an alarming percentage of college freshmen in the UC and California State University systems are taking remedial math and English. For instance, more than half who entered the CSU system last fall were unable to handle college-level math, while 43 percent were sub-par in English.

It's mind-boggling that thousands of college students are obliged to bone up on basic skills they should have acquired by the time they graduated from high school. Particularly when they finished in the top one-third of their graduating classes.

Meantime, a consortium of educators, the Education Round Table, is mulling over a draft of minimum scholastic standards that students ought to meet in order to compete in the global marketplace. Once adopted, mind you, these standards would be voluntary and fall well below UC admission standards. State schools chief Delaine Eastin, who is pushing instead for mandatory academic standards, says that anything less would be "loopy."

She's right. But don't look for educators or state lawmakers to raise the academic bar anytime soon. That's because doing so would create problems for many schools and parents alike.

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that students who failed to read at grade level were held back until they met the standard. Were that to happen, California high schools wouldn't be granting diplomas to 17-year-olds who are functional illiterates. To enforce that common-sense standard, however, would create all manner of tension be-

tween teachers, administrators and parents. That's why the public schools promote the kid and hope he gets up to speed somewhere along the educational assembly line.

Which brings us back to the baseball gag.

Like those fictitious fielders bushed by chasing down base hits, our guess is that many of you have become as weary as we of being told repeatedly that things are going to get better in our schools because of this reform or that task-force report.

Instead of trying to re-invent the wheel every so often, schools should be setting learning standards for each grade and then holding kids to them. Were that to happen, businesses would not be spending a small fortune teaching their employees the basics, and colleges wouldn't be wasting time and resources remediating high school graduates.

This is precisely the kind of public accountability we keep hearing about from educational reformers, but has been painfully slow to materialize. Nor will it happen until students and teachers understand that their actions, or lack thereof, have consequences.

SACRAMENTO BEE

MAR 31 1997

The school construction crisis

One of the more promising developments of this slow-moving legislative session cropped up this week when Assembly Speaker Cruz Bustamante and Senate President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer announced the formation of a special bipartisan committee to develop a long-term plan for financing one of the state's most pressing needs: construction of new schools for a burgeoning student population and renovation of existing facilities that are crumbling and ill-equipped for the technological age.

It is along partisan lines that past efforts to solve the school construction funding crisis have often broken down. The effort to reach consensus about how to pay for a staggering backlog of needs - an estimated \$12 billion to \$33 billion statewide over the next decade - must be joined seriously. This will undoubtedly require some give all around - from Democrats who have blocked Republican efforts to cap the fees that local school districts can charge developers to cover school construction costs; from Republicans who have resisted Democrats' efforts to make it any easier for local districts to pass school construction bonds, which now require a two-thirds vote.

What this new committee should be able to agree on at the outset is the scope of the problem. A combination of factors - the growing number of school-age children of baby-boom parents, immigration, higher school attendance and rising birth-

rates among blacks and Hispanics - have combined to make California the state with the fastest-growing student population in the country. An estimated 1 million more students - an increase of 18 percent over the current rolls of 5.8 million - are expected here by the year 2006.

And the wildly popular, possibly expanding, class-size reduction initiative in the early grades has compounded the already enormous needs at elementary schools. Many schools have been making room for the smaller and thus more numerous classes by converting libraries, music rooms and science laboratories to classroom space. But those makeshift solutions are hardly ideal, and they shouldn't be permanent.

The last statewide school bond, a \$3 billion measure, was approved last spring; it was the first bond to be placed on the ballot by the Legislature in two years and the first to pass since 1992. The Legislature failed to agree on the terms for placement of a \$4 billion measure on the ballot last fall.

That kind of spotty progress won't begin to erode that backlog unless bonds are put on the statewide ballot and approved by voters more regularly. If the committee can agree to do that, and bring along the rest of the Legislature and the governor (who has already expressed interest in a solution), it will have done yeoman's work.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 1997

Lawmakers question accreditation standards

Tests and timing are among issues

BY PAMELA STALLSMITH

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Lawmakers told state education officials yesterday that too many unanswered questions remain about proposed school accreditation standards.

Uncertainties abound about new test requirements for high school students and the financial implications to local school systems, members of the House Education Committee said.

One lawmaker disputed the assertion by Richard T. La Pointe, state superintendent of instruction, that the standards would be "budget neutral" and not incur costs.

"The standards will create a major fiscal impact unless the state pays," said Del. James H. Dillard II, R-Fairfax. "I think we have some problems here."

Del. Alan A. Diamonstein, D-Newport News, questioned what he called the "quick timing" of the standards, which were released in February and are intended to go into effect July 27.

"There have been a lot of questions that haven't been answered," Diamonstein told La Pointe.

La Pointe said virtually every newspaper in the state has editorially backed the proposals, and that people's questions would likely be answered during the public hearings and comment period that is under way.

The standards are part of Gov. George Allen's education reform initiative in Virginia.

The proposed standards call for stricter graduation requirements; a greater focus on the core academic subjects of English, math, science and history; end-of-course testing in those areas, which would in turn be tied to a school's accreditation; and a school report card that would include

a number of factors, including test scores and attendance.

Students in 11th grade would have to pass tests in those core subjects to graduate.

The state Board of Education, whose members were appointed by the Republican governor, has held three of nine statewide public hearings on the standards. Locally, a hearing will take place April 15 at Highland Springs High School in Henrico County.

The public comment period ends May 17, and the board intends to conduct a final review of the proposed standards at its May 22 meeting.

Lawmakers also questioned how the increased course requirements would affect vocational education and fine arts classes, and expressed concern that requirements for the number of hours spent teaching each subject might restrict a teacher's flexibility.

"We're going to improve the educational program in the core subjects, but we don't believe it's at the expense of elective areas," La Pointe said.

While the Virginia Association of School Superintendents supports the board's intention to raise academic

achievement, doubts exist about the standards' fairness, effects and financial impact.

"I believe that the Board of Educa-

tion is acting in haste, before resolving critical issues, which have a serious impact on the lives of individual children," Philip L. Worrell, superintendent of Greensville County and a representative of the association, told the committee.

Later this month, students in grades three, five, eight and 11 will take pilot tests for the new statewide exams, which will be part of the accreditation program.

Worrell said no information has yet been provided on what the passing level will be. Tests are supposed to be held in March, even though the exams are supposed to cover a whole year's worth of material, he said. Remediation programs could carry a cost, he said.

"It is not fair to wait until a student is in high school or eighth grade and suddenly require passing several new tests for which parents, students and teachers have not been informed," he said.

USA TODAY APRIL 3, 1997 A11

EDUCATION STANDARDS: A top California education official and 248 high-tech executives endorsed national learning achievement tests. President Clinton, at a White House ceremony, said the support provides "powerful new momentum" to his push for national education standards. Among those signing on was Delaine Eastin, California's elected state superintendent of public instruction. She promised to "work on this on a high priority basis." But it requires approval by the Board of

Public Education, which is appointed by Gov. Pete Wilson. He has balked at such testing in the past. Maryland, Michigan and North Carolina have committed to participate.

ORLANDO SENTINEL, Feb. 17, 1997

Educator: Let's set national standards

□ A theme of Clinton's inaugural address, the idea of tougher testing is catching on.

By Linda K. Wertheimer

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

A U.S. Education Department official urged the nation's school chiefs Saturday to support President Clinton's goal to give students national tests in reading and math.

The tests would gauge how fourth- and eighth-graders compare with their peers abroad, said Gerald Tirozzi, the U.S. assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education, during an education conference in Orlando.

"If people don't participate, over time, you're going to find more and more citizens wanting to know how our students are doing compared with others internationally," Tirozzi said.

But as is the case with most of Clinton's recommendations, the federal government cannot force school districts to give new tests, he said.

Tirozzi led one of numerous sessions during the annual convention of the American Association of School Administrators at the Orange County Convention Center.

Some 11,000 superintendents and other administrators are attending the conference, which began Friday and ends Monday with a speech by former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo. Former Vice President Dan Quayle is the featured speaker today.

In his State of the Union address Feb. 4, Clinton outlined a slew of goals to improve American schools. High on his list was test-

ing all fourth- and eighth-graders on tough national standards. Various national education groups have been creating standards in math, social studies and other subjects. Some national tests exist, but not all school districts give them.

The federal government will pay for developing national exams. It now is looking for school districts to volunteer to try the tests later this year and in 1998, Tirozzi said. The first national test would be offered to all schools in 1999.

"Let's raise the bar," he said. "Let's set the standards high."

Many states set new standards, but the requirements were not high enough, Tirozzi said. He referred to a recent report by *Education Week*. For example, in one state, 88 percent of the students passed state reading exams, but only 17 percent passed a reading exam designed to be comparable with what students are tested on internationally.

Paul Hagerty, superintendent of Seminole County schools, said Florida is creating tougher standards.

But Hagerty agreed with Tirozzi that the country must set higher academic standards to help America compete economically with other countries.

"The more we can use national and international standards, the better off we'll be," he said.

Other school administrators said Tirozzi made them more optimistic about the future of American education. They don't see Clinton's plans as an attempt to control what school districts do.

"I'm encouraged if they follow through with what they're saying," said Phil Morton, superintendent of the East Windsor, Conn., school system.

Tirozzi predicted Congress will support most of the plan.

"Education is our No. 1 priority," he told the superintendents. "These are the things we're going to do. We have to move quickly. We have to move aggressively and with confidence."

Leave Standards to the States

By Tommy G. Thompson

Academic standards are a hot topic of discussion from the White House to the schoolhouse. But President Clinton's call for national standards for elementary, middle and high schools is cause for concern as well as comfort.

While it is helpful for the President to impress upon the nation the need for rigorous academic standards, it would be wrong for the White House or Congress to start mandating what those standards should be. There is great concern among those involved in education at state and local levels that once Washington creates national standards, mandates will follow.

It should be up to states and local school boards to decide what students need to learn. Education is a local issue. This is the way our parents and communities want it, and that is how it should be. After all, the states and local taxpayers are the ones who pay for schools.

That is why Goals 2000, President Clinton's laudable effort to improve education, has languished: It came

Tommy G. Thompson is Governor of Wisconsin.

National tests are the wrong way to improve our schools.

from Washington, became embroiled in Washington politics and was perceived by the public as an attempt by the Federal Government to meddle in local school issues. Even though the program offered states money to pursue the national goals, state and local educators and parents were leery of Washington's involvement.

Setting world-class standards for our schools will be successful only if it is done from the ground up — by parents, teachers, administrators, businesses and local taxpayers. Indeed, when the National Education Summit, a conference of the nation's governors and business leaders held last spring, set a goal of having every state establish such standards within two years, the idea was for states and communities to take on the task.

The benefit of this approach is that it allows every state the flexibility to address the individual needs of its children and the communities they

live in. States may want to see schools in different cities and towns achieve the same level of academic success, but there are different roads to the same destination.

Wisconsin is one example. Although my most recent budget requires every school district to set rigorous standards and every student to pass a graduation test, we are leaving it up to each school district to determine its standards and its tests, with the state offering assistance to communities.

So while the state is developing a model set of standards, it is up to each school district to adopt that model, modify it or establish its own standards. A community with a strong computer industry, for example, may want to have higher or more specialized math requirements. A similar approach is being taken with graduation tests.

Ultimately, the pressure for higher-quality education must come from the community — most important, from parents. Most of us agree that rigorous academic standards will help us improve our schools. It's best if the parents of Elroy, Wis., and other communities across America set those standards. □

Chester E. Finn Jr. and Diane Ravitch

A Yardstick for American Students

President Clinton's proposal for national testing makes sense. As former assistant secretaries of the Department of Education in the Reagan and Bush administrations, we urge Congress to support it.

There are ironies, of course. When George Bush and Lamar Alexander suggested something similar—which they called American Achievement Tests—congressional Democrats scoffed, and no such bill was ever introduced. And in 1992, when a bipartisan panel called the National Council on Education Standards and Testing recommended a form of national testing, a convoluted scheme that involved different tests based on common standards, the idea was ignored by congressional leaders and attacked by prominent educators.

Still, it was a good idea then, and it's a good one now. In fact, Clinton's version of national testing is better than Bush's in these important respects: It doesn't require any new standards or tests to be devised, and it does not hinge on dubious efforts to attach multiple tests to uniform (nonexistent) standards.

The administration has figured out that the nation already has two excellent tests that measure student achievement in reading and math, the most basic of basic skills. Accordingly, the president has proposed that states and school districts be permitted to use a respected national test for fourth-grade reading and an equally admirable international test for eighth-grade mathematics.

Nobody is obliged to use these tests, nor will anyone be punished for failing to do so. The federal government will pay for the first round of testing, and after that it's up to states and districts to cover their own costs. They can, however, embed the national tests into their own testing programs—which virtually every jurisdiction has—and commercial publishers would be licensed to offer them, a welcome form of "outsourcing" that would hold down costs, bureaucracy

and allegations of unfair government competition.

Most important, they're good tests, incorporating standards far more rigorous than most states are now using. The reading test is based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been around for almost three decades but has never been used by districts or schools to report the progress of individual students. The NAEP reading test is solid, multi-faceted (not just multiple choice) and has rigorous standards built into it.

For eighth-graders, the White House proposes to make available the math part of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), which was given to a half-million youngsters in 41 countries. The standards of TIMSS are built into the international comparisons. It's TIMSS results

that enabled us to see that our eighth-graders perform poorly in mathematics compared with their peers in many other industrial countries.

Consider how powerful it will be for parents and teachers to compare the math prowess of their eighth-graders in, say, Phoenix or Minneapolis, to the performance of their peers in Korea and the

Czech Republic. Consider the impact of parents in Denver or Boston actually seeing how well their fourth-graders read in relation to a national standard of proficiency.

According to every major public opinion poll, an overwhelming majority of the American people want national standards and tests. Until now, there has been no way for parents or public officials to get good information about how students are doing. Instead, they've been stuck with college entrance tests that are not representative of the full population and that, in any case, aren't even administered until the end of high school. Or they have had to settle for "standardized" tests that yield spurious results about youngsters being "at or above grade level," even though "grade level" is simply a statistical average, not a true standard.

Only with such information in hand can parents make wise choices among schools. Only with such information in hand can parents and legislators appraise how well their school systems are doing. Only with such information in hand can teachers and principals determine how effective their efforts are—and take corrective action where needed.

To those worried about "local control," we say that these tests are a yardstick, not a harness. They give the federal government no new powers. The test results, in fact, will actually enhance local control by empowering consumers, policy makers and professionals to know what actions need to be taken locally to improve education. As the CEO of a major corporation pleaded at the governors' education "summit" last March, "Why shouldn't the reading standards for 9-year-olds in Pittsburgh be the same as in Seattle?" Math is math, whether it's taught in Oregon or South Carolina, and the global economy in which today's youngsters will live and work expects them to meet world standards, not just those of Portland or Charleston.

Information is power. And gathering and dispensing good information is one of the things that the federal government does very well.

So important is national testing that it must be safeguarded from politicization, a temptation that is sure to arise if the student results are as bleak as everyone expects. To prevent this possibility, responsibility for national testing should be re-

moved from the federal Education Department (and congressional committees) and placed under the control of an independent, nonpartisan body. Fortunately, such an entity, called the National Assessment Governing Board, already exists. It is supposed to set policy for NAEP. That board, however, has been weakened by recent legislation and turned into something more like an advisory committee to consider decisions that are actually made by political appointees. The White House' current plan to give control of national testing to the Department of Education would, we think, be a big mistake.

If Clinton will agree to turn the program for national testing into an autonomous agency, akin to the National Science Foundation (where the National Science Board sets policy) or the National Transportation Safety Board, then Congress should endorse this part of his education package. This proposal deserves their support. Once upon a time it was even a Republican idea. Now it is a good American idea.

Chester E. Finn Jr., a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, was assistant secretary of education from 1985 to 1988 and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board from 1988 to 1996. Diane Ravitch, a senior research scholar at New York University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, was assistant secretary of education from 1991 to 1993.

Cost of proposed academic standards questioned

BY PAMELA STALLSMITH

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Members of a legislative panel studying the future of Virginia's education questioned state officials yesterday about their claim that proposed academic standards won't carry a price tag.

"There is some healthy skepticism about costs," Steve Staples, York County's school superintendent and a member of the Commission on the Future of Public Education, told Richard T. La Pointe, state superintendent of public instruction.

La Pointe has previously described the new standards as "budget neutral," contending they wouldn't require more teachers or

classroom periods since the standards are based on a six-period day. If school divisions found they couldn't meet the requirements, they would have to change their priorities.

But some local schools fear the standards might turn into another unfunded mandate that they would be forced to shoulder, without any money from state coffers.

The proposed Standards of Accreditation are generating much talk among educators and parents across Virginia as the state Board of Education moves aggressively to enact the regulations this summer.

The standards call for stricter graduation requirements and a greater focus on the core subjects of English, math, science and history. Students would have to pass end-of-

course tests in those subjects to graduate from high school.

State education officials began working on the standards last year. In February, the state board released the standards and set up statewide hearings. The public comment period ends May 17 and the board expects to review and approve a final copy at its May 22 meeting. The standards would go into effect in July.

The standards would apply starting with the class of 2001, or with students who are ninth-graders in the 1997-98 school year. However, schools could obtain a one-year waiver for the graduation requirements.

Alan L. Wurtzel, a commission member and former member of the state Board of

Education, called for a three-year delay in enacting the standards. Wurtzel, in a seven-page letter to state board president Michelle Easton released yesterday, said schools and students don't have enough time to adjust to the changes under the proposed timetable.

The state board has held five of nine public hearings so far around the state and might have to hold more because of the high turnout of speakers. At a hearing in Virginia Beach Wednesday night, 146 speakers signed up. But because of time constraints, only 76 spoke, so the board will let the remainder of the speakers address the members at a retreat in Virginia Beach April 23-24.

The next hearing will take place Tuesday

at Highland Springs High School in Henrico County, beginning at 7 p.m.

Commissioners said yesterday they agree with the concept of higher standards, but many expressed concern over possible higher costs, the tight timetable and potential stress on schools and students if they can't fit in all the new required courses.

Some said they worry that fine arts, vocational education and other electives will be squeezed out.

"If the core requirements increase, and the time of the classroom day does not, it seems to me that we're eliminating some flexibility," said Edward B. Barber, a teacher who is a member of the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors.

Education Week, January 15, 1997

VOLUNTARY STANDARDS FOR ECONOMICS RELEASED

by Kathleen Kennedy Manzo

America's schoolchildren will be better equipped to handle personal-finance decisions throughout their lives, from managing their allowances to making sound investments, if the new voluntary national standards for economics are adopted in schools countrywide, authors of the guidelines say.

"This is a framework for students to analyze problems that come up in their lives, from buying a house to getting married ... to making career choices," said John J. Siegfried, the chairman of the writing committee for the standards and a professor of economics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

Released at the American Economic Association Conference in New Orleans this month, the document identifies in layman's terms 20 overarching standards that outline what children need to know and be able to do in the discipline by the time they graduate from high school.

It also brings to a close the effort to create voluntary national subject-matter standards.

Led by the New York City-based National Council on Economic Education, economists and educators representing a coalition of organizations, including the National Association of Economic Educators, the Foundation for Teaching Economics, and the American Economic Association's Committee on Economic Education, worked for two years revising drafts of the standards before releasing the final document. Dozens of teachers from all grade levels were also consulted for the project, especially in establishing the benchmark criteria.

-more-

The project was almost derailed when the U.S. Department of Education discontinued funding national-standards efforts. However, the NCEE, a private, nonprofit organization that trains teachers, gained more than \$250,000 in financial backing from the Calvin K. Kazanjiam Economics Foundation Inc. of Oneonta, N.Y., the AT&T Foundation in New York City, and the Foundation for Teaching Economics in Davis, Calif.

Enduring Concepts

The standards are based not on facts about the economy, which are subject to constant change, but on essential and enduring concepts.

Like most of the other standards, the economics document is broken down into achievement levels for grades 4, 8, and 12. For instance, 8th graders should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the principle of incentives by predicting how their study habits would change if they received pass/fail grades or no grades instead of letter grades.

Authors of the standards do not expect to stir up the same interest or debate that surrounded the release of national guidelines for some core subjects, such as history. Instead, project leaders hope that the standards will highlight the importance of economics education for all students and help states and teachers infuse the discipline's principles into the curriculum.

"National standards [in other subjects] serve as guides for states developing their own standards," said Bonnie T. Meszaros, the associate director of the Center for Economics Education and Entrepreneurship at the University of Delaware and the co-author of the document. "If they didn't have national economics standards [to guide them], it would probably be omitted."

About half of all high school students take at least one economics course, according to William Walstad, a professor of economics at the University of Nebraska and a project consultant. Sixteen states mandate economics education, with about a dozen more incorporating the subject into other courses, Mr. Walstad said.

-more-

Macroeconomics Slighted?

By all accounts, the effort to achieve consensus was a successful one because most economists agree on the most basic and essential principles, said Michael K. Salemi, a professor of economics at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Mr. Salemi chaired a committee of leading economists that reviewed the standards and recommended changes.

"There were folks with strong right-wing sympathies and those with strong left-wing sympathies, and they reached friendly agreement," he said.

But compromise was still necessary to satisfy all who worked on the project. For instance, a separate standard on interest rates was added after the review committee suggested that the record-high level of investment in the stock market and the influence of the Federal Reserve warranted it.

Some economists and educators were dismayed that only four of the standards emphasize macroeconomic principles, which consider all the forces at work in national and global economies. The authors said that decision was made to arm students with information most essential to their own economic literacy.

But even scholars critical of some of the decisions made in crafting the standards praised the document overall.

"They produced a very comprehensive and detailed statement of what should be taught in schools," Mr. Walstad said. "But there is too much microeconomics and not enough macroeconomics. Students should know what is going on in the national economy, what is talked about on television and reported in the newspaper."

UC Backs High School Math, English Standards

■ **Education:** State superintendent had sought regents' support in drive for state graduation requirements.

By KENNETH R. WEISS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SAN FRANCISCO—Throwing its clout behind a comprehensive set of statewide high school graduation standards, the University of California Board of Regents on Thursday endorsed a plan that would reward students for what they learn, not how much time they sit in classrooms.

The proposed math and English standards, assembled by a consortium of the state's top educators called the Education Round Table, spells out minimum subject matter that students ought to know in order to succeed in a globally competitive job market.

Although the standards fall short of UC admission requirements, they would move more students closer to being prepared

for college. That, in turn, could help the university's efforts to place more underprivileged and minority students on track for college.

"Anything that improves the quality of education in the state is good for the University of California," said UC President Richard C. Atkinson, a member of the Round Table.

The regents' endorsement has no formal role in the state's effort to improve kindergarten through 12th-grade public education. But it was sought by state Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin to add momentum to the campaign to set statewide graduation requirements.

California now sets no standards for public schools, leaving each school district to devise its own. As

a result, schools on average require students to achieve only eighth-grade-level work, with wide disparities among districts.

Some poor, inner-city and rural schools do not even offer the classes required for admission to the University of California, said UC Provost Judson King, the university's chief academic officer.

The proposal calls for all high school students to master basic algebra and geometry as well as a variety of reading, writing and analytical skills. It does not address the issue of how to test for these skills.

The Round Table, which is made up of Atkinson, Eastin, California State University Chancellor Barry Munitz and other top educators, has submitted its proposal to the recently formed Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Stand-

ards. Set up by the Legislature last year, the commission must draft standards for every elementary and secondary grade by this fall. It also will develop a series of statewide tests to measure students' performance along the way.

The commission has reviewed the Round Table's standards along with half a dozen other proposals, said Ellen Moratti, its executive director.

Although she praised the Round Table's ideas, she said the commission has discovered "better standards out there that are more rigorous, better-written and more measurable."

The State Board of Education has until Jan. 1 to adopt or revise the commission's plan.

But even then, the standards would only be voluntary "models" for school districts to adopt—an idea that Eastin calls "loopy." She said she wants the Legislature to make standards mandatory.

Silber blasts programs for teachers, urges new standards

By Alice Dembner
GLOBE STAFF

Calling the low quality of teacher training "a scandal" that is hampering efforts to improve public schools, John Silber yesterday proposed minimum admissions requirements of 1100 on the SATs and a 3.0 grade point average for students entering the state's public and private schools of education.

Silber, chairman of the state Board of Education, also said the schools should overhaul their curriculums because "the quality and standards of typical courses in schools of education are derisory - among the lowest, among the dumbest that you can find in higher education."

In a speech to his counterparts on the Board of Higher Education, Silber also derided the tougher admissions standards that go into effect for all Massachusetts public college students this fall. Those call for a minimum high school grade point average of 2.6 for the state colleges and 2.75 for the University of Massachusetts, rising to 2.7 and 3.0, respectively, in fall 1998.

"We have to restore the standards of admission in our state institutions and our independent institutions ... if we're to put the pressure on the high schools that was once there," Silber said.

Silber spoke at the invitation of James Carlin, chairman of the Board of Higher Education, which is discussing ways to toughen standards for teacher training at public colleges. The board met at Bunker Hill Community College.

Both Carlin and higher education chancellor Stanley Koplik said yesterday that they generally agree with Silber's assessment of the poor quality of many education schools and teacher-training programs. "In your heart, you know he's right," said Carlin.

But they said the Board of Higher Education may not have authority to set standards for admission to schools of education or any other programs within state colleges. The board has no authority over admissions or quality at private colleges.

Carlin said, however, that the board would likely approve resolutions to show its intent and would work with the state's 11 public schools of education to improve quality. He also said the board would assist the Board of Education, which certifies teacher-training programs.

A survey conducted by the Board of Education last fall found that some private colleges were admitting students to teacher-education programs with combined SAT scores as low as 642 and that some of the largest programs at public colleges had SAT averages in the 800s. In that survey, based on data from 1994, about half the programs had SAT averages that would be above 1100 on the newly adjusted scoring system for 1600-point exam.

Koplik and other educators said that while they are as eager as Silber to attract more talented students to teaching, they are even more concerned with ensuring that any students graduating from the programs perform well as teachers.

Beginning in January 1998, all new teachers in Massachusetts will have to pass tests showing mastery of English and of the subject they plan to teach. Silber said he expects many to fail the exams until schools of education improve their courses.

Richard Clark, director of teacher education at UMass-Amherst, said Silber's remarks are insulting and inaccurate.

"The shoe doesn't fit," he said. "Faculty here are second to no one. The majority of our students preparing to teach are at the post-baccalaureate level and are extraordinary." Under the state's education reform law, new teachers must have a bachelor's degree in arts and sciences in addition to teacher training to get certified as a teacher.

Silber made a point of saying that the "scandal in the quality and standards of schools of education" doesn't extend to all schools, and he praised the tough standards at Boston University, where he is chancellor. But he said "as a general rule, the standards in schools of education are the lowest in the higher education system." National studies have also pointed to problems with schools of education.

Board member Jane Edmonds challenged Silber's emphasis on SAT scores, saying she worries about "a real potential to exclude large numbers of people ... including persons of color" who might become excellent teachers. Only 2.9 percent of those graduating from public colleges as education majors in 1988 were minorities, she said, and today's figure is not much higher.

"I wouldn't make a fetish out of any particular standard," Silber responded, "but these are not very high standards." He said students

with high grades but low SAT scores could be admitted, as well as motivated students with low grades and test scores who got the noncredit remedial instruction they needed.

Speaking about the new admissions standards for public college students, Silber said grade inflation and exceptions to the policies make them virtually meaningless. "When you have admissions standards like

these, it is hard to make a reasonable claim that you are dealing with higher education," he said.

Koplik defended the standards as "the right next step" given how the standards had slipped. But Carlin said he agrees with Silber that they are still too low and reiterated his intent to propose that the board "ratchet them up" next fall.

BOSTON GLOBE MAR 19 1997

Higher tuition eyed for those who linger

CHARLESTOWN - Students who linger in the state's four-year colleges far longer than they need to earn a bachelor's degree should pay out-of-state tuition rates, James Carlin, chairman of the Board of Higher Education, said yesterday.

"Other students and taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing these 'professional students,'" he said.

Carlin said he would propose the tuition increase for students who take more than 140 or 150 credit hours. Most bachelor's degrees require about 120 credit hours, and Carlin said he wants to leave room for changing majors or pursuing double majors. Out-of-state tuition is about four times in-state tuition.

A preliminary survey found that about 500 stu-

dents at state colleges and the University of Massachusetts had taken more than 138 credit hours, costing taxpayers about \$800,000, according to Stanley Koplik, chancellor of higher education. But some of those students have transferred credits from other institutions, while others have enrolled for additional semesters because courses needed for graduation were not available.

The board is expected to discuss and vote on the issue next month. Similar provisions are in place in other states, but some board members said they might oppose Carlin's proposal for fear of discouraging students from broadening their studies.

ALICE DEMBNER

New education standards should be set by the states

P 15

By Jeanne Allen

Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

President Clinton's plan for national testing at first glance seems to be much-needed and courageous. However, the best place for education reform is in the individual states.

Several states are already creating standards that raise the level of knowledge expected of our children. Virginia, in the vanguard of this trend, created content-rich, demanding and rigorous standards for every child in the core areas of history, math, English, science and social studies.

While Virginia is on its way to developing an assessment that will eventually serve not only as a barometer of

how well its children are performing but whether they should graduate, other states, such as Florida, Arizona and Massachusetts, are cribbing heavily from Virginia and elsewhere, and

creating their own high standards that put children to the test and require much more of our schools.

All that is great. Standards with consequences can not only wake up a complacent populace, but more to the point, indicate to youngsters what they must know to achieve. This trend is long overdue since even some students at the top of their classes are among the 40 percent who find reading proficiency a challenge.

Standards are our road map to accountability. Only by knowing where we are going can we get there. Secretary of Education Richard Riley outlines an ambitious proposal to create a national test that states could use for assessing math and reading in individual students, schools, districts and states. It is very similar to a proposal of President George Bush; only Mr. Riley recommends a new test, not an expansion of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

The proposal to create a NAEP-like math and reading test for voluntary use by states is welcome news. What is not so welcome is the process right now being employed that

makes the test an instrument of the U.S. Department of Education — the same department whose employees have challenged NAEP's rigor for years.

What also is puzzling is why anyone would want to spend \$8 million to launch tests that already exist in Virginia and elsewhere. Why not use NAEP as it exists and simply remove a federal prohibition on states' use of the scores to compare districts and schools? Or perhaps states could opt to use NAEP to evaluate every student in the fourth and eighth grades, in lieu of a test that does not exist and may not be a good test once it does.

Expand NAEP, and let states such as Texas opt to use it if they believe it will help. In

addition, ask states that have set good standards and contracted for assessments to provide others with the tools they used, or engage in "assessment" sharing with those standards that are most similar from state to state.

But don't stop there. Consider that standards and testing are just one piece of a very complex puzzle to cure deficiencies in education. Even if parents have good standards to measure schools, in most states they have no avenue to pursue should they be unhappy with the results. Increasingly, states have adopted new charter school laws that allow communities — parents, teachers and civic groups — to start new independent

public schools, which are freed from many of the restrictions that stand in the way of schools making the grade. There are 480 such schools in existence in 16 of the 26 pioneer charter states — including 20 in Texas — and another 200 close behind.

To the dismay of many in groups that are wed to conventional public schools, these charters are breathing new life into public education by making solid options available to parents, instilling teachers with autonomy to teach the way they see fit and allowing schools to tailor their programs to best meet the needs of students and the demands of families. Parents choose to send their children there, and boy, are they choosing. More than 105,000 attend charters today, and

it is estimated that an equal number are on waiting lists.

The Urban League of Miami has a charter tailored to children who have fallen through the cracks. Vaughn Learning Center in Los Angeles now has a 99 percent attendance rate, higher test scores and a yearly budget surplus used to build a library and technology center, as well as employ members of its troubled community. Phoenix's ATOP Academy teaches the basics to mainly minority youth; Boston's City on a Hill instills civic responsibility and a high caliber of educational achievement. Ford Motor Co. helped create a technical school in Michigan.

These schools and others like them have become catalysts for change in traditional schools and are helping to expand opportunities for all children in public education.

Likewise, we must recognize that there are schools too troubled to really help many children. Children in our worst performing schools are stuck with nowhere to go while more affluent children have been going to private schools. While some talk about equality, real equality is in allowing these children the same opportunities afforded to President Clinton himself, members of Congress and other national leaders. Poor children should not be stuck in failing schools by virtue of their place of residence;

they, too, should be permitted access to a plentiful supply of existing private schools that are ready, willing and able to meet their immediate needs.

Finally, throughout the education system the call for standards is matched by a call for more accountability, period. People are fed up with hearing reasons schools can't do this or that. Union contracts hamstringing the flexibility of local administrators wanting to make changes. Great but non-tenured teachers are often left out in the cold while more senior teachers move up regardless of performance. The president has called for an end to this unproductive shuffling; let's match his interest with action.

Some school boards are working to tie performance to pay in modest ways. Others are challenging the whole basis for lifetime tenure, yet are often rebuffed by unions or legislators who don't understand how difficult it is for well-meaning principals to clean house.

Decisions about how schools are run should return to the schools that have the most to do with our children on a daily basis. Money should flow with children, rather than to programs that are often bureaucratized and leave few dollars after various offices have taken their share. And hiring and firing should be school-based.

Let the states set standards, let there be guidelines to safeguard our children, but let the schools be ultimately free to excel.

Jeanne Allen is president of the Center for Education Reform in Washington.

State Officials Seek Flexibility, Regulatory Relief

By Joetta L. Sack

Wilmington, Del.

While President Clinton was out pushing his ideas for national academic tests and standards, members of Congress learned last week that Delaware is already a step ahead.

The state does not need federal help to measure its students' achievement because its system goes above and beyond President Clinton's proposals, according to its top education officials.

What the state does need is flexibility in federal regulations—freedom to figure out how to bring student achievement up to the ambitious standards it has set, several of its top education officials said at a March 3 hearing here.

In a series of field hearings, Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., has the House education oversight subcommittee he chairs focusing on what programs are working and what money and effort are being wasted in public schools across the country.

So far, the subcommittee has made stops in Arizona and California. And the roadshow will continue with yet-to-be-named stops about once a week in the coming months.

State in Spotlight

Last week, the oversight panel stopped here, on the turf of Rep. Michael N. Castle, R-Del. Reps. Hoekstra and Castle and two other subcommittee members trekked to Wilmington High School to take a look at Delaware's standards, which have won praise from education groups across the country. They posed questions about whether the federal government should set minimum standards in core academic areas, and how it could help states meet those goals at a time when many student test results have been less than encouraging.

The hearing also gave state leaders a forum to laud some of their own initiatives, such as the standards effort and the state's public-school-choice

system.

The Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee cannot propose legislation but will review programs that are called into question, a spokesman said.

The panel plans to keep making stops through the end of the year, said Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., who chairs the full Education and the Workforce Committee.

Plea for Deregulation

In Delaware last week, state officials did not offer many complaints. Instead, they focused on highlighting their own accomplishments, hoping Congress might learn a thing or two.

The state is now working on tests to mark students' performance against the state's standards, officials told the panel.

"Our top issue now is, what do we do with the results of those assessments?" said Gov. Thomas R. Carper. "It's imperative to me that all kids have a decent shot at meeting those standards."

Mr. Carper pointed out the state has taken several steps to try to boost the performance of at-risk students: training parents in early-childhood-development issues, creating new discipline programs such as in-school suspension, and investing in classroom technology.

While most of the state officials had suggestions on how federal programs could help in their efforts, they begged for flexibility and relief from regulations as they attempt to bring students' scores up to par.

"You can't assume that all of a sudden students are going to show up and be able to meet those new standards," said George Frunzi, the superintendent of the Sussex vocational education district in Georgetown.

Districts need to experiment with teacher training and lesson planning to figure out the best way to raise test

scores, nearly all the state officials agreed. Mr. Frunzi said his district found that more students applied to vocational training programs after administrators were allowed to raise the number of core academic classes required for graduation.

One state leader said that students fail because the current education system follows mostly a "one size fits all" approach.

"We have attempted to create a program that meets everyone's needs, and the world just isn't like that," said state Sen. Richard Hauge, a Republican.

Yes to National Standards

Back in Washington, one committee member said that even though the federal government is lagging behind some states, national standards are still needed.

"Minimum requirements should not be negotiable," said Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif., who also attended the Delaware meeting. "That would still allow states and localities to set higher and broader standards."

Mr. Riggs disagreed with some Republicans who said Mr. Clinton's proposed national standards would encourage states to lower their expectations.

At a Washington hearing March 5 with Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, Mr. Hoekstra was quick to relate the lessons he had learned in Delaware.

While he did not dismiss the Clinton administration's plan to craft voluntary national standards in reading and math, Mr. Hoekstra said the Department of Education needed to streamline its programs and allow states to take the reins on some reforms, citing Delaware as an example.

"It's time for Washington to focus on those things it can do really well in education," Mr. Hoekstra said.

45.

Why wait on standards?

Schools should set and enforce them now

President Clinton traveled to Lansing, Mich., the other day to extol the virtues of national education standards.

In his speech to Michigan lawmakers, he noted that "40 percent of fourth-graders in this country still cannot read a book on their own." And he added that U.S. students get a smattering of math and science instruction, while kids in Germany and Singapore receive in-depth instruction.

Citing these and other examples of educational deficiencies, Clinton summoned his listeners to strive for public schools that "have standards, high expectations and high levels of accountability."

Sound familiar? It should, because Ronald Reagan and George Bush were saying much the same thing when they were in the Oval Office. Indeed, it has been 14 years since Reagan's commission concluded that the nation is at risk because of the rising tide of educational mediocrity. In the ensuing years, task forces have been formed, reports have been generated, recommendations have been proffered and legislatures have churned out various reforms.

To what end? Scholastic Assessment Test scores remain flat, for the most part, even though the scoring formula was reformulated to make them look better. California fourth-graders rank among the lowest in reading comprehension. Student math scores are anemic. Tens of thousands of college freshmen are taking remedial English and science because they lack basic academic skills. Meantime, school districts such as San Diego Unified are still trying

to determine what kids should be learning at each grade level.

Rather than wait for national and state standards, school districts should be determining what their students ought to be learning and then strictly enforcing those academic expectations. That presumes, of course, that students who don't make the grade will not be promoted to buttress their self-esteem; or that the standards will not be set so low as to be meaningless.

Catholic schools have been expecting a great deal from their students for decades. Little wonder their graduates tend to excel in college. A new study by University of Chicago economics professor Derek Neal concludes that inner-city minority kids with similar backgrounds are more than twice as likely to complete college if they attend Catholic schools rather than public schools. Furthermore, Neal found in his national sample that 88 percent of urban minority students in Catholic schools go on to graduate, compared with only 62 per-

cent of those attending public high schools.

The Catholic school success story cannot be explained away by citing selective admission standards. Several parochial schools are reaching problem students whom the public schools have neglected. It should also be noted that parochial schools, on average, are doing their good work with far less money than public schools have.

It doesn't take state or national standards to challenge children to excel in the classroom. Rather, it takes schools that expect nothing less than the best from their kids.

DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

MAR 20 1997

Straight talk is educational

THE ISSUE:
Calling students "gifted and talented" to raise their self-esteem

OUR VIEW:
Achievement, not labels, is most likely to increase sense of self-worth

Here's a radical proposal: Try telling students the truth even when you think that a fib will make them feel better.

That some school officials find this approach outlandish is illustrated in an anecdote reported by the *Rocky Mountain News*' Hector Gutierrez. It seems some "at-risk" students at Horace Mann Middle School asked their principal, Miguel Elias, why they weren't considered "gifted and talented."

So Elias, along with assistant principal Laura Stephens and math teacher Mark Mounsey, "brought together 65 at-risk students to give them a pep talk and to designate them gifted and talented."

That certainly is a straightforward solution. It is also misleading. Wouldn't those students have benefited more had Elias said something like this:

"Look, gifted and talented students are those who learn very quickly. If their teachers assign a lot of reading, they do it and come to class prepared to discuss in detail what they've read. If they're asked to memorize foreign language vocabulary, they manage to commit a lot of words to memory. If mathematical and scientific concepts are explained to them, they grasp those concepts rapidly.

"This description may fit some of you now, or it may fit some of you later. But understand that being called gifted and talented guarantees you nothing. The guy accused of being the Unabomber was clearly gifted and talented and, if justice prevails (and he's guilty), he'll spend the rest of his

life in a prison cell.

"Meanwhile, plenty of people who are not labeled gifted and talented work hard and become successful. They have fulfilling careers and they raise strong families and they become important members of their communities. So don't waste your energy worrying about who is and who is not gifted and talented. Instead, give yourself a gift by putting your nose to the grindstone and improving yourself."

Such an explanation not only might help motivate students; it has the virtue of being more truthful than arbitrarily designating a group of students as gifted and talented because that's what they say they want to be.

When did it become educational dogma that such superficial attempts to boost students' self-esteem prod them toward success? The most satisfying and legitimate sort of self-esteem is a result of achievement, not its pre-condition.

To his credit, Elias also asked the students to sign pledges promising, for example, to control their anger, not to get sent to the principal's office, and to pursue a dream. Those are all worthwhile goals. They also obviously have little to do with being gifted and talented.

Whatever the descriptive value of the term "gifted and talented," the fact is that successful students, like successful athletes or like successful just about anything else, combine raw aptitude, dedication and self-discipline in varying measures.

What really counts is where people end up, not what abilities they utilize or even what obstacles they overcome to get them there. A surprising number of students might embrace that message, if their teachers were candid enough to deliver it.

Many Cal State Freshmen Lack Math, English Skills

■ **Report:** Officials blame the students' elementary and secondary education, but say they are taking steps to remedy the situation.

By KENNETH R. WEISS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

More than half the freshmen who entered the California State University system last fall were unprepared for college-level math and 43% lacked the skills to handle college English courses, even though they are among the top third of California's high school graduates.

The new data, released Wednesday by Cal State officials, shows a continuing rise in the number of freshmen in the 22-campus system who need remedial courses on subjects they should have mastered in high school.

The percentage of unprepared students was the highest since Cal State officials began reliably tracking the data in 1989.

"It is going to take a fundamental revolution in the way California undertakes K-12 education to change those numbers

you saw today," said Barry Munitz, chancellor of the Cal State University system. "Tinkering around the edges is not going to help the next generation of Californians."

Munitz and other officials outlined ambitious plans to improve high schools, ranging from better teacher training to setting higher standards for student achievement and dispatching thousands of college students into the schools as tutors and mentors.

Munitz said he was encouraged that the Board of Trustees was willing to embrace the discouraging statistics and not shirk its responsibility as California's primary source of public school teachers. About 60% of the state's teachers are trained at Cal State institutions.

"It's not scapegoating. It's an act of contrition," Munitz said.

Delivering Cal State's first report on remedial education, Senior Vice Chancellor Charles Lindahl unveiled newly revised figures that show 53% of last fall's freshmen needed remedial classes in math and 43% needed English

remediation to prepare them for college work.

University officials suggested that the percentage of substandard performers may creep higher still as the university does a better job of rounding up the 10% to 12% of freshmen who manage to "elude" the assessment tests.

The latest set of numbers was based on the performance of about 22,000 of the 25,298 freshmen enrolled through regular admissions. It did not include athletes, talented musicians and others enrolled through special admissions. If they were counted, officials said, the percentages of poor performers would rise a few points.

"This should not happen at a university," said Trustee Ralph R. Pesqueira, who led a campaign two years ago to phase out Cal State's \$10-million-a-year remedial education program and deny admission to students who lack college-level math and English skills.

He agreed last year to soften the policy by setting gradual goals to reduce the number of students who need remedial courses to 10% of freshmen by 2007.

"We must help those who are feeding us, namely kindergarten through 12th grade," said Pesqueira, who is chairman of Cal State's educational policy committee.

"This is the most important thing we have to do. The more successful we are in helping K-12, the more we can get on with our primary mission: higher education."

Although sobered by the escalating need for remedial college courses, Pesqueira said he was

encouraged by steps taken in the first year of a long-term project to improve K-12 education.

One accomplishment highlighted was the cooperation among education leaders to draft a comprehensive set of high school graduation standards.

Stall 1.

OCT. 27, 1996 P. 45

The Answer Is National

Standards

Education is a campaign issue without a focus. The school reform that really matters is not vouchers or charter schools or breaking the unions or wiring the classrooms. It's a curriculum set in Washington, and monitored in every town and city through testing.

By Sara Mosle

AMONG THE ISSUES THAT CONCERN MOST AMERICANS, EDUCATION HAS MOVED TO THE top of the list, ranking in some polls above the economy, the environment or even crime. Bill Clinton and Bob Dole have made it a major issue in the Presidential campaign, but their oratory has become so similar and so insular as to cloud rather than clarify their differences. The education debate has been reduced to a single issue, "choice," which both candidates have claimed as their own, grabbing on either side of the term and pulling, like two kids with a beach towel in a game of tug of war. But neither candidate is addressing the problems in most classrooms. I learned about them firsthand in 1992 — from boats.

I was teaching third grade at a public school in a poor immigrant neighborhood in New York City. At the time, my school had some 1,600 children in a building designed for about half that many. It was an S.U.R. school, a school under review. The reading and math scores were so low that it was in danger of being taken over by the state.

My students had just come back from lunch one day, and in their absence I had set up for that afternoon's science experiment. Every third-grade teacher in the district taught three units in science, one of which was boats, or "why things float." Students were supposed to construct boats from clay, aluminum foil or paper to test whether they would float or carry cargo like paper clips and then to draw conclusions about which designs were best and the nature of buoyancy. The philosophy behind this hands-on inquiry approach was sound enough: kids would act like real

Sara Mosle, a contributing writer for the Magazine, last wrote about the Science Skills Center in Brooklyn.

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (2)

scientists, collect and interpret data, learn the laws of nature through observation and then write up reports about what they had discovered. But the theory, as is often the case, foundered on the hard rocks of practice.

I had laid out newspaper, a plastic tub of water and lumps of clay on several clusters of desks so that students could work together in groups of four. I'd seen this approach demonstrated beautifully in my ed.-school courses, but almost always in small "alternative" settings, with lots of supplies and assistance and managed by teachers who had developed and refined their methods over years. Grace in the classroom does not spring, Athena-like, full grown from the heads of even the best ed.-school programs.

With 32 kids in my class, I couldn't fit eight groups of four desks in the room. In such cramped quarters, kids frequently bumped into one other, resulting in spills. Wet clay, I quickly discovered, is extremely difficult to wash off, particularly when there are 64 muddy hands and one small sink. Despite trash-bag aprons, the clay got on everything: clothes, desks, books. One teacher poked her head in during a lesson and asked incredulously, "You're actually *doing* this with so many kids?" I nodded weakly, my clothes covered in clay, my hair frazzled, the classroom a mess.

Most teachers, I later learned, simply did demonstration experiments in front of their classes. (So much for hands-on learning.) And who could blame them? There were no background materials for teachers; no histories of science nor interesting tales about real scientists to inspire kids. Most of my students were recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic, with limited English, who desperately needed exposure to scientific vocabulary. We were supposed to be inculcating a love of reading in our kids, but they almost never got a chance to read nonfiction. Yes, yes, I could haul in books from the local library, create research projects from scratch, design a thematic unit around the "Titanic," but curriculum building of this sort takes exceptional amounts of time, energy and devotion.

I'd see my middle-class friends and painfully realize that their kids grasped entire subject areas about which my students knew nothing: the organs of the body, the solar system, photosynthesis, rockets, dinosaurs, creatures of the ocean. Their kids hadn't learned about such things solely from hands-on experiences with, say, bodily organs, but from reading or being read to at home; they had begun to explore their interests *through* reading and were building up a wealth of knowledge on a wide range of subjects. I despaired at the discrepancy between what they and my students knew, and doubted that "boats" was going to help bridge the gap. I began to yearn for the kind of textbooks that I had once loved as a kid: big, beautiful books that I liked just holding, smoothing down their shiny pages of colorful illustrations and photographs.

Certainly, science lessons should include experiments, but boats, at the time, constituted a third of the science curriculum in my district. Too often, lessons deteriorated into the children drawing an endless series of boats in their lab books. It's axiomatic among many educators that kids in poorer urban schools don't get the frills, like art, that more affluent students do. If anything, my students got too much of it.

NEVER, IN ALL OF AMERICAN HISTORY, HAVE ELEMENTARY AND secondary students taken more standardized tests. Yet there are no standards in American public education, no officially recognized, agreed-on expectations of what students should know at each level of schooling. Curriculums vary widely, not only within cities and states but

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (3)

also within individual schools. Report after report has shown that American children study too many subjects, too superficially, and spend way too much time taking electives that don't give them the basic skills they need to get even a blue-collar job after high school. And particularly in poorer urban schools, kids are shuffled into tracks in which they take different courses, from driver's ed. to advanced calculus, that determine their career prospects, often before their teens.

In the global economy, Americans worry about our ability to compete, but we don't do for our children what other countries do for theirs. Nearly every other industrialized nation has a core curriculum that stipulates what students

must learn in subjects like math, science, literature and history in order to graduate from one level of schooling to the next. The standardized tests used to measure such progress are limited in number and are content-based, designed for the curriculum, and typically require analytical essays as well as multiple-choice answers. Students know exactly what's expected of them; notions of achievement are associated with effort, not inherent ability, and everyone receives help to meet the same goals. What's more, this system has produced higher and more equitable levels of achievement (particularly in science and math) than in the United States — even in countries like France, which also contends with a large immigrant population. National standards not only boost the achievement of disadvantaged students but also raise academic levels systemwide.

In the United States, by contrast, expectations of students are vague, almost insuring inequality of educational opportunity and achievement. Students are besieged with standardized tests, yet most have little connection to what they study in school; consequently, teachers are encouraged to teach "test-taking skills" rather than specific content. The most important standardized test in America, for instance, is the S.A.T., which is an aptitude rather than an achievement exam, meaning that its emphasis is on general ability rather than knowledge of particular subjects.

Getting back to basics, of course, is a hardy perennial in educational reform. What distinguishes the current standards movement from past hortatory rhetoric is that it emphasizes equal opportunity as much as achievement, through a national curriculum — goals on which both liberals and conservatives should be able to agree. The present movement is led by three figures: Diane Ravitch, who worked in the Education Department under former President Bush; E. D. Hirsch Jr., an author who describes himself as a political liberal and an educational conservative, and Albert Shanker, the union boss and longtime head of the American Federation of Teachers. The most unlikely of the three, Shanker is actually the one who has pushed the longest and the hardest for standards.

Presidents Clinton and Bush have also supported the idea of national standards. Clinton's Goals 2000 initiative, which is almost indistinguishable from Bush's America 2000, offers funds to states to develop standards on their own. Neither political party, however, has ever really campaigned vigorously for the issue. Instead, both have embraced choice

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (4)

as a panacea to what ails our public-school system. By choice, Dole and other Republicans mean publicly funded vouchers for parents to send their kids to private or parochial schools. Democrats and the teachers' unions both oppose vouchers, and the Dole attacks on the "militant teachers' unions" and on the President are best understood as shots fired in this vouchers war.

At the Democratic convention, President Clinton also voiced his support for choice — by which he means public-school choice, in which parents can send their kids to any one of a number of public or charter schools instead of being assigned by geography. Some 25 states have established charter laws that create public schools free from constraints like union seniority rules and special education mandates. And some states, including New York, have what amount to charter schools without charter laws; in the last few years, some 50 new "alternative" public schools have opened in New York City as part of a growing choice system. Still, as a movement, choice lags behind many other reforms. Out of approximately 85,000 public schools nationwide, there are only 475 charter schools, while only 120 private schools accept vouchers in two states. As Shanker has

pointed out, starting a school from scratch is like starting a small business, and half of all new businesses fail. Public-school choice and charter schools would reform the current system; vouchers could potentially destroy it.

Choice, however, makes no sense without standards, for how can parents choose without a means to compare schools? Resistance to standards, though, comes from both liberal and conservative quarters. Progressive educators, who historically have concerned themselves with how learning occurs, worry that a national curriculum would lead to more rote exercises, unimaginative teaching and a greater reliance on standardized tests, which they see as biased against poor and minority-group children. And conservatives, who you might think would cozy up to standards, are deeply suspicious of any sort of outside meddling in their neighborhood schools. Several districts, for instance, have turned down Federal funds offered under Goals 2000 rather than cede any perceived control of their schools to the Federal Government.

Yet for all the cries of "more local control," the American education system remains one of the most decentralized in the industrialized world. There are some 15,000 local school districts in this country, and they are run and financed almost entirely at the state and local level. If our schools are failing, as some people claim, it probably argues against, rather than for, more local control, which is exactly the point that standards advocates make. Conservatives like to point to international comparisons to demonstrate how poorly American students are doing. What they fail to note is that most other industrialized nations do not rely on a voucher system to achieve their superior results. The Dutch, for instance, instituted a voucher system many years ago, and today the Netherlands exhibits the least consistent school quality in northern continental Europe. Some 16 percent of Dutch schools perform below par, Hirsch reports, compared with 1 to 5 percent of subpar schools in the nonchoice systems of Denmark, Japan and South Korea. What these nations do share is a national, standardized curriculum.

The American population is highly mobile — which means choice without standards will only make things worse. My first year teaching, some 10 students transferred in or out of my class — the norm in many poorer urban schools. But even the average child changes schools some five times between the 1st and 12th grades, and each time, his or her chances of graduating decreases 2.6 percent, regardless of family background or income. Schools must respond to this mobility by providing a more uniform system that will make dislocations less disruptive.

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (5)

In order to earn a middle-class income, workers today must have "hard skills" in reading and math "at levels much higher than many high-school graduates now attain," Richard Murnane and Frank Levy write in their new book, "Teaching the New Basic Skills." These authors note that while "soft skills" like the ability to work in groups or make oral presentations will also

be vital, companies like Diamond-Star Motors and Honda typically require job applicants to pass standardized tests in basic skills before they can even move on to the "soft" portion of the interview.

Standardized tests, in other words, are not some artificial measure imposed by educators but are a real-world exercise that many employers now use to weed out applicants, precisely because they have lost faith in the meaning of a high-school diploma. And far from being discriminatory, standardized measures tend to be fairer. "Skills tests are less biased [against ghetto blacks] than the subjective assessments used in the typical interview," William Julius Wilson writes in his new study, "The Disappearance of Work."

The relationship between a 17-year-old's math scores and his or her hourly wage seven years later has grown stronger rather than weaker over the last two decades. When Murnane and Levy talk about "strong math skills," they are not referring to calculus but to the simple use of fractions and decimals in one- or two-step problems. And by comparing the cut-off points of employer tests to the student scores on national standardized exams, they discover that "close to half of all 17-year-olds cannot read or do math at the level needed to get a job in a modern automobile plant."

Even surfing the Internet requires an ability to spell a World Wide Web address flawlessly or to read often very dense material on the screen. It may be hypertext, but it is still text. It is true that I have forgotten much of what I learned in high-school math or science, but that is partly because I did not become a doctor, an architect or engineer. Yet all these professions remained open to me into my 20's because I had the preparation in high school to take premed or advanced math courses in college. For my students, however, I began to see doors closing as early as third grade. They were not getting the elemental skills they needed to take more advanced courses in junior high and high school, which would in turn make entry into a wide variety of professions possible.

"Nations that establish national standards do so to insure equality of education as well as higher achievement," Diane Ravitch writes in "National Standards in American Education: A Citizen's Guide," because "they make explicit what they expect children to learn to insure that all children have access to the same educational opportunities."

Here, Catholic schools provide a powerful example. Most of them, even those that serve disadvantaged children, expect all students to take a core curriculum that will prepare them for college. While the achievement gap between disadvantaged and more privileged students widens in high school, it actually narrows dramatically in most parochial institutions. Yet Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee and Peter Holland, who compiled these statistics in "Catholic Schools and the Common Good," do not conclude that America should adopt a

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (6)

voucher system. Instead, they credit the Catholic schools' reliance on a core curriculum — on standards.

IN THE FIRST QUARTER of this century, there was not a great need for "standards" because most Americans did not make it to the eighth grade. Recent immigrants and the poor often climbed the economic ladder by attending vocational schools. Only the children of the middle and upper classes generally pursued higher education. Not until mid-century, after *Brown v. Board of Education* and the height of the civil rights movement, did the United States even begin to make good on its promise to educate its children equally. The testing industry initially sprouted, as Nicholas Lemann has written, as a means of assisting elite colleges to select scholarship students.

But as the public schools began opening their doors to a wider array of students in the 1960's, the need for students to reach higher levels of academic achievement also mounted as low-skill, high-paying jobs began to disappear. The standards movement is partly a reaction to this economic reality.

In the 1960's, as many minority-group parents and liberal academics became understandably discouraged by the slow pace of educational progress, they began to call for more reforms: community control, a racial diversity in faculty and curriculum and less reliance on tests that were regarded as culturally biased. In 1968, a battle erupted

between an experimental community board in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the teachers' union in New York City. The board, in a bid to gain complete control over its local schools, managed to dismiss and replace hundreds of teachers in the A.F.T.'s local, the United Federation of Teachers. The leader of the union, Albert Shanker, called a series of strikes and at one point some 55,000 members walked out for 36 days in what was then the longest teachers' strike in the nation's history. The bitter battle, which pitted the largely black school board against the union's predominantly white Jewish leadership, soured relations between Jews and blacks in the city and led to the "decentralization" of the city's school system into 32 semiautonomous community districts, which are still in place.

At the time, Shanker was widely regarded, as he later put it, as a "powerful madman," a reactionary who supported more discipline and higher academic standards in schools. In Woody Allen's 1973 film, "Sleeper," Allen's character wakes up after being frozen for 200 years to discover that civilization as he knew it had disappeared. When he asks what happened, he learns that "a man named Albert Shanker got a hold of a nuclear warhead." But history has largely vindicated Shanker's role in the strike. Most city officials now agree that decentralization has failed, and nowhere more so than in poorer

school districts, which have been subject to exactly the kind of political patronage and corruption that Shanker warned against.

At 68, Shanker is now regarded as "education's elder statesman," as *Teacher* magazine recently put it. Perceptions of him have changed largely by his standing still. Far from unqualifiedly praising the nation's public schools, he is often their harshest critic and, in recent years, he has occasionally turned his newspaper column "Where We Stand" into a bully pulpit for creating a national curriculum. It has appeared as a weekly union advertisement for the last 28 years in, among other places, *The New York Times* each Sunday. So outspoken is he that the A.F.T.'s executive board once had to vote on

whether or not to try to muzzle him. "We decided to let Al be Al," says Sandra Feldman, the president of New York's United Federation of Teachers, the A.F.T. local that Shanker built up in the 1960's from 2,400 members to a 60,000-strong organization that would strike on his command.

Like Diane Ravitch, Shanker, who was active in the civil rights movement, sees standards as an equity issue — the only assurance that disadvantaged children will receive the knowledge they need to succeed. "The idea that we can't have national standards and curriculums because every state and, indeed, every locality wants to create its own is

bunk," Shanker wrote in a typically blunt column. "We already have a national curriculum — but it is set by textbook publishers, and its standards are very low."

Feldman recalls the moment that Shanker first urged the union to reform itself. The year was 1983, on the eve of a union convention in New York, and Shanker, Feldman and the union's executive board had gathered in a hotel suite to read advance copies of the "Nation at Risk" report. Feldman recalls: "We all had this visceral reaction. You know, 'This is horrible! They're attacking teachers.' Everyone was watching Al to hear his response. When Al finished reading the report, he closed the book and looked up at all of us and said, 'The report is right, and not only that, we should say that before our members.' And that's what he did. It was a really courageous thing for him to do."

As a union leader, Shanker has always confounded easy stereotyping, especially by conservatives. He helped to orchestrate the first "national education summit" under President Bush in 1989 and then this past March under President Clinton. He was instrumental in helping to create both the America 2000 and Goals 2000 programs. And each of the last two years, the A.F.T. has issued a

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (7)

"National Report Card" on the efforts of states to create rigorous, content-specific goals in English, math, social studies and science. (The A.F.T. estimates that adequate standards and means of assessment in all four areas exist in only 14 states.)

"Look, I agree with Al Shanker four days out of every five," concedes Chester E. Finn Jr., a former Assistant Secretary of Education in the Reagan Administration and a senior fellow at the conservative Hudson Institute. "But he is not representative of his union. He is way ahead of his membership." When I told Shanker of Finn's comments, he let out a rare low chuckle. "But that's not what Dole and other Republicans say," Shanker said, his dark eyes glinting behind thick, nerdy glasses and his usually impassive pudding-white face crackling into a wide mischievous grin. "They say it's the union leaders who are awful and the members who are wonderful." His laughter rumbled like a distant thunderstorm.

We were talking at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, where he was undergoing radiation treatment. Shanker had bladder cancer two years ago and recovered, but he was diagnosed with lung cancer in April. Nevertheless, he remains active. Although he was in a period of chemotherapy, he attended the A.F.T.'s biennial convention in Cincinnati in August at which he delivered one of his trademark Castro-length speeches, presided over caucuses and was unanimously elected to another two-year term. Sitting upright recently

in his hospital bed, his dour, basset-hound face was as immobile as ever. But underneath his thin, white hospital sheet, I spied two narrow, dark, nylon-socked feet robustly pumping as he talked, like pistons in a steam engine.

At the convention, the A.F.T. issued a report offering qualified support of charter schools, but Shanker, who wishes that the support had been stronger, still finds the emphasis on charter laws as the chief means of school reform misplaced. "At the moment," he argues, "public schools take all corners." With a voucher system, he says, "you'll end up with kids of different religions, nationalities and languages going off to different schools to maintain their separateness, and I think we'd have a terrible social price to pay for it. You'll end up with creationist schools, Louis Farrakhan schools."

Many voucher advocates have been disappointed by the lack of studies demonstrating that such programs have dramatically boosted student achievement. But this summer they were given a lift by the publication of a report that retabulated data that had already been collected on a Milwaukee voucher program; the new study claimed to show what the old study hadn't: students in the voucher schools made significant gains over comparable public-school students. Conservative commentators seized upon the report as proof that vouchers work. However, recent articles in *The New Republic* and *The Wall Street*

Journal have raised serious questions about the statistical validity of the new study. "It shows you the danger of trying to rely on statistics if you had a market system," says Shanker. Without standards, making objective comparisons is difficult at best.

Shanker insists that most teachers and parents actually want the same things for children: tougher academic standards and better discipline. Boiled down to its Brechtian essence, "grub first, then ethics," Shanker's reform message is "standards first, then choice." He says, "If we had a system of standards and assessments in place, then as far as I'm concerned every school should be a charter school."

JUST HOW EFFECTIVE A standard curriculum can be is evident at Mohegan, a K-8 public school in the South Bronx that uses E. D.

Hirsch's "core knowledge" sequence through the sixth grade. His curriculum, which was compiled by educators across the country and introduced in 1990, is one working model of what a national curriculum might look like. It specifies lesson content in the basic subjects, with each year building on the last. Already some 350 schools have adopted Hirsch's curriculum, and initial qualitative reports are impressive.

Jeffrey Litt is the principal of the school and, at 48, has a dark salt-and-pepper beard and still lets off a faint whiff of 60's radicalism. He is an ardent disciple of both Hirsch and Shanker.

Shanker is one of my heroes," he says. "I've been in the system for more than 20 years and I've seen it all: open classrooms, the old math, the new math. I've seen every methodology, but core knowledge is the first thing that's made sense to me, because it makes content the priority. For children to be successful as adults, they need a shared body of knowledge so they'll be able to communicate, write an article, understand a story in the paper about the Supreme Court. Shanker is right on the money with regards to standards."

Litt and I were sitting in his office, a large room with high ceilings in a gothic, five-story 1925 building that serves 939 kids. The school is neither a choice nor a charter program. Mohegan's students, most of whom are black or Latino and qualify for the free-lunch program, come from the surrounding neighborhood. Although it has an association with the Manhattan Institute, which provides some funds and extensive institutional support, it looks very much like a traditional public school in New York, at least at first glance.

When Litt took over the school in 1988, it was decrepit. There had been five principals in the previous

More...

NATIONAL STANDARDS, continued... (8)

two years. Fire had damaged the building, and there was graffiti on the walls, the smell of urine in the stairwells and an atmosphere of chaos and defeat throughout. The district was once known for its corruption. "There were no books, no pencils," he recalls. "The school had been cleaned out."

Litt describes how Hirsch's core knowledge curriculum has given his students and teachers badly needed direction, but he also touches on many of the problems faced by urban principals and teachers. Forty-four percent of all teachers in Mohegan's district are "permanent substitutes" and consequently have little or no training. Teacher turnover is high, and so his staff cannot afford to redesign the curriculum each year as more stable schools can.

"Teachers who disagree with Shanker are afraid of standards; they fear they won't be able to add their own flavor or creativity," Litt says. But in the classes that I visited, teachers were not promoting bloodless rote learning. Their methods were mostly a hybrid — part traditional, part progressive — avoiding easy caricature.

"Before core, there was no sequence," says Evelyn Hernandez, a fifth-grade teacher who has worked at the school since 1988. "Teachers taught whatever they wanted, but nothing was connected. They weren't building the knowledge or the background that children needed to be critical thinkers. But after we implemented core in 1991, the content was much more exciting than in their text-

books. I knew what I was supposed to be doing. The curriculum provided the topic, but I could teach it however I wanted. I have a lot more freedom and flexibility. In fifth grade, we learn about the Aztecs and the Incas and the Mayans, but every year I teach it differently, so I don't get bored. Some years, it might

be a drama; others, we might make headaddresses — whatever the kids are geared to — but they learn the same information."

Nancy Sorokin used to teach in Riverdale, an affluent section of the Bronx, and says her mostly upper-income parents used to complain, "You're teaching the kids too much!" She laughs. This fall, by the third week of school, she already had her routines in place with her first-grade class. Desks were arranged in groups in a classroom as cramped as my own had been. Her approach was a mixture of phonics (in which kids learn to read by sounding out words) and whole language (in which they learn by reading words in context). First, she reviewed some of the letter sounds, and then students came together to read "Skip to My Lou," a rhyming big-book. Kids could read along, pick out complicated rhymes on their own and learn the names and habits of different farm animals. This was the core curriculum content for the start of the first grade. It was not unlike the many demonstration videos I had seen in my courses in ed. school. The kids were engaged and already reading at a higher level than some third graders.

STANDARDS ADVOCATES like Shanker have essentially offered a trade-off with more progressive-minded educators: standards for charter schools. It's a deal that those on both the left and right can accept. There are a thousand ways to teach American history. Standards dictate minimum content, not method, and while there are certain to be debates about exactly what will be taught, the discussion can begin by looking at the curriculums of other industrialized nations. These do not need to be massive guides, such as many school districts put out for each subject in every grade. The Japanese goals for elemen-

tary and secondary education are encapsulated in three slim volumes. Conciseness demands specificity.

Education, of course, in the American fashion, aims to enrich lives, not just to line pockets. But you cannot think critically if you do not have something to think about; content matters. It does not empower students to teach them about power without giving them the power to succeed.

Still, progressive educators are right to point out that too many American classrooms remain dull and lifeless. But standards advocates are not arguing for a return to rote learning. The sensitivity to children's needs and differences, the ability to inspire intellectual curiosity and excitement exist independent of method. Schools should be

allowed to use whatever approach they would like and then be held accountable for the results on substantive, content-based exams that are geared to the curriculum.

In recent years, many educators have advocated replacing standardized tests with "portfolios" of students' work — essays, short stories, videos, plays — in

an attempt to measure hard-to-quantify abilities. Though as a means of learning portfolios are wonderful, as a means of testing they are too subjective, too labor-intensive and consequently too costly to implement on a national scale. Every system requires trade-offs; some students will always perform better on certain kinds of tests. We would be better off reforming the tests we have, combining essay and multiple-choice questions to evaluate a wide range of skills.

Standards, of course, will be meaningless unless cities and states devote the resources necessary to helping students meet them. Schools and classes need to be smaller, and a new curriculum will require new supplies.

Americans have never been more interested in education reform since, perhaps, the days of Horace Mann. Whoever takes the oath as President on Jan. 20, 1997, would be wise to seize the moment and advocate the creation of a national curriculum with high-stakes assessments and the means to help students meet them. Will the real education President please stand up? ■

Stamant
Cable News 2/

Kansas to halt its open policy for admissions

Universities no longer will accept any graduate from state high schools.

By KATE BEEM
Staff Writer

They may not know it, but eighth-graders in Kansas officially could become pioneers this week.

The Kansas Board of Regents will vote Thursday on new standards for admission to the six state universities. The move will end the tradition of accepting any graduate of the state's high schools to the universities in Lawrence, Wichita, Hays, Emporia, Manhattan and Pittsburg.

The standards, mandated by the state Legislature last session, will affect students in the eighth grade this year. They will be college freshmen in 2001.

Kansas was one of the last states to offer open admissions. But now college freshmen will be required to either achieve a composite score of 21 on the American College Test, rank in the top one-third of their high school graduating class or complete a precollege curriculum prescribed by the regents.

Those new rules will take some explaining, said Jack Prall, a guidance counselor in the Shawnee Mission School District.

His department is including the new standards in its planning booklet, which eighth-graders and their parents receive in the spring. Students will have to understand how their high school courses relate to their college careers, he said.

"They don't always put the two together," he said.

The standards, drafted by a regents task force, include a recommendation that Kansas students achieve at least a 2.0 grade point

average on a four-point scale in a 14-unit precollege curriculum in the ninth through 12th grades.

The core curriculum:

- Four units of English or language arts.

- Three units of natural science chosen from among biology, chemistry, earth-space science and physics. At least one unit must be in chemistry or physics.

- Three units of mathematics with two years of algebra and one of geometry. Applied math I and II can be substituted for algebra I.

- Three units of social sciences, including one of U.S. history, half a unit of U.S. government, half a unit from among world history, world geography or international relations, and one unit from among psychology, economics, civics, history, social issues, sociology, anthropology and/or race and ethnic group relations.

- One unit of computer technology.

Persons who are 21 or older are exempt from the new standards. High school graduates who fail to meet the requirements can attend a regents school after successfully completing 24 hours at another school, such as a community college.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

NSF Eliminates Millions In State Math, Science Funds

Three states and Washington, D.C. recently lost a total of \$16 million in funding for systemwide science and math reforms.

The National Science Foundation's Statewide Systemic Initiative (SSI) began in 1990, creating broad-based coalitions to spur reforms allowing students and teachers to delve deeply into math, science and technology.

From 1991 to 1996, SSI programs in 25 states and Puerto Rico received about \$10 million each for five years. NSF, an independent federal agency, granted two extensions this year, to Connecticut and Louisiana.

Home-Grown Reforms

But Florida, North Carolina and Virginia did not win continued funding. According to NSF's second annual SSI report, Delaware, Florida, North Carolina, New Mexico and Texas had slow or false starts.

The report says successful states had already developed reform visions before SSI. "How an SSI is designed and evolves depends in large part on the history of reform in the state and on the state's political culture," NSF says.

Virginia's grant—part of NSF's second-round awards that began in 1992—ended Aug. 31. The state received about \$6 million of a \$9.6 million award.

Tom Short, director of secondary education in Virginia, said he isn't sure why the program was not funded in its final year.

"We have just implemented the standards of learning in Virginia," Short said. "A lot of the standards were highly influenced by this initiative. It impacted the whole state."

Virginia officials say they will incorporate the SSI reforms, such as teacher training, into the state's new standards for math and science.

North Carolina also learned in August that its program would not be funded for its final year, a loss of about \$1 million over the life of the \$7.8 million, five-year grant.

Florida's program ended in June, about six months earlier than scheduled. As a result, the state missed out on about \$1.6 million it had expected as part of its \$9.5 million, five-year grant.

Under a separate NSF program, Washington, D.C., last month lost \$10 million of a \$13.5 million grant awarded in 1995 as part of NSF's Math, Science and Technology Initiative.

Rhode Island, after three years and \$5 million, lost its NSF funding in 1994 because its SSI plan was not having wide-ranging impact on its K-12 system, NSF said (ED, April 26, 1994). Lack of quality control and uneven change were the reasons NSF gave for cutting off the funds.

Making The Grade

Meanwhile, 14 states and Puerto Rico, which remain in the program, are making progress in achieving statewide reforms in K-12 math and science education, NSF officials say.

Connecticut and Louisiana recently won additional awards of \$6 million each from SSI.

Connecticut's program focuses on improving student achievement, working with colleges and universities to improve teacher preparation, reaching out to senior citizens and teaching them how to use new technology, and providing professional development for teachers.

NSF is looking for tangible gains, such as strong staff development, work with higher education institutions and gains in narrowing the gap between minority and white student achievement scores.

Connecticut regards its SSI project in a 12-year block—one student generation—from 1991 to 2003.

Although the NSF money will fund the program only until 2001, the state has additional funds from private industry.

A Discerning Eye

Under SSI, NSF enters into cooperative agreements with states and requires extensive progress reports. States must provide data on student achievement, course-taking, graduation rates and professional development.

NSF is looking for strong programs that show impact data on all students in the state as well as strong teacher development programs, said Pierce Hammond, NSF's acting director of the division of educational system reform, in an interview last week. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark

What's right about education in America today

There are a lot of problems with Maggie Gallagher's July 23 column on school choice ("School choice, not an echo," Commentary), but the most telling indicator of how far off the mark she is is her charge that "Mr. Clinton has mostly ignored the current public school crisis."

President Clinton has spent a good portion of the first three years of his administration focusing on improving our public schools. While Ms. Gallagher moans and wails about Goals 2000, the truth is that Goals 2000 is the first federally funded education initiative to ask of states the very thing we all want to see in our public schools — higher standards for our children. It does this without any new regulations or mandates as it helps states and communities raise the standards to which our children learn and our teachers teach.

School districts in 48 states are actively participating in Goals 2000. All over the country, teachers and principals who are using Goals 2000 funds to support their own local efforts attest to both its flexibility and its importance in their drive to better their schools.

School districts are also benefiting from Mr. Clinton's efforts to ensure safe and disciplined schools, get computers in every classroom and enhance family and community involvement in the education of our children. Both as governor and as president, he has championed some of the most progressive efforts to date to better our public schools. Mr. Clinton has also waged a critical battle to provide adequate investments within his balanced-budget plan. The fight continues, but after two GOP-prompted government shutdowns over budget priorities, it became clear even to the Republicans that Americans believed Mr. Clinton's commitment to public education reflected the views of the American people.

The fight has included Mr. Clinton's support for school choice. Ms. Gallagher admits that most parents, given a choice, prefer their neighborhood public school. The Clinton administration has aggressively promoted expanding public-school choice. In 1993, Mr. Clinton proposed new seed money to help parents, teachers, businesses and others start up charter schools to provide more choice, competition and opportunity within public education. Enacted in 1994, this fund is helping to start up charter schools in 11 states. Since the president's State of the Union appeal for more public school choice, five states have

enacted laws authorizing charter schools. Mr. Clinton requested \$40 million dollars in 1997 for charter schools, but the House has cut his request by more than half.

Ms. Gallagher is also wrong when she says Bob Dole's voucher proposal will simply and cheaply "liberate American kids from some of our worst schools." With 89 percent of America's children attending public schools, Mr. Dole's proposal will only divert much-needed funding from public schools without giving parents any real ability to fully fund a private-school education. For most private schools, it's just not enough money.

Further, the very poor, working-class minority student Mr. Dole says he supports with his proposal my actually be made worse off by it. Recent events in Ohio, whose program Mr. Dole held up as an example of how his proposal could work, prove the point. Before Gov. George V. Voinovich could get his legislature's support for his voucher program, he had to agree that inner-city Cleveland students would not be permitted to use the money to transfer to suburban school districts. What kind of choice is that?

It seems to me that at least two things need to happen as we have this debate. First, while everyone agrees that our public schools face challenges, we need to stop beating up on them and try to find ways to better them. Together. Inner-city and suburban. Rural and urban. Poor, middle-class and affluent. With 89 percent of our children being educated by public schools, it's a pretty safe bet that public schools aren't going away. And we're all affected by their success or failure.

Second, we need to think seriously about the consequences of our ideas when we raise them and when we support them. Because, at least for the poor community in Cleveland Mr. Dole purports to help, the voucher program he supported may turn out to be a real bust.

Mr. Clinton has long known there are no quick fixes to the challenges facing our schools. We should follow his lead and work together to raise standards — for students and teachers — increase family and community involvement and help all of America's children find the way to a promising future.

LESLIE T. THORNTON
Deputy Chief and
Counselor to the Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
Washington

What's Right About Education in America Today

Maggie Gallagher's July 23 column ("School choice, not an echo," Commentary) was an insightful and encouraging analysis of the potential advantages of a government education-voucher program. However, I was disappointed by her rhetorical question that if after 12 years of schooling, a student cannot read, write, think or understand the basic elements of America's constitutional republic, "what good will two more years of school do . . . ?"

Today's community colleges do much more than just provide credit courses for future transfer students. Many community colleges require students to undergo diagnostic testing to determine the extent of their basic skills, after which they are enrolled in an appropriate program to learn, improve and practice standard college reading and writing.

Most community colleges offer tutorial programs in the basic skills, and some offer tutoring in advanced areas such as the sciences, foreign languages and computers. After just one semester in a tutor-assisted program, and students can show remarkable improvement in their ability to read, write and solve mathematical problems, and students who continue for up to two years can achieve a basic skills level similar to that of their peers entering four-year universities.

At community colleges, students with learning disabilities can be tested and placed in programs designed to minimize or even help them over-

come their difficulties. Students can also learn about the U.S. political system through internships, guest speakers and campus events.

Finally, community colleges not only bestow associate degrees, but also provide career counseling, job information service, resume- and essay-writing workshops, certificate programs in several professional areas and a wide selection of non-credit course for personal knowledge and self-improvement.

If Ms. Gallagher were to ask any community-college student who has taken advantage of the services offered today if these two years did any good, she would hear strong support for public proposals such as the president's to "make two years of education after high school just as universal as a high school education is."

MARK CROATTI
Washington

■ Mr. Croatti is the coordinator of the IMPACT tutoring center at the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College.

— The Editor

Colorado sees no gain in ACT scores

By Janet Bingham
Denver Post Education Writer

Colorado's average scores on the ACT college entrance exam remained stable for the third consecutive year, even as the national average score inched up for the third time in four years.

Colorado students still score above the national average, but that lead is narrowing, according to test results released yesterday.

The ACT, administered by the American College Testing Program, is taken annually by about 80 percent of the state's high school se-

niors. The average composite score for Colorado seniors in 1996 was 21.4, compared to a national average score of 20.9. The highest possible score is 36.

The national score began rising from 20.6 in 1992. It is now just half a point lower than Colorado's average, which is the same today as it was in 1990.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley attributed the rise in national scores to an increase in the percentage of students taking a rigorous academic curriculum.

"Every parent, student and guidance counselor should heed the unmistakable message: students who accept the challenge of taking core academic courses and hold themselves to higher standards of learning do better and are better prepared for entering and succeeding in college," he said in a statement.

In Colorado, Education Commissioner Bill Randall highlighted the same message: The percentage of tested Colorado students taking

core academic courses rose slightly this year to 58 percent, "but it is not rising the way it needs to rise. That figure should be 70 percent in Colorado." Parents of college-bound students need to "get your kids into that core program."

Students who take a core academic program that includes four years of English and at least three years each of math, science and social studies test higher than those who don't, according to test data. That is true across all racial, ethnic and economic groups.

The ACT tests achievement in English, math, reading and science reasoning. About 21,587 high school seniors in Colorado's class of 1996 took the test.

Disparity among groups

While scores of Colorado females rose slightly, narrowing the gap between males and females, scores of black students fell slightly, widening the gap between blacks and others.

While 61 percent of Colorado Anglos and 65 percent of Asians tested reported taking core academic courses, only 50 percent of blacks and Hispanics reported taking core courses. Average scores of blacks and Hispanics lag behind those of Asians and Anglos.

Students with family incomes above \$36,000 averaged 2.7 points higher than those from families with incomes under \$18,000. But regardless of income, those who took the core academic courses av-

eraged more than 2 points higher than those who didn't.

In the four largest districts in the Denver area, results were mixed. Scores fell slightly in Jefferson County and Denver and rose slightly in Cherry Creek and Aurora. Cherry Creek and Jefferson County remain above the state and national averages, while Denver and Aurora remain below.

National hike hailed

ACT officials hailed the rise in national scores. According to ACT President Richard L. Ferguson, this is only the second time since ACT scores were first reported in 1960 that the national composite average has increased as often as three times in four years.

"An increase in three of four years may not guarantee continued increases," he said, "but it is certainly a positive — and virtually unprecedented — development."

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1996

Scores on ACT Rise, Testing Service Says

WASHINGTON, Aug. 14 (AP) — College-bound students as a whole scored slightly better this year on the ACT entrance exams. Over all, girls scored higher and boys remained the same. And while scores rose for most minority students, those of black students fell slightly.

The national average score for graduating seniors in 1996 crept up to 20.9 from 20.8 in 1995, the American College Testing service said yesterday in its annual report. Nearly 60 percent of college-bound students take the examination offered by the testing service.

Many colleges consider the ACT and the Scholastic Assessment Test scores in their admissions process.

Increases in the test scores of girls — to an average of 20.8 from 20.7 — accounted for the overall rise this year. The average score for boys held steady at 21.

The test scores of black students, as a group, slipped to 17 from 17.1 because of lower scores in science reasoning.

Students who classify themselves as American Indians and Alaskan natives, as a group, scored an average 18.8 this year, the highest yet for the group.

Hispanic students also improved their average scores by one or two percentage points. Mexican-Americans scored an average 18.7, up from 18.6 in 1995. Scores for students of Puerto Rican and Cuban descent rose to 18.9 from 18.7. Asian Americans matched their 1995 performance, scoring 21.6. White students also scored an average of 21.6.

P-8B

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1996 • USA TODAY

Core courses credited for rise in ACT scores

By Dennis Kelly
USA TODAY

Pushed by gains among females and tougher course loads in high school, scores are up again on the ACT the college admissions test.

The composite score on the American College Testing (ACT) Assessment, measured on a 1 to 36 point scale, rose from 20.8 to 20.9. That represents an average two more questions answered correctly out of the 215 on the four-part ACT, which focuses on math, science, English and reading, says ACT's Kelley Hayden.

ACT president Richard L. Ferguson calls the gain "significant" since scores have climbed three of the past four years. That trend is "a positive — and virtually unprecedented — development," he says.

The ACT, taken by 925,000 graduating seniors last year, is

the dominant admissions test in the Midwest and South.

The new ACT report credits score gains to:

► Female score improvements. Girls averaged 20.8, still less than 21 for boys, but male scores have stayed flat since 1990 while female scores climbed from 20.3.

► More students taking "core" academic courses — four years of English and three each of math, science and social science. Ten years ago, 35% to 40% of ACT test takers had taken such courses; now it's 60.5% and roughly equal for males and females.

Ferguson was also encouraged by gains among Native American students, whose average has risen from 18.1 in 1992 to 18.8 in 1996.

He calls it "good news" that more students are taking tougher courses, but adds, "We still have a ways to go."

P-1D

Alh

13.

AL 12
8/15

ACT Scores for College-Bound Students Edge Up

By JEANNINE AVERSA

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - High school seniors scored a bit higher this year on the ACT college entrance exams, with girls doing better, boys staying the same and blacks slipping.

The national average ACT score in 1996 crept up to 20.9 from 20.8 in 1995, the American College Testing service said in its annual report Wednesday. Nearly 60 percent of college-bound students take the ACT.

The score range is 1 to 36. The average comes from individual scores of 925,000 high school graduates taking the test, which covers English, math, reading and science reasoning. Colleges use the ACT and the Scholastic Assessment Test, or SAT, to help measure academic potential.

"Every parent, student and guidance counselor should heed the unmistakable message of these ACT scores: Students who accept the challenge of taking the core academic courses and hold themselves to higher standards of learning do better and are better prepared for entering and succeeding in college," said Education Secretary Richard Riley.

Girls' test scores went up again this year and accounted for the overall increase. They raised their average score to 20.8 from 20.7. The average score for boys held steady at 21.

One factor in the national average increase was that for the first time the number of girls and boys taking core high school courses was about even, said ACT President Richard Ferguson.

Core courses are defined as at least four years of high school English and at least three years each of science, math and social studies.

This year, 60.5 percent of ACT test takers had enrolled in the core courses, 1 percentage point higher than last year. ACT officials say students who enroll in the core courses historically outperform those who don't. Ten years ago, about 40 percent of college-bound students said they took those courses.

As a group, blacks' test scores this year slipped to 17.0 from 17.1 because of lower scores in science reasoning. The ACT said the decline may have been due to a smaller proportion of blacks taking at least three years of science or advanced science courses such as physics.

Their scores in English, math and reading, however, matched last year's.

Terry Peterson, senior adviser to Riley, said he's concerned about the overall drop in blacks' scores.

But Ferguson said he was not alarmed by the decline because scores tend to fluctuate year-to-year by a tenth of a point, sometimes as a result of rounding.

Of more concern to Ferguson is that the scores of all minority students still continue to lag behind the national ACT score average of 20.9, despite gains for some minority groups this year.

Students who classify themselves as American Indians and Alaska natives, as a group, scored an average 18.8 this year.

It's the highest score yet for the group, whose average scores have increased steadily since 1992. This year's improvement was attributed to more students taking the core courses.

Hispanics also improved their average scores. Mexican Americans scored an average 18.7 this year, up from 18.6 in 1995. Scores for students of Puerto Rican and Cuban descent rose to 18.9 from 18.7.

Asian Americans matched their 1995 performance, scoring 21.6.

White students since 1992 have consistently scored higher than the national average. This year, they scored an average 21.6.

1996 Average ACT Composite Scores, By State

State	Total		Core completers		Non-core completers		No course data	
	Percent of graduates tested	Average composite score	Percent of total tested	Average composite score	Percentage of total tested	Average composite score	Percent of total tested	Average composite score
Alabama	57%	20.1	63%	21.4	35%	17.8	2%	19.0
Alaska	35	20.9	39	24.1	24	20.6	36	17.6
Arizona	27	21.2	65	22.0	33	19.5	2	19.9
Arkansas	64	20.2	67	21.3	29	17.9	4	18.7
California	11	21.0	67	21.8	31	19.1	3	20.4
Colorado	60	21.4	58	22.5	40	19.8	2	20.5
Connecticut	2	21.4	39	22.1	42	20.9	19	21.4
Delaware	4	21.1	70	22.0	29	18.6	1	24.5
District of Columbia	5	19.6	65	20.1	29	18.4	5	20.6
Florida	34	20.6	71	21.6	24	18.0	4	19.1
Georgia	16	20.3	76	21.1	19	17.3	5	19.4
Hawaii	15	21.7	68	22.3	29	20.1	3	21.9
Idaho	59	21.3	51	22.4	47	20.2	2	19.4
Illinois	67	21.2	50	22.8	49	19.7	2	19.6
Indiana	19	21.3	55	22.7	40	19.3	5	21.0
Iowa	64	21.9	66	23.0	33	19.8	1	20.7
Kansas	70	21.3	49	23.0	50	19.7	1	19.3
Kentucky	62	20.1	35	21.1	64	19.6	2	18.6
Louisiana	73	19.4	67	20.4	31	17.2	2	19.1
Maine	2	21.2	44	21.8	41	20.9	15	20.4
Maryland	9	20.9	72	21.5	26	19.5	3	20.5
Massachusetts	5	21.2	40	21.7	39	20.9	21	21.0
Michigan	64	21.1	56	22.4	42	19.5	1	20.6
Minnesota	59	22.1	72	22.8	26	20.3	2	21.8
Mississippi	68	18.8	63	19.9	35	16.9	2	17.6
Missouri	63	21.4	57	22.7	41	19.7	2	20.4
Montana	54	21.7	60	23.0	38	19.8	2	20.1
Nebraska	72	21.4	59	22.6	40	19.7	1	19.6
Nevada	39	21.2	63	22.0	35	19.6	2	21.3
New Hampshire	3	21.7	51	22.6	39	21.2	9	19.6
New Jersey	2	20.9	37	21.7	56	20.5	8	20.4
New Mexico	59	20.2	54	21.4	44	18.8	2	17.9
New York	16	21.7	64	23.0	30	19.1	6	20.8
North Carolina	11	19.6	68	20.4	28	17.7	3	18.3
North Dakota	77	21.3	68	22.4	31	18.7	1	20.1
Ohio	58	21.3	62	22.5	36	19.4	1	20.6
Oklahoma	63	20.5	49	21.8	48	19.2	3	19.6
Oregon	11	22.6	63	23.6	35	20.8	2	21.1
Pennsylvania	6	21.0	69	21.8	24	19.3	6	17.8
Rhode Island	1	21.6	41	22.4	50	21.2	9	20.1
South Carolina	13	19.1	68	20.1	27	16.8	4	18.0
South Dakota	65	21.4	63	22.5	36	19.6	1	19.5
Tennessee	77	19.9	56	21.3	42	18.0	2	18.4
Texas	30	20.2	67	21.2	30	18.0	3	18.6
Utah	66	21.4	40	22.4	58	20.7	2	20.3
Vermont	3	22.3	49	22.9	43	21.9	8	21.0
Virginia	5	20.8	63	21.8	30	19.3	7	18.8
Washington	15	22.3	56	23.2	42	21.1	2	21.7
West Virginia	54	20.0	44	21.1	55	19.2	1	18.6
Wisconsin	63	22.1	61	22.9	38	20.9	1	21.4
Wyoming	64	21.4	53	22.6	45	20.2	2	18.6
National	35%	20.9	59%	22.0	38%	19.2	3%	19.9

Source: American College Testing, "ACT Assessment, 1996 Results: Summary Report," August 1996.

Justice Jumps To The Aid Of Mentoring Programs

Schools and nonprofits using mentoring programs to reach at-risk youths are getting a little help from the Justice Department.

Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs is inviting applications from collaborations of school districts and public and private nonprofit groups for its Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP).

Grant winners will use their share of JUMP's \$4 million to support one-to-one mentoring for youths at risk of failing in school, dropping out of school or getting involved in crime and delinquency, including gangs.

Grants top out at \$190,000 for three years. The deadline is Sept. 20.

Make Me A Match

Mentoring projects will pair at-risk youths with adults of the same gender, racial and cultural backgrounds who will offer personal, social, educational and general guidance to the students at least four hours per month.

Projects must target at-risk youths and should focus on crime-riddled areas with a high dropout rate, where 60 percent or more of students are eligible for Title I funds.

Once target areas are chosen, grantees will match needy students with compatible adults; train mentors in communication and limit-setting skills, relationship-building and youth interaction; provide mentors with feedback and advice; and monitor the results

based on levels of delinquency and gang participation, academic performance and dropout rates.

OJJDP offered some examples for school districts to consider in preparing applications.

Projects in secondary schools should provide students with the opportunity to experience the work environment, witness useful job skills, get help with their homework and be exposed to positive new experiences.

Elementary school students involved in the mentoring programs should receive academic assistance, emotional support and new experiences.

Learning From Experience

Because the JUMP programs are only a few years old, Justice has not evaluated the successes and failures of the previous two rounds of grant winners. But OJJDP has noted some pitfalls plaguing several applicants and grantees, and offers this advice:

- ✓ Establish a strong relationship between schools and nonprofits to allow joint decision-making;
- ✓ Let parents play a role in the program and make decisions about their children;
- ✓ Use several strategies for recruiting mentors and set realistic goals for what sometimes is a difficult process; and
- ✓ Recruit mentors of similar genders, race and cultural backgrounds as the youths the project is trying to reach.

For more information, contact Travis Cain or Cora Roy, Program Managers, Special Emphasis Division, (202)307-5914; e-mail, travis@ojp.usdoj.gov or royc@ojp.usdoj.gov.

Program guidelines and application information also are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at (800)638-8736 or on the Internet at <http://www.nccjrs.org/jump.html>.

—Brenda Cordwell

Bilingual & Immigrant Education

A battle over academic standards—and how students who are not fully proficient in English are included in those standards—is brewing in California.

A panel of educators last month released proposed state content standards that seek to spell out what high school students should know in mathematics and English language arts.

But educators who work with the state's 1.3 million limited-English-proficient students are wondering how those students will be judged against the standards, which must be implemented by 1998.

The state's leading advocacy and professional groups for LEP students and their teachers—the California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and the California Association for Bilingual Education—have argued that, so far, the proposed standards do not do enough to distinguish between native English speakers and those learning English.

Both groups agree that LEP students should be held to the same high standards as native English speakers. But how fairly they are measured against those standards—and whether the standards become roadblocks to a diploma—is of major concern.

"Standards are cheap, but assessments are expensive," said Kara Lee Rosenberg, the president of CATESOL. "That's where this usually all falls apart."

Many LEP students may achieve a relatively high level of oral English but still write in patterns indicative of their native languages, said Silvina Rubinstein, the executive director of CAFE. And LEP students who come to California schools as teenagers will be hard pressed to perform in English classes on a par with their native English-speaking peers, she said.

Many academically successful teenagers believe immigration and affirmative action policies will stand in the way of getting the jobs they want or of being accepted by the colleges of their choice, a national survey says.

In the annual *Who's Who Among American High School Students* survey, 59 percent of the respondents said they think immigration and affirmative action will make it harder to get the jobs they want. Forty-nine percent said they believe the policies will make it harder to get into college; 52 percent said there are too many immigrants in the United States.

The survey, which was released last month, was conducted among 3,370 high school students with an A or B average.

—LYNN SCHNAIBERG lschnaib@ape.org

(Best Copy Available)

EXCELLENCE GOES ABROAD

BY ROCHELLE L. STANFIELD

"We expect less from our children, and they meet our expectations." That's the perspective Pascal D. (Pat) Forgione, the commissioner of education statistics, placed on the middling results of American eighth-graders in the most comprehensive study to date of worldwide mathematics and science achievement in school.

American 13-year-olds placed slightly below average in math and slightly above average in science among youngsters in 41 countries who were tested as part of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

EDUCATION

Country-to-country differences make absolute rankings inappropriate, Forgione said at a Nov. 21 news conference, but U.S. student performance clearly was mediocre. Although Americans were on a par with students in Germany and England, Japanese students did significantly better. The real honors in both science and math went to youngsters in Singapore, South Korea, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Considering the results, the fanfare with which the Education Department released these findings was somewhat surprising—a much-hyped session in a swanky Washington hotel followed by a luncheon for the news media. One reason may be that education is a top Clinton Administration priority. In any event, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley used the occasion to beat the drum for raising standards and expectations for all U.S. students.

"For U.S. students, average is just not good enough," Riley said, urging new

emphasis on "higher standards, better teaching and tougher testing" in America's schools.

Riley faces an uphill trudge to achieve this goal. While many people talk about the need for higher standards, almost nobody wants his or her kid to become an educational grind. Earlier this year, for example, when the Gallup Organization Inc.'s latest poll of attitudes about public

schools asked parents to choose between a child's earning A's or getting average grades but being active in extracurricular activities, only 28 per cent preferred academic excellence, while 60 per cent selected skill in socializing (9 per cent volunteered that they wanted both, and 3 per cent said they didn't know).

Education reformers have been promoting higher standards since President Bush staged the first education reform summit with the nation's governors in 1989. But conservative advocates of local control over schools consistently oppose national standards as a big-government grab for power. Thus, the issue of standards

became increasingly controversial after the 1994 elections. It remains a touchy subject.

The math standards, the first set promulgated, have been the least controversial. While American math teachers say they are familiar with the standards, they don't use them in the classroom. Ironically, the international study found that Japanese math teachers actually practice what the U.S. math standards preach.

Rather than being chagrined by that situation, Linda P. Rosen, executive director of the Reston (Va.)-based National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (which developed the math standards), said in an interview that she found it "wonderfully encouraging." Even though the math standards have been in circulation for several years, she insisted that "we're really just getting started with the implementation." So the international

study findings, she continued, are "going to show in concrete terms how other countries, in particular Japan, are manifesting what we value in our standards."

Excellence in math and science comes — down to the quality of teaching and the curriculum, the study showed. American students spend as much or more time in class, have more homework assigned and spend the same number of hours watching television as Japanese students. But Japanese children learn more math because their teachers are better prepared, and the Japanese curriculum stresses problem solving rather than memorizing as the American approach does.

In addition to testing students and comparing curricula, the study videotaped math and science lessons in progress. Evaluators of the math videotapes labeled 87 per cent of the U.S. teaching as low quality, while they put only 13 per cent of the Japanese teaching in that category.

"If we see the news in the report as simply a horse race story of who finished first and who finished second, we miss the point," Riley said. "The issues are much deeper—the content and rigor of what we are teaching, how we go about teaching, the fact that we continue to shortchange America's teachers."