

COALITION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

August 27, 1997

Members of the United States Senate

Dear Senator:

**Subject: Support for funds in the FY 1998 Education Appropriations (S.1061)
to Develop National Tests in Mathematics and Reading**

The organizations listed below urge your support for the Appropriations Committee provisions in the Fiscal Year 1998 Labor/HHS/Education Bill (S.1061) which enable development of new voluntary national tests for individual students in mathematics and reading. We urge, also, your opposition to any amendments which would prohibit funding for development of the tests or otherwise impede their preparation.

Why develop voluntary national tests?

Our students must be able to benchmark their education progress now in ways never done before so they may prepare for their future. Although there is extensive testing in our nation, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations. Our highly mobile students and their families need test results indicating their performance as they move among school districts and states. Our children will also compete for jobs across communities, states, and nations. They need test results indicating whether their achievement is competitive with other students around the world. In short, students and families want to know what level of learning is required to reach the high standards necessary as we enter the 21st Century.

The proposal for developing national tests in reading and mathematics is designed to provide that information at two critical points -- 4th grade in reading and 8th grade in mathematics. The selection of 4th grade reading is made because at that stage to succeed in all subjects in school, students must have proficiency in reading English. The selection of 8th grade mathematics is key, because that is the pivotal year for a student to determine what level of mathematics she or he will pursue in high school. This choice, in turn, heavily influences whether or not the student will advance to postsecondary education.

Design of the tests

The proposal for developing the tests included in the Appropriations Committee's bill takes maximum advantage of tests already in use. It enables students and families to have the achievement information they want in an efficient and timely way.

The new tests are built on the widely accepted testing done under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP enjoys strong, bipartisan support as a measure of national student samples and samples in more than 40 states of student achievement in mathematics and

reading. By basing the new individual student tests on content tested under NAEP, the new test is the most efficient way to link scores nationally to NAEP and internationally to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. As a result, a long-standing hope will be realized by 2000: an individual student anywhere in the United States will be able to compare his or her academic achievement to that of students in other states and in more than 40 other countries.

Safeguards in test development

The Senate Appropriations Committee, with the agreement of the Administration, has provided clear safeguards for development of the tests. The development and field trials of the new tests will be reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences with a favorable report required in advance of any use of the tests. The process of Academy review is comparable to the quality controls required by Congress in the development of the NAEP, in that case, by the National Academy of Education. The Congress, the states and localities, and students and parents will have the advantage of a thorough technical and professional review before the national tests are actually administered.

Urgency for test development in 1997

The members of our organizations urge that development of the national tests moves forward in 1997. States and localities are now addressing significant choices regarding their future testing systems. The option of using the national tests in reading and mathematics is an extremely important one. We need to have that option, but final decisions require test availability by 1999 and design and field testing in 1997 and 1998. No state is required to participate, and no state should be denied the option by halting test development. This use of federal funds for test development is as cost-effective an investment in state, national and international reading and mathematics comparisons as could be made with public or private funds.

We urge the Senate to give the green light for developing voluntary national tests in reading and mathematics, thereby enabling our students and their families to genuinely benchmark their individual efforts and results to their counterparts throughout the United States and around the world.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

American Federation of Teachers
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Great City Schools
Council of Chief State School Officers
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Education Association
National School Boards Association

COALITION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

August 27, 1997

Members of the United States House of Representatives

Dear Representative:

**Subject: Support for funds in the FY 1998 Education Appropriations (H.R. 2264)
to Develop National Tests in Mathematics and Reading**

The organizations listed below urge your support for the Appropriations Committee provisions in the Fiscal Year 1998 Labor/HHS/Education Bill (H.R. 2264) which enable development of new voluntary national tests for individual students in mathematics and reading. We urge, also, your opposition to any amendments which would prohibit funding for development of the tests or otherwise impede their preparation.

Why develop voluntary national tests?

Our students must be able to benchmark their education progress now in ways never done before so they may prepare for their future. Although there is extensive testing in our nation, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations. Our highly mobile students and their families need test results indicating their performance as they move among school districts and states. Our children will also compete for jobs across communities, states, and nations. They need test results indicating whether their achievement is competitive with other students around the world. In short, students and families want to know what level of learning is required to reach the high standards necessary as we enter the 21st Century.

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SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

✓ **The American Public Supports High National Standards**

Parents deserve to know how their children are performing based on rigorous national standards no matter where they live in this country.

A recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll shows that 67% favor using standardized national tests to measure the achievement of students and 77% favor national standards for measuring the academic performance of our schools.

✓ **Educators Support Continued Development of Voluntary National Tests**

"Although there is extensive testing in our nation, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations. They need test results indicating whether their achievement is competitive with other students around the world. In short, students and families want to know what level of learning is required to reach the high standards necessary as we enter the 21st century."

Letter signed by the following:

American Federation of Teachers
Council for Chief State School Officers
National Education Association

Council for Exceptional Children
Council of the Great City Schools
National School Boards Association

National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education

"For those states opting to participate in the program, it offers an unprecedented opportunity for individual students to compare their abilities with other students from across the nation... We believe the states should be afforded the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to take part in these national assessments."

Brenda Lilienthal Welburn, Executive Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education

"A voluntary national test would give teachers and parents the ability to measure their students and children against high national standards. Currently, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations."

Gerald D. Morris
Director of Legislation, American Federation of Teachers

✓ **Business Community Support for the Voluntary National Tests**

"The proposed standards and tests will help provide parents, students, educators and policy makers with the information they need to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century world and workplace."

Edwin Lupberger, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee

"There is certainly a place for legitimate discussion over details...But these and other arguments should not weaken or overshadow our commitment to raising academic standards and assessing student performance. Without a national assessment, raising academic standards will be, at best, an amorphous goal."

Jim Orr, CEO, UNUM Corporation, Chairman of the National Alliance of Business

"The Alliance believes these voluntary tests could be used by state and local school districts to measure the progress of American students in these core subjects. The Alliance recently surveyed its members on this issue and an overwhelming number supported the initiative to develop the voluntary national tests."

National Alliance of Business

"As the CEO of a company that does business in every state in the union and 70 countries worldwide, voluntary national tests that give individual student scores make sense. Here's why. When prospective employees apply for a job, employers hold them to the same standard, no matter where they went to school. In our global economy where employers are competing on a worldwide basis, the quantitative and communications skills needed for a particular job are not unique to Delaware or Texas or California."

**John A. Krol, Dupont President and CEO and
Chairman of the Business Roundtable Education Task Force**

"President Clinton's national testing initiative offers a new opportunity to use widely accepted national benchmarks in reading and math against which states, school districts and parents can judge student performance."

**Jim Barksdale, CEO and President, Netscape Communications, and
L. John Doerr, Partner in the firm of Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield and Byers
on behalf of 240 technology industry leaders**

✓ Editorial Support for the Voluntary National Tests

"Yes on Tests...The results of the new tests would be available for individual students, classes, schools and school districts, rather than expressed in broad national or regional terms. The idea is that, yes, they might then become instruments for change, but not dictated from above. Rather, parents and others would use them as a standard for comparison, and for demanding improvement on the ground, at the local level...The danger is not that the federal government is going to take over the nation's schools. The danger rather is that poor performance will continue to be tolerated and obscured."

The Washington Post

"Put Schools to the Test...American children won't notice, but the public schools they return to this fall lack something important: a reliable, uniform means of assessing how well they're doing their job. Erasing that lack is what President Clinton has in mind when he call for national tests...For the sake of America's students, the political and philosophical hurdles have to be cleared. Reliable national tests won't in themselves rebuild public education, but they're an important foundation stone."

The Christian Science Monitor

September 6, 1997

DELAYING THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS WOULD BRING BACK THE TYRANNY OF LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR MINORITY STUDENTS IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

When we don't expect or encourage our children to learn we indirectly encourage them to fail. When we set high standards and when we insist on them, there's no end to what our kids can do.

-President Clinton, July 25, 1997

- The Voluntary National Tests would make it clear that all children, wherever they live, whatever their color, and whatever their language background, can and should achieve to the same high standards as students throughout the nation. Any delay in these tests sends a terrible signal that we doubt whether our kids can achieve.
- Over the long run, the national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math will most benefit the kids in poor urban and rural areas who currently need the most help.
- Fifteen major urban school systems, including the three largest (New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago), as well as cities ranging from Atlanta and San Antonio, to El Paso, Philadelphia and Detroit, boldly pledged that their students will participate in the national tests beginning in 1999 and that they will work to prepare their students to excel on those tests.
- For the first time ever, parents, teachers and the public in these communities will know how well students perform compared to national standards in reading and math and to students in other cities and states throughout the nation, making it harder to shortchange any student when it comes to learning.
- The national tests can become a rallying point for local efforts to strengthen curriculum, provide training to teachers, increase parental and community involvement, and support the necessary investments at the local, state, and national levels to improve our schools.
- Educators and parents can use results of the tests to provide valuable help to low performing students, while communities can use the results to hold administrators and teachers accountable for poor aggregate performance.
- One year after instituting higher standards and tough tests, the School District of Philadelphia has demonstrated that this approach -- raising standards, measuring performance, and working to improve results -- works. On September 3, Philadelphia released results of its 1997 testing program, recording significant gains (in most cases, greater than a 5% increase in students performing at or above the Basic level) over the 1996 baseline in reading, math and science at the 4th, 8th and 11th grades. This is particularly impressive because over the same year there was a very large increase in the number of students taking the test, over 40% of whom were either special education students or students for whom English is not their first language -- students who many wrongly assume cannot learn to high standards.

KIDS SPEAK OUT IN FAVOR OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN READING AND MATH

CNN Newsroom and Worldview
September 8, 1997

Today, Tony Frassrand, Anchor of *CNN Newsroom*, interviewed 60 students and a teacher at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, VA. The following is what they had to say about the President's proposal for Voluntary National Tests in reading and mathematics:

Q: How would you feel about a test in the 4th grade to measure independent reading skills or in the 8th grade to test algebra skills?

- "I think it's a great idea because, in reality, it's for our own good, and if we don't pass it, then the teachers and educators can give us the help we need, so that we are literate." -Cat
- "Yes, we're testing to see if kids are ready to move on, because kids have graduated that haven't been able to read, and that's really sad. We need to be able to test to make sure kids after each year are learning appropriately, and learning what they should be learning." -Casey
- "If you have a national test, no one can slip through the cracks like they have before, and I agree with the testing theory." -Clark
- "In Alexandria, we have the Learning Passport Test, and supposedly you can't move on past 9th grade if you haven't passed it, but I know people who haven't and still moved on, so if there's going to be a test, then it needs to be enforced. I mean, they can't just let people slip through the cracks."
- "Personally, I think the tests are a good idea for something practical. However, I think that if we are going to enforce these tests, we have to get rid of some of the useless tests, which students were given today." -Adam
- "So many people are taking these tests, the Iowa test, and they're obviously not working if people are graduating without being able to read, and not knowing simple math. They're obviously not working." -Amanda

CURRENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

STATES

Alaska
Kentucky
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
North Carolina
West Virginia

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Atlanta, GA
Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
Fresno, CA
Houston, TX
Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles, CA
New York City, NY
Omaha, NE
Philadelphia, PA
San Antonio, TX
Seattle, WA

The Department of Defense schools will also participate.

Together, these states and school districts represent 20% of all 4th and 8th graders.

Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Mathematics: A Strategy to Master the Basics and Reach High Standards

Tonight, I issue a challenge to the nation: Every state should adopt high national standards, and by 1999, every state should test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met.

President Bill Clinton

1997 State of the Union Address

STRONG SCHOOLS WITH CLEAR STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR CHILDREN AND SOCIETY. These standards are needed to help instill the skills and encouragement for hard work that our children need to succeed in school and in life. Toward that end we must establish meaningful standards for what students should be expected to learn and achieve in the basic subjects of reading and mathematics.

A CHALLENGE TO PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY STUDENT MASTERS THE BASICS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS. Reading well by grade 4 and mastering mathematics -- including the foundations of algebra and geometry -- by grade 8 are the gateways for further learning and achievement. Research shows that students who fail to learn to read English well by the end of grade 3 are at greater risk of dropping out and facing diminished success in school and life. Students who fail to master the basics of mathematics by the end of grade 8 do not have the foundation to take tough mathematics and science courses in high school which in turn prepare them for college and better jobs.

While our students have been making progress in reading and mathematics, we are not yet where we need to be as a nation. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 40 percent of our 4th grade students do not reach the "basic" achievement level. In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the U.S. 4th graders score above average in math and science. However, our 8th graders score below the international average in mathematics, and only 5 percent of U.S. eighth grade students score in the top 10 percent internationally.

RIGOROUS VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN 4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS. Parents need to know that students have mastered the basics no matter where they live or move in this country. And they have the right to know how well their children are doing compared with students in other schools, states, and countries. To help give parents this information, the U.S. Department of Education is prepared to offer every state and school district the opportunity to use voluntary national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics, beginning in 1999. These rigorous tests will provide parents, for the first time, scores for individual students, measured against widely accepted national and international standards of excellence. They will give states, local communities, teachers and parents the kind of accurate information they need to help students master basic and advanced skills and strengthen academic performance.

TESTS BASED ON WIDELY RECOGNIZED NATIONAL STANDARDS. The tests will be modeled on the NAEP in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. The NAEP tests are based on widely accepted standards developed by parents, teachers, reading and mathematics specialists, curriculum specialists, and researchers. The NAEP standards reflect a national consensus of what students should know and be able to do when they reach these crucial stages of learning. The voluntary national tests will be linked to NAEP and, in the case of mathematics, linked to TIMSS, so that scores can be compared to national and even international standards. As proposed by the

Department of Education, the Senate has voted to authorize the bipartisan, independent National Assessment Governing Board to set policy for the national tests as it does for NAEP, insuring the integrity of the new tests.

A NATIONAL EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE ODDS FOR STUDENTS. Schools and communities are already working hard at educational improvement; they are committed to parent involvement, getting technology into the classroom, and ensuring a trained and dedicated teacher in every classroom. The federal government provides funding to states and communities to support these efforts. But these efforts cannot be fully effective unless parents, schools and communities are aiming at clear, high standards of achievement. That is why these national tests are already spurring a renewed nation-wide effort to support school improvement and strengthen student achievement in these core subjects. Reading and literacy groups are coming together to improve reading. The mathematics and science community, engineers and business leaders are working to improve mathematics teaching and learning. To assist parents, teachers, principals and communities in using the tests effectively, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and others are developing a tool chest that includes information for parents and teachers on how to prepare to meet these high standards, how to use test results to improve education, and what high standards in reading and mathematics look like. As part of this effort, every year the entire test (along with answers, scoring guides, and other materials) will be released to the public and available on the Internet so that students, parents, and teachers can know what is expected for students to reach standards of excellence.

TOOLS FOR PARENTS; GUIDES FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES. The current NAEP is designed to assess how well a sample of students across the entire nation and individual states perform in reading and mathematics. Not all students participate in NAEP, and no parents know how their own children do on this test. In contrast, the voluntary national tests will provide students, parents, and teachers with meaningful scores to compare individual student performance to widely accepted national and international standards and to identify students and schools that need extra help. These standard measures of excellence will help parents hold schools accountable for improved performance, help teachers and principals improve curriculum and instruction, and give students a guide for charting their own progress.

The tests will be available for the first time in the spring of 1999 and updated each year. Individual test scores will *not* be collected by the federal government; state and local school districts will decide how to use the data. States and school districts will have the option to administer the tests as part of their local testing programs.

For more information, visit the voluntary national tests web site at <http://www.ed.gov/nationaltests/>



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

September 12, 1997

Dear Member of Congress:

Next week, you will be voting on an amendment to H. R. 2264, the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill, that would prohibit the use of funds to develop or implement the voluntary national tests of fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics skills proposed by the Administration. I am writing to urge you to oppose that amendment.

As you are aware, yesterday the Senate approved -- by a strong bipartisan vote (87-13) -- an amendment that designates the independent National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) as the entity responsible for guiding the development and implementation of the tests and makes a number of changes in NAGB's composition. During the debate on that amendment, Senator Coats of Indiana stated what this issue is all about when he said, "A voluntary national test, which states and parents may choose to participate in, will give parents another tool . . . to measure their children's academic achievement and hold local schools accountable." I hope, as you cast your vote, you will consider Senator Coats' remarks.

Over the last several weeks, a number of arguments have been raised in opposition to these proposed tests. I would like to address these issues:

*** The tests will NOT lead to a national curriculum.** They are to be based on accepted standards that reflect widespread agreement on what students should know and be able to do. They would not define the approach to teaching that should be used in reaching those levels of academic achievement. States and local communities will continue to determine their curriculum. I vigorously oppose any movement toward a national curriculum. Making sure every child can read well and do algebra is not a national curriculum. It is a very old-fashioned idea of making sure that every child has mastered the basics once and for all. These tests are voluntary and are not a condition for receiving other Federal education funds.

*** There is a very important need for these tests:** America's parents and educators deserve to know the truth about how our children are doing in meeting agreed upon academic standards regardless of where they live. Other tests administered by states to students have widely different standards of performance. The attached graph compares the results of state assessments with the results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). While state standards are improving, they remain very uneven. In our mobile society, parents need to be able to determine if their children are learning the basics so they can compete with students throughout the nation and around the world. Furthermore, the design of these tests will provide for much more effective feedback to students, parents and teachers, as to the specific areas that need to be addressed in individual students' educational progress.

*** The tests will not be developed by Department of Education staff, nor will they be designed to promote some particular philosophy.** Reading is reading and mathematics is mathematics no matter where you live and no matter what your political philosophy. These tests do not endorse or

encourage any specific form of instruction. This is a local decision made by local educators. The Senate's action yesterday supports the Administration's recommendation that NAGB, not the Department, oversee development and administration of the tests. NAGB also oversees the development and administration of the widely respected NAEP tests.

* We are proposing to spend only \$16 million in 1998 for test development. A request for funds to administer the tests would come in the fiscal year 1999 appropriation, not in this bill. Some have argued that the Department already spends over \$500 million in test development. This is incorrect. Approximately 90% of the funds included in that estimate are Goals 2000 funds which are used, as each state determines, for a wide variety of purposes including teacher professional development, promoting parental and community involvement in schools to bolster standards, and bringing educational technology into the schools. Only a very small part of Goals 2000 funding goes to tests. We estimate that the costs of administering the test will range from \$10 to \$12 per student tested. Decisions as to who will be tested depend entirely on voluntary decisions by states, local education agencies, and families.

Some individuals are concerned that these tests will place low-income and minority students at a disadvantage. I understand and appreciate these concerns. However, I am very firmly convinced that one of the biggest obstacles to improved educational opportunities and results for those students has been the widespread and mistaken belief that students from these backgrounds cannot learn to the same high levels as other, more advantaged students. This belief -- the foundation of what I have called a tyranny of low expectations -- has pervaded the schooling experience of our most disadvantaged youngsters, and resulted all too often in watered down curricula, poorly prepared teachers, and under-investment in their schooling. Challenging national standards and tests are a fundamental tool for overcoming these obstacles.

We also know that changing expectations and setting higher standards lead to results. Test scores are up in New York City, Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco to name a few cities. Philadelphia students made significant gains in reading, math, and science at the 4th, 8th, and 11th grade levels, and they did so at the same time that student participation increased substantially among students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient students, and low-income students. In Milwaukee, only 21% of the school district's eleventh grade students passed a rigorous mathematics proficiency examination. After an intense community-wide effort to bolster student achievement, 98% of the class of 1996 students passed the test.

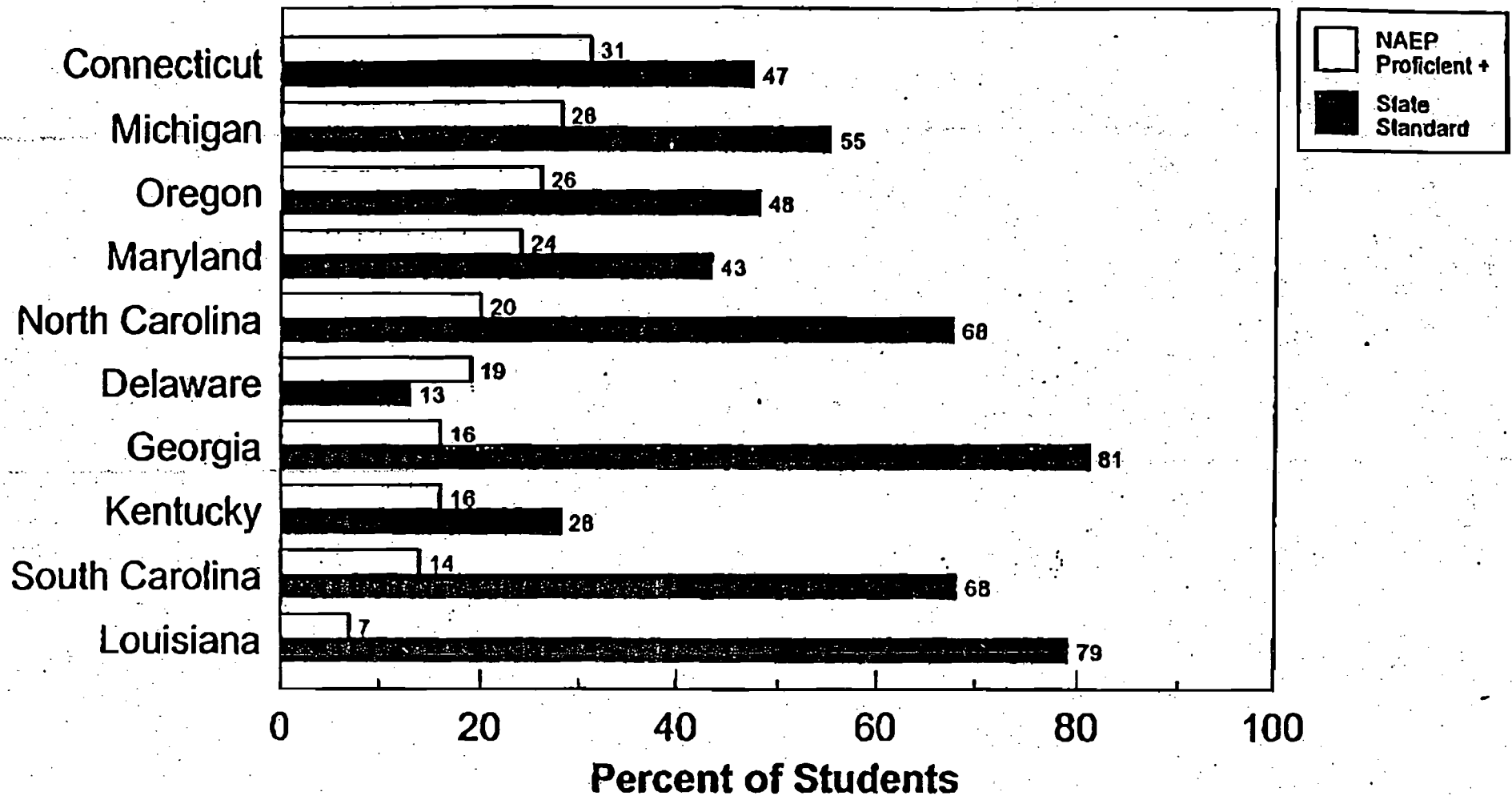
When you cast your vote, I urge you to put partisan politics aside and permit funding of this critical education reform tool. America's parents deserve a dependable means of finding out how their children are doing in reading and mathematics. America's students deserve to be given the challenge to perform to high standards of academic achievement and the support it takes from all of us to succeed. Local school officials should have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to use these voluntary national tests.

I ask that you support the continued development of the voluntary national tests.

Yours sincerely,


Richard W. Riley

State 1996 NAEP Scores for 8th Grade Math Compared to States' Own Assessments*



★ State assessment results are for the 1995-96 school year. All are for grade 8 except for Michigan which is for grade 7. NAEP results are percentages of students scoring at the proficient or advanced level, state results reflect the state's standards.

Source: U.S. Department of Education and State Departments of Education: Individual State

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 4, 1997

Contact: Johanna Schneider
(202) 872-1260

STATEMENT ON VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTING
BY JOHN A. KROL, PRESIDENT AND CEO, DUPONT COMPANY AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Washington, DC--In 1989, over 200 member companies in The Business Roundtable made a ten-year commitment to a state-by-state initiative to improve our K-12 education system. Over the course of the decade, states have made great strides in raising standards, assessing student performance on challenging tests and reforming state policies that affect student learning. However, a critical piece of information has been missing for parents -- how their own children measure up against national and international performance benchmarks. This was recognized by President Bush in his call for voluntary national testing.

New national tests that provide a national benchmark in fourth-grade reading and an international benchmark in eighth-grade mathematics for individual students could be in place by 1999. These national tests also could be killed by concerns about testing, governance struggles and partisan differences. There are important issues to be resolved but none are insurmountable. In my own view, a national test must be free from even the appearance of partisan politics so that it can be a long-term barometer for student achievement. For this reason, the tests need independent oversight by a group outside the U.S. Department of Education, as recently agreed to by the Administration in response to concerns raised by Republicans. I urge the Administration and Congress to quickly work out any remaining differences that impede bipartisan support for voluntary national tests.

No one in business believes that testing alone will improve our schools. But you also don't get what you don't measure. Successful companies continually assess performance -- both their own and their competitors. However, we don't do this just to record the data and file it away. We measure our strengths and weaknesses to make better-informed decisions and change direction if necessary.

Students already take a lot of tests. But parents often do not know whether their children are learning what they need to know to succeed or whether their children's test scores measure up to expectations in other communities, states or countries.

Good tests that are comparable across geographic boundaries are prerequisites to the actions needed to make dramatic improvements in our schools. Some schools obviously will need more help than others. What's needed to help students achieve higher academic performance will vary from place to place, but we must not shortchange students by lowering the standards based on where they reside.

States are beginning to set higher standards. I am particularly proud of DuPont's role in partnership with teachers to develop Delaware's science standards. Other states are equally proud of their own standards. But I also believe that Delaware needs an external measure to independently verify that we are indeed holding our students to a world class standard. That's the power of a national test that reports individual student scores.

The national test proposal endorsed by President Clinton has three compelling features that merit bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats in Congress and the nation's Governors:

- First of all, it is voluntary. No state or district will be required to administer the tests. No federal strings will mandate use of the tests. Local control will be maintained.
- Second, two highly-regarded existing tests, now only given to a sample of students to measure state and national student achievement, will be adapted so that individual student scores can be reported. For the first time, parents and educators would know how their own children and students perform on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics. In math, there is an added advantage. The test would also be adapted from the math portion of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) so that an individual American child's performance could be compared to children in 40 other countries. Results from tests given to a sample of students are too easy to dismiss as about someone else's kids. Individual student scores on these challenging tests will bring the message home.
- And third, the testing is limited to two basic subjects, reading and mathematics, at two critical junctures in a child's education, fourth grade and eighth grade. Of course, since people vehemently disagree on the best methods for teaching reading and math, the tests should be clear about the performance expected and leave it to local educators and parents to choose the methods they believe will best produce the desired results.

As the CEO of a company that does business in every state in the union and 70 countries worldwide, voluntary national tests that give individual student scores make sense. Here's why. When prospective employees apply for a job, employers hold them to the same standard, no matter where they went to school. In our global economy where employers are competing on a worldwide basis, the quantitative and communications skills needed for a particular job are not unique to Delaware or Texas or California.

As a parent and grandparent, I believe we owe our children the kind of K-12 education that allows them to be successful in today's fast-paced world. Parents should be confident that their children are graduating from high school with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed at college or to obtain a good job.

Our schools serve many purposes, not the least of which is to instill the principles of citizenship in a democratic society. Education also prepares young people to succeed when they finish compulsory schooling to pursue further education and work. For business, improving the

3
education system's performance is more than a matter of good works; in our highly competitive global economy, it is a business necessity.

The Business Roundtable is an association of more than 200 chief executive officers of leading U.S. corporations employing over 10 million people. The CEOs examine public policy issues that affect the economy and develop positions which seek to reflect sound economic and social principles.

A BIPARTISAN CALL FROM U.S. TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY LEADERS FOR HIGH NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS IN READING AND MATH

Gale Aguilar	CEO	Mitern Corporation
Paul Allaire	CEO	Xerox
Joseph Ambrosio	General Partner	Pirene Partners
Dr. Gilbert Amelio	CEO, Chairman	Apple Computer
Marc Andreessen	Co-Founder, Vice President of Technology	Netscape Communications
Vincente Anido, Jr.	President and CEO	Combichem, Inc.
Sherry Annes	VP, Investor Relations & Corporate Communications	Arris Pharmaceuticals
Eric Archambeau	President	DataMind Corp.
Howard Asher	President & CEO	Advanced Bioresearch Associates
Mel Badgen	President	Homesoft Corporation
Naren Bakshi	President & CEO	Vision Software
Jim Barksdale	CEO & President	Netscape Communications
Carol Bartz	Chairman of the Board & CEO	Autodesk
Gary Beach	President	Computerworld
George Bell	CEO	Excite
Eric Benhamou	CEO & Chairman	3COM
Charles Berger	CEO & President	Radius
Philip Berman	Chairman & CEO	CompuRAD
Jeff Bezos	CEO	Amazon.com
David Binkley	CEO	Argonaut Technologies
Phillip J. Biola	President	Zeus Communications
Jaleh Bisharat	Senior Vice President of Marketing	Pointcast
Julie Blanchard	Vice President Human Resources	Heartport
Charles Boesenberg	CEO	Ashtech, Inc.
Shelby Bonnie	COO	C/Net
Jerry Brenholtz	President	Advanced Technical Resources
John Seeley Brown	CEO	Xerox PARC
Neill H. Brownstein	Special Partner	Bessemer Venturer Partners
George H. Bruns, Jr.	Chairman & CEO	Giga-tronics Incorporated
Brett Bullington	Executive VP Strategic & Business Development	Excite
Pat Burt	President	Acteron
Brook H. Byers	Partner	Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers
Gordon Campbell	President	TECHFARM, Inc.
William Campbell	President	Intuit
Douglas Carlston	CEO & Chairman	Broderbund Software
Steve Case	Chairman & President	America On-Line
Daniel H. Case III	President & Co-CEO	Hambrecht & Quist
John Castello	President & CEO	XOMA Corporation
John Chambers	CEO	Cisco
Kumar Chandrasekaran	CEO	InSite Vision, Inc.
Robert Chess	CEO	Inhale Therapeutic Systems
Sanjeev Chitre	CEO	Integrated Process Equipment Corp.
Ronald Chwang	President & CEO	Acer America
Gregory R. Clarke	President & CEO	Creative Computer
Mark Clotek	CEO	Smart Corporation
Vincent Coates	Chairman & CEO	Nanometrics
Louis C. Cole	President & CEO	Legato Systems, Inc.
Kevin Compton	Partner	KPCB
Lisa Conte	CEO	Shaman Pharmaceuticals
Paul M. Cook	Chairman	SRI International
Scott Conk	Chairman & CEO	Intuit

Ames Cornish
Michael Crichton
Charles Crocker
Anne Crossway
Peter Currie
A. Stephen Dahms
John Dean
Michael Dell
Jim Dezell
James Diller
L. John Doerr
Henry Donaldson
Mark W. Dowley
Joe Durrett
Herbert Dwight
Esther Dyson
Howard Earhart
Herb Edelstein
Yorgen Edholm
Dan Eilers
Arthur Einstein
David Ellington
Bob Epstein
Judy Estrin
Gary Fazzino
Buck Feltman
Jerry Fiddler
Robert Fisher
Jay Flatley
H.K. Flesher
John Freidenrich
Greg M. Gallo
Larry Garlick
Katrina Garnett
Garrett Garrettson
Louis V. Gerstner, Jr.
Charles Geschke
Majid Ghafghaichi
Peter Giles
Phillip Gioia
Michael Goldberg
David Gollaber
Dominique Goupil
Thomas Greaves
Chris Greene
Dan Greening
Robert Grosshandler
Andrew Grove
Garrett Gruener
Michael Gullett
Brian Halls
William Hambrecht
Judith Hamilton
J. Emmett Hammond
Richard Hansen
James Harris

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President
CEO
CEO
Chief Financial Officer
Member of the Board of Directors
President & CEO
Chairman, CEO
Chairman
CEO
Partner
President & CEO
Chairman
President
CEO
President
President & CEO
President
President & CEO
CEO
President
President
Chief Tehnical Officer
President & CEO, Co-founder
State Government Affairs Director
President & CEO
Chairman of the Board
CEO
President & CEO
CEO & President
Principal
Partner
CEO & Chairman
CEO
CEO
Chairman & CEO
President
President
President
CEO
CEO
President
President
President & CEO
President
CEO
CEO
CEO & President
Partner
President
CEO
Chairman
CEO
CEO
President & CEO
CEO

Vividus
Constant C Productions
BEI Electronics, Inc.
Cosmederm Technologies, Inc.
Netscape Communications
US Council of Biotechnology Centers
Silicon Valley Bankshares
Dell Computers
NetSchools Corp.
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Digital Generation Systems
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EOventure Holdings
Power Integrations
Two Crowes corp.
Brio Technology
Cideo
AEA
NetNoir
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Precept Software
Hewlett Packard
Nextwave Design Automation, Inc.
Wind Reserve Systems
Fisher Berkeley Corp.
Molecular Dynamics
APTEK Industries, Inc.
Bay Partners
Gray Cary Ware & Friedenrich
Remedy
CrossRoads Software
Spectrian
IBM Corporation
Adobe Systems
Accurel Systems International Corp.
The Tech Museum of Innovation
Zeus Communications
OnCare
CHI
Claris Software Inc.
NetSchools
Greene Engineers
Charm Communications Corp.
EyeCash Co.
Intel
Alta Partners
Paradigm Technology Inc.
National Semiconductor
Hambrecht & Quist
First Floor Software
Wireless Data Corp.
Silicon Engineering, Inc.
Redwood MicroSystems, Inc.

Kevin Harvey
 R. Peter Henschel
 Danny Hillis
 Scott H. Holmberg
 James Hornthal
 Dr. Irwin Jacobs
 Robert Jagunich
 N.W. "Bill" Jasper, Jr.
 Kathryn Johnson
 Reese Jones
 Tom Jorde
 Robert Kagle
 David E. Kahn
 Roberta Katz
 Mike Kaufman
 Bob Kavner
 Gene Miller
 Harrison Miller
 Richard Miller
 Halsey Minor
 George Montgomery
 Gordon E. Moore
 John Morgridge
 Mort Myerson
 Henry Nordhoff
 Tina S. Nova
 Pierre Omidyar
 Janina Pawlowski
 Premysl Pech
 Leonard Perham
 Steve Perlman
 Eckhard Pfeiffer
 Nancy Pfund
 Lewis Platt
 Kim Polese
 Steve Pollock
 Rhea Posedel
 Ronald S. Posner
 Bob Puette
 T. Wade Randlett
 Ron Rankin
 William Rasdal
 Guiliano Raviola
 Hollings Renton
 Sanford R. Robertson
 Duane Roth
 Theodore Roth
 James Rurka
 Dennis Ryan
 Edgar Seck
 Phillip Salisbury
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 Scott Sander
 W. J. Sanders
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 Fernand Sarrat

Partner
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 Chief Technology Officer
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 CEO
 Chairman of the Board
 President & CEO
 President
 President & CEO
 Chairman
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 Partner
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 General Counsel
 Co-Founder
 President & CEO
 President
 Sr. Vice President, Marketing
 President & CEO
 CEO
 Managing Director
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 Chairman
 Chairman
 President & CEO
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 CEO
 CEO
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 President & CEO
 President & CEO
 Partner
 Chairman, CEO & President
 CEO
 Vice President
 CEO
 Chairman
 CEO
 California Director
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 CEO
 Chairman
 CEO
 Executive Vice President
 President & CEO
 President
 CEO
 CEO
 CEO
 CEO
 CEO
 Chairman & CEO
 President
 CEO

Benchmark Capital
 Institute for Research on Learning
 Walt Disney Co.
 Image Quest Technologies
 Preview Travel
 Qualcomm, Inc.
 NewAbilities Systems, Inc.
 Dolby Laboratories, Inc.
 The Health Care Forum
 Farallon Communications
 LEC G
 Benchmark Capital
 MicroGuild, Inc.
 Netscape Communications
 NetDay
 On Command Corp.
 Astec Semiconductor
 The Lightspan Partnership
 Pharmacyclics
 C/net
 Hambrecht & Quist
 Intel
 Cisco
 Perot Systems
 Gen-Probe
 Nanogen
 E-Bay & Co.
 E*Loan
 Pierre Partners
 Integrated Device Technology
 Web TV
 Compaq Computer
 Hambrecht & Quist
 Hewlett-Packard
 Marimba
 Netiva Software
 Aehr Test Systems
 Graphix Zone
 NetFRAME Systems, Inc.
 Democratic Leadership Council
 Cardiac Mariners
 Symmetricom, Inc.
 VC Ventures
 Onyx Pharmaceuticals
 Robertson Stephens & Co.
 Alliance Pharmaceuticals
 Alliance Pharmaceuticals
 Microcide Pharmaceuticals
 Net-It
 Zilog, Inc.
 SEEQ Technology
 Electronic Communities
 Digital Sight/Sound
 Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.
 Four11 Corp.
 Cylink

Mark Saul
 Eric Schmidt
 Stratton Solavos
 John Sculley
 John Seidl
 Charles Shalvoy
 John Shoch
 Mark Simon
 Dave Singer
 Jeff Skoll
 Howard Smith
 Vincent Solitto
 Peter Sprague
 Larry Stambaugh
 William Starling
 Tom Sterling
 Dr. Wes Sterman
 Geoff Tate
 Charles R. Trimble
 Les Vadasz
 Louis Velasquez
 Madhu Vora
 Charlotte Walker
 John Walker
 Steven Weiss
 Jo Ann Weiss
 Steven Westly
 Don Wexler
 Thad Whalen
 Randall Whitfield
 Ann Winblad
 Curtis Wozniak
 Pardner Wynn
 Gerald J. Yakaran
 John Young

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 President & CEO
 CEO
 President & CEO
 CEO
 General Partner
 Partner
 CEO
 President
 President & CEO
 CEO
 Chairman & CEO
 President & CEO
 CEO
 President & CEO
 CEO
 President & CEO
 CEO
 Executive Vice President
 Sr. Vice President
 Chairman
 President & CEO
 CEO
 President
 CEO
 Vice President, Business Development
 CEO
 Partner
 President & CEO
 Partner
 CEO
 President & Founder
 President & CEO
 Retired, CEO

IChat
 Novell
 VertSign
 Sculley Associates
 CellNet Data Systems
 Conductus, Inc.
 Asset Management Company
 Robertson Stephens & Co.
 Heartport
 E. Bay & Co.
 Clarity Software, Inc.
 Photon Dynamics
 Wave Systems Corp.
 Maxim Pharmaceuticals
 Cardiac Pathways
 Pretty Good Privacy
 Heartport
 Rambus
 Trimble Navigation
 Intel
 Interval Research
 Dyna Logic Corporation
 Sanctuary Woods Multimedia Co.
 Arris Pharmaceuticals
 Lumisys, Inc.
 Academic Systems
 WhoWhere
 Automated Test Engineering, Inc.
 Aspen Ventures
 VIA Medical Corp.
 Hummer Winblad
 Electrogas, Inc.
 Stanford Testing Systems, Inc.
 IriSys R&D
 Hewlett Packard

RESPONSES TO CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL TESTS

1. We don't need another test.

These tests provide information to students, parents and teachers that no other tests do. They will show whether individual students meet challenging, widely accepted national standards in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. No other test provides this clear and critical information to students, parents and teachers. There is no other way for families that move from community to community or state to state to ~~maintain~~ consistent, high expectations in the basics.

Tests don't generate higher academic performance.

Unlike many other tests, these tests will be designed so that teachers and students can prepare for them, starting when the child enters school. Teachers and parents will have materials that describe clearly what kind of work is expected -- what students must know to master the material and do well on the tests.

In addition, the tests will tell school administrators, parents, and teachers how well students and schools are doing. ~~They will be able to tell which schools and students need assistance and how to boost their performance.~~

Research and experience show that raising standards for students lifts student achievement. These tests are tied to high academic standards, and they will generate high academic performance.

3. National tests are too controversial to implement without Congressional authorization.

We welcome Congress as a full partner in the effort to raise standards for all students and to provide parents and students with national standards and tests in the basic skills. None of us can do this alone. We should be working together to raise standards for our students, improve teaching and learning, and give our schools the tools they need to prepare our children for the future. We want Congress to play a role in this effort.

The Administration will submit legislation shortly to ~~create~~ ^{provide for} an independent governing board to oversee and ensure the integrity of the tests. We will ~~use~~ ^{propose that} the National Assessment Governing Board, a group that already exists and that oversees the ~~widely used~~ National Assessment of Education Progress (a sample tests that gives information on how the U.S. and over 40 states are doing, but provides no information for individual students or their teachers and families.) We ask Congress as a partner in the effort to raise standards for all students, to pass this legislation.

highly respected

Work
to get comparison
of tests to
NAEP

compare how schools are doing in
achieving

that will enable

which who to determine what can be done

4. New tests can lead to inappropriate and unfair comparisons of schools and school districts.

- These tests lead to exactly the right kinds of comparisons -- they tell us how well our students and our schools do when measured against high standards of excellence that define what students should know and be able to do in the basics of reading and math. We should welcome these comparisons, not fear them.

We should not presume that any student, no matter where he or she lives or goes to school, will do poorly on this test. We must stop perpetuating the cycle of low expectations that, in the name of compassion, actually keeps young people from achieving their full potential. ~~Results measure~~

In July, 15 major urban school districts around the country pledged to participate in these tests -- not because these districts believe they will excel the first time around, but because they know that their students, when challenged and when provided with the proper support, can perform just as well as any other students can. ~~to high standards~~

5. New national tests can lead to a national curriculum.

- Providing a voluntary reading test in 4th grade and a voluntary math test in 8th grade will not create a national curriculum. These tests are based on accepted standards that reflect widespread agreement on what students should know and be able to do. States and local communities will continue to determine their curriculum, and will use the national tests to focus attention on how to improve student achievement in the basic skills.

6. Instead of another test, more resources should be sent into the classroom.

- We agree that more resources should be sent into the classroom. That is why the Administration has supported record investments in education to help states and communities raise standards, train teachers, improve basic skills, and promote the effective use of technology in the classroom. The national tests will aid us in better understanding where those resources are needed and how they can be wisely spent. They are an integral part of a comprehensive strategy to raise standards and improve education.

7. The federal government is already spending over \$500 million just to test students.

- This figure is totally incorrect. Approximately 90% of these funds is for the Goals 2000 program, which improves teaching and learning in local classrooms by helping states and school districts raise standards, train teachers, promote the effective use of technology and increase parental and community involvement. A very small part of this money goes to tests.

Might add something about Philadelphia area school

everyone involved

**CURRENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN
4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS**

STATES

Alaska
Kentucky
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
North Carolina
West Virginia

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Atlanta, GA
Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
Fresno, CA
Houston, TX
Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles, CA
New York City, NY
Omaha, NE
Philadelphia, PA
San Antonio, TX
Seattle, WA

The Department of Defense schools will also participate.

Together, these states and school districts represent 20% of all 4th and 8th graders.

August 29, 1997

TALKING POINTS FOR THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

The voluntary national tests for 4th grade reading in English and 8th grade math provide an opportunity for states and local school districts to gain valuable information about their students' academic achievement and will be a motivational tool to stimulate nationwide interest in ensuring all children master the basics.

THE TESTS ARE VOLUNTARY

- States and local school districts, as well as private schools, have the opportunity to offer the tests to their students beginning in the spring of 1999, but it is not mandatory. *on school*
- No state will be required to give these tests as a condition of receiving federal funding *or for any other reason imposed by the federal government*

And the parents of children schooled at home

THE TESTS ARE BASED ON WIDELY RECOGNIZED, RIGOROUS STANDARDS

- The tests will be based on the widely respected National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP - also known as the Nation's Report Card) which is used in 43 states.
- NAEP's content frameworks and performance standards are widely accepted and were developed with strong input from teachers, curriculum experts, and state education officials.

THE TESTS WILL GIVE PARENTS AND TEACHERS THE SAME INFORMATION THAT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND POLICY MAKERS NOW RECEIVE

- Every year, when the NAEP results are released, Members of Congress receive important information about how well the nation and the states are doing, to help decide how to improve our schools. Not one parent in America receives information about his or her own child. *about their own children and their schools*
- The voluntary national tests will be different from NAEP by providing individual student information to parents and teachers; NAEP is designed to assess how well the nation and states perform *on average* *in aggregated form*
- These tests will empower parents by providing them with the information they need to determine if their children are on track in the basic skills. With the information provided by these tests, the conversation around the dinner table can be as well informed as the conversation in the hearing room -- and parents can act on behalf of their own children. *comparable*

THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS ARE NOT A NATIONAL CURRICULUM

- The voluntary national tests will help determine a child's academic achievement, but will not guide a national curriculum.
- The tests will provide information to parents and teachers about an individual student's performance and the local education authorities will determine how to use the results. *levels of achievement*

THE 8TH GRADE TEST COVERS BASIC MATH AS WELL AS THE FOUNDATIONS OF GEOMETRY AND ALGEBRA, NOT THE SO-CALLED "WHOLE MATH"

in shaping their own curricula.

- is designed to determine all things*
- The voluntary national math test will help students to master the basic skills in math.
 - In addition, it will also expect that students master much more challenging material based on tough demanding standards including the foundations of geometry and algebra.
 - International research shows that most other industrialized nations introduce their students to algebra and geometry much earlier than the United States.

UNDER THE FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ALREADY HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DEVELOP THESE TESTS

- Former Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander used similar authority to develop voluntary national standards without this kind of opposition from Congress.

a decision to

PREVENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FROM FUNDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TESTS PREVENTS PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS FROM GETTING VALUABLE INFORMATION

- Parents and teachers need this information to appropriately judge the progress of their students and the effectiveness of their school.
- Students all over the country will benefit from clearly defined and widely accepted national and international standards in basic skills.
- States and local school districts enrolling 20% of America's 4th and 8th grade students have already chosen to participate in the voluntary national tests; denying funding would take away their opportunity to assess individual students, as well as state and local progress in achieving high standards.

utilize this resource to

THIS SHOULD NOT BE A PARTISAN ISSUE; POLITICS SHOULD STOP AT THE SCHOOL HOUSE DOOR

- We have demonstrated that we can make real progress for our children when we work together across party lines, as we have done with the balanced budget and with IDEA. We should work together in the same spirit to support voluntary national tests in the basic skills.
- The American public strongly supports national standards and tests in the basic skills. They have the common sense to know that we need high national standards. A recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll indicated that 77% supported "national standards for measuring the academic performance of schools" and nearly 60% favored the plan for national achievement tests.

- indicated their desire intention*
- This initiative has bipartisan support from states, business leaders, and education organizations (including the National Chamber of Commerce, Business Roundtable, National Alliance of Business, 240 high-tech CEO's, Council of Chief State School Officers, National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education).

using standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students.

*indicated their desire***STATES AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO PARTICIPATE**

- Alaska, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, and West Virginia
- The large urban school districts of Atlanta, GA; Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL; Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Detroit, MI; El Paso, TX; Fresno, CA; Houston, TX; Long Beach, CA; Los Angeles, CA; New York City, NY; Omaha, NE; Philadelphia, PA; San Antonio, TX; and Seattle, WA.
- The Department of Defense schools will also participate.
- Together, these make up approximately 20 percent of all 4th and 8th grade students.

even before a test is finalized

PURPOSES FOR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

- ✓ **Improve the odds of success for all students**
 - Providing voluntary national tests arms parents and educators with the knowledge of their students' individual achievement in comparison to widely respected national and international standards.
- ✓ **Focus national attention on the need to improve basic and advanced skills in reading and mathematics**
 - Individually reported tests will highlight the importance of reading independently by the 4th grade, raising awareness that learning to read enables students' to read to learn in all subjects.
 - If students don't learn challenging mathematics by 8th grade, they are less likely to take the math courses required for college admission and success in the workplace.
- ✓ **Help standards come to life by providing teachers, parents, and students with examples of the kind of work expected of students in fourth grade reading and eighth grade mathematics**
 - By giving parents and teachers individual student scores in comparison to national and international standards, these tests will help school reform permeate to the classroom and home.
- ✓ **Help energize local efforts to improve teaching and learning in reading and mathematics to high standards**
 - Good indicators like the voluntary national tests contribute to raising the standard of instruction and curriculum for all students.
 - This effort will stimulate greater use of high-quality materials to help teachers and parents prepare students.
- ✓ **Provide students, parents, and teachers with accurate and reliable information about student performance measured against national standards. Parents have a right to know how well their children are doing.**
 - Congress already receives this information at the national and state levels, but parents and teachers should have access to students' levels of achievement on national standards. These tests will give families and schools information on exactly what items their students answered correctly, and what areas need improvement for each student.

September 2, 1997

SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

✓ **The American public supports high national standards**

Parents deserve to know how their children are performing based on rigorous national standards no matter where they live in this country.

A recent Gallup poll shows that 67% favor using standardized national tests to measure the achievement of students and 77% favor national standards for measuring the academic performance of our schools.

✓ **Endorsements for the voluntary national tests from the education community**

"Although there is extensive testing in our nation, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations. They need test results indicating whether their achievement is competitive with other students around the world. In short, students and families want to know what level of learning is required to reach the high standards necessary as we enter the 21st century."

Letter signed by the following:

American Federation of Teachers

Council for Chief State School Officers

National Education Association

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

Council for Exceptional Children

Council of the Great City Schools

National School Boards Association

✓ **Endorsements for the voluntary national tests from the business community**

"The proposed standards and tests will help provide parents, students, educators and policy makers with the information they need to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century world and workplace."

Edwin Lupberger, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee

"The first step to improve education in the United States is to substantially raise academic standards and verify achievement through rigorous testing."

Education Task Force of the Business Roundtable

"The Alliance believes these voluntary tests could be used by state and local school districts to measure the progress of American students in these core subjects. The Alliance recently surveyed its members on this issue and an overwhelming number supported the initiative to develop the voluntary national tests."

National Alliance of Business

more

"Every state should adopt high national standards, and by 1999, every state should test every 4th

August 29, 1997

grader in reading and 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met. President Clinton's national testing initiative offers a new opportunity to use widely accepted national benchmarks in reading and math against which states, school districts and parents can judge student performance."

Jim Barksdale, CEO and President, Netscape Communications, and
L. John Doerr, Partner in the firm of Kleiner, Perkins, Caulfield and Byers
on behalf of 240 technology industry leaders in a bipartisan call for high national
education standards in reading and math.

August 29, 1997

RESPONSES TO CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL TESTS

1. We don't need another test.

- These tests provide information to students, parents and teachers that no other tests do. They will show whether individual students meet challenging, widely accepted national standards in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. And the 8th grade math test shows whether students meet international standards as well. No other test provides this clear and critical information to students, parents and teachers. There is no other way for families that move from community to community or state to state to maintain consistent, high expectations in the basics.

2. Tests don't generate higher academic performance.

- Unlike many other tests, these tests will be designed so that teachers and students can prepare for them, starting when the child enters school. Teachers and parents will have materials that describe clearly what kind of work is expected -- what students must know to master the material and do well on the tests.
- In addition, the tests will tell school administrators, parents, and teachers how well students and schools are doing. They will be able to tell which schools and students need assistance and how to boost their performance.
- Research and experience show that raising standards for students lifts student achievement. These tests are tied to high academic standards, and they will generate high academic performance.

3. National tests are too controversial to implement without Congressional authorization.

- We welcome Congress as a full partner in the effort to raise standards for all students and to provide parents and students with national standards and tests in the basic skills. None of us can do this alone. We should be working together to raise standards for our students, improve teaching and learning, and give our schools the tools they need to prepare our children for the future. We want Congress to play a role in this effort.
- The Administration will submit legislation shortly to create an independent governing board to oversee and ensure the integrity of the tests. We will use the National Assessment Governing Board, a group that already exists and that oversees the widely used National Assessment of Education Progress (a sample tests that gives information on how the U.S. and over 40 states are doing, but provides no information for individual students or their teachers and families.) We ask Congress as a partner in the effort to raise standards for all students, to pass this legislation.

- 4. New tests can lead to inappropriate and unfair comparisons of schools and school districts.**
 - These tests lead to exactly the right kinds of comparisons -- they tell us how well our students and our schools do when measured against high standards of excellence that define what students should know and be able to do in the basics of reading and math. We should welcome these comparisons, not fear them.
 - We should not presume that any student, no matter where he or she lives or goes to school, will do poorly on this test. We must stop perpetuating the cycle of low expectations that, in the name of compassion, actually keeps many young people from achieving their full potential.
 - In July, 15 major urban school districts around the country pledged to participate in these tests -- not because these districts believe they will excel the first time around, but because they know that their students, when challenged and when provided with the proper support, can perform just as well as any other students can.
- 5. New national tests can lead to a national curriculum.**
 - Providing a voluntary reading test in 4th grade and a voluntary math test in 8th grade will not create a national curriculum. These tests are based on accepted standards that reflect widespread agreement on what students should know and be able to do. States and local communities will continue to determine their curriculum, and will use the national tests to focus attention on how to improve student achievement in the basic skills.
- 6. Instead of another test, more resources should be sent into the classroom.**
 - We agree that more resources should be sent into the classroom. That is why the Administration has supported record investments in education to help states and communities raise standards, train teachers, improve basic skills, and promote the effective use of technology in the classroom. The national tests will aid us in better understanding where those resources are needed and how they can be wisely spent. They are an integral part of a comprehensive strategy to raise standards and improve education.
- 7. Some Members of Congress say the federal government is already spending over \$500 million just to test students.**
 - This figure is totally incorrect. Approximately 90% of the funds cited by Members is for the Goals 2000 program, which improves teaching and learning in local classrooms by helping states and school districts raise standards, train teachers, promote the effective use of technology and increase parental and community involvement. A very small part of this money goes to tests.

September 2, 1997

**CURRENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN
4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS**

STATES

Alaska
Kentucky
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
North Carolina
West Virginia

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

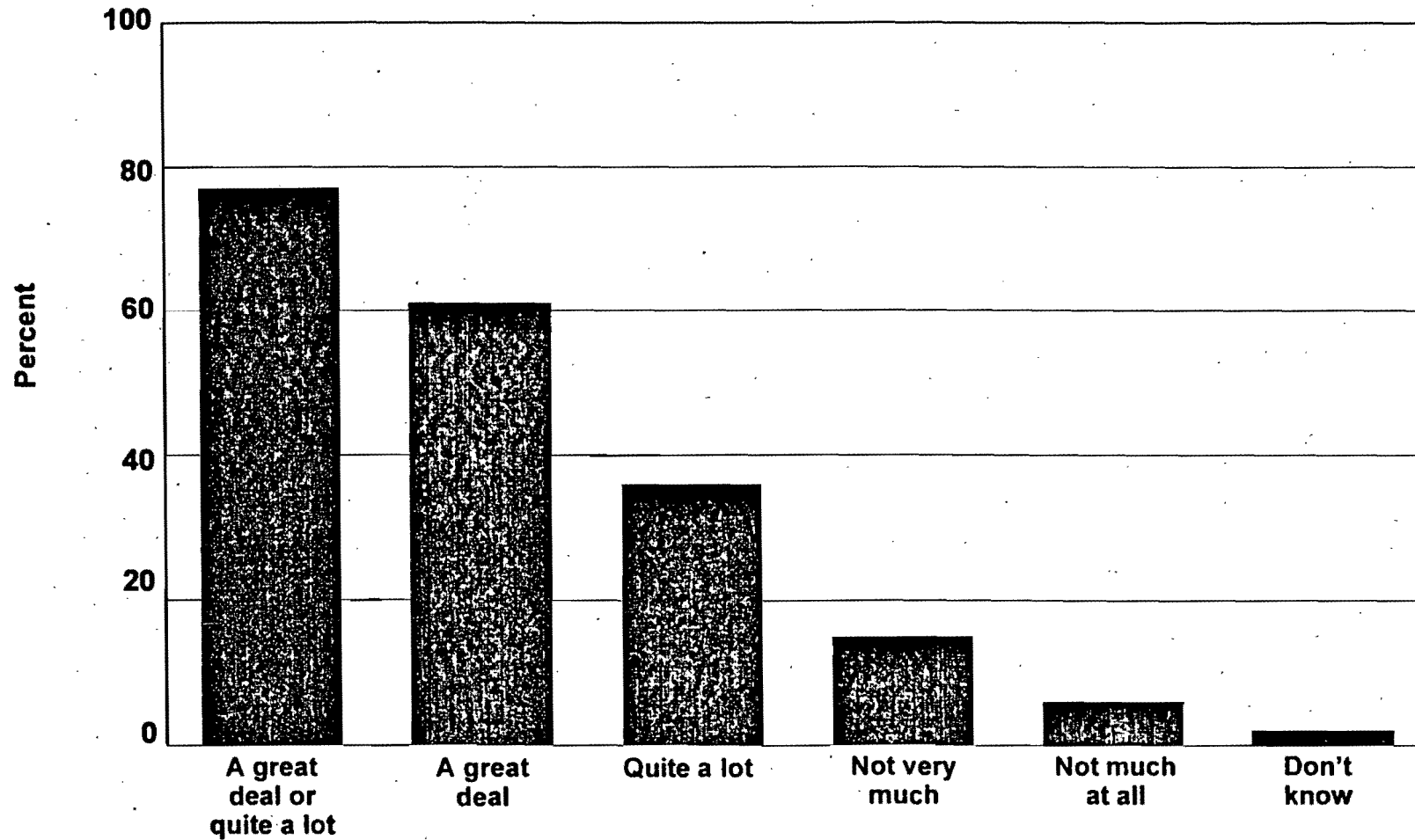
Atlanta, GA
Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
Fresno, CA
Houston, TX
Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles, CA
New York City, NY
Omaha, NE
Philadelphia, PA
San Antonio, TX
Seattle, WA

The Department of Defense schools will also participate.

Together, these states and school districts represent 20% of all 4th and 8th graders.

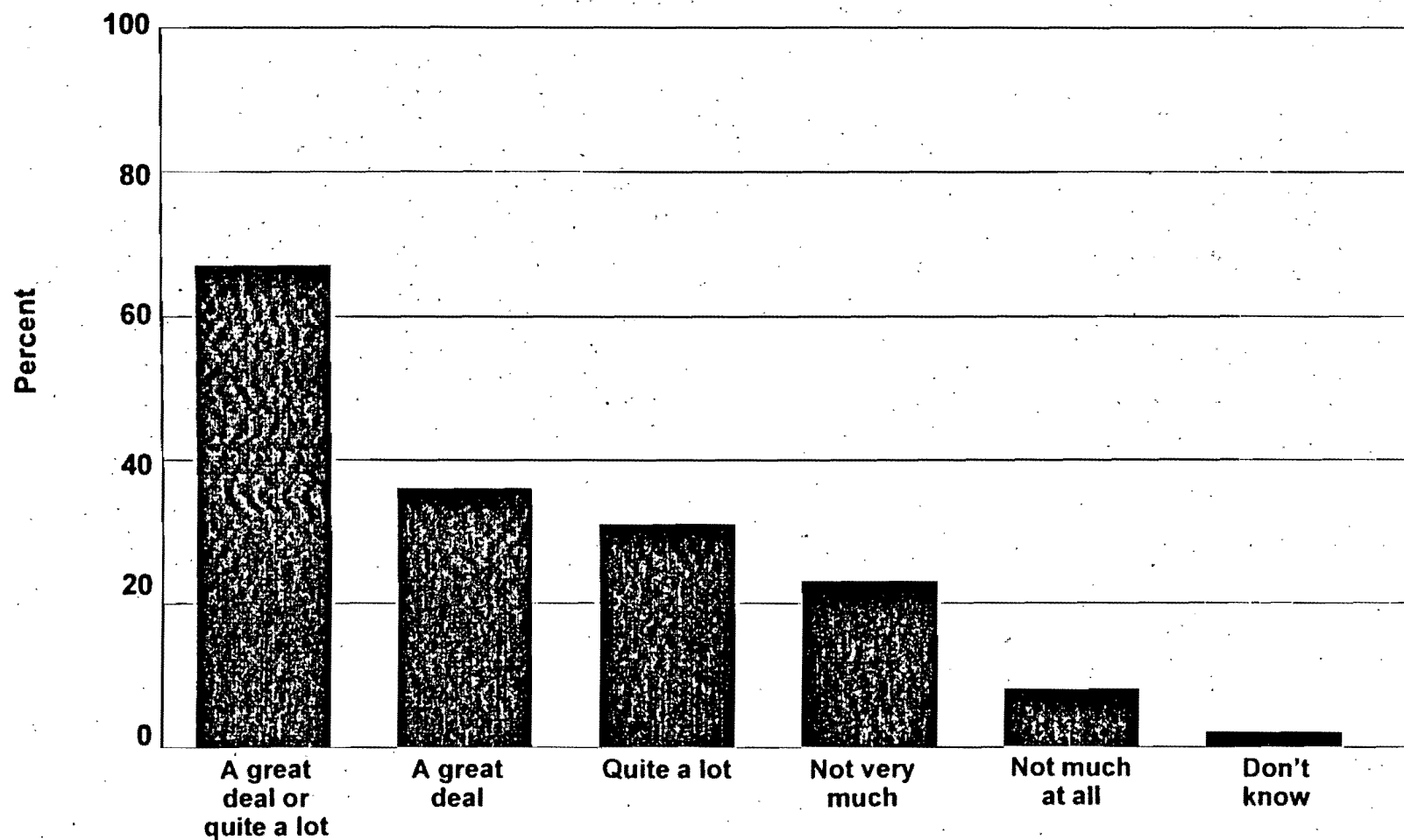
August 29, 1997

Establishing national standard for measuring the academic performance of the public schools



Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll
August 26, 1997

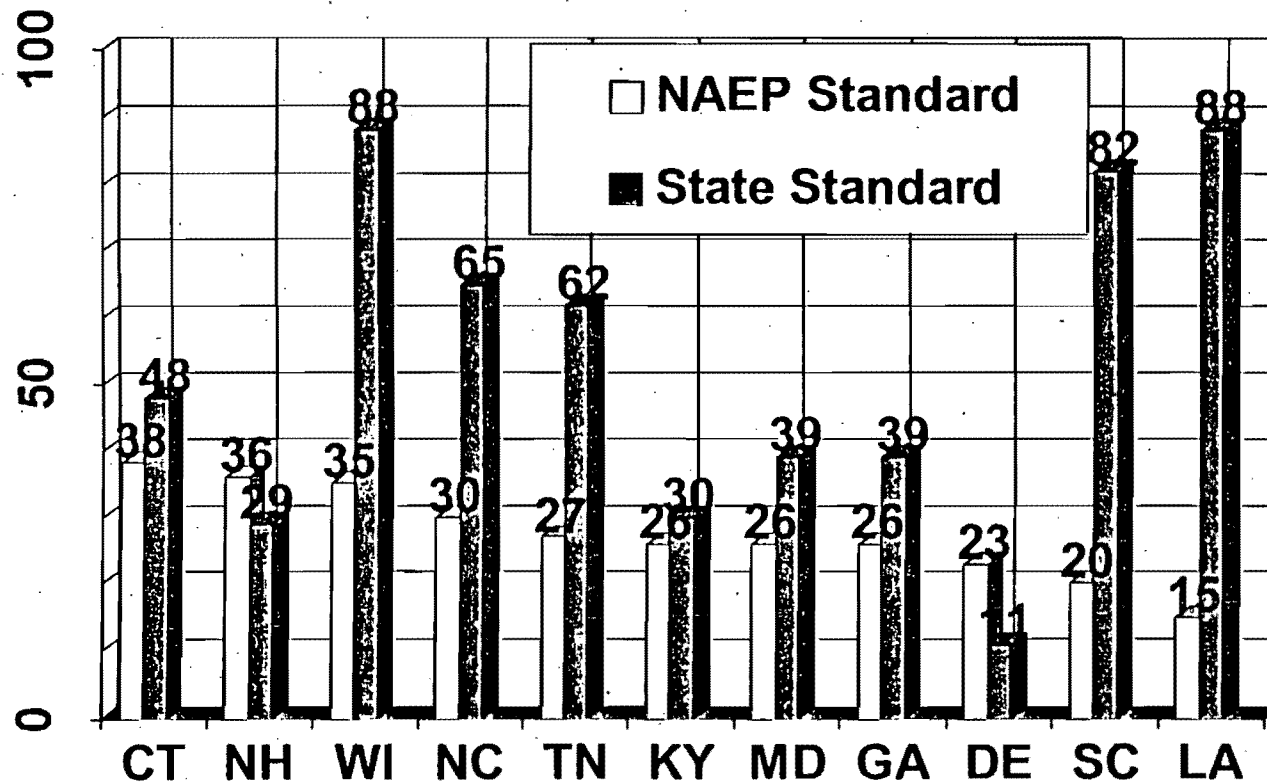
Using standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students



Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll
August 26, 1997

NAEP MEASURES HIGH STANDARDS:

State NAEP Scores for 4th Grade Reading Compared to States' Own Assessments



Source: US Department of Education, State departments of education, National Education Goals Panel



U.S. Chamber of Commerce
1615 H St., NW
Washington, DC 20062-2000

Media Relations Department (202) 463-5682

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: (202) 463-5682 Frank Coleman/Thomas Love
Friday, April 4, 1997 (888) 249-NEWS (press@uschamber.com)

U.S. CHAMBER SUPPORTS GROWING BIPARTISAN CALL FOR VOLUNTARY EDUCATION STANDARDS AND TESTS

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce -- the world's largest business federation representing an underlying membership of more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector and region -- today threw its support behind the growing bipartisan call for voluntary education standards and tests.

"Wednesday's endorsement by leading business executives of proposed national reading and math tests -- announced at the White House -- supports our long-held belief that all children need and deserve a world-class education," said Edwin Lupberger, chairman of the U.S. Chamber's Executive Committee and chairman and president of Entergy Corporation.

The U.S. Chamber also called on all proponents to back yesterday's endorsement with an action plan to support voluntary world-class academic standards. *The Common Agenda*, developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Alliance of Business and The Business Roundtable, calls on U.S. companies to consider state and local education standards in making location decisions, to examine student transcripts before hiring, and to target corporate education philanthropy to initiatives and communities promoting high-level voluntary academic standards.

"U.S. businesses have learned the hard way that being competitive begins with identifying and setting competitive standards" Lupberger said. "The proposed standards and tests will help provide parents, students, educators and policymakers with the information they need to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century world and workplace."

The U.S. Chamber looks forward to working with committed partners on how best to develop appropriate standards and implement assessments that are voluntary, based on consensus, locally implemented and part of a comprehensive strategy to upgrade and reform local, state and national education and training systems.

[For further information on the U.S. Chamber's education and training strategy and programs, contact the Center for Workforce Preparation, the U.S. Chamber's not-for-profit education and training affiliate at (202) 463-5525.]

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97-48

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE
OF BUSINESS**

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: Immediate

Contact: Milt Goldberg
202/289-2944

**Business leaders endorse President Clinton's
initiative to develop voluntary national tests**

Washington, DC (May 21, 1997) - James F. Orr III, chairman and CEO of UNUM Corporation and chairman of the National Alliance of Business (NAB), today announced the endorsement of the Alliance for efforts supporting the initiative to develop voluntary national tests, originally proposed by President Clinton in his 1997 State of the Union address, to measure student reading skills in the 4th grade and mathematics skills in the 8th grade. The Alliance believes these voluntary tests could be used by state and local school districts to measure the progress of American students in these core subjects.

The Alliance recently surveyed its members on this issue and an overwhelming number supported the initiative to develop the voluntary national tests.

The Alliance works cooperatively with over 300 state and local business/education coalitions in partnership with school leaders, parents, and teachers to improve the quality of American education.

###

The National Alliance of Business is a nonprofit, business-led organization dedicated to building a quality workforce by improving American education, forging a smooth transition from school to work, expanding life-long learning opportunities for incumbent workers and fostering strategies that simultaneously address worker security and employer flexibility. The Alliance is chaired by James F. Orr III, chairman and CEO of UNUM Corporation.



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 10, 1997**

**Contact: Johanna Schneider
(202) 872-1260**

**STATEMENT BY NORMAN R. AUGUSTINE, CHAIRMAN AND CEO
LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION AND
CHAIRMAN, EDUCATION TASK FORCE OF
THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
ON PRESIDENT CLINTON'S CALL FOR NATIONAL TESTS IN
READING AND MATHEMATICS**

Washington, DC--The Business Roundtable applauds the President's continued efforts to make achievement of high academic standards a top priority--a goal the Roundtable itself has been pursuing. The Roundtable supports voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. These tests will provide a national benchmark in reading and an international benchmark in mathematics that parents and educators can use to learn how their own children and students are performing.

The first step to improve education in the United States is to substantially raise academic standards and verify achievement through rigorous testing. In many local communities, parents are uncertain about whether their children are being adequately prepared to succeed. They do not know whether their child's grades or test scores measure up to expectations in other communities, states or countries. Parents who move frequently are surprised to discover that the rigor of what their children learn in school varies from place to place. Yet, when young people apply for a job, employers hold them to the same standard, no matter where they went to school, because employers must themselves compete on a worldwide basis.

The Business Roundtable urges states and local communities to continue to adopt standards in these basic subjects and in other core academic disciplines. Successful schools, like successful businesses, use data to improve their performance. The availability of a national benchmark in 4th grade reading and an international benchmark in 8th grade math should help drive the improvements that are needed to help students meet world-class academic standards.

The Business Roundtable is an association of more than 200 chief executives of leading U.S. corporations, employing over 10 million people. The CEOs examine public policy issues that affect the economy and develop positions which seek to reflect sound economic and social principles.

A BIPARTISAN CALL FROM U.S. TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY LEADERS FOR HIGH NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS IN READING AND MATH

Gale Aguillar
Paul Allaire
Joseph Ambrosio
Dr. Gilbert Amelio
Marc Andreessen
Vincente Anido, Jr.
Sherry —
Eric Archambeau
Howard Asher
Mel Badgen
Naren Bakshi
Jim Barksdale
Carol Bartz
Gary Beach
Geroge Bell
Eric Benhamou
Charles Berger
Philip Berman
Jeff Bezos
David Binkley
Philip J. Biola
Jalech Bisharat
Julie Blanchard
Charles Bosenberg
Shelby Bonnie
Jerry Brenholtz
John Seeley Brown
Neill H. Brownstein
George H. Bruns, Jr.
Brett Bullington
Pat Burt
Brook H. Byers
Gordon Campbell
William Campbell
Douglas Carlson
Steve Case
Daniel H. Case III
John Castello
John Chambers
Kumar Chansrasekaran
Robert Chess
Sanjeev Chitre
Ronald Chwang
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Mark Clotek
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Zeus Communications
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Ashtech, Inc.
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Inhale Therapeutic Systems
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 Dominique Goupil
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 Andrew Grove
 Garrett Gruener
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 Judith hamilton
 J. Emmett hammond
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Alliance Pharmaceuticals
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Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.
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Cylink
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Novell
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Cardiac Pathways
Pretty Good Privacy

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Geoff Tate
Charles R. Trimble
Les Velasquez
Madhu Vora
Charlotte Walker
John Walker
Steven Weiss
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COALITION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

August 27, 1997

Members of the United States Senate

Dear Senator:

**Subject: Support for funds in the FY 1998 Education Appropriations (S.1061)
to Develop National Tests in Mathematics and Reading**

The organizations listed below urge your support for the Appropriations Committee provisions in the Fiscal Year 1998 Labor/HHS/Education Bill (S.1061) which enable development of new voluntary national tests for individual students in mathematics and reading. We urge, also, your opposition to any amendments which would prohibit funding for development of the tests or otherwise impede their preparation.

Why develop voluntary national tests?

Our students must be able to benchmark their education progress now in ways never done before so they may prepare for their future. Although there is extensive testing in our nation, there is no individual student test of reading or mathematics which enables a student to compare his or her work with students in other states and in other nations. Our highly mobile students and their families need test results indicating their performance as they move among school districts and states. Our children will also compete for jobs across communities, states, and nations. They need test results indicating whether their achievement is competitive with other students around the world. In short, students and families want to know what level of learning is required to reach the high standards necessary as we enter the 21st Century.

The proposal for developing national tests in reading and mathematics is designed to provide that information at two critical points — 4th grade in reading and 8th grade in mathematics. The selection of 4th grade reading is made because at that stage to succeed in all subjects in school, students must have proficiency in reading English. The selection of 8th grade mathematics is key, because that is the pivotal year for a student to determine what level of mathematics she or he will pursue in high school. This choice, in turn, heavily influences whether or not the student will advance to postsecondary education.

Design of the tests

The proposal for developing the tests included in the Appropriations Committee's bill takes maximum advantage of tests already in use. It enables students and families to have the achievement information they want in an efficient and timely way.

The new tests are built on the widely accepted testing done under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP enjoys strong, bipartisan support as a measure of national student samples and samples in more than 40 states of student achievement in mathematics and

reading. By basing the new individual student tests on content tested under NAEP, the new test is the most efficient way to link scores nationally to NAEP and internationally to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. As a result, a long-standing hope will be realized by 2000: an individual student anywhere in the United States will be able to compare his or her academic achievement to that of students in other states and in more than 40 other countries.

Safeguards in test development

The Senate Appropriations Committee, with the agreement of the Administration, has provided clear safeguards for development of the tests. The development and field trials of the new tests will be reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences with a favorable report required in advance of any use of the tests. The process of Academy review is comparable to the quality controls required by Congress in the development of the NAEP, in that case, by the National Academy of Education. The Congress, the states and localities, and students and parents will have the advantage of a thorough technical and professional review before the national tests are actually administered.

Urgency for test development in 1997

The members of our organizations urge that development of the national tests moves forward in 1997. States and localities are now addressing significant choices regarding their future testing systems. The option of using the national tests in reading and mathematics is an extremely important one. We need to have that option, but final decisions require test availability by 1999 and design and field testing in 1997 and 1998. No state is required to participate, and no state should be denied the option by halting test development. This use of federal funds for test development is as cost-effective an investment in state, national and international reading and mathematics comparisons as could be made with public or private funds.

We urge the Senate to give the green light for developing voluntary national tests in reading and mathematics, thereby enabling our students and their families to genuinely benchmark their individual efforts and results to their counterparts throughout the United States and around the world.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

American Federation of Teachers
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Great City Schools
Council of Chief State School Officers
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Education Association
National School Boards Association

September 3, 1997

Dear Representative:

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) urges you to oppose any amendments offered to the FY 98 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, H.R. 2264, that would prevent the Department of Education from further development of the national assessments in reading and math.

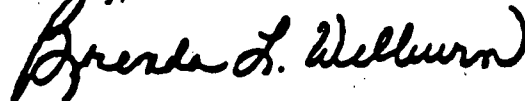
Development of these tests, which will be patterned after the widely acclaimed National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is consistent with the Department of Education's traditional role in research and development and should not be impeded. In addition, for those states opting to participate in the program, it offers an unprecedented opportunity for individual students to compare their abilities with other students from across the nation. Currently, no assessment system of this scope exists.

State participation in the testing program is strictly voluntary. Because this initiative is only six months old, many states have just begun to consider whether they should participate or not. Still, six states have already given their commitment to administer the tests beginning in the spring of 1999: Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, and West Virginia.

Furthermore, H.R. 2264 requires a rigorous evaluation process at the federal level as well. The proposed legislation directs the National Academy of Sciences to study the national assessments' preliminary field results and submit a report to Congress by next summer. It is at that time, after the majority of states have weighed in on the issue and the Academy's review is complete, that Congress should and will be able to conduct an informed debate over the merits of the tests.

We believe the states should be afforded the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to take part in these national assessments. These discussions among state education policymakers can only continue if the development of such tests proceeds. Again, we request that you oppose any amendments to H.R. 2264 regarding national assessments.

Sincerely,



Brenda Lilienthal Welburn
Executive Director

President
Thomas Davis
Missouri

Past President
Patricia Hayes
Colorado

Secretary-Treasurer
Barbara Roberts Mason
Michigan

Northeastern Area Directors
Beverly Greenberg
Connecticut

James C. Dawson
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Adrienne Ottaviani
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Brenda Lilienthal Welburn
Executive Director

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Measuring Success in School

Rep. William Goodling's Aug. 13 column attacking voluntary national tests was based largely on the Pennsylvania Republican's belief that "Americans don't want and don't need a new national reading test for fourth-graders and a new national math test for eighth-graders." This statement demonstrates a misunderstanding of the importance of these tests to families, students and teachers, who want to know if our students have mastered the basics no matter where they live and work.

This is not simply "another test." It is about setting high expectations and standards for students and then measuring achievement based on these goals. The new voluntary tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics will offer, for the first time, an assessment of individual student performance in these two critical subject areas based on national and international standards of excellence. No current test achieves this goal.

After the tests are given, all the test items will be made available and will be accompanied by information that lets teachers and parents know what goes into the tests, what they mean and how parents can help their children get ready for them. Raising expectations and standards in education motivates students to learn more and work harder.

I differ with Rep. Goodling's view that these tests are inconsistent with Goals 2000. Like the rest of the president's education initiatives, these tests will give local schools and states new opportunities to improve.

As former governors, President Clinton and I strongly support the

essential state and local nature of education. Providing a voluntary reading test in grade four and a mathematics test in grade eight has nothing to do with creating such a national curriculum. We want to strengthen local education by giving state and local governments and parents the chance to know how well their students have learned to read and to do math.

The administration also will ask Congress to expand the authority of the National Assessment Governing Board to include setting test policy for the two national tests as it does now for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This is the best way to make sure that the new tests are overseen by an independent and bipartisan organization. I hope Congress will pass this legislation without delay.

Perhaps the most disappointing suggestion by Rep. Goodling is that a national test would be "inappropriate" for some "disadvantaged" students. We must stop perpetuating the cycle of low expectations that keeps so many young people from achieving their full potential. Only if we are willing to break free from the tyranny of low expectations and help individual states and schools to challenge students can we achieve higher standards of learning for all students. Fifteen large urban school districts already have committed to having their students take the test.

These tests, along with the efforts to improve education, will raise standards of learning for students across America.

RICHARD W. RILEY
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
Washington

Students' Test Scores Show Slow but Steady Gains at Nation's Schools

By PETER APPLEBOME

Despite the pervasive sense that the nation's schools are mired in decline, three major tests of educational achievement released over the last month all indicate that more than a decade of attention to student achievement seems to be paying off in modest, but significant, continuing improvements in student scores.

The progress is better in math and science than in reading and writing. It is more gradual than dramatic. And overall figures obscure the enormous variety of the nation's schools and the alarming shortcomings in its worst schools and school systems.

Examining long-term trends in the College Board's reasoning tests, the S.A.T. and the American College Testing college-entrance tests, the A.C.T., as well as the nation's broadest elementary and high school tests, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which are given to a cross section of students, analysts are increasingly coming to see advances not only in test scores but, perhaps not surprisingly, in the content of coursework as well.

The progress comes at a time when students tend to be more diverse ethnically and poorer than in the past — which has been associated with lower achievement — and when college preparatory tests are being taken by a broader segment of the student population.

Coming as an array of critics call for revolutionary changes in American education, like vouchers and charter schools, the recent findings are likely to provide ammunition to those who counter that what is needed is not radical systemic reform but sustained, concerted attention to basics like teacher training, adequate resources, higher standards and better tests.

"What leaps out at me is that we've got steady progress, and we have steady progress for all the major subgroups, whites, blacks and Hispanics," said Marshall Smith, Acting Deputy Secretary of Education. "And that's exactly what you want in education. I don't think the word is getting out, because most people think test scores are still going down, but we have a positive story in the way progress is steady and significant."

And, in a tantalizing sidelight to the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, which were released on Saturday, indications are the biggest improvement may be coming in the nation's beleaguered public schools, not its private ones.

The first of the recent results was the A.C.T., taken by nearly 60 percent of America's entering college freshman, predominantly in Western and midwestern states. Scores announced in August rose for the fourth time in the last five years, only the second time since A.C.T. scores were first reported in 1960 that the national average increased four times in five years. The earlier period was 1984 through 1988.

"We're certainly seeing a different pattern in A.C.T. scores than we did 20 or 30 years ago," said the A.C.T. president, Richard L. Ferguson. "This period of stable or increasing scores coincides almost exactly with a nationwide effort beginning in about 1983 to improve the education we offer our young people."

Scores on the College Board's tests, taken by 1.1 million students, rose in math to the highest level in 26 years but were flat in English. Officials say the results, released last week, take into account the recentering of test scores that produced a rise in scores two years ago.

The national assessment tests have shown significant progress in science and math over the last two decades, with less progress in reading and writing, according to a report of long-term trends released Saturday.

Similarly, Michael Casserly, head of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents the 50 largest urban school districts, said several districts, including New York, Chicago, Houston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Seattle, have shown improvements on various standardized tests.

Still, experts say that the improvements are modest over all and that achievement results still range from encouraging to dismal. For instance, the most recent national assessment test of fourth grade reading showed 40 percent of students did not score at even the lowest of three possible levels.

"There has been some improvement, and that's to be welcomed," said Chester Finn, an education expert at the Hudson Institute and a proponent of vouchers and charter schools. "But after spending more money and putting ourselves through all kinds of hoops, if we'd had zero payoff, it would have been pretty depressing."

One intriguing sidelight to the national assessment scores is that the greatest progress apparently has been made in public schools. Private school students still outperform public school students at all levels, however.

But in mathematics, for example, between 1982 and 1996, scores of students in public schools improved 9 points for 17-year-olds, 6 points for 13-year-olds, and 13 points for 9-year-olds on a scale of 500 points. For private schools, 17-year-olds and 13-year-olds gained 5 points and 9-year-olds gained 7 points.

Officials at the National Center for Education Statistics said that because of a small sampling, the individual differences for each grade and subject area could not be shown to be statistically significant, but because 10 of 12 measures — four subject matters at three age levels — show public schools gaining more than private ones, the overall pattern appears to be statistically valid.

Analyses of all three tests indicate that one factor helping to push up results is that students are taking more rigorous courses.

"I think we're all tapping into the same mother lode and coming up with essentially the same results, with the trends seeming to be reasonably positive, less in verbal/reading than in math," said Donald M. Stewart, president of the College Board. "I think it has something to do with students working harder, taking harder courses. But looking cautiously at what for us is a self-selected group of students, things seem to be moving in the right direction. I guess that's called cautious optimism." Recent results from three major tests of educational achievement — the S.A.T., A.C.T. and N.A.E.P. — all show a continuing rise in student scores that experts now say is a significant trend. S.A.T./S.A.T. I Mean scores for college-bound high school seniors. The lowest possible score is 200; highest possible score is 800. A.C.T. Mean score for high school graduates. Lowest possible score is 1; highest is 36. N.A.E.P. Percentage of students age 13 with math scores indicating they can add, subtract, multiply, and divide using whole numbers and can solve one-step problems. (*Sources: College Board; National Center for Education Statistics; A.C.T. Assessment Program*) ■

U.S. Is Seeking More Influence Over Education

By PETER APPLEBOME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

get a good education."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

upper-class families already enjoy," a spokesman for Mr. Lieberman said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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DRAFT

Why Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Mathematics

1. Why voluntary national tests?

Today's students will be entering a highly competitive workforce that will demand greater knowledge and skills. Key to gaining the needed knowledge and skills is to have a sound foundation in reading and mathematics. The voluntary national tests will focus sustained national attention on the need to improve basic and advanced skills in reading and mathematics.

The tests will be a catalyst for mobilizing the efforts of parents, teachers, businesses, and communities to help all students achieve to higher academic standards. The tests will provide measures of a student's achievement against rigorous national and international standards. After the test is given, all of the items on the test will be made publicly available on the Internet so that parents, teachers, students, and the public can see what is being asked of students and where we need to improve. We hope that these items will be published widely and discussed around the kitchen tables across the country. Every student will have their tests returned so the parents, teachers and students can see review their performance.

2. Why 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics?

These are two critical points in a child's learning. By 4th grade, students need to have mastered basic reading skills in order to begin to learn other subjects. Reading is an essential skill in learning geography, history, science and mathematics. Students who are not able to read independently by the end of third grade have difficulty learning other subjects and are very likely to have academic difficulties. By 8th grade, students need to have mastered challenging mathematics to be prepared to take advanced mathematics courses necessary to be admitted college and to be successful in the workplace.

3. What is the relationship of the voluntary national tests to NAEP?

NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) monitors the academic performance of students in the nation and has existed for over twenty-five years. The NAEP test is given to a national sample of students in a range of academic subjects (mathematics, reading, science, geography, history). The voluntary national tests will be individual student tests with results given to the student and the student's parents and teacher. The voluntary national tests are designed from the frameworks of the NAEP assessments in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. These frameworks have been developed through a broad national consensus process. The voluntary national tests will provide a measure of student performance against national standards in reading and mathematics as well as against international standards in mathematics.

4. Will funding be tied to state use of the national tests?

No state will be required to use these tests as a condition of receiving federal funding.

5. Does the Department have the authority to develop voluntary national tests?

The Department has the authority to develop voluntary national tests but is asking Congress to give the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversees NAEP, the authority to set policy for the voluntary national tests to assure the independence of the tests. NAGB is an independent bipartisan group established by Congress to set policy for NAEP.

6. Is there public interest in the voluntary national tests?

Public opinion polls show that almost two-thirds of the public support voluntary national tests. The voluntary national tests have been endorsed by many leading education groups including teachers, principals, state school officials, and school boards. States and school districts with over 20% of the fourth and eighth graders have already committed to using the voluntary national tests.

7. Will these tests lead to inappropriate and unfair comparisons?

The national tests will provide results of student performance in reading and mathematics against rigorous national standards. These are the kind of test results that allow for meaningful comparisons. The results of the national tests will go to parents, teachers and students to help them understand how students are performing against rigorous national standards. We must stop perpetuating the cycle of low expectations that keeps so many young people from achieving their full potential. We should not be willing to tolerate low standards for any group of students. If we can break free from the tyranny of low expectations, we can help all students reach higher standards of performance. We should not presume that any student, no matter where he or she lives or goes to school, will do well or poorly on this test. The test can give every student a chance to measure themselves against demanding standards and then focus on the areas that need improvement.

8. Will the voluntary national tests lead to a national curriculum?

The President and Secretary of Education are opposed to a national curriculum. As a former Governor, the President believes that education is a state responsibility and a local function.

Providing a voluntary reading test in 4th grade and a voluntary mathematics test in 8th grade will not create a national curriculum. Parents, teachers, schools and states will decide what should be the curriculum in reading and mathematics and how reading and mathematics should be taught. The voluntary national tests will strengthen local education by focusing attention on the need to improve the performance of students in these two basic skills -- reading and mathematics.

6. Instead of another test, shouldn't we send more resources should to the classroom?

More resources need to be sent into the classroom and this test will aid teachers and principals in better understanding where resources are needed and how they can be wisely spent. The Administration has supported increased investment in helping states and communities raise standards, train teachers, improve basic skills, and promote the effective use of technology in the classroom.

7. Doesn't the federal government spend over \$540 million to test students?

This figure is incorrect. Approximately 90% of that figure is money from GOALS 2000 that goes to states and local districts to use in improving education as they choose. The testing sponsored by the federal government, such as NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) and TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study), is conducted on a sample of students to learn how the Nation's students are performing and how well they compare to students in other countries. The voluntary national tests will provide similar information on the performance of an individual student.

8. How will the voluntary national tests improve the academic performance of students?

We test students in order to learn how they are doing and what we need to do to improve their performance. The national tests are part of a national campaign to energize local efforts to improve teaching and learning in reading and mathematics. This effort includes support from businesses, volunteer organizations, parent groups, community organizations, and educators. The test results can motivate students, teachers, and parents to examine what they can do better to help a child be able to read independently by 3rd grade or learn challenging mathematics in 8th grade. The voluntary national tests can encourage teachers, parents, and principals to raise the standard of instruction for all students.

9. What is being done to assure that the test is free of ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, cultural or regional bias?

Item development will follow a rigorous process of item writing, internal review, fairness panel review, and pilot testing to produce high quality items which are free of ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, cultural, or regional bias.

The following steps will be taken to avoid items that would disadvantage a group because of differences in culture or familiarity: 1) item writers will follow specific guidelines for avoiding various types of item bias, after which the items will undergo internal review by the test publishers; 2) an external fairness committee will review items. Members of this committee will represent diverse geographic, ethnic, and gender groups. Edits and revisions of items will be made following the fairness panel review; and 3) items will be pilot tested, or tried out, with a diverse sample of students. After pilot testing, statistical analyses will be performed to further determine whether items are biased.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

In his State of the Union address, President Clinton made clear that his number one priority for the next four years is to make sure that Americans have the best education in the world. He also issued a 10 point call to action for American education in the 21st century to enlist parents, teachers, students, business leaders, local and state officials in this effort. Setting rigorous national standards with voluntary national tests in 4th grade in reading and 8th grade in mathematics is the first point of his plan.

Will voluntary national tests actually help improve my child's education?

Yes. The voluntary national tests are tools that will provide information that will lead to higher achievement. These tests will be different than any other tests our students take. No matter where children live, they deserve the best education possible. If parents and teachers are to provide this education, they must have accurate information about their children's and students' performance. These tests will provide parents and teachers individual scores for their students and children as they relate to challenging national and, in the case of mathematics, international standards. That is important information that parents and teachers don't have now. After the tests are given, the tests, scoring guides and other supporting materials will be available to parents and teachers so they can review their child's performance. Unlike the standardized tests children take now, parents and teachers will actually be able to see the test questions and where their children did well or poorly on the test. The information these tests will provide will empower parents and teachers to ensure that their children are being challenged and meeting those challenges. The voluntary national tests initiative is not about tests. It is about our children and their future.

My state has high academic standards and participates in other state and nationwide tests. Why do my children need these tests too?

Almost every state in the country is well on its way to having statewide assessment systems; however, there is great disparity in states' standards and assessments. A recent study by the Southern Regional Education Board showed that while many states report that 70% of their students meet their own standards for student achievement on the states' tests in mathematics and reading, only 30% (or even fewer) of their students are actually proficient in these subjects, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The voluntary national tests are not substitutes for the tests states are developing in many subjects and grade levels. Rather, they are designed to supplement and anchor state tests to national and international benchmarks for student performance at critical points. Indeed, these tests will be used by states and communities in conjunction with their own tests. They will provide two points of comparison, one for 4th grade reading and one for 8th grade math.

Why 4th grade reading and 8th grade math?

Reading and math are two of the most basic skills. Children can't move ahead in school in any subject if they can't read English well by the 4th grade. And 8th grade math is a pivotal point in terms of making sure that a student has mastered the mathematics needed to move forward in high school and go to college or into the work place.

Children go to school for the first three years of grade school to learn how to read, so they can spend the rest of their years reading to learn. There is a strong link between low reading skills and falling behind in school, disruptive behavior, and dropping out. Of course, a short national test in reading does not replace what teachers and parents have always done -- paying attention to children's progress in learning to read all through the critical early childhood years.

8th grade math is also a critical turning point for students. At that point, students need to have mastered the basics of math -- including the foundations of algebra and geometry -- so they are prepared to go on and take the harder math and science courses they need for college preparation or jobs right out of high school.

Don't we already test our students enough?

These tests will not significantly increase the testing burden on students. The reading test is 1 and ½ hours in the 4th grade and the mathematics tests is 1 and ½ hours in the 8th grade -- 3 hours over all the student's years in school. That is not a lot of time when you think about all the important information we will be getting or when you realize that 43 percent of 4th graders watch television 4 or more hours *daily*. In addition, states and districts can choose to use this test as a supplement or replacement to parts of their existing testing program.

How can parents and teachers help their children prepare for success?

The U.S. Department of Education supports local initiatives that assist parents to gain the skills they need to help their children build a better life for themselves and their families. To help parents assist their children prepare for the tests, materials including a field test and supplementary booklet of example questions will be available to schools, libraries, and other educational institutions as well as on the internet. The U.S. Department of Education is also working with the business community and local leaders to build and strengthen ways the whole community can assist students in their preparation. Every parent can help, from the first days of a child's life -- singing and reading and paying attention to them. Parents can assist in their children's academic progress by being active in school activities, giving them a place to do homework and making sure that they do it. Over thirty years of research shows that family involvement in children's learning is critical to their child's success.

The U.S. Department of Education is also focusing on the most effective strategies to address the challenges in improving teaching quality and accountability, including recruitment, alignment with challenging standards, professional development, and rewards for excellence. The Department supports these efforts through initiatives including Eisenhower professional development grants, Title I assistance for disadvantaged students, and Goals 2000 funding, as well as by disseminating ideas and best teaching practices within the professional field. Teachers will also be encouraged to use field tests and supporting materials to help their students prepare for the national tests.

Will the federal government have my child's test score?

No. The federal government will not collect individual student scores. States and communities may collect such information and will decide how the scores will be reported. However, individual student scores must remain confidential.

What if my child doesn't do well on these tests?

These tests are about lifting students up, not putting them down. We are developing these tests so that parents and teachers get accurate information about how students are doing in relation to challenging national and international standards. These tests, along with state and local tests, will help parents and teachers know which children need help and what help they need. Because education is a state and local issue, it is the responsibility of states, community leaders, teachers and parents to determine how they will respond to student needs in their community.

Will children with disabilities and limited English proficiency be able to participate?

Yes. We want to make sure that students with disabilities and students with limited English will be able to take the test whenever possible. This means that we will provide the math test in Spanish. It also means that when the tests are administered, schools will accommodate student needs such as Braille and large print editions, extended response time for students with disabilities, or access to an English dictionary for the math test for students with limited English proficiency.

Why is the math test being given in English and Spanish, but the reading test is only being given in English?

Developing the ability to read in English is a basic skill that every child has to have to succeed in American schools and society. On the other hand, competency in math cuts across languages. There are many immigrant and other children at the 8th grade level who have limited English proficiency but who can learn advanced math and should be asked to show what math they know. We are providing a bilingual math test in Spanish and English because Spanish is the most common language other than English among students.

Will children in non-public schools be able to participate?

Yes, at the option of the school. The U.S. Department of Education will consult with non-public school organizations and interest groups to ensure comprehensive distribution of the tests. In addition, after each test administration, the tests (along with answers, scoring guides and other materials) will be released to the press, the educational community and placed on the Internet for access by anyone.

Education is a local issue. Why is the federal government giving these tests?

One of the clear and established roles of the federal government when it comes to education is to do the research that states by themselves can't. The federal government will fund the development of the tests, but state and local school districts will be in charge of administering the tests and determining how information is used in schools and communities around the country. These tests will empower states, school districts, teachers and parents with information they can use to ensure their children are on the road to high standards.

How much will it cost to give the tests?

The total cost of developing the tests will be between \$10 - 12 million per year in 1997 and 1998. The U.S. Department of Education will reimburse licensees (for example states, school districts, and testing companies) who wish to administer the new tests in 1999 which is estimated at \$10 - \$12 per student.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN READING AND MATH A STRATEGY TO MASTER THE BASICS AND REACH HIGH STANDARDS

STRONG SCHOOLS WITH CLEAR STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR CHILDREN AND SOCIETY. These standards are needed to help instill the skills and encouragement for hard work that our children need to succeed in school and in life. Toward that end we must establish meaningful standards for what students should be expected to learn and achieve in the basic subjects of reading and mathematics.

A CHALLENGE TO PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY STUDENT MASTERS THE BASICS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS.

Reading well by grade 4 and mastering mathematics -- including the foundations of algebra and geometry -- by grade 8 are the gateways for further learning and achievement. Research shows that students who fail to learn to read English well by the end of grade 3 are at greater risk of dropping out and facing diminished success in school and life. Students who fail to master the basics of mathematics by the end of grade 8 do not have the foundation to take tough mathematics and science courses in high school which in turn prepare them for college and better jobs.

While our students have been making progress in reading and mathematics, we are not yet where we need to be as a nation. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 40 percent of our 4th grade students do not reach the Abasic@ achievement level. In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the U.S. 4th graders score above average in math and science. However, our 8th graders score below the international average in mathematics, and only 5 percent of U.S. eighth grade students score in the top 10 percent internationally.

RIGOROUS VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS IN 4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS. Parents need to know that students have mastered the basics no matter where they live or move in this country. And they have the right to know how well their children are doing compared with students in other schools, states, and countries. To help give parents this information, the U.S. Department of Education is prepared to offer every state and school district the opportunity to use voluntary national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics, beginning in 1999. These rigorous tests will provide parents, for the first time, scores for individual students, measured against widely accepted national and international standards of excellence. They will give states, local communities, teachers and parents the kind of accurate information they need to help students master basic and advanced skills and strengthen academic performance.

TESTS BASED ON WIDELY RECOGNIZED NATIONAL STANDARDS. The tests will be modeled on the NAEP in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. The NAEP tests are based on widely accepted standards developed by parents, teachers, reading and mathematics specialists, curriculum specialists, and researchers. The NAEP standards reflect a national consensus of what students should know and be able to do when they reach these crucial stages of learning.

NATIONAL EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE ODDS FOR STUDENTS. Schools and communities are already working hard at educational improvement; they are committed to parent involvement, getting technology into the classroom, and ensuring a trained and dedicated teacher in every classroom. The federal government provides funding to states and communities to support these efforts. But these efforts cannot be fully effective unless parents, schools and communities are aiming at clear, high standards of achievement. That is why these national tests are already spurring a renewed nation-wide effort to support school improvement and strengthen student achievement in these core subjects. Reading and literacy groups are coming together to improve reading. The mathematics and science community, engineers and business leaders are working to improve mathematics teaching and learning. To assist parents, teachers, principals and communities in using the tests effectively, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and others are developing a tool chest that includes information for parents and teachers on how to prepare to meet these high standards, how to use test results to improve education, and what high standards in reading and mathematics look like. As part of this effort, every year the entire test (along with answers, scoring guides, and other materials) will be released to the public and available on the Internet so that students, parents, and teachers can know what is expected for students to reach standards of excellence.

TOOLS FOR PARENTS; GUIDES FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES. The current NAEP is designed to assess how well a sample of students across the entire nation and individual states perform in reading and mathematics. Not all students participate in NAEP, and no parents know how their own children do on this test. In contrast, the voluntary national tests will provide students, parents, and teachers with meaningful scores to compare individual student performance to widely accepted national and international standards and to identify students and schools that need extra help. These standard measures of excellence will help parents hold schools accountable for improved performance, help teachers and principals improve curriculum and instruction, and give students a guide for charting their own progress.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE TESTS. The U.S. Department of Education will contract with independent test developers to produce the new tests, which will be available for the first time in the spring of 1999 and updated each year. Guidance for test development will come from the most successful mathematics and reading teachers, parents, governors, and local and state education, civic and business leaders. Individual test scores will *not* be collected by the federal government; state and local school districts will decide how to use the data. States and school districts will have the option to administer the tests as part of their local testing programs.

The total cost of developing and licensing these tests will be between \$10 and 12 million annually. The U.S. Department of Education will reimburse licensees (for example states, school districts, and test companies) that wish to administer the new tests at an estimated cost of \$10 - 12 per student. Each test will require approximately 90 minutes of total testing time.

For more information, visit our web site at <http://www.ed.gov/nationaltests>

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

TALKING POINTS ON THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

Purpose of the Voluntary National Tests

- Not just another test
- Motivate changes and opportunities for children to learn to read well by end of 3rd grade and to learn to achieve challenging standards in 8th grade math
- Propel standards based reform - helping states and local districts move forward
- Mobilize the country around reading and math
- Test is a lever, a stimulus, something to capture people's attention
- Provides information on student performance against national standards, and for math, international standards
- Origin of tests was to support standards

Problems which led to the Voluntary National Tests

- Standards movement has hit a plateau; difficult to embed standards into the classroom
- Bringing the standards movement to life; how do we capture people's attention?

Solutions that the Voluntary National Tests will provide

- Mobilize the country
 - Parental involvement
 - Private sector - engineers, Pizza Hut, airlines, major league baseball
 - Ed programs and other government agencies' activities
 - Read*Write*Now!
 - Math Initiative (with NSF, NASA, OSTP)
- Show student work
 - Field test and other materials will show student work and the type of work we expect children to be able to do
 - After administration each year, the tests, along with scoring guides and other materials, will be available to parents, teachers, schools, etc.
- Timing is right
 - Press is reporting substantive education stories (e.g. TIMSS)
 - President Clinton and Secretary Riley are using the bully pulpit
 - Education is America's #1 priority

What is different about the Voluntary National Tests (VNT)

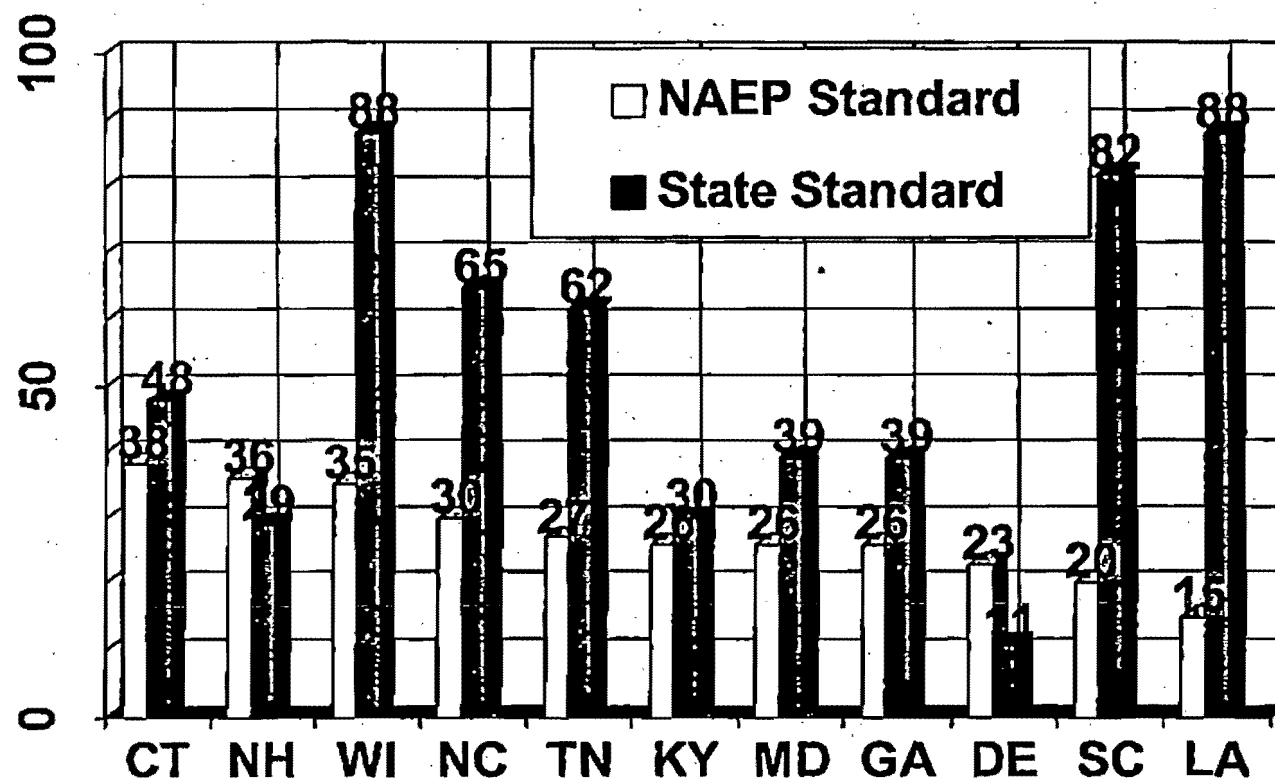
- Motivational factor: tests will motivate and mobilize communities to focus on helping kids master the basics and achieve high standards
- VNT provides an annual report of individual student proficiency
- NAEP - a sampling that by law cannot report individual scores
- Information will be available from state or local district for parents and/or teachers on an individual child which will empower them and ultimately lead to higher achievement
- Basic skills at pivotal times in a child's academic career - 4th grade reading; 8th grade math

For more information, visit our web site at www.ed.gov/nationaltests

07/02/97

NAEP MEASURES HIGH STANDARDS:

State NAEP Scores for 4th Grade Reading Compared to States' Own Assessments



Source: US Department of Education, State departments of education, National Education Goals Panel