

TESTING OUR KIDS

While the Clinton administration pushes for national exams and standards, education experts debate the merits of his proposal

Challenges help students learn more

By Richard W. Riley
Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

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Americans have turned with renewed vigor and interest to education as a means to build a stronger and more enriching future. Poll after poll demonstrates that students, teachers and parents all want an education that makes a difference, that challenges students to learn and better prepares them for future success.

Reflecting this national enthusiasm and concern, President Clinton has outlined a bold "call to action" to spur a national crusade on behalf of educational excellence. This commitment includes helping children master the basics, improving teaching, promoting educational technology and modernizing our schools. It will work to increase parent and community involvement in schools, helping families pay for college through increased Pell grants, Hope Scholarships and tax deductions — expanding all the tools available to citizens to make the most of their own lives.

At the core of this strategy is a simple but vitally important concept: Our schools need to establish clear, meaningful standards of achievement for what students should be expected to learn and achieve in the basics and core subjects. Extensive research confirms that students who are challenged to learn and who focus on high academic standards usually learn more. Low standards and a watered-down curriculum lead to just the opposite result.

To achieve these high standards, the president has set as a goal that every American child should be able to read well independently by the start of the fourth grade, and that every American child should understand the basics of math and algebra by the end of the eighth grade. All our research tells us that reading independently by the fourth grade and having good math skills — including algebra and some geometry — by the eighth grade are critical turning points in the education of our young people and the future success of these children in school and in their careers.

A child who doesn't learn to read by the fourth grade is likely to be less interested in reading about science, history and literature, and more likely to drop out and be at risk for a lifetime of diminished success in school and employment. A child who doesn't have this strong foundation in math is less likely to take more advanced math and science courses in high school and be prepared to enter and succeed in college and the increasing competition in the working world.

To achieve these higher standards of learning and achievement, while simultaneously ensuring that the control of education remains firmly rooted at the local level, President Clinton has proposed a promising, workable and sensible solution — challenging, voluntary national tests for individual students in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math.

These tests, to begin in 1999, will make the achievement of reading well and independently by grade — four, and mastering math, including algebra, by grade eight, meaningful and useful to students, teachers, parents and grandparents. They will allow every teacher, family, school and community to know how their students compare with their peers around the country and throughout the world. They will help parents know if their children are mastering critical basic skills early enough to succeed in school and prepare for college. And, equally important, they will help eliminate inequity in education because there will be one set of expectations and standards for all students, rich and poor.

The tests would be comparable to the widely accepted National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading and math tests, used by more than 40 states, and the math component of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The existing tests are not sufficient, because they are intended only to be given to samples of students to calculate national averages. The new tests will be designed to evaluate individual students and, when used in a comprehensive crusade for educational excellence, will help improve teaching, learning and student achievement. This is precisely the type of initiative that the department ought to be pursuing in the Fund for Improvement of Education and we will continue to consult with the Congress and state officials as we go forward.

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These are national, not federal tests, designed to empower parents, teachers and communities to know where they stand. They mean more local control, not less. Guidance for test development will come from the most successful math and reading teachers across the country, as well as from parents, and local and state education, civic and business leaders. As former governors, the president and I firmly oppose any form of national control over schools and their curriculum. But we must not hide behind our passion for local control of schools or use it as an excuse for not holding ourselves to standards of excellence. After all, reading is

reading, and math is math, whether we are in Dallas, Duluth or Des Moines.

If a student or school does poorly on these tests, the object will not be to push them down, but to pull them up. The tests will identify students and schools that need help. Communities then must move to offer extra support — after-school and summer tutoring, increased parent and community involvement, more focused teaching, or whatever it takes to lift student achievement. And if schools continue to fail even after these efforts to fix them, then we must reconstitute or close them and start over. We must do whatever it takes.

We have made substantial progress in improving math and science education, as the most recent NAEP tests demonstrate, with improved eighth-grade math scores in Texas and across the nation. This improvement reflects the work of the nation's math teachers in developing challenging standards, which are beginning to have an impact on the classroom. But now we need to get these standards into every classroom and apply them to every student. Only 20 percent of our young people are taking algebra by the end of the eighth grade. In the rest of the advanced world, the vast majority of students have studied algebra by then. As a result, these nations surpass America in math achievement at grade eight,

according to the recent TIMSS test.

Too often, individual state assessments, evaluations and standards of learning achievement fail to stand up to the kind of strict scrutiny and rigorous, challenging measurement that are so crucial to educational excellence. A recent Southern Regional Education Board study found that in some states, more than 80 percent of the students meet state educational assessments, but 20 percent or fewer of these students make the grade when held up to higher standards of achievement based on excellence. If a state participates in a national test in the crucial subject areas of reading and math, we can eliminate this kind of disparity.

It is time to come together to build an America that is committed to learning. President Clinton's call to action on behalf of educational excellence, spearheaded by a national test to achieve high academic standards, is a good start.

Richard W. Riley is U.S. secretary of education.

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Comment

ON THE NATION

U.S. Crusade on Curriculum Rests on Bogus Assumptions

By Larry Cuban

STANFORD, CALIF.

How can anyone oppose President Bill Clinton's call for national academic standards and for testing all children in reading and math? Disappointing scores on recent national and international tests bolster his challenge. Corporate leaders and governors preach the gospel of standards and tests. Moreover, more than 90% of Americans have told pollsters they like this prescription for ailing public schools. The crusade for centralizing curriculum in a country with a 150-year history of decentralized public schooling is both remarkable and, apparently, unstoppable.

To be sure, some governors, many small-town officials, occasional academics and parents have expressed fear that national standards and tests—even "voluntary" ones—will reduce what little power they already have to conduct community business. But their voice has steadily weakened in the face of the bipartisan crusade to create national standards and tests.

This campaign rests on two assumptions. First, public schools' productivity, as measured by test scores, will spur the larger economy. Second, poor U.S. student performance on international tests results from a lack of national standards and tests. Both assumptions are false.

Since the early 1980s, corporate and public officials, aided by stories in the media, have spliced together declining U.S. productivity and falling standardized-test scores in public schools. They have pointed to Japan's and Germany's schooling as the mod-

el. If, as Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said, "Education is the engine that drives our economy," national standards and tests—as in Japan—would prod students, parents and teachers to work harder.

Yet, consider what has occurred in the 1990s. National productivity has risen. The U.S. economy has outperformed both Germany's and Japan's. Unemployment and inflation are lower than in the early 1980s. But no awards have been handed out to public schools. Media reporting and public officials' announcements continue to report and interpret test scores as reflecting students' failure to measure up to 21st-century workplace needs. Thus is revealed the sham of linking economic productivity and students' test scores.

Nonetheless, blaming a declining economy on failing public schools was shrewd politics. Americans do believe that education and individual gains are strongly linked; personal income and years of education are highly correlated. But it is not the individual link between education and the larger economy that presidents, governors and corporate leaders have crusaded for since the early '80s; rather, it is the connection between students' test performance and the overall economy. While such a connection goes largely unquestioned, it is, nonetheless, a myth.

The bogus connection between public schools and economic conditions becomes glaring when the spotlight shifts from public schools to university research. Century-old ties between federal and corporate funding of university scientists—seldom noted in the media yet richly documented—have led to the development of commercial products, medical advances and defense technology. Such contracts starkly reveal how critical university research has been to the larger economy and how phony it is to connect students' test scores to lowered economic productivity.

From 1958-1968, federal funding of scientific research in universities grew from \$254 million to \$1.57 billion, or an increase of 523% (controlling for inflation). When these federal research contracts are calculated on a per-professor basis, the results are staggering. For private universities, the median annual per-professor federal grant in the late 1980s was just over \$107,000; for public universities, it was a tad above \$64,000. Corporate and foundation research contracts add another 15% to these figures.

This linkage between university research and expected national economic returns needs no myth-making. Public and private funding produced inventions and corporate profits. The sham of blaming public schools for the ebb and flow of national economic productivity may be politically smart and a low-cost strategy of exploiting a vulnerable institution, but it rests on counterfeit assumptions.

The flawed assumption that U.S. students do less well on international tests because we lack national curriculum standards and tests shows up most clearly in the recent reporting of

the Third International Math and Science Study for 7th and 8th graders.

As widely reported, U.S. students scored below many of their foreign counterparts in math and were average in science. Japanese and French students, for example, whose countries have national ministries and centrally driven standards and tests, scored significantly higher in math than their U.S. counterparts. In science, students from Japan, Singapore and Korea—the latter two nations also with national curricula and tests—substantially outscored U.S. 13-year-olds.

Few pundits, however, noted the contradictions that seriously undercut the argument for national academic standards and tests. Other countries with national curricula and tests—England, Norway, Israel and Spain—ranked the same as the United States in math. Further complicating the math picture is that 13-year-olds from Switzerland, Australia and Canada, who come from decentralized systems of schooling much like the U.S., also scored significantly higher than students from countries with ministry-driven curricula.

When science scores are examined, similar contradictions arise. Japan's students outscored America's in science, but France's and Spain's, which have heavily centralized curricula, fell significantly below students in the United States. Moreover, students from New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland—all lacking national curricula and tests—did just as well as students from countries with strong national direction for local schools. Furthermore, on some science topics, U.S. students did as well or better than Japanese, Norwegian and French students—even those from Hong Kong.

Beneath the headlines of U.S. students' supposedly mediocre performance on international tests is far more contrary than supporting evidence for the president's national curricular standards and tests. Nevertheless, a politically clever and feel-good crusade has sprung up to bring them about. Meanwhile, larger education issues that seriously undermine the nation's public schools—such as severe inequalities in funding and quality of schooling for the nation's poor in rural and big-city districts—go unaddressed.

Larry Cuban is a professor of education at Stanford University.

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

A Commonsense Approach

Last week, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) released its eagerly awaited results for eighth-grade students in 41 nations. TIMSS is important for a number of reasons. It tested more students than any comparable study—over half a million randomly selected youngsters. And because it ironed out the technical problems that led to questions about earlier international comparisons, we can have real confidence in its findings.

What do TIMSS test scores say about the math and science achievement of U.S. eighth graders? We are not at the bottom. In fact, we are in the middle of the pack—a little below the average in math and a little above in science. This puts us pretty much on a par with many of our major trading partners—Germany, England, and Canada, for example. That is *good* news. The bad news is that we are not on top—with Singapore, Korea, Japan, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—which is where we have to be.

How do we get there? TIMSS provides some important signposts. Researchers not only tested students; they also compared curriculums and textbooks from all 41 countries; they questioned students, teachers, and administrators about attitudes, practices, and policies; and they carried out classroom observations and videotaped and analyzed math lessons in Japan, Germany, and the U.S. The first installment of TIMSS provides a kind of window into what goes on in eighth-grade math and science classrooms throughout the developed world. When the reports on fourth and twelfth grades come out, we will have a fuller picture, but much is already clear.

TIMSS calls into question a number of fashionable explanations and remedies for mediocre student achievement. For one thing, we are not going to raise student achievement by instituting a longer school day or school year: TIMSS tells us that U.S. students already spend more time in class than German or Japanese students. Nor will it help to give our students more homework or somehow induce them to turn off the TV. TIMSS shows that American students get more homework than Japanese students and watch no more television than they do. Some obvious solutions we've heard about turn out not to be so obvious after all.

However, TIMSS is unequivocal about what the school systems of successful nations share—and it is not vouchers or charter schools or any of the other jazzy schemes that we are being urged to try. Nearly all of these nations have clear and rigorous national or state curriculum standards, and everything they do in the schools is hitched to these standards. We do not have such standards.

When TIMSS researchers analyzed U.S. textbook and curriculum samples, they found that what our students are taught in math and science is fragmented and unfocused. This should be no surprise given the fact that our national system still consists of 15,000 school districts, each making its own decisions about curriculum. Textbooks in standards-based systems focus on what the standards say that students must know. Here, where textbook publishers want to accommodate as many different school curriculums as possible, we have textbooks crammed with topics, nearly all treated in a superficial way. Since districts rely on these textbooks, it is no wonder that the curriculum is, as TIMSS says, "a mile wide and an inch deep."

Another critical difference between high-performing systems and ours is that their standards involve incentives for working hard in school—and consequences for failing to. Students in these systems understand that success in school—and on rigorous gateway exams—will be important to their future. In Japan, for example, students who have been educated together through eighth grade take a tough exam that decides what high school they will go to, and this, in turn, influences what college they will get into. In the U.S., there are no such stakes connected with academic achievement. So except for students who hope to enter a selective college, there is no reason to work hard. Are these differences related to the high achievement of Japanese students on TIMSS and the average achievement of ours? There is no question about it.

We have made some progress in bringing standards and stakes for students to this country, but supporters face an uphill battle. In the meantime, "innovative" solutions to our school problems grab media and political attention—vouchers, charter schools, private management of public schools (remember EAI?). They often grab the funding, too. TIMSS demonstrates once again that the answer is not one of these new or sexy or headline-making proposals. High standards of achievement with stakes attached are an old-fashioned, commonsense approach that is not the stuff of slogans. But it works in other successful school systems, and it can work here.

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study report, "Pursuing Excellence," is available for downloading (<http://www.ed.gov/NCES/timss>).

U.S. Bases Join Education Test Effort

Military-Run Schools Enlist in National Standards Plan, Clinton Says

By John F. Harris
Washington Post Staff Writer

RALEIGH, N.C., March 13—President Clinton traveled today to North Carolina, where most folks at the state Capitol were too polite to bring up the name of this state's senior senator and a certain remark he made two years ago.

So it fell to Clinton to raise the awkward subject of Sen. Jesse Helms, among the most zealous of the president's Republican antagonists, who once warned Clinton that he "better have a bodyguard" if he visited military bases in the Tarheel State.

Noting that he had traveled here with Defense Secretary William S. Cohen—Helms's old GOP colleague in the Senate—Clinton joked that no one should get the wrong idea.

"Before I came down here, Senator Helms asked me to tell you that [Cohen] is not the guard Jesse once said I would need to come to North Carolina," Clinton cracked, drawing spirited applause and chortling from state lawmakers.

Cohen was traveling with Clinton today as the administration announced that schools on the nation's military bases will **enlist in Clinton's** program for national educational testing starting in 1999. North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt Jr. (D) also announced that the state would participate in the voluntary national tests. The Education Department is drafting reading tests for fourth-graders and math tests for eighth-graders.

As for Helms, who was not in the audience, Clinton said their relationship has lost some of its old bite. "Ever since I got a chief of staff that does not speak with an accent," Clinton said, "we've been getting along better, Senator Helms and I."

That was a reference to North Carolina native Erskine B. Bowles, Clinton's top aide and a longtime family friend of Helms's.

Clinton's speech here was the latest in the traveling road show that he and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton have embarked on in recent weeks to encourage state legislatures to impose more rigorous instruction and testing policies on local schools.

Clinton has gone from Maryland to Michigan to North Carolina, essentially delivering the same speech, with only minor variations in theme. North Carolina, a state with numerous military installations, was a logical place to announce raising standards at the 233 schools the Defense Department operates for 115,000 students at U.S. bases overseas.

Clinton also made a rhetorical pitch for raising teacher standards. He noted that in Cincinnati the

school board and teachers union have worked together to streamline procedures for removing bad teachers. "While good teachers get a raise," Clinton said, "the truly bad teachers who can't measure up should get a pink slip."

The administration has been taking pains to reassure conservatives that its testing proposals are not an attempt to encroach on local schools. When Clinton talks about national standards, he envisions "a national challenge, not a national curriculum," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, who also traveled to North Carolina.

Raleigh was the first stop on a three-day jaunt devoted only partly to work. Later in the day in Miami, Clinton was set to attend two fund-raisers, as his effort to raise money for Democratic candidates and the Democratic National Committee continues unabated despite questions concerning whether the administration bestowed improper access on large donors in the 1996 campaign.

A fund-raiser for the DNC was expected to take in about \$100,000 in contributions of \$250 each. The

fund-raiser for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) and Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) is likely to bring in about \$1 million in donations of \$5,000 each. The DSCC has not accepted the voluntary curbs Clinton imposed at the DNC, which bar "soft money" gifts greater than \$100,000, but the president continues to raise money for the group.

On Friday morning, Clinton is scheduled to talk about federal efforts to aid school construction and will spend the rest of the day and most of Saturday doing what is apparently the primary purpose of this visit: playing golf.

Clinton is playing in a private, member-guest tournament sponsored by golf pro Greg Norman, who owns a lavish seaside estate near Palm Beach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To review the president's fiscal 1998 budget request and to read a primer on the federal role in education, click on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's Web site at www.washingtonpost.com

Math & science

Clear lessons from international scores

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Here's the first question state education policymakers should ask in response to new results from international science and math tests: When's the next plane to Singapore?

Wow, are those Singapore eighth-grade kids good — besting the world by wide margins in both math and science. Educators should want to learn as much as possible about the curriculum and teaching techniques — if not the repressive social climate — Singapore educators use that lead to such outstanding student learning. They should stop in Japan and Korea as well, whose students also lead the 41 countries that participated in the test.

But even if they can't get to Singapore, they can learn a lot from these tests. One of the many excellent features of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study is that each school provided detailed information on curriculum and instruction techniques.

The test results reveal that all the leaders have a clear, consistent, focused curriculum. Minnesota's startling success in science — tied for fourth in the world — demonstrates those same qualities. Most state schools use the same textbooks, with teachers trained and certified in their subject matter. If a curriculum is clear and well-designed, and teachers do a good job with it, students will learn, whether in Minnesota or Singapore. Because Minnesota teachers focus on earth science, students' understanding is tops in the world.

This lesson also explains why Minnesota students do less well, although better than the national and world averages, in algebra and geometry. Our schools divert far too many students from such classes compared to schools in other countries.

The solution to that deficiency is also clear. State officials should add algebra and geometry questions to the new standard for high school graduation. Then teachers will teach it far more broadly.

There's much for Minnesota to celebrate in these international test results. So when will education officials at the Department of Children, Families and Learning start celebrating and stop reflexively slapping Minnesota's remarkable educational achievement? When will it be accepted that Minnesota schools actually do some things right?

According to background demographics, Minnesota's remarkably high score in science and above-average score in math cannot be explained by the state's relatively homogenous population, but by the way teaching is done in the schools. Yet Bob Wedl, commissioner of the department, reacted to the scores with a statement that "doing fine is not good enough. Minnesota simply must be among the best in the world." Well, Minnesota is among the best in the world in science, and without the socially repressive environment of front-runner Singapore, Wedl should be crowing, not carping, about this achievement. Educators from all over the country, and from most of the world's democracies, will be studying Minnesota to learn why our schools do so well in science.

The scores and background data in this study are the best ever available in the world, finally providing an apples-to-apples comparison of educational effectiveness among the vast majority of the world's industrial competitors. It's interesting to note that education department officials did not seek to make available the state data that allowed this comparison with students in other nations. That honor belongs to SciMathMN, a partnership of business, education and state government. When state officials declined the chance to break out the Minnesota test data, SciMathMN leaped at the chance, the only state fully to do so. That history makes the comments of Bill Linder-Scholer, executive director of SciMathMN, more credible than Wedl's: "When we focus on the right content, and deliver it well to students, Minnesota students really perform."

Goodling endorses reading, math tests

They must be voluntary, he cautions

By Susan Ferrechio
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Clinton's plan to introduce national tests in reading and mathematics is gaining support from a House Republican leader on education.

Rep. Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, told The Washington Times yesterday he will back national testing in public schools, as long as it is not mandatory and is first approved by Congress.

"I support producing the tests as long as everybody understands it is strictly voluntary," Mr. Goodling said. "I want teachers to know exactly what students need to learn about in [math and reading]."

Mr. Goodling, a former teacher and school superintendent, made the comments after the committee's hearing yesterday on the president's education initiatives, which include spending \$90 million to develop and implement national testing by 2002.

The plan also calls for spending \$5 billion on school construction and \$260 million on training reading tutors, and offering \$1,500 tax credits to college students with a B-minus average.

Mr. Goodling said that he has some doubts about the testing plan because he has not seen details about how it would be implemented.

"What it can lead to if we're not careful is rating and ranking school systems based on those tests and that is totally unfair," he said.

If Mr. Clinton's plan is implemented, fourth-grade students would be tested in reading and eighth-grade students in mathematics.

Mr. Clinton yesterday touted his school standards plan in Raleigh, N.C., part of a state-by-state effort to convince lawmakers to adopt the national tests. He ordered the Pentagon to require standardized tests in classrooms for children of military personnel.

The reading test would be mo-

deled after the National Assessment of Education Progress test, or NAEP, which is now administered randomly on a voluntary basis. The math test would be based on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which recently compared U.S. students' performance with those in other developed countries.

Mr. Goodling said the plan is "doomed" if the Clinton administration tries to implement it without the support of Congress.

Opponents to the national testing plan argue that the federal government has no business interfering in local education-reform.

Cheri Yecke, a member of the Virginia State Board of Education appointed by Republican Gov. George Allen, testified before the committee yesterday that such tests, and the standards they would set, would harm the state's success with its own reform initiatives.

"I do not see national testing as a legitimate role for the federal government," Mrs. Yecke said. "If the nationalization of education is allowed to occur, then in 30 years we will have a disaster on our hands."

Single Education Standard? States Are All Over the Map

By Scott Baldauf

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

SETTING standards for what a fifth-grader should know in mathematics might seem fairly elementary. But somehow, no two states seem to do it alike.

In Virginia, for example, students must be able to add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers. In Alaska, where standards are less specific, they must "use mathematics with confidence."

To end this type of disparity, President Clinton is urging all 50 states to adopt one rigorous set of academic standards for math, English, history, and science. He argues that nothing less than America's ability to compete in the global marketplace depends on it — a theme he tested yesterday on the Michigan legislature and the state's reform-minded Republican governor.

National standards are at the core of the most ambitious White House initiative to improve American education in a generation. But to achieve that goal, the president will have to win over a critical mass of state and local officials — many of whom believe that deciding what children should learn is their responsibility, and not the federal government's.

Still, support for the idea seems to be broadening. Already, pressure from parents and business leaders has moved many states to establish or revise academic standards.

"The movement to standards is primarily an economic issue,"

says Michael Kirst, education professor at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif. "The big changes in education always come from outside, like Sputnik, the Vietnam War.... That's what causes the system to move."

"In the 1980s, after the recession, Toyota replaced Sputnik," he adds. "That led to the idea that we can no longer afford local standards in an international market."

Business leaders say today's schools produce future employees who have never learned to read, write, or perform basic math. Many parents who have moved from job to job and state to state complain that their children are repeating some lessons and skipping others altogether.

For education reformers, Virginia has become the model for other states to emulate in the standards movement. "Virginia has probably done the best job so far of writing academic standards that are rigorous, specific, and clear enough to use in the classroom," says Heidi Gordon, a pol-

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— Heidi Gordon

icy analyst with the American Federation of Teachers in Washington. "The best standards draw a balance between content and skills, what you need to know and what you should be able to do."

In other states, standards vary from the specific to the vague. In Missouri, 11th-grade history students must "acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of: continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States, and the world." Their counterparts in Oregon, meanwhile,

will "demonstrate the ability to think critically, creatively, and reflectively in making decisions and solving problems."

Some educators say this disparity in standards puts students in some states at a disadvantage. "Look at California," says Mr. Kirst. "There was an uproar over the low scores in reading and math. This is a state with the sixth largest economy in the world, and we're tied with Louisiana, and ahead of only Guam and the District of Columbia. There's something ... wrong with that."

But a small group of states-rights advocates and conservatives say the push for national standards is misguided, at best.

"I'm philosophically opposed to a top-down approach," says John Fonte, a senior fellow at the Alexis de Toqueville Institute in Alexandria, Va. Many states may object to "political correctness" in history or English lessons, he says, or an emphasis on global warming in science.

"I prefer a competitive process rather than a collaborative one," he adds. "If 50 states set their own standards, some may get it wrong, but others will have the chance to get it right."

Some long-time supporters of the academic-standards movement say that the goal of higher achievement is still far off. Many states have had standards for a long time, they point out, but that has not stopped a general erosion in educational excellence.

"People say they want high standards," says John Silber, chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education. "People also say they want to lose weight, but they don't."

To Dr. Silber, America's 19th-century curriculum, in which students had four years of math, science, and English, are most worth emulating. "That was a rigorous curriculum. It's just that we got to the point where we thought everything should be fun. Well, it can't all be fun."

Other educators warn that any push for high academic standards will be meaningless unless states test their students.

"Not one state has both high standards and high stakes, with real consequences for students and school personnel," says Edwin Delattre, dean of Boston University's school of education.

While some experts worry the standards movement will be watered down, others say parents will push states for improvement.

"You may have what you feel are strong standards," says Ms. Gordon, "but if parents can't understand them or don't like them, you'll be shot out the window."

Pointing to Minn. Results, Officials Pitch National Test as Change Agent

By David J. Hoff

Washington

When Minnesota learned last week how its students compare with the rest of the world in math and science, the state's leaders started talking about what needs to change—from the state board room down to the classroom.

That's just the kind of discussion President Clinton hopes to spark with the national tests he is proposing in reading and math.

"A commitment to national standards is the best way we know to help local districts benchmark their own practices and to come up with ways that will help all the children achieve at a higher level," first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said here last week at a round table discussion with members of the news media.

"We've hit a plateau in the standards movement," Marshall S. Smith, the acting deputy education secretary, added at the briefing intended to publicize Mr. Clinton's testing plan.

"States are not, in many cases, adopting really rigorous standards. ... These [national] tests are seen as a wake-up call, putting high-octane gasoline into the engine of the school reform movement," he said.

In Minnesota, school leaders and standards advocates received that jolt last week when a nonprofit organization that had paid to have students tested released the state's scores on a version of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, known as TIMSS.

The results showed that Minnesota's 8th graders ranked higher in science achievement than all but five of the 41 nations that took the test. In math, however, the state's achievement fell to the middle of the pack.

"What we have on the science side is incredible focus," said Bill Linder-Scholer, the executive director of SciMathMN, the nonprofit that paid \$380,000 for the TIMSS testing of a sample group of 5,000 students in grades 3, 4, 7, 8, and 12. Results

released last week were from the 2,000 8th graders who took the test.

"If we're really focused on what we're teaching, we really get system performance," he said.

Making Changes

But the state does not dedicate the same attention to math, Mr. Linder-Scholer said. Low-achieving students are often tracked out of higher-level courses such as algebra and geometry, he said, and teachers don't follow a standardized curriculum that emphasizes hands-on learning and problem-solving.

And even though the state has adopted standards in math and a test students must pass to earn a diploma, the TIMSS results show that neither the standards nor the test are challenging enough to stand up to international competition, Mr. Linder-Scholer said.

SciMathMN—a coalition of government agencies, businesses, and school officials—is recommending that the state push all students to learn algebra and geometry by the 8th grade and that the graduation test include open-ended questions in those subjects rather than its current reliance on multiple-choice questions.

The group also says the state should ensure that teachers are prepared to teach to a higher standard.

These are the types of changes that Clinton administration officials expect all states to start making if they choose to participate in the program that is to begin in 1999. President Clinton has been pushing national standards and testing as part of his 10-point education plan.

Setting a Benchmark

The new tests would be offered to 4th graders in reading and 8th graders in math and would yield individual results—not just statewide averages, such as the ones Minnesota received from the TIMSS project last week.

"It is not an attempt to micromanage what goes on in the classrooms of America, but instead to

set a national benchmark against which local districts can measure themselves," Mrs. Clinton said last week.

And because every student would receive scores on the tests, parents could use the results to demand improved services for their children.

"This will be the first time that parents, particularly in urban areas, will have honest, accurate information about how well their kids are doing," Michael Cohen, the president's education adviser, said at the briefing. "It ought to empower parents to call for and mobilize for education reforms in ways that have been more difficult for them to do now."

Last week, North Carolina signed up to participate, joining Maryland and Michigan in making commitments to the voluntary national tests, which have not yet been written. Another eight to 10 "have expressed a serious interest" in taking part, Mr. Cohen said.

Minnesota will have a head start when it comes to its students' science and math skills. The United States participated in the international testing effort, but only Minnesota, Colorado, and Illinois paid the consortium to test a sample size large enough to compare how their students achieve compared with children in other countries.

Minnesota's students achieved higher than the national average in both tests, much as they do on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and college-entrance exams. But by doing better in science than in math, they reflected the national results.

Twenty Illinois school districts also took the TIMSS test, and scored higher in science than in math.

"It was important to get a snapshot of where Minnesota is in terms of the rest of the world," Mr. Linder-Scholer said. "In the past, there was no way to say how we were doing as a state, except in very rough form."

HIGH-TECH FIRMS BACK NATIONAL SCHOOL TESTS; BUSINESS LEADERS VOW TO PUSH CLINTON PLAN

By Knight-Ridder/Tribune.

The chiefs of more than 200 major technological companies pledged Wednesday to use their clout to push educators to adopt voluntary national tests aimed at building a stronger educational system.

The executives, who gathered in Washington on Wednesday to endorse President Clinton's proposal to establish national testing standards for 4th graders and 8th graders, said U.S. schools are failing to provide enough skilled workers to fill thousands of high-tech jobs.

Without skilled workers, they warned, American leadership in technology and the economic growth that it brings is threatened.

"We are striving for what you would call in manufacturing a zero-defect result," Clinton said in a White House meeting with the technology executives.

The president said national standards should "guarantee that 100 percent of the children" graduate from high school with the skills required to go to college and train for high-wage jobs in places like Northern California's Silicon Valley, one of the most economically vibrant regions of the country.

The high-tech endorsement lends weight to the idea of national standards to boost educational performance, a cornerstone in Clinton's second-term agenda.

Education is a subject of vital interest to the executives, whose high-tech

companies are forced to look overseas for programmers and whose assembly line workers must understand statistics.

"What this is really about is about the new economy and what our kids, our companies, and society has got to do to compete and prosper," said John Doerr, a venture capitalist.

"We all agree that we need national education standards. These companies that have endorsed this program today employ a half-million people. More importantly, they've created 130,000 jobs over the last four years. And even more importantly than that, they have hundreds to thousands of high-wage job openings right now that they're trying to fill."

The difficulty in filling the jobs, according to high-tech companies, is that schools are not teaching enough children the proper skills in reading, math, science, engineering or computer programming to allow them to work in computer or biotechnology jobs.

"People in the high-tech sector bang their heads against each other trying to hire enough people," said Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape Communications in Mountain View, Calif. "There's a whole series of things that have to happen to improve education. This is just a start."

Delaine Eastin, California's superintendent of public instruction, also attended Wednesday's White House meeting and endorsed the national standards proposal.

She called the national standards vital to moving her state's schools forward and assuring parents that educators "can get the job done."

"Just because a kid gets an 'A' ... doesn't mean anything," she said. "I need (standards) to know how my kid measures up against kids in Connecticut and Kentucky."

If other California education officials echo Eastin's support—a course by no means certain—the state's 5.5 million public school students would join those in Maryland, Michigan and North Carolina, and those in U.S. military schools, in taking the tests beginning in 1999. While that's only four states, they contain about 20 percent of public school students.

In California, Republican Gov. Pete Wilson sounded a discordant note. "The bottom line is, she (Eastin) doesn't have the authority to set policy for the state of California," said Wilson spokesman Sean Walsh.

The tests would be designed by the U.S. Department of Education at a cost of \$10 million to \$12 million, paid out of existing research funds, said Education Secretary Richard Riley.

The administration also has pledged to absorb the costs of the first year of administering the tests, which Riley estimated at \$80 million to \$90 million. But that money must come from Congress in the 1999 budget. ■

MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE APR 03 1997

CEOs join Clinton campaign for national school standards

AA President Clinton claimed new momentum in his push for national education standards and testing by enlisting 240 executives and a top California school official to lobby for the program. Clinton told an roundtable of parents, teachers and business leaders that the endorsements by Silicon Valley execs and Delaine Eastin, California's superintendent of public schools, amounted to "powerful new momentum to the crusade for national education standards."

Schools Chief, CEOs Back National Tests

Clinton Hails Endorsement as Sign of Widespread Support for Standards

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton's campaign to give students new national tests in reading and math, the most controversial part of his second-term education agenda, picked up the support yesterday of two significant allies: the chief of public schools in California and a group of 240 prominent executives in the nation's technology industry.

During a short White House forum on education, Clinton and Vice President Gore hailed those endorsements as compelling evidence that his testing proposal, which is unprecedented in American schools, is being embraced nationwide.

"California and all of you who are here today have given powerful new momentum to the crusade for national education standards," the president said.

But even as Clinton praised the state's school superintendent, DeLaine Eastin, for backing the national tests, aides to California Gov. Pete Wilson (R) said yesterday that the state has not decided if it will support the president's plan.

"The idea is still being reviewed," said Dan Edwards, a spokesman for Wilson on education. "Her endorsement does not speak for all of the education hierarchy of California. . . . It says nothing but that she personally supports the idea."

Clinton has vowed to make the voluntary tests a top priority of his second term and has traveled to several state legislatures in the past few months to promote the idea. It is one of the most politically sensitive issues in education because some officials fear it could lead to excessive federal intrusion in local schools.

While most other industrialized nations have strict national standards



BY SUSAN WALSH—ASSOCIATED PRESS

PRESIDENT CLINTON

... sees "powerful new momentum"

and tests for core academic subjects, standards and testing vary widely across the United States and are set largely by local school boards.

There have been several other high-profile attempts this decade by business and education leaders to develop voluntary national standards, but those initiatives often have produced more controversy than results.

Three states—Maryland, Michigan and North Carolina—have committed to Clinton's plan, and California's support would be quite significant. With more than 5 million students, it accounts for more than 10 percent of the nation's public school enrollment. Eastin, who is an elected official, vowed to fight for it. "We'll work on this on a high-priority basis," she said, "to make this happen within the next couple of years."

Beginning in 1999, Clinton wants to test all fourth-graders in reading and all eighth-graders in math with two separate exams that are highly regarded among educators for academic rigor. Clinton has pledged to have the federal government pay for the first year of testing. Afterward, states may have to pick up the tab.

The 240 industry leaders who joined Clinton at the White House yesterday, many of whose companies are based in California, also pledged to begin campaigning for the tests in every state. "We all agree that we need national education standards," said John Doerr, a venture capitalist who is helping lead the group. "These companies that have endorsed this program employ a half-million people. More importantly, they've created 130,000 jobs over the last four years. And even more importantly, they have hundreds to thousands of high-wage job openings right now that they're trying to fill."

Clinton said the nation has put off the tests "for too long." He argued that they would give schools a framework to create higher academic goals and a better way to judge whether students are meeting them. "The most important thing of all is that we know whether we are learning what we need to know," he said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For an overview of Clinton's proposed national testing standards, and transcripts of Education Department hearings on the proposal, click on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's Web site at www.washingtonpost.com

testing

Clinton gets backing for national student testing

By TERENCE HUNT

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Clinton today won support from the nation's largest school system and 240 leaders of high-tech industries for his campaign for national testing standards for America's students.

Delaine Eastin, California's superintendent of public instruction, announced her backing for the president's initiative at a White House ceremony. White House officials consider her endorsement important because California has 5.5 million public school students.

"The people are behind you," Eastin told the president. "We'll work on this on a high priority basis ... to make this happen within the next couple of years."

"The most important thing of all is that we know whether we are learning what we need to know," Clinton said. "And that requires something America has put off doing for too long: the embracing of a genuine commitment to national standards of learning for our young people."

Maryland, Michigan and North Carolina already have committed themselves to Clinton's program, which envisions a national set of performance standards for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

With California's participation, 20 percent of the nation's schoolchildren "will be enrolled in the type of testing regime the president has recommended that would bring high quality standards to our schools," presidential spokesman Mike McCurry said.

"Today, America's largest school system and leaders of its most forward-leaning high-tech industries have joined together to put California alongside Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and our military schools in the support of a national standards movement," the president said.

It was unclear whether Clinton's plan had bipartisan support from California's political establishment. McCurry said he did not know if Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican, had expressed a view. Eastin, a Democrat, is elected statewide rather than appointed by the governor.

McCurry also said that leaders of high-tech industries based in California's Silicon Valley "are going to say that they, as an industry, are pledging their support for the president's initiative."

"Because that is a high job-creating sector of our economy, we believe that will be very significant," McCurry said. "The message will be loud and clear to states and legislatures that it's time to get with the program because one of our most important sectors, that will be hiring the graduates of the future, that these standards are necessary to produce the type of work force that they need to have available."

California Schools Chief Supports Nationwide Tests

By ELIZABETH SHOGREN
and RICHARD LEE COLVIN
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

WASHINGTON—Delaine Eastin, California's schools superintendent, committed herself Wednesday to securing the state's backing for President Clinton's proposal for national tests in reading for fourth-graders and math for eighth-graders.

"I believe we will in fact prevail," Eastin said after meeting with the president at the White House.

Although Clinton said California's schools were on board, Eastin's confident endorsement was more a battle cry than a guarantee that California schoolchildren will take the tests, which would be given for the first time in 1999.

A spokesman for Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican, said the announcement was premature.

Dan Edwards said the governor favors the development of demanding academic standards and tests, but that it should be a state, not federal, responsibility.

"It's good for the president to use the bully pulpit to talk about high standards, but we're actually doing it in California," Edwards said, referring to a commission that is putting together grade-by-grade academic standards, due next fall, to be followed by statewide tests.

Clinton's initiative, unveiled in his State of the Union address two months ago, would for the first time give schoolchildren and their parents a national yardstick against which to measure performance. Now, states can measure performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, but districts and individual students cannot.

So far, Michigan, Maryland and North Carolina have endorsed the testing proposal, which is voluntary.

But before students in California see the tests, the State Board of Education—which is appointed

by Wilson—would have to vote for participation. And the Legislature would have to approve the cost of \$10 to \$12 per pupil for administering the tests after the

first year.

Eastin predicted that the board and the Legislature will approve the plan, but Wilson's office was skeptical. Even if the board and the Legislature were to reject the national tests, individual districts could decide to administer them to students.

"This is not about the political ideology of adults," Eastin said. "This is about the success of children in the next century."

Failing to provide students with tools needed to compare themselves with those across the country—and the world—would leave American children at a disadvantage in the increasingly competitive international workplace, Eastin said.

"In a global economy, after all, it is not unreasonable for parents to ask, how do their kids measure up compared to those in Germany or in Korea or anywhere else in the world," she said.

Clinton appeared eager to count the state as a supporter of his initiative. California's 5.5 million schoolchildren represent 11% of the nation's public school enrollment.

"Today, with California's endorsement, states and school systems that educate nearly 20% of America's schoolchildren are now on the road to measuring their students against those high standards," Clinton announced, perhaps prematurely. "If any state understands the challenges we face in the 21st century in the global economy and an Information Age, it is surely California, our gateway to much of the world and the home of many of the industries that will shape our future."

Also joining Clinton at the White House on Wednesday were representatives of California teachers unions, a parent from Pasadena, a reading teacher from Porterville and representatives of other state education groups.

To further bolster his program, Clinton invited representatives of the state's high-tech industries—many of whom gathered at a school in San Jose to participate in the White House event via satellite—to get on board.

"Finding enough educated employees is our greatest

challenge. It's an acute issue," said Marc Andreessen, co-founder and vice president of technology of Netscape Communications, one of 200 industry leaders who said they will help Clinton campaign for national standards and tests.

"It's hard to improve something if you can't measure it," Andreessen said. "If we tried to run a business like this [without standards and testing], we clearly would fail."

Andreessen and his colleagues said national tests would create the kind of competition needed to produce graduates qualified to hold the higher-wage jobs of the future.

"It will give parents a yardstick to judge their children's progress," said Kim Polese, CEO of Marimba, an applications technology company in Palo Alto.

But testing experts cautioned that the 90-minute tests would be too short to measure the range of skills needed to read well or attain mathematical competency. They also fear that the tests would overemphasize basic skills, causing teachers to put less time into lessons that require students to think critically or apply what they know.

Although the tests will be developed by private testing firms under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, they will be administered by states or individual school districts—or parents who choose to school their children at home.

More...

To deflect concerns that the testing program represents a federal intrusion into education, test scores will not be collected nationally. Instead, scores would be reported by states and local districts that administer the tests.

The purpose of the testing program is to create a check on the standards that have been set by 48 states, which administration officials said are far too low.

They also hope that the standards will spur changes in teacher training, textbooks and other areas. "The purpose is not to give a test, the purpose is to motivate changes to increase opportunities for kids," said Marshall Smith, acting deputy secretary of education. "The test is a lever to get there."

BOSTON GLOBE APR 04 1997

New Netday aims to increase classrooms linked to Internet

By James A. Duffy
GLOBE STAFF

The second of two Massachusetts NetDays, designed to bring the Internet into classrooms, will be held across the state tomorrow as more than 400 schools — 31 of them in Boston — are to be "hooked up" with computers.

A number of companies are contributing, including Lotus, Sun Microsystems and BankBoston, with perhaps the largest single donation, \$1 million, made by California-based 3Com Corporation.

According to David Katz, worldwide education industry manager for 3Com, \$700,000 will be spent on equipment for three Boston middle schools and 10 elementary schools, and \$300,000 for technical support.

NetDay started in Massachusetts last Oct. 28 as a way of supporting education reform, said Steven B. Miller, executive director of

Mass. Networks Education Partnership, Inc. The event was modeled after a California effort, when President Clinton helped wire hundreds of schools in the state.

While Massachusetts supporters predicted 400 schools would go on line in October, only about 140 schools out of 1,500 statewide were hooked to the Internet that day. In an effort to meet the goal of 400, the nonprofit Mass. Networks planned the second NetDay for tomorrow.

"We stopped adding schools when we hit 430," Miller said.

Mass. Networks has organized about 7,000 volunteers statewide to install and distribute between \$8 million and \$10 million in goods, services and technical support.

At Oliver Ames High School in Easton, volunteers plan to log on to the Internet from the school's library. At Memorial Elementary

School in the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District, volunteers will set up computers. And at Stoughton Middle School, volunteers will spend the day unpacking computers, tables and software.

Before October's NetDay, Massachusetts ranked second to last in the nation in networked classrooms, according to Mass. Networks. The group says the state has "significantly" improved since then, but could not give a ranking.

Training programs have also been set up today for both students and teachers. Tomorrow from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the Museum of Science is sponsoring two seminars to introduce its technology integration program. Call 832-7850 to register. Internet workshops for teachers will be held in Brookline, Fall River, Lexington and Peabody from 10 a.m. to noon. Call 287-7204 for more information.

learning

SACRAMENTO BEE

FEB 08 1997

Toward a national test

p. 06

President Clinton's call for national testing to measure the reading and math skills of American schoolchildren, even if heeded by Congress, won't cure the well-documented ills of public education in this country. It could, however, enable parents and educators in the disparate states to better measure the progress of their students against those in other parts of the United States, and that could in turn drive the laggards to keep up. In an increasingly mobile society, in which students in California ought to know whether their math skills hold up against their peers in Connecticut and elsewhere, national standards and assessments make all kinds of sense.

That doesn't mean that this modest effort - which would only address reading skills of fourth-graders and the math abilities of eighth-graders, and in which states would only participate if they volunteered - won't be controversial. Some critics charge that a national test, with results for individual students, will unfairly stigmatize poor children in struggling districts by comparing them to their more successful counterparts in privileged neighborhoods. But ignorance of the stark disparities in opportunity and achievement between students of different means is surely no way to bring them closer together.

And past claims that national tests are a federal government attempt to wrest control of children's education from states and local school districts are already being revived, though the fact that any test would be voluntary seriously undercuts the argument. Thus it was no surprise that Clinton called the tests and the standards that will drive them "national" rather than "federal," a term that these days is considered an epithet in some circles.

By whatever name, the test would be formulated by a group of education leaders chosen by the Department of Education. They will base the test on the already established and reliable National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which are given to fourth- and eighth-graders every four years. Unlike those tests, which only inform states about the percentage of their students who read or do math above, at, or below grade level, the new national exams would be administered annually and would provide individual scores to all students, enabling school districts and parents to see where each child stands nationally.

Parents may not like what they see. In states such as Louisiana that have developed their own statewide achievement tests, for example, that test shows that 88 percent of Louisiana students are reading at a level deemed appropriate for their grade. Yet on the most recent NAEP reading test, only 15 percent of the students scored as proficient. That ought to be sending Louisiana a clear message about the adequacy of its own reading standards.

California, which has no statewide assessment, cannot yet make such comparisons. But the limited existing national tests have already proved useful here. The state's recent abysmal showing on the NAEP test helped spur significant reforms in the teaching of reading in the primary grades. If the expanded, individually scored national test that the president proposes is prepared well, it could provide an even greater service to all the states.

Clinton proposes setting national

By Dennis Kelly
USA TODAY

The national tests that President Clinton proposed Tuesday night would give states and local school districts a new yardstick to see how their students stack up against the rest of the country and the world.

Some observers said Tuesday they wanted to wait and see whether the test proposals would translate into an intrusion on local control.

But those same observers praised Clinton for using the bully pulpit to push tougher academic standards.

Clinton is proposing that states adopt newly developed, voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and for eighth-graders in math. The tests would be administered beginning in 1999.

The reading test would be based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a federal

project that has used a random sample of U.S. students to gauge skills in math, reading and other subjects for 27 years.

The math test would be based on the Third International Mathematics

and Science Study (TIMSS), which tested 40,000 U.S. students against peers in 41 countries.

"This is actually one piece of the Clinton plan I like," says Chester Finn, senior fellow at the Hudson In-

stitute. "What's smart is he's using two well-regarded existing tests as the basis of this."

Other than NAEP, schools have little way of seeing how their students compare to those in other states. And few students take NAEP exams.

The Clinton administration also argues that the NAEP and TIMSS tests are based on some of the toughest standards around.

standards for schools

"I think on face value it sounds like a good thing, particularly when you're talking about a test as solid as NAEP," says Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education Reform, a conservative group that pushes for locally controlled reform. "But ... the devil is in the details."

Allen wants tough standards, but not ones generated by the federal government.

"I do not think the president is going to mandate these," says Anne Bryant, executive director of the Na-

tional School Boards Association. "I think it's something the president is holding out as something for us to strive for."

Clinton also renewed his call for making sure every student can read independently by third grade. He wants money to pay 30,000 reading specialists and coordinators to recruit and train 1 million tutors.

But Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, questions the need for more money. He says the nation has spent \$50 billion on Head Start and \$100 billion on Chapter 1, which gives federal aid to help with reading and math.

With literacy skills as low as they are, "we have to admit (the programs) didn't work," Goodling says. Instead, he says, the country needs to focus on family literacy and parenting skills so children have someone at home to help build their skills.

Critics: College plan not aiding neediest

Critics of President Clinton's college aid proposal say it fails to help the neediest students.

Clinton wants:

► A \$300 boost in Pell Grants, to a \$3,000 maximum, and expanding eligibility to students who are financially independent.

► HOPE Scholarships of up to \$1,500 in a refundable tax credit. Students would be eligible for a second year if they earn at least a B average and stay off drugs.

► A tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for educational expenses.

But low-income families who pay little or no taxes wouldn't benefit from the deduction, says Larry Gladieux, executive director for policy analysis, The College Board. And the HOPE program is a tax credit, applied only against existing tax liability.

By Mary Beth Marklein

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 1997

Comment

ON THE NATION

U.S. Crusade on Curriculum Rests on Bogus Assumptions

By Larry Cuban

STANFORD, CALIF.

How can anyone oppose President Bill Clinton's call for national academic standards and for testing all children in reading and math? Disappointing scores on recent national and international tests bolster his challenge. Corporate leaders and governors preach the gospel of standards and tests. Moreover, more than 90% of Americans have told pollsters they like this prescription for ailing public schools. The crusade for centralizing curriculum in a country with a 150-year history of decentralized public schooling is both remarkable and, apparently, unstoppable.

To be sure, some governors, many small-town officials, occasional academics and parents have expressed fear that national standards and tests—even "voluntary" ones—will reduce what little power they already have to conduct community business. But their voice has steadily weakened in the face of the bipartisan crusade to create national standards and tests.

This campaign rests on two assumptions. First, public schools' productivity, as measured by test scores, will spur the larger economy. Second, poor U.S. student performance on international tests results from a lack of national standards and tests. Both assumptions are false.

Since the early 1980s, corporate and public officials, aided by stories in the media, have spliced together declining U.S. productivity and falling standardized-test scores in public schools. They have pointed to Japan's and Germany's schooling as the mod-

el. If, as Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said, "Education is the engine that drives our economy," national standards and tests—as in Japan—would prod students, parents and teachers to work harder.

Yet, consider what has occurred in the 1990s. National productivity has risen. The U.S. economy has outperformed both Germany's and Japan's. Unemployment and inflation are lower than in the early 1980s. But no awards have been handed out to public schools. Media reporting and public officials' announcements continue to report and interpret test scores as reflecting students' failure to measure up to 21st-century workplace needs. Thus is revealed the sham of linking economic productivity and students' test scores.

Nonetheless, blaming a declining economy on failing public schools was shrewd politics. Americans do believe that education and individual gains are strongly linked; personal income and years of education are highly correlated. But it is not the individual link between education and the larger economy that presidents, governors and corporate leaders have crusaded for since the early '80s; rather, it is the connection between students' test performance and the overall economy. While such a connection goes largely unquestioned, it is, nonetheless, a myth.

The bogus connection between public schools and economic conditions becomes glaring when the spotlight shifts from public schools to university research. Century-old ties between federal and corporate funding of university scientists—seldom noted in the media yet richly documented—have led to the development of commercial products, medical advances and defense technology. Such contracts starkly reveal how critical university research has been to the larger economy and how phony it is to connect students' test scores to lowered economic productivity.

From 1958-1968, federal funding of scientific research in universities grew from \$254 million to \$1.57 billion, or an increase of 523% (controlling for inflation). When these federal research contracts are calculated on a per-professor basis, the results are staggering. For private universities, the median annual per-professor federal grant in the late 1980s was just over \$107,000; for public universities, it was a tad above \$64,000. Corporate and foundation research contracts add another 15% to these figures.

This linkage between university research and expected national economic returns needs no myth-making. Public and private funding produced inventions and corporate profits. The sham of blaming public schools for the ebb and flow of national economic productivity may be politically smart and a low-cost strategy of exploiting a vulnerable institution, but it rests on counterfeit assumptions.

The flawed assumption that U.S. students do less well on international tests because we lack national curriculum standards and tests shows up most clearly in the recent reporting of

the Third International Math and Science Study for 7th and 8th graders.

As widely reported, U.S. students scored below many of their foreign counterparts in math and were average in science. Japanese and French students, for example, whose countries have national ministries and centrally driven standards and tests, scored significantly higher in math than their U.S. counterparts. In science, students from Japan, Singapore and Korea—the latter two nations also with national curricula and tests—substantially outscored U.S. 13-year-olds.

Few pundits, however, noted the contradictions that seriously undercut the argument for national academic standards and tests. Other countries with national curricula and tests—England, Norway, Israel and Spain—ranked the same as the United States in math. Further complicating the math picture is that 13-year-olds from Switzerland, Australia and Canada, who come from decentralized systems of schooling much like the U.S., also scored significantly higher than students from countries with ministry-driven curricula.

When science scores are examined, similar contradictions arise. Japan's students outscored America's in science, but France's and Spain's, which have heavily centralized curricula, fell significantly below students in the United States. Moreover, students from New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland—all lacking national curricula and tests—did just as well as students from countries with strong national direction for local schools. Furthermore, on some science topics, U.S. students did as well or better than Japanese, Norwegian and French students—even those from Hong Kong.

Beneath the headlines of U.S. students' supposedly mediocre performance on international tests is far more contrary than supporting evidence for the president's national curricular standards and tests. Nevertheless, a politically clever and feel-good crusade has sprung up to bring them about. Meanwhile, larger education issues that seriously undermine the nation's public schools—such as severe inequalities in funding and quality of schooling for the nation's poor in rural and big-city districts—go unaddressed.

Larry Cuban is a professor of education at Stanford University.

in Dearborn. "It's like being with family."

The NAIA also provides services for the American-Indian community, including job training. Wanda Dockstader, 40, of Detroit completed the training program there and works as a school service assistant at Detroit's Medicine Bear American Indian Academy.

She moved to Detroit in 1966 after leaving an Oneida reservation in Ontario.

The mother of three, Dockstader teaches American-Indian crafts at Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, a public school centered on the cultures and traditions of American Indians.

"I earned my GED in 1988, and I plan to attend Wayne State University," she said. "I'd like to see all Native Americans get their education because, to me, that's the only way to fulfillment."

The South Eastern Michigan Indian center in Center Line is another gathering place for American Indians. The organization provides direct services for Macomb, Oakland and St. Clair counties, including a food distribution program

and job training among others.

Ragsdale, of the South Eastern Michigan Indians, said: "We are one of the most complex of all people because we come from over 500 tribes, but we simply want the same respect that everyone else wants."

Who is a Native American?

The definition of Native American keeps changing among tribes and government agencies.

For example:

*** U.S. Department of Education:** A person is a Native American if he or she belongs to a state or federally recognized tribe, including tribes terminated by the federal government after 1940. The agency also recognizes immediate descendants of those people, all Alaska natives, and some special cases.

*** U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs:** A Native American is someone recognized by one of the 510 federally recognized tribes, or who can document their link to people on tribal rolls or government records kept in the 1800s. Members of tribes the U.S. government tried to

disband are not eligible. To receive hiring preference, BIA employees must be a member of a federally recognized tribe or at least one-half Native American blood.

*** Michigan Indian tuition waiver:** People who are a quarter or more Native American and who have lived in Michigan for at least 12 months are eligible for the state college tuition waiver.

*** Tribes:** Each tribe has the sovereign right to determine membership. Most Michigan tribes require one-quarter blood except for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, which admits all descendants of tribal members, and the Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community, which requires members to be at least half Native American. Caption: Allan Gabriel carries a sacred incense of sage, tobacco and grasses during a Native-American religious ceremony at Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Lincoln Park. James Borchuck / The Detroit News■

COMMENTARY

The Wall Street Journal

05/01/97

Letters to the Editor: Standards Tests Minus The Fear and Loathing

Lynn Cheney's diatribe against voluntary national tests ("Whose National Standards?" editorial page, April 2) misstates the problem and the proposed solution. Ms. Cheney contends that the president's proposed tests — which will help gauge how American students are doing compared with each other and with other nations' students — will lead to a national curriculum dictated by often unorthodox learning styles. But defining the proposed test as something it is not does not make it so. An examination of this issue minus the fearful hyperbole reveals the soundness and significance of the president's proposal.

As President Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley have stated, reading is reading and math is math, throughout the country. That is, the

expectations for reading and math are, or should be, the same everywhere. Researchers agree that by the fourth grade, when the reading test is to be given, all students should know how to read well, no matter how they learn to do it, or they will be at a significant risk for a lifetime of diminished success in school.

Contrary to Ms. Cheney's view, President Clinton's plan for a voluntary national test will not endorse any of the teaching methods she so fears — or for that matter any instructional method at all. We want states to challenge students to master basic and advanced academic skills, but it remains up to states, local school districts, and teachers to determine the best method to teach their students. What these tests, which states

are not required to use, will do is offer states, local communities, teachers and parents a yardstick by which to assess whether their students and children are mastering critical basic skills early enough to succeed.

The tests will be based both on the well-established and respected National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test, which has been a crucial and reliable national indicator of student achievement for many years and is used by more than 43 states, and on the widely accepted Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), used by the U.S. and many other nations.

Marshall S. Smith
Acting Deputy Secretary
Department of Education
Washington■

in Dearborn. "It's like being with family."

The NAIA also provides services for the American-Indian community, including job training. Wanda Dockstader, 40, of Detroit completed the training program there and works as a school service assistant at Detroit's Medicine Bear American Indian Academy.

She moved to Detroit in 1966 after leaving an Oneida reservation in Ontario.

The mother of three, Dockstader teaches American-Indian crafts at Medicine Bear American Indian Academy, a public school centered on the cultures and traditions of American Indians.

"I earned my GED in 1988, and I plan to attend Wayne State University," she said. "I'd like to see all Native Americans get their education because, to me, that's the only way to fulfillment."

The South Eastern Michigan Indian center in Center Line is another gathering place for American Indians. The organization provides direct services for Macomb, Oakland and St. Clair counties, including a food distribution program

and job training among others.

Ragsdale, of the South Eastern Michigan Indians, said: "We are one of the most complex of all people because we come from over 500 tribes, but we simply want the same respect that everyone else wants."

Who is a Native American?

The definition of Native American keeps changing among tribes and government agencies.

For example:

*** U.S. Department of Education:** A person is a Native American if he or she belongs to a state or federally recognized tribe, including tribes terminated by the federal government after 1940. The agency also recognizes immediate descendants of those people, all Alaska natives, and some special cases.

*** U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs:** A Native American is someone recognized by one of the 510 federally recognized tribes, or who can document their link to people on tribal rolls or government records kept in the 1800s. Members of tribes the U.S. government tried to

disband are not eligible. To receive hiring preference, BIA employees must be a member of a federally recognized tribe or at least one-half Native American blood.

*** Michigan Indian tuition waiver:** People who are a quarter or more Native American and who have lived in Michigan for at least 12 months are eligible for the state college tuition waiver.

*** Tribes:** Each tribe has the sovereign right to determine membership. Most Michigan tribes require one-quarter blood except for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, which admits all descendants of tribal members, and the Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community, which requires members to be at least half Native American. Caption: Allan Gabriel carries a sacred incense of sage, tobacco and grasses during a Native-American religious ceremony at Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Lincoln Park. James Borchuck / The Detroit News■

COMMENTARY

The Wall Street Journal

05/01/97

Letters to the Editor: Standards Tests Minus The Fear and Loathing

Lynn Cheney's diatribe against voluntary national tests ("Whose National Standards?" editorial page, April 2) misstates the problem and the proposed solution. Ms. Cheney contends that the president's proposed tests — which will help gauge how American students are doing compared with each other and with other nations' students — will lead to a national curriculum dictated by often unorthodox learning styles. But defining the proposed test as something it is not does not make it so. An examination of this issue minus the fearful hyperbole reveals the soundness and significance of the president's proposal.

As President Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley have stated, reading is reading and math is math, throughout the country. That is, the

expectations for reading and math are, or should be, the same everywhere. Researchers agree that by the fourth grade, when the reading test is to be given, all students should know how to read well, no matter how they learn to do it, or they will be at a significant risk for a lifetime of diminished success in school.

Contrary to Ms. Cheney's view, President Clinton's plan for a voluntary national test will not endorse any of the teaching methods she so fears — or for that matter any instructional method at all. We want states to challenge students to master basic and advanced academic skills, but it remains up to states, local school districts, and teachers to determine the best method to teach their students. What these tests, which states

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Marshall S. Smith
Acting Deputy Secretary
Department of Education
Washington■

testing

Clinton's Initiatives Gain Approval, But People Split on a National Test

BY JUNE KRONHOLZ
AND ALBERT R. HUNT

Staff Reporters of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Educational tests are an idea whose time has come—as long as they're not too tough.

Forty-eight states today either have mandatory tests or are drafting them. President Clinton is proposing a national test. But the vast majority of states draw the line at fashioning a curriculum for all students, and the national testing proposed by the president would be strictly voluntary—with-out even incentives to participate.

These policies very much reflect the public mood on the testing issue. The Wall Street Journal/NBC News national poll found that 81% of adults favor President Clinton's initiative, with almost half the public strongly in favor and only 16% opposed.

But when asked whether the federal government should establish a national test—with questions spelling out the pro and con arguments of a standard national accountability vs. ceding too much power to the federal government—the public splits 49% to 47%, barely in favor.

There are some clear demographic differences on the desirability of a national test. Whites are closely divided, but blacks give the notion strong support. There is little variance by income levels except among the very poorest adults, who favor a standard national accountability test.

The catalyst for testing was the 1989 governors summit in education that drafted a series of reading, math and science targets. Tests were called for then to ensure that kids were learning what they were supposed to be taught.

Tests were to be the engine that toughened curricula. A well-written test would outline what a child should know; teachers would teach to the test so their students would fare well compared with the rest of the state; from this competition a new, improved curriculum would emerge without

The Testing Debate

Should the federal government be involved in establishing a national test for reading and math?

	SHOULD BE INVOLVED	SHOULD NOT BE
All adults	49%	47%
White	47	50
Black	62	33
Men	47	50
Women	51	45
K-12 in house	50	47
Non K-12	48	48

the state government's dictating it.

Texas has a state-wide curriculum where most students study from the same textbooks. Most other states, however, have avoided mandating curricula. (The two states that haven't adopted any testing yet are Iowa and Wyoming.)

The issue is full of political land mines. Conservatives, especially the religious right, go ballistic at the idea of a government-mandated curriculum. Many on the right accept testing, however. But more than a few liberals claim that standardized tests are unfair to inner-city children, immigrants, the learning-disabled and students from poorer rural areas.

In reality, the problem with testing sometimes is that it's too benign. A California state test collapsed after one year because no one—employers, college admissions departments, parents, teachers, politicians—could agree on it. Maryland's current high-school assessment test is so easy that it is being given in junior high school. The state is considering a much tougher version, and requiring students pass it to get a diploma; that idea already is drawing fire from some parents who complain their children will be held responsible

for the schools—not the other way around.

And there sometimes are confusing variations in results. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress gives tests to a sample of kids in grades four, eight and 12 and then produces a score for the school. This year the NAEP found that only 15% of Louisiana's fourth-graders were adequate readers, but Louisiana's own standardized test claimed that 88% were. Similarly, in Wisconsin the NAEP found that only 35% of children read well, while the state claimed 85%.

But the NAEP doesn't grade individual students or tell parents how their children are doing. Instead, it grades schools, a useful-enough measure for deciding what each school is doing right or wrong. Kentucky pegs teacher bonuses to improved results on the state's standardized tests—and threatens to close schools that don't show improvement.

President Clinton's proposed national tests for fourth- and eighth-graders—for reading and math—would test individual students as well as schools. The federal government would pay to write the tests and cover the first-year administrative costs of the states, though it's still not clear where the relatively small amount of money will come from. Also, the president proposes to put both the tests and the school results on the Internet, hoping to generate pressure for school change from parents whose children fare poorly.

The administration goes to great lengths to counter claims that this is federal intrusion into what traditionally has been a local concern. The tests measure only reading and math and they are strictly voluntary, it is frequently noted.

Still, virtually every other industrialized country has mandatory nationalized tests and a standard core curriculum. But despite all the clamor for change and reform in education, Americans don't yet seem willing to go that far.

sailing on uncharted waters" and bound to make a few mistakes.

But Chester E. Finn Jr., the president of the Washington-based Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, which underwrites K-12 education projects, compared today's teachers' unions to the automobile industry of the 1970s: big, bureaucratized, and heavily unionized.

And for all the NEA headquarters' talk about change, he said, the group's local affiliates have not gotten the message.

But Mr. Chase gave one signal that the union may be serious. He announced that the NEA board had voted to encourage its affiliates to consider peer monitoring and review by teachers. The union's representative assembly will vote on the measure at its annual convention in July.

Mr. Finn said that unions eventually will have to accept proposed reforms, such as charter schools. And if they do not, "we will have education reform anyway, and it will be a lot bloodier."

When it came to mathematics, reading, and science, Kika Wilson was happy with the education three of her

children were getting at Woodlake Elementary School in California's San Fernando Valley. But she felt that they were missing out in art class. Although the 600 students at the school were learning arts and crafts, there was little formal instruction in fine arts.

Ms. Wilson, who was a folklore teacher in her native Mexico, decided to do something about it. This year, she organized more than two dozen parents, gathered books and materials on the master painters and art history, sought donated art supplies, and got permission to teach art to each class for at least one hour a week.

"Reading and math and spelling aren't the only things they need to learn," said Ms. Wilson, the mother of five.

Ms. Wilson and Michele Young, a parent who has helped organize and teach the volunteers, provide workshops to help parents create new lesson plans.

While most of the parents teach one or two classes a week, Ms. Wilson teaches five or more. "I just strap my 8-month-old baby on my back and go teach class."

California educators have released a comprehensive strategic plan to recruit critically needed new teachers.

The plan, drafted by a statewide task force of educators, aims to address the vast teacher demand created by increases in student population and the state's class-size-reduction mandate. ("Class-Size Cuts in Calif. Bring Growing Pains," April 30, 1997.)

Created in conjunction with the Belmont, Mass.-based nonprofit group Recruiting New Teachers Inc., the plan calls for expanding the pool of prospective teachers with outreach and assistance activities, an expansion of alternative training efforts, and an easing of transfer restrictions for teachers trained in other states.

One recommendation is the creation of a "one-stop shopping" source where potential teachers would be able to obtain information and counseling about teacher requirements, preparation programs, and job opportunities.

—ANN BRADLEY, JOETTA L. SACK, KATHLEEN KENNEDY MANZO, & JEANNE PONESSA■

19. Education Week

May 21, 1997

Clinton May Seek NAEP Board Role In New Tests

Washington

The Clinton administration may try to involve the National Assessment Governing Board in the governance of the new voluntary national tests that the president is promoting, says his education adviser, Michael Cohen.

The governing board, a citizens' panel, sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the nation's report card. NAEP, which measures achievement by a national sample of students in a variety of core academic subjects, is a project of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

The assessment, which has been conducted since 1969, delivers results for student performance across the nation and the states but by law cannot report individual scores. The new tests that President Clinton proposes for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math—which would be based on the NAEP exams in those subjects—would report the achievement of individual students to

schools and parents.

Mr. Cohen, who made his comments here May 9 to a quarterly meeting of the governing board, said that under current law, NAGB could not be involved in the president's initiative. But the launch of the new testing plan this year coincides with Congress' consideration of reauthorizing the assessment and the governing board.

A top House Republican, meanwhile, made an unsuccessful bid last week to stop the administration from using current funds to pay for the new program. ("Rep. Goodling Fails To Block Funding for New Tests," in This Week's News.)

A just-completed survey of some of NAEP's users turned up results that are generally consistent with the revamping of the national assessment now under way, according to a draft shared with the board.

The survey, conducted this year for the Education Department's statistics

center by the private Education Statistics Services Institute in Washington, drew on written questionnaires and focus groups. Between 400 and 500 questionnaires were mailed to state assessment directors, chief state school officers, state legislative aides, governors' aides, and others; the response rate was 84 percent.

A majority of respondents said that they would like to see NAEP exams administered in at least some subjects every year. Now, the national assessment is given in two or more subject areas every other year; the redesign calls for testing every year, although not in the same subjects each time.

Respondents also urged the release of results more quickly after the exam has been given, even if it means sacrificing the collection of background data of students and schools. In the past, reports have come out 10 months to 27 months after the exam.

A little-known task force within the Education Department is working to improve math achievement nationwide.

"We're looking across the department at all our resources and identifying where we are already doing things in math education that we could tighten up, strengthen, be more proactive in," Judy Wurtzel, the initiative's director, said in

an interview last week following a presentation at the nagb meeting. The aim, she said, is to create strategies for boosting students' math performance, provide tools to administrators and teachers, and get information out to parents.

The task force plans to disseminate materials about best practices in math

education. This summer, it plans to release a curriculum "toolbox," which would allow school officials to analyze their own math curricula in light of the expectations on NAEP and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

—MILLICENT LAWTON
mlawton@epe.org■

LOCAL

20. Detroit News

May 22, 1997

Effort under way to keep Dominican High School open **Parent association is formed, will develop plan to save all-girls school.**

By Kristin Storey / The Detroit News

One day after learning Dominican High School will close at the end of this school year, more than 150 parents, faculty and alumni gathered to find a way to keep the doors open.

"These young girls, they need this school," said Mari West, who has two daughters in the school and one daughter who is an alumna.

School officials announced Tuesday that the 57-year-old Catholic girls school for grades 6-12 will close in June. It is the only all-girls Catholic school in Detroit.

Parents on Wednesday formed a parent association and developed a plan

to take to the Adrian Dominican Sisters, who run the school and decided to close it. The Adrian Dominican Sisters agreed to meet with the group at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Officials cited declining enrollment, poor funding and lack of parent involvement for closing the school on Detroit's east side.

The school has 260 students this year, but expected increased enrollment in the fall, said Cortesa Danner, a school recruitment officer.

Parents promised to support the school more and pledged to find more girls to enroll.

"All they had to say is they needed help and obviously they would have gotten help," said Dean Saylor, of Mt. Clemens, whose daughter will be a senior next year.

Barbara Goodlow, who organized the meeting and was elected president of the new parent association, said parents were comfortable with the school and administration.

"When the education is what you want, when the environment is safe — you're not always going to be banging on the doors," Goodlow said.■

21. Cincinnati Enquirer

May 22, 1997

Six local schools get nation's highest honor

BY CHRISTINE WOLFF

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Six local elementary schools have been selected as National Blue Ribbon winners - the highest recognition from the U.S. Department of Education.

The winners:

Hamilton County: Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, Symmes Township; Crosby Elementary School, Crosby Township; Reading Central Community School, Reading; W.M. Sellman Middle School, Madeira.

Butler County: Shawnee Elementary

School, Union Township.

Grant County, Ky.: Dry Ridge Elementary, Dry Ridge.

Earning a Blue Ribbon "is like winning the Super Bowl of education to me," said David Stouffer, principal at Sellman.

"It's a reflection on the support of the community and a reflection that you have a pretty great staff," Mr. Stouffer said.

Sellman also won the Blue Ribbon award in 1985-86.

"Now, a national Blue Ribbon - if they were an athletic team, we'd be building them a stadium," said John Varis, Reading superintendent. The designation comes two weeks after Reading residents voted down a tax levy and a bond issue to pay for building improvements to Central and the district's two other schools.

"This vindicates the hard work of the staff and students. I'm hoping the voters will now see clear to support a nationally

Test Scores in Poor Districts Still Lagging, Officials Say

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR

TRENTON, Dec. 4 — Statewide test results released today show that high school students in New Jersey's 30 poorest school districts continue to score substantially lower than their wealthier, suburban counterparts on the standardized tests needed to graduate.

The reports came in conjunction with the annual release of report cards for each of the state's 2,200 schools, detailing a host of information ranging from the number of hours devoted to classroom instruction to teacher salaries.

Beverly Hall, the state-appointed Superintendent in Newark, also made public a 52-page outline of her goals for improving the district's 82 schools before the projected date of returning the district to local control in July 2000.

The annual test results in the three urban districts under state control — Jersey City, Paterson and Newark — were essentially static when compared with last year. But state officials said that the poor results on the first sitting of the test improved markedly after students were allowed to take it up to four times.

"They are much better than they used to be," said Leo F. Klagholz, the state's Commissioner of Education. "The challenge is: how do you get them up?"

Of the 62,761 students statewide who took the test for the first time at the start of their junior year in October 1994, 91.3 percent passed it by the time they needed the test to graduate in April 1996, the figures showed. Of those who failed, 3,649 students were allowed to graduate through other evaluation methods, leaving 1,795 who did not get diplomas.

In the poorest districts, 72.6 percent eventually passed; in the state-operated districts, 63.6 percent passed all three sections of reading, writing and mathematics.

For the state-operated districts, less than one-third of the students who took the test in October 1995 passed, while 77 percent of the students in the rest of the state passed it in one sitting. The statistics for this fall's sitting were not included in the report, although the numbers generally do not vary widely from year to year.

The state made improving tests scores a priority in Jersey City,

which it took over in 1989; Paterson, taken over in 1991, and Newark, taken over last year. The takeover had not been in place in Newark long enough for any improvements in results to be expected, officials said, adding that there was no simple explanation for the gaps in districts long under state control.

"That is the question of the century," said Mr. Klagholz. "There are no formula answers for this."

The test administered to all eighth-grade students to predict how they will perform in high school showed a slight drop across the state. Of those who took the test in March, 74.2 percent passed, compared with 76 percent in March 1995.

While math and reading scores edged up, those passing writing dipped to 84.3 percent from 88.5 percent. State officials said the kind of writing sample used accounted for the drop because it asked students to write an essay detailing how they would give a friend some advice.

"This socio-personal type of writing is less emphasized by teachers," said Gary T. Reece, the assistant commissioner in charge of testing.

In the plan for Newark, Dr. Hall set specific testing goals for her students. The goals specify that by June 2000, 80 percent of the eighth graders will pass the reading and writing portions of the test and 75 percent the math. It also said that 85 percent of the high school students would pass the proficiency test needed to graduate, as opposed to the 56.6 percent who pass it now.

The outline also pledged to improve safety in the schools, increase the attendance rates and invest \$35 million to get computers into every classroom. The report said changes in each school would be introduced through the planning teams organized in the spring.

Dr. Hall won a ringing endorsement from Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, who praised her for changes in management and budgeting made since the state deposed the elected school board in July 1994 after accusing it of nepotism, corruption and neglecting basic student needs.

LOCAL

26. The Washington Post

05/11/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Metro; Page B03

Many Area Educators Skeptical About Clinton's National Testing Proposal

By Jay Mathews
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton wants every U.S. child to take national reading and math exams and has put the tests at the top of his education agenda. But many Washington area students won't be participating, judging from the way the region's school officials have greeted Clinton's plan.

Virginia officials say they're opposed to the voluntary tests, D.C. school leaders are divided, and even in Maryland, the first state to endorse the Clinton proposal, school administrators are having second thoughts.

Clinton proposed the reading test for fourth-graders and the math test for eighth-graders in his State of the Union message in January. He and Education Secretary Richard W. Riley have urged all states to begin administering the new 90-minute exams in 1999, to ensure that their students have mastered those two essential skills and to see how their schools compare with those in other states and countries.

"Our young people need to master the basics once and for all," Riley told a congressional committee last month. "And parents deserve to know how their children are achieving — how they stack up, no matter where they live or move in this great country of ours."

But many Washington area educators contend that the additional testing isn't needed. They say they already are improving reading and math teaching and have their own tests to measure their students' progress.

The Maryland and Virginia state school boards will have the final say on whether their students take the national exams, unless they take the rare step of leaving the decision to local school boards. In the District, the decision will be made by the D.C. emergency school board of trustees.

In Virginia, Gov. George Allen (R) and a majority of the state Board of

Education say they prefer tests created by Virginians, including the state tests just being introduced for third, fifth, eighth and 11th grades in basic subjects.

"We like the notion of a test our kids can study for, and in Virginia, you know exactly what is going to be on your test," board President Michelle Easton said.

Board Vice President Lil Tuttle, a Richmond parent, said the Clinton initiative seems like an intrusion into state affairs. Those who want to impose national education standards appear to be "trying to come through the back door with a test," she said.

Northern Virginia officials also are skeptical.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, on which the national exams would be based, have a good reputation, said Kathleen F. Grove, assistant superintendent for instruction in Arlington. But, she added, "we have to be cautious about how many tests we subject the children to."

New tests also would require administrators and teachers to put aside other duties to organize, secure and collect the test booklets and to monitor additional test data, she said.

Dolores Bohen, spokeswoman for the Fairfax County schools, said adopting national tests "would be wrenching for this country because we have such a deeply rooted tradition of local curriculum and local school boards."

D.C. officials said they are worried about loading tests on children who need more instruction, not more assessment.

"In most of our schools, we have a breakdown in supervision; we have one of the highest poverty rates in the country; we have a variety of problems. And I think that just setting up testing . . . will not serve the interests of most of the kids or the schools," said Don Reeves (Ward 3), president of the elected D.C. school board and one of the trustees setting school policy. "It's only going to tell us what we already know."

But Bruce K. MacLaury, chairman of the D.C. school board of trustees, said he thought the national tests might help D.C. schools, particularly since the federal government has agreed to pay school districts' first-year costs. He said the trustees hope to announce within a month a set of new school standards and ways to test them.

Maryland's state Board of Education endorsed the Clinton proposal Feb. 10, making Maryland the first state to do so, followed by Michigan and North Carolina. Maryland board Chairman Christopher Cross said the quick embrace was inspired in part by a Clinton visit to Annapolis. But since then, Cross said, district superintendents have told State School Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick that they are concerned that their students may be getting too many tests.

Maryland Education Department spokesman Ronald Peiffer said the districts were worried that "every time you bring in a new test, you have to build a different curriculum, and it is a different yardstick."

Steven Ferrara, state director of student assessment, said the school systems would have to explain the differences between the results of the Clinton tests and those of state tests.

Nonetheless, Ferrara said, "there is a commitment from Maryland to take seriously the possibility of participating" in the Clinton program.

Leroy J. Tompkins, chief divisional administrator for instruction for the Prince George's County schools, said the Clinton tests sounded useful. But he said he wanted a better explanation of how they would work alongside a battery of National Assessment of Educational Progress tests already given to selected students in 43 states.

"There is some confusion on my behalf as to the necessity of two different tests," he said. ■

25. Academe Today

May 12, 1997

Backers of Affirmative Action Seek Strategy to Win Support for Their Cause

By DOUGLAS LEDERMAN

Cambridge, Mass. — More than 150 academics, lawyers, and civil-rights advocates gathered here Friday to begin plotting a strategy for persuading judges, politicians, and the public that it is legal and just for colleges to use affirmative action to promote diversity.

The day-long conference, sponsored by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, achieved mixed results. The participants, all of whom seemed to favor affirmative action, shared ideas for producing social-science research that might build support for it in the courts and elsewhere.

But the civil-rights advocates and professors in the crowd also realized that the narrow boundaries that recent court decisions have set for justifying the use of racial preferences leave little room for doing so, no matter how passionately they believe affirmative action to be right.

"It's frustrating to be focusing on how we can come up with data and research that will make the case before a reactionary Supreme Court as to why they should continue to allow some minuscule sliver of affirmative action," said Anthony M. Platt, a professor of social work at California State University at Sacramento. Supporters of affirmative action may be better off, he said, "focusing instead on reaching a larger group of Americans, not around narrow legal issues, but around a defense of democracy in higher education."

That idea appealed to many of the participants, who argued that the political fight over the future of affirmative action was, in the long term, more significant and promising than the current battle in the courts. But the legal experts in the group sought repeatedly to remind their colleagues that academe must step up its fight in the courts, which it is losing badly, they said.

The conference was the third sponsored by Harvard since March 1996, when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, in a case known as

Hopwood v. Texas, barred the law school at the University of Texas at Austin from using race as a factor in admissions.

By declaring that the desire to attract a diverse student body was not a sufficiently compelling reason to use affirmative action in admissions, the Fifth Circuit directly challenged the Supreme Court's 1978 decision in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, on which most colleges have justified their use of race-based preferences.

In 1996, at the first of the Harvard conferences, which was closed to the public, educators and lawyers bemoaned the lack of social-science evidence colleges could use to prove the value of diversity to their campuses. Friday's conference was aimed at starting to fill that void but showed that that will be an uphill climb.

One researcher, Sylvia Hurtado of the University of Michigan, unveiled a new study showing that female and minority professors were more likely than white men to use cooperative learning and other techniques that, she said, helped students learn.

But John A. Payton, a lawyer in Washington, D.C., who has defended affirmative action in several major lawsuits, said such a finding would do little to persuade a judge or opposing lawyer of the merits of diversity. Mr. Payton told Ms. Hurtado that he imagined a judge would respond to her argument by saying: If you believe those techniques are beneficial, why not just require all professors to adopt them, rather than counting on only some minority professors to provide them?

Legal experts drilled similar holes in other pieces of research, disheartening some of those in attendance. "It seems as if nothing may be enough to convince some of those federal judges," said Jorge Chapa, associate dean of the graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin.

Many of the participants argued that

the colleges had created at least part of the current dilemma for themselves by depending so heavily on standardized-test scores in admitting students. By defining excellence through students' scores on such tests, on which black and some other minority students score significantly lower on average, colleges have had to use "affirmative action to correct the problems we've inflicted on ourselves with our testing standards," said Christopher Edley, Jr., a Harvard law professor who is co-director of the university's Civil Rights Project.

Mr. Edley and the other co-director, Gary Orfield, a professor of education, ended the day by exhorting those gathered here to build and make the case to people inside and outside academe that students benefit from being educated in a diverse setting and that employers want to hire students who have learned how to work with people of other races.

Dr. Orfield seemed to strike the most powerful chord of the day with a presentation that sought to challenge what he called the Hopwood court's statement that using race in admissions was "no more rational on its own terms than would be choices based upon the physical size or blood type of applicants." Using a series of simple charts, Dr. Orfield sought to reveal the great differences between black and white Americans today, showing black people with far higher rates of unemployment and incarceration, and white people with far greater wealth, among other things.

The Fifth Circuit court, in Hopwood, and some other tribunals have dismissed arguments about such societal discrimination, but one person attending the meeting, Isabelle Katz Pinzler, the acting Assistant U.S. Attorney General for civil rights, said evidence of continuing racial discrimination could be used in other courts and, more importantly, in the political debate about affirmative action, to persuade Americans that race still does matter. ■

22. Education Daily

May 12, 1997

CLINTON TEST PLAN PROMPTS INQUIRIES FROM NAEP BOARD

Overseers of the nation's report card expressed concern Friday about duplications between their tests and national reading and math assessments President Clinton wants.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) met with White House education consultant Mike Cohen to determine what role, if any, they would play in setting policy for the new tests.

"We're not out saying, 'we're going to do this,' but we certainly have a level of expertise," said William Randall, NAGB chairman, during a board meeting in Washington, D.C.

Cohen assured NAGB the White House would continue to consult the board on assessment policy, but didn't spell out how the National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) and the board itself would fit into the new assessment strategy.

Clinton has proposed creating voluntary reading tests for fourth graders and math exams for eighth-graders by 1999 (ED, Feb. 5).

The board oversees the NAEP examinations, in which fourth-, eighth- and 11th-graders are tested to produce a snapshot of student achievement.

But the federal government does not allow for disclosure of individual NAEP exam results, something the president wants under the new test.

Cohen emphasized that Clinton wants the test to let parents measure what their children are learning individually.

"I would see this test, if nothing else,

as something that tells parents, 'Your kid's on track,'" he said.

However, he said state and local officials would determine whether to report individual test scores, or aggregate data showing broad results.

Math Exam In Spanish

The reading exam would be administered only in English, and the math test in English and Spanish, according to Cohen.

NAGB panelist Mark Musick, president of the Southern Regional Education Board, urged the White House to create reading and math tests that measure student performance according to current NAEP achievement levels.

—William J. Cahir■

23. Chronicle of Higher Education - Academe Today

May 12, 1997

Selma U. Drops Its Entire Staff and Appears Likely to Close

Selma University, a 119-year-old, historically black institution in Alabama, appears likely to close after a vote by its Board of Trustees not to renew the contracts of all 27 of its employees, the Associated Press reported on Saturday.

The university's president, Willie L. Muse, resigned last week, after a board meeting. His was among the contracts that will expire on May 31 unless the board changes course and decides to renew them. Mr. Muse has denied the institution is about to shut its doors.

For some time, the university has faced enrollment and financial problems. In December 1996, it lost its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The university appealed, to no avail.

Once an institution loses accreditation, its students are no longer eligible for federal student aid and loans.

The university's supporters also held daily prayer vigils early last year in hopes of raising \$10-million. However, those vigils netted only a few thousand dollars for the university.

As of April 1996, the institution was \$3-million in debt and its enrollment had declined to 125 students. Today, it has fewer than 50 students, according to the Rev. Wilson Fallin, Jr., a past president of the university. According to The Montgomery Advertiser, the university now owes about \$2-million.

Despite those obstacles, Mr. Fallin said he thought that the university's

current leaders would try to keep the institution alive. "I think the purpose is to reorganize and strengthen what can be strengthened," he said, "and then to move the institution ahead."

Neither Mr. Muse nor the chairman of the university's board, the Rev. James A. Smith, were available on Sunday for comment. The university's legal adviser also could not be reached.

In an interview with The Montgomery Advertiser, Mr. Muse denied the university was in danger of shutting down. "This school could have closed 100 years ago if [trustees] wanted it," he told the newspaper in late April. "In spite of what people have heard, we are not going to close."■

24. Chronicle of Higher Education - Academe Today

May 12, 1997

Texas Lawmakers Approve Bill Requiring Colleges to Take Top High-School Seniors

By PATRICK HEALY

The Texas Legislature sent Governor George W. Bush legislation Thursday that would require public universities to admit all students who graduated in the top 10 per cent of high-school classes in the state.

The Republican Governor is expected to sign the bill, which passed overwhelmingly and is designed to reverse declines in minority applications to the universities.

The bill has university officials deeply concerned. It would radically change how their undergraduate classes are selected, and would sharply reduce the influence that admissions officials have over whom they accept.

The legislation, for example, would require the University of Texas at Austin to admit students who fell in the top 10-per-cent bracket, regardless of their standardized-test scores or extracurricular activities. Remaining admissions slots would be filled by more top-ranked students, or by applicants who stood out in other ways, such as bilingual speakers, community volunteers, or children of low-income families.

The number of applications from minority students plummeted at several Texas universities this year, after all of the state's public campuses stopped considering race as a factor in admissions and financial-aid decisions. The campuses took those steps last year, after a federal court struck down an affirmative-action admissions policy used by the law school at the University of Texas at Austin.

As a result of that court decision, which is known as Hopwood v. Texas, many minority students became

concerned that they would not be eligible for admission to some public universities in the state. At the Austin campus, applications for undergraduate admission from black and Hispanic students fell this year by 24 and 22 per cent, respectively.

"The reductions have raised alarms across the state," said Steve Kester, a legislative aide to state Senator Gonzalo Barrientos, a Democrat who sponsored the bill in his chamber. "This is an attempt to address Hopwood by creating an admissions policy that can improve minority numbers in several ways."

As the Legislature's logic goes, the class-rank provision would provide public universities with a large pool of minority students who form the majority in many high schools in the state's cities and southern counties.

But several university officials worried that some students who are in the top 10 per cent of their high-school classes will not be sufficiently prepared to do work on highly competitive campuses because of the vast differences in the quality of education offered in the state's wealthy and poor districts. The same argument was made by members of the Texas Senate before it voted, 27 to 4, in favor of the bill.

State Senator Jane Nelson, one of the four Republican Senators who dissented, said Friday that the bill did not take into account the need for all Texas students to be academically prepared for college when they apply.

"School is about academics, but this bill includes a number of non-measurable, non-academic criteria," she said. "Applicants to Texas universities deserved to be judged

equally on factors that are relevant and measurable."

Bruce Walker, director of admissions at the University of Texas at Austin, said the bill would force his campus to admit students who would be ineligible under current standards. Admissions officials at Austin now look at a student's academic record, standardized-test scores, essays, extracurricular activities, work and volunteer experience, and other factors.

"This bill moves away from the direction we've been moving in," Dr. Walker said Friday. "We've been trying to include more factors in our admissions decisions, but this bill gets it down to one factor for many students."

Many questions about the bill remain. With the automatic-admission provision, for instance, will applicants still need to write essays? If not, how will universities be sure that their applicants have the writing skills to do college-level work? And what would happen if half of the estimated 18,000 students in the top 10 per cent of high-school classes wanted to attend the University of Texas at Austin, which enrolls only about 6,000 new undergraduates a year?

"There's a lot we still need to figure out," said Dr. Walker.

The bill also perplexed some college officials because it does not insure that eligible minority students will attend the universities. Because race-based aid is banned, they said, universities will need as much as \$60-million in new funds to accommodate minority students who qualify for admission under the new criteria but who may not be able to afford to attend. ■

at Cusseta Road Elementary in Columbus, left the exhibits one day with two bags stuffed with books, catalogs, posters and a free T-shirt from Saxon Phonics, whose program she was using.

The show even provided a service called Sack Sitters, which stored the freebies for the day, starting at \$1 a sack, or shipped the whole load home for another fee, so that teachers could attend sessions without looking like a pack mule.

Under one roof, teachers can see

samples of a publisher's entire catalog, see hands-on demonstrations of a particular software program, and probably walk away with free goodies. More than half of the 296-page program for the show was filled with advertisements for the show, with items like a coupon from Scholastic that could be redeemed at its booth for a free yellow tote filled with a poster and coupons.

Houghton Mifflin, a major Boston-based textbook publisher, set up a small theater inside its booth to talk up

products to teachers and handed out free samples to those who sat through the 10-to 12-minute presentations, said the company's Becky Mulzer. The company had 100 employees working the convention and ran out of 1,500 tote bags it had planned to give out on the first day the exhibits opened.

"This is the most important trade show conference in elementary reading in the world," said Beth Wray of Scholastic Inc. ■

50. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

05/10/97; Edition: Final; Section: News; Page 1

18% of MPS seniors fall short in math; Exam required for graduation

By LARRY SANDLER

Journal Sentinel staff Dolan Media

More than one in six Milwaukee Public Schools high school seniors are in danger of not graduating because they have not passed a required math test, the school district's testing chief said Friday night. Math teachers and high school principals are charging that the March test was flawed, and Superintendent Robert Jasna is considering whether to administer the test one more time to give those seniors another chance to graduate with the rest of their class, said Mary Quilling, director of research and assessment, and Cynthia Ellwood, director of education.

Jasna's decision could come as early as Monday, Quilling and Ellwood said. The superintendent did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Among juniors, who still will have two more chances to pass the test before graduation, the success rate was about half as good as last spring's results.

All Milwaukee high school students are required to prove their proficiency in math and writing before they are allowed to graduate. The math test given in March was the third chance for the graduating class of 1997, which also was able to take the test last spring, as juniors, and last fall, as seniors.

Taking all three tests together, 82% of seniors have passed, Quilling said. In February, Jasna said 75% of seniors had passed the test, meaning 7% more passed in the spring.

Only 25% of the juniors in the class of '98 passed the March test on their first

try, Quilling said. That was down sharply from last year's 46% success rate for the juniors in the class of '97.

"Twenty-five percent was less than we had hoped would pass," Quilling said.

But this year's juniors still did better than the class of '96, which took the school district's first-ever math proficiency test as juniors two years ago. The 21% passing rate for that class was condemned by House Speaker Newt Gingrich as a sign of "the beginning of the collapse of your (American) civilization."

By the end of their senior year, however, 92% of the class of '96 had met the math proficiency requirement, winning less-publicized praise from Gingrich.

That class had a total of four chances to pass the test, instead of the three chances that this year's class has had, Quilling said. The difference could be a key factor in Jasna's decision whether to give the test again, she said.

Students who don't pass the test or don't take it also can win their diplomas by presenting a portfolio of their work in math. Quilling said portfolios are being judged now, and administrators believe one-third to one-half of those who haven't passed the test another 6% to 9% of all seniors will meet the math requirement with portfolios.

If all else fails, students who haven't met the math requirement can attend summer school and take the test again at the end of the summer, Quilling said.

The number of students represented by the percentages was unclear Friday

night. A breakdown of results by high school also was unavailable. High school math teachers and principals met with Quilling and Ellwood on Thursday and raised three major criticisms of the test:

Whether at least one of the questions that math teachers submitted for the more complicated "problem-solving" portion of the test actually wound up on the more basic "knowledge and skills" portion. If true, that would mean that students had only 15 minutes to solve a problem that was supposed to take 45 minutes, Ellwood said.

Administrators are still investigating whether that happened, Quilling and Ellwood said.

Whether Quilling's staff changed the meaning of some questions in editing the test, which could have affected the answers. Quilling said she was confident that had not occurred.

Whether the grades were lowered by the use of elementary school teachers to score the tests. About one-eighth of the teachers scoring the tests were not high school math teachers, Quilling and Ellwood said.

But a review has found no significant difference between the scores given by elementary school teachers and those given by high school teachers, Quilling and Ellwood said. Also, five to seven teachers scored different parts of each test paper, reducing the chance that any student's test was scored entirely by elementary school teachers, Quilling said.

Quilling said she thought the scores

48. St. Louis Post-Dispatch

05/10/97; Edition: FIVE STAR LIFT; Section: NEWS; Page 16

EDUCATION AGENCY UNDER INVESTIGATION

AP

Three inquiries follow an official's charge that education department managers are misusing money set aside for teacher training.

Accusations that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education misused money set aside to train teachers have sparked a legislative inquiry, a state audit and an internal agency investigation.

Chris Schroeder, director of financial services for two divisions in the department, wrote to lawmakers and elected officials last month that he had evidence of "extreme waste, mismanagement, abuse of authority and illegal acts" by department managers.

Schroeder is concerned about the use of professional development money set aside when Missouri's formula for public schools was rewritten in 1993.

The 1993 legislation earmarked just less than 1 percent of the state school fund for teacher training and development.

The teacher-training amount proposed for the budget year beginning July 1 is about \$14 million.

Schroeder presented his evidence last week before a group of lawmakers, most of them Republicans.

Rep. Todd Akin, R-St. Louis and a leader of the group examining Schroeder's claims, said he was convinced the state was laundering money through teacher-training grants and violating state procurement laws.

Education Commissioner Bob Bartman was invited to attend and present the department's side of the story, but he declined and sent no representative, Akin said.

"Almost everything (Akin) showed us would fit into the category of bureaucratic money laundering," Akin said. "They are finding ways of circumventing the law to get things done."

An internal Education Department investigation is nearly complete, and the results will be announced soon,

department spokesman Jim Morris said.

"Because our investigation was still under way, we didn't think it was appropriate to discuss those issues Mr. Schroeder had raised in a public forum like that until we had our facts together and all of our responses in order," Morris said.

State Auditor Margaret Kelly is scheduled to begin her second look Monday at how the professional development money is used. An audit issued last year questioned nearly \$600,000 worth of spending from the fund.

Frank Ybarra, spokesman for Kelly's office, said accountants had spoken with Schroeder about his concerns, and it appears that practices questioned in last year's audit are still going on.

The audit also found that people who got teacher-training money used it to buy equipment that was then turned over to the department and to hire employees, including clerical help, for the department. ■

49. The Atlanta Journal - The Atlanta Constitution

05/10/97 Section: LOCAL NEWS; Page C; 02

Teachers reap book bonanza at trade show Freebies, exhibits attract 16,000 educators to event.

By Diane Loupe
STAFF WRITER

Want to know how to attract the attention of thousands of teachers? Give them free books.

That was the trick at this week's International Reading Association convention in Atlanta, where almost 16,000 educators gathered to attend sessions on teaching reading and to prowl the cavernous Georgia World Congress Center to collect books. Savvy teachers walked into the exhibits with empty rolling suitcases, luggage carts or huge empty bags, and walked out groaning under the weight of catalogs, free T-shirts, posters, videotapes, software and books.

"It's like Halloween candy," said Teresa Logan, executive editor of Interactive Teacher, a Tallahassee-based

teacher's magazine. "Last night I went back to my hotel room and dumped it out on the bed and went through it, making mental notes that this can go to this teacher, or someone else can use this."

Meeting, greeting and giveaways are especially important to book publishers this year in Georgia as the state prepares to spend \$29 million in selecting textbooks, most of it for language arts. For their part, companies are eager to put their materials into the hands of teachers, who often spend money to purchase books or influence textbook decisions.

Most Georgia school systems have or will choose the textbooks and other materials for their elementary language arts program by the middle of the summer, said Cindy Cupp, the state Department of Education's director of reading programs.

Cupp, who has been teaching reading for 27 years, said she appreciates the show for its ability to allow teachers to network.

"I meet up with reading teachers and ask them what they're using, what's working," she said. "They tell me to go see so-and-so, or go look for a certain textbook."

McGraw-Hill managers met with the 50 or so employees who worked the show, reviewing which states were in the middle of adopting textbooks, said Doug Wolfe, a technology specialist with McGraw-Hill. So Wolfe was careful to be especially attentive to any teacher bearing a badge from Georgia and other states, pressing into their hands a catalog, a free phonics workbook and perhaps an invitation to a special party.

Hildagene Manio, a first-grade teacher

might have been affected by a change in the content of the test. This year's test stressed algebra, statistics, probability and data analysis, while previous tests had a greater emphasis on geometry and formulas, she said. The increased emphasis on algebra reflected a curriculum change, Quilling said. This

year's graduating class was the first one required to complete algebra by the end of the ninth grade.

Ellwood and Quilling stressed that all the questions raised by teachers and principals were being taken seriously and that Jasna was trying to reach the best

decision for the students.

"We don't want any students to be negatively affected by anything that's gone wrong," Quilling said. "We're all working night and day to make sure all our seniors have the very best chance to graduate." ■

51. The Washington Post

05/12/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A01

A Study in Starting Fresh; Before Va. School Opens, Lessons in Logistics

By Victoria Benning
Washington Post Staff Writer

Another shipment of books, and no place to put them. Principal E. Wayne Griffith stands in his unfinished office with a perplexed look on his face and tries to discuss what to do with the new arrivals, but Assistant Principal Sherron Gladden can barely hear him — the fire alarms are being tested.

Potomac Falls High School, scheduled to open in September in Loudoun County, is one chaotic place these days. But despite the hundreds of details and problems that come with starting a school from scratch, Griffith is thrilled to be there.

TD "I kind of relish the excitement of opening a new high school," he said. "This is going to be a true community school — no one lives more than a five-minute drive away — and I think that will encourage more student and parent participation."

It's a ritual that has become increasingly familiar in Washington's fast-growing outer suburbs, especially in Loudoun, a school district that is adding about 2,000 students a year. Potomac Falls is one of three new schools that Loudoun is opening this year, and county officials expect to build at least 12 more over the next five years.

No matter how often the process is repeated, creating a school is a demanding and intricate task for hundreds of children, parents and school administrators. Students must leave classmates, teams and clubs to find new friends and pursuits. Mothers and fathers seek neighbors' donations for school amenities and equipment. School officials are preoccupied with duties ranging from hiring teachers to choosing a mascot.

Potomac Falls, a \$29.9 million, 1,350-student school in the Cascades section of Sterling, is the county's first new high school in 21 years. Griffith has been on the job since July, working out of a small office in the county's school administration building in Leesburg and driving to the new building at least twice a week to check on its progress.

He can hardly contain his enthusiasm as he offers a visitor a tour of the sprawling brick structure, which looks more like a college campus than a high school. The four computer labs, the skylights, the banks of classroom windows, the 650-seat auditorium with Broadway-quality light and sound systems — Griffith delights in how bright and fresh it all looks.

His biggest challenge, he says, is building a school identity and spirit with students and teachers who came from different places.

Out of the more than 80 Loudoun teachers who applied for transfers to Potomac Falls, he has hired about 44 and still has 10 teaching positions to fill. More than two dozen of those hired came from Broad Run High School, where Griffith was principal for 17 years and from which Potomac Falls will draw most of its students.

Griffith says he tried for a mix of experience and youthful enthusiasm in assembling the new teaching staff. He also wanted teachers who understood technology's role in the classroom and who would think of the school as a laboratory for new ideas.

"I feel like I want to go forth and try new things and some innovative techniques at Potomac Falls," Griffith said. "I don't intend to stay stagnant. That means I'll be learning new things as well."

For 15-year-old Scott Loftis, the toughest part of going to Potomac Falls is the breakup of Broad Run's football team.

Potomac Falls will open without a senior class, because this year's juniors wanted to stay at their current schools and were allowed to do so. School officials also gave many of Broad Run's sophomores the choice of whether to transfer to the new school.

Scott, a sophomore and a captain of the junior varsity football team at Broad Run, decided to switch to Potomac Falls. But about half his teammates are staying behind.

"Basically, we split down the middle," Scott said. "We're losing a lot of quality players. A lot of friends are splitting up. You wonder whether we'll see each other as much."

On the other hand, Broad Run's first home football game will be against Potomac Falls, and that's a rivalry Scott is looking forward to.

"It's going to be fun," he said. "We're going to go out there and try to do our best and show everyone they were wrong when they said we wouldn't have a good team."

And there's this bonus for Scott and his classmates: Because Potomac Falls will have no seniors next year, the juniors will enjoy senior privileges for two years in a row. Senior court, an outdoor eating area reserved for seniors, will become junior court. Juniors will park in the senior parking lot.

The school won't have a homecoming this fall — there won't be anyone returning to visit — but there will be a "dedication week" complete with the election of a king and queen. Rising juniors will be able to order their Potomac Falls class rings this spring.

"Basically, it'll be like being seniors for two years," Scott said. "We'll be starting the school traditions. We'll be the first graduating class. I think I'm going to love it."

Charles Lutman, Potomac Falls's athletic director, has the job of outfitting more than 30 sports teams and hiring coaches.

Two decisions Lutman doesn't have to make are the teams' name and colors. Those questions were settled last year through an elaborate process that included surveys of parents and students. One parent even used a computer program to make sure they wouldn't choose the same name or colors as any of the school's competitors.

"Panthers" eventually won out over "Bandits" and "Pirates," and the winning colors were black, purple and white.

Lutman came on board three months ago after 28 years in the Clarke County, Va., school system. Like Griffith, he was lured to the job by the challenge of creating something new. "I've always wanted to start a totally new program from scratch," Lutman said.

He'll have some impressive facilities in which to do it: a weight room with state-of-the-art equipment, six tennis courts, six outdoor volleyball courts, baseball and softball fields, a 1,500-seat gymnasium and a 2,300-capacity lighted football stadium. There also are separate but equal facilities for boys and girls, down to the "his" and "her" whirlpools in the training room.

The downside is that Potomac Falls will play a full varsity schedule, with no seniors the first year, in a league that includes much larger high schools such as Chantilly, Centreville and Herndon. Some players and parents worry that the school's teams won't be able to compete.

Lutman says everyone needs to be patient.

"Look at us like an NFL expansion team. We're not going to have the seniors. We're not going to have the veterans," he said. "If people keep the wins and losses in proper perspective, we'll be all right in a year or so. Look what's happened to the [NFL] expansion teams in a couple of years."

Not all of Potomac Falls's books are at the new building. Many boxes have been delivered to the school district's media center, where Potomac Falls librarian Kathy Marsh has been sorting through them.

Close to 100 boxes arrived on a recent afternoon — still only a fraction of the 17,000 books that will fill the new library. That's 17,000 books that have to be checked against invoices, catalogued, entered into a computer system, stamped, labeled and fitted with security tags — all by hand, all by Marsh.

Then there's the organizing and arranging on shelves, once the shelves are finally delivered and Marsh can finally get into the library.

She doesn't dwell on the logistical headaches or on the fact that she'll be spending weekends and her summer vacation getting ready for next school year.

"I thought setting up a new library would be fun, and it has been," said Marsh, who had been at Loudoun County High School for 17 years. "It's sort of like being in a candy store. I can buy whatever I want. . . . There's just something about new books."

Liz Harm is one of about 40 Potomac Falls parents who have been meeting for three months to gear up for the opening. Harm, who will have two sons at the school, is in charge of the nomination

and election of officers for the new parents' organization.

Even with no officers in place, Harm and others have been making plans to raise scholarship money, sell ads to fill the programs for the first football game and seek donations to build a stadium concession stand.

It took two years and \$35,000 in parent and business donations to get a concession stand at Broad Run. Potomac Falls parents want to try to have one up and running this fall.

And it could happen. All of Sterling's many subdivisions have rallied around the new school, Harm said. Many residents felt removed from Broad Run, which is in Ashburn, a good 15- or 20-minute drive away.

"I've had so many parents calling and wanting to help," Harm said. "It's been amazing. I think the fact that we're going to have a school this size that will take most of the kids from here just kind of completes our community. This school will pull us all together."

Harm said it will be a challenge to give Potomac Falls its own identity. Parents don't want just to copy ideas that were successful at other schools — such as Broad Run's annual popular crafts sale. And, she added, Potomac Falls will be a diverse community with many families who moved to Loudoun from other places, so the parents' group will have to deal with various personalities and egos.

"The fact is we all come from different experiences," said Harm, whose family came to Loudoun five years ago from California. "It's going to take a lot of patience and diplomacy — and keeping in mind what we're all here for, the education and well-being of our children." ■

52. Denver Post

May 11, 1997

CU students tell their side

Drinking enforcement controversial nationwide

By Steven Graham Special to The Denver Post May 11 - Last weekend's Boulder rioting, which led to dozens of injuries and 45 arrests, was the culmination of a bitter, three-year conflict among students, police and the university over partying and underage

drinking on University Hill, students say. "It's a rubber band that has been stretched all semester; then it snapped," said Tim Roberts, 21, a student and Hill resident. "Everyone was angry with the way they have tried to break up parties." Students complain that police have tightened the

reins not just on illegal drinking, but on legal partying as well, that police increasingly are harassing students, and that they should be more concerned with drunken driving and alcohol-related domestic abuse. Police say the measures are simply attempts to uphold the law

undergraduate diversity were Tennessee State, the University of Memphis, the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and the University of Tennessee-Martin.

Community colleges struggling the most were Shelby State, Jackson State and Volunteer State.

Schools meeting objectives were East Tennessee State University and community colleges Motlow State and Walters State.

The numbers aren't always black and white though, said Cliff Gillespie, associate vice president for enrollment at Middle Tennessee State University.

The fast-growing Murfreesboro school increased its black undergraduate enrollment by 15 students last fall but, because its white enrollment swelled, its overall percentage of black students dropped from 10.6 percent to 10.4 percent. The school's goal is nearly 13

percent.

Middle Tennessee State, which has a black president, targets blacks students with a special recruiting day each February and heavy recruiting in Memphis, which has a large black population. But every other college in America makes similar efforts and it's hard to find good students, he said.

Barrett retorts: "These schools don't have trouble recruiting football players. Why can't they recruit students and faculty members?"

One stipulation under the 1984 settlement allows Tennessee State to expand its degree programs while restricting program growth at Middle Tennessee State and Austin Peay, the two other public universities in Tennessee State's region.

Middle Tennessee State wants to add new programs - including doctorates in

psychology and education and a master's in nursing - but it can't.

"It's time to take an open-market approach," Gillespie said. "Let institutions do the best job they can and let students then choose where they want to go."

But from Barrett's perspective, the playing field won't be level until more changes are made, such as merging the three boards governing higher education - the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, University of Tennessee board of trustees and state Board of Regents - to give higher education a clear, decisive direction.

"It's not a happy commentary on higher education that we're still in court talking about something that should have been taken care of 30 years ago," he said. ■

73. Associated Press

05-12 1:11a

State looks into possible irregularities in testing

BESSEMER, Ala. (AP) - Bessemer school officials are denying that they improperly kept students from taking an aptitude test in a effort to inflate average test scores at their schools.

But state school Superintendent Ed Richardson is looking into the matter after state investigators found that in at least two schools, Jess Lanier High School and Davis Middle School, waivers existed to exempt students from taking the Stanford Achievement Test for reasons not allowed under state testing law.

"At this point, the question we face is whether there was a concerted effort to elevate scores by exempting students who might well have done poorly on the test," Richardson said last week. "We're

after who, if anyone, did wrong."

Bessemer school Superintendent Ernest Nicholson said less than 200 of 4,800 students missed tests because of medical excuses or physical disabilities.

State investigators, however, say some reasons given by schools to exempt students included those who had performed poorly on practice tests, those who were failing certain classes and those who had excessive absences, tardies and trancies.

Nicholson said there was a misunderstanding between himself and the principals, who filled out the waivers.

Jess Lanier High School Principal Don Walker said nobody told him he could not exempt a student for any of the reasons he listed.

Asked if Nicholson reviewed his waivers, Walker said: "He should have. As far as I know he did, but no one ever told me this was something we couldn't do."

By not giving the Stanford Achievement Test to third- through eleventh-graders who school officials figured would do poorly, the test results from certain schools could have been artificially increased.

The Stanford is an important test because it is used to determine whether schools are adequately educating students. State law gives the state school board the power to take over schools or systems where a majority of students consistently post low scores. ■

74. Tampa Tribune

May 12, 1997

Industry: Schools pollute kids' minds

By TRACIE REDDICK
of The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA - A quiet war is being waged between industrialists and environmentalists, and it is not a fight for oil or trees.

It's a fight for children's minds.

To combat the green consciousness movement sweeping classrooms, industry groups and companies such as Dow Chemical are financing studies that argue schools preach, but do not teach, about

the environment.

The latest report was released in April by the Independent Commission on Environmental Education. The group of 10 scientists says it examined the most widely used and highly recommended

names.

Three board members were defeated in the recall election. The winners were Mikesell, Linda Lenz and Greg La Pean.

"We're not doing anything different than we said we would do when we ran for school board," Mikesell said. "What it comes down to is, we have a situation

where we should not have a handful of people deciding something for the community. We have to work as a community. We have to have open communication and talk about things."

Six of the nine members of the pre-election board now say they favor a

community vote.

That includes board president James Welch. But Welch also objected to suspending the new nickname and returning to "Indians."

"We did go through a process," he said. ■

71. Associated Press

05-12 1:55a

Taxpayers group says per student funding hike misleading

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - A 7 percent increase in the money spent per student in Utah is misleading given emerging trends in education spending, a taxpayers' advocacy group reports.

In a study released late Sunday, the Utah Taxpayers Association found that while per pupil spending increased to \$4,688 in 1995-96, the actual dollars reaching the classroom improved only slightly, from 56 percent the previous year to 57 percent last year.

In 1993-94, instructional expenditures totaled 58 percent, although the association noted that year's figures were significantly affected by fluctuations in per pupil spending for facility construction and debt service.

"A decline in the number of total

additional dollars reaching the classroom, a widening gap between teachers' and administrators' salaries, and fewer teachers as a percent of total personnel are indications that we are not focusing on children," association president Howard Stephenson said.

The group found that the Logan School District had the highest percentage of total dollars spent for instruction at 72 percent. Park City spent only 35 percent of its expenditures in 1995-96 on instruction, although the association noted that figure was largely due to increased facilities construction.

Average teacher salaries were up 5 percent to \$32,498 per fulltime equivalent teacher on a regular

nine-month contract, including career-ladder enhancements.

Salt Lake School District was highest at \$37,033, followed by Emery (\$33,960) and Park City (\$33,923). Piute came in the lowest at \$23,011.

Average salaries for administrators and supervisors increased nearly 5 percent over the previous year, with the Cache and Millard districts paying the most at \$66,151 and \$63,921, respectively.

Administrators in Grand, Toole, Iron, Juab, Murray, Piute, Alpine and Cache districts received increases averaging 13.6 percent. Teachers in those districts received average pay hikes of only 5.1 percent. ■

72. Associated Press

05-12 1:21a

College Desegregation-Glance

By MARTA W. ALDRICH
Associated Press Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - Most of today's college students weren't even born when attorney George Barrett filed a complaint that is still impacting the higher education system in Tennessee.

But the 30-year-old document - now worn and yellowing - led to a federal judge ordering public colleges and universities in the state's system of 53 schools to integrate their classrooms, faculty and administration.

A report released May 1 shows most of them haven't. Only one university and two community colleges have met court-approved goals for racial diversity in undergraduate enrollment. None of the schools have met all goals, including

diversity in graduate programs and employment.

And time is running out. Schools only have until the 2000-01 school year to meet the goals, which the state is quick to point out are not quotas.

The state argues schools have progressed reasonably and will continue to do so without federal supervision. It has asked numerous times to be freed from the case - most recently last September.

But Barrett insists the state hasn't done all it can to dismantle the dual system of higher education it built.

The case opened in 1968 when a black professor at Tennessee State University tried to block construction of a University of Tennessee campus in

Nashville because the historically black Tennessee State already existed in the city. Construction proceeded, but the campuses were ordered to merge in 1979. Integration requirements were approved in 1984.

Among the requirements was that traditionally black Tennessee State and Shelby State were to increase white enrollment while traditionally white schools were to increase black enrollment. The goals were determined based on racial composition of the counties from which they drew their students.

This month's report by a committee monitoring the desegregation goals showed that according to 1996 fall enrollment, the chief laggards for

produced by failing public schools.

So a successful Superintendent Zacarias will have to reject conventional wisdom and promote realistic standards of achievement for L.A.'s schoolchildren—standards neither so low as not to challenge the best of them, nor so high as to ignore the socioeconomic

context of education in our city.

Every institution needs reform, and Zacarias should root out whatever incompetence, corruption or self-satisfaction he can find. He should preach that schools can always do better. But, most important, he needs to rebuild

the system's self-confidence. When his term is completed, we should have learned not to snicker when L.A. teachers brag: "We work for the most successful institution of assimilation and mobility anywhere in the world—American urban public education." ■

89. The New York Times

05/10/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section I; Editorial Desk; Page 19, Column 3

What's Fairer Than a Test?

By Micah C. Lasher

Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew has been pushing for more diversity in New York's gifted and specialized schools. He has attacked schools for not informing more parents about gifted programs, and he has criticized school districts for charging a fee for admissions exams. Both are valid complaints.

But some critics of gifted programs have gone further. Acorn, a community group that has just issued a report on the low number of minority students in gifted programs, has advocated suspending entrance exams to these high schools. The group has suggested replacing them with more subjective measures like teacher recommendations and interviews.

But this is the wrong way to go. The problem is not the admissions policies of the specialized high schools, but the poor preparation of students.

Stuyvesant High School, the specialized math and science public school in Manhattan, admits students based only on their performance on a free S.A.T.-like exam. The top colleges accept more students from Stuyvesant

than from any other high school in the country. From the class of 1996, 36 students were accepted at Columbia, 28 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and 20 at Harvard.

But Stuyvesant is hardly diverse. This year there were only 38 black students in the freshman class, 5.5 percent of the student body. These figures are actually up slightly from last year, when only 31 black students entered the freshman class. That's because the school recently started two programs — the Math and Science Institute and the Bridge Program. The Math and Science Institute is a free two-year program for students from poor neighborhoods that prepares them for the Stuyvesant admissions exam. The Bridge Program helps students from poor neighborhoods who already have taken the admissions test but did not quite achieve the cut-off score. Participants take classes over the summer, and then start school in the fall. These programs aid disadvantaged students, while maintaining fairness and objectivity.

Basing admission on teacher recommendations and interviews may be easy for smaller schools, but for larger

schools like Stuyvesant, it would be a logistical nightmare.

More important, judging students in this way introduces subjectivity, and "who you know" becomes important. This can be a serious problem in gifted and specialized schools, where seats are coveted and sometimes bitterly fought over. Further, students with already limited resources would have to rely on overworked teachers for recommendations, not to mention general encouragement and support.

Ending the admissions tests at gifted and specialized high schools will not help disadvantaged students. All students deserve an equal chance to attend schools like Stuyvesant. But rather than change the admissions process, the Chancellor should be encouraged to improve the city's primary schools, and programs like the Math and Science Institute should be expanded citywide. This would truly encourage diversity at gifted schools.

About the Author: Micah C. Lasher is a sophomore at Stuyvesant High School.

04:34 EDT May 10, 1997 ■

90. Hartford Courant, May 12, 1997

May 12, 1997

To see school choice at work, head north

By LAURENCE D. COHEN This column ran in The Courant May 11, 1997

The Connecticut General Assembly's Education Committee members are offended at and huffy about the notion that legislators aren't enthusiastic about school choice.

The wimpy, toothless thing that emerged was gutted by the Appropriations Committee, but have no

fear, the Education Committee promises. The money is still there, hiding in some desk drawer, and the issue will be "addressed" later on in the session.

In the meantime, those folks more openly hostile to the idea of giving parents freedom to pick schools for their children are circling the carcass. We have

no room, the suburban schools whine. The thousands of dollars that the transferring children would bring with them to their new schools aren't enough. Only the rich kids, only the white kids, only the motivated kids, only the smart kids, will escape to where the grass is greener.

Even those who pretend to sound balanced and rational about injecting a tiny bit of competition into the mix are in intellectual retreat. This school choice business is a good idea, they grudgingly concede, but of course it's not as important as spending a billion trillion more dollars on preschool baby-sitting and teacher training and bilingual education and champagne fountains in every school lobby.

It's pathetic. It's dishonest.

The hostility to freedom, to choice, to liberating parents and students from failing schools, is a typical status quo reaction from monopoly players. As you stare in wonder at the new school czars who march into Hartford to save the day, prepare yourself for disappointment. Until that terrible school system is subjected to the test of the marketplace, the expensive, frustrating spiral toward failure will continue.

Connecticut isn't alone in its numbing failure to reform. Texas, for instance, has had public school choice on the books since 1995, but the lousy districts wouldn't promote the program, and the better schools ran away from their obligation.

Last week, in the face of this overt sabotage of a school choice initiative, Texas legislators crafted perhaps the most clever voucher legislation in the country. If a student in a failing school applied to any other public school in the

state and was rejected, that student would be funded to attend any school in Texas — public, private or religious. That's in-your-face reform. That's putting the question to the test.

Minutes after a tie vote in the Texas House of Representatives to table the bill, the bill's sponsor pulled it, in the face of last-minute weak knees from gutless legislators.

For an example of a state that isn't afraid of its teacher unions and isn't in bed with its education bureaucrats, drive north across the border to Massachusetts. An open enrollment law that passed in 1991 has, as of the last school year, almost 7,000 students participating, with 206 districts sending students out and 89 districts accepting new students in.

A study of the Massachusetts program by Harvard University not only dispelled the myths about school choice offered up by critics, but confirmed the value of market forces in education.

The Harvard study found "no significant effects" on the racial balance or financial health of the districts that lost students. These findings are remarkable, because Massachusetts practiced "tough love" in its choice program. There were no racial restrictions on the freedom to move; in theory, every white student in a minority district could have escaped. Also, the districts losing students have to pay the bill at the new school out of existing funds; no state bailout or

assistance was available to reward failure.

The financial bite wasn't crippling, the Harvard study concluded, because the urban districts are large enough to handle the relatively small percentage of students who actually decided to leave.

More important, the Harvard researchers confirmed the importance of competition. "Those sending districts most severely affected by student losses responded by improving policies and programs in order to win back students or attract replacements from other districts..."

Most important, those districts that made programmatic changes slowed or reversed their choice losses, while those that did not continued to lose students at the same rate."

That's choice. That's reform. That's competition at work. Compare it to the dismal effort in Connecticut.

Addendum: If your home straddles two town lines, a new Connecticut statute allows you to choose which school system your children will attend. School choice! One step at a time.

Laurence D. Cohen is executive director of the Yankee Institute for Public Policy Studies in Glastonbury and a public-relations consultant. His column appears every Sunday and every other Thursday. To leave him a comment, please call (on a touch-tone phone) Courant Source at 246-1000 or (800) 246-8070; Source No. 3643. ■

EDITORIAL

91. New York Post

May 12, 1997

Don't wreck top city schools

It speaks volumes about the activist organization ACORN that it's working overtime to deconstruct precisely the part of New York's public school system that functions best.

ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) is a left-leaning '60s-era outfit that continues to push collectivist ideals, like organizing workfare recipients into labor unions. In New York, it focuses on leveling attacks on quality public education.

In March, the group zeroed in on the public school system's programs for the gifted and talented. The problem? Too

many Asian and white students and not enough Hispanics.

Now the organization has turned its attention to the city's three most prestigious public high schools — Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech. Admission to these top-notch institutions is highly competitive, and based solely on academic merit.

A study released by ACORN last week alleges that blacks and Hispanics are under-represented in these schools relative to their numbers in the public school system at large. As is its wont, the group attributes the alleged enrollment disparities to "de facto Jim Crow

policies" in admissions.

Of course, representation statistics can't legally or logically prove actual discrimination. But in any case, it's an odd kind of racism the ACORN study found, a racism in which Asian students are favored above all others. Asian-Americans constitute half of Stuyvesant's student body.

Is New York to believe that a sinister Asian conspiracy is rigging entrance exams to benefit Asians at the expense of Latinos? Or that the white powers-that-be are doing their all to give Asian children a leg up over white children, whose enrollment at the top schools is

87. Los Angeles Times

* 05/11/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Zones Desk; Page B-6

Dean's Reasoning Doesn't Add Up

Orange County Superintendent of Schools John Dean tried to set the record straight regarding math scores (Orange County Voices, May 4). Now I'm doubly concerned.

I don't mind that he personally doesn't know the theory behind the operation of dividing a fraction by a fraction. It's his belief that only professional mathematicians need to know this that's nonsense. Our math teachers have to know it! One can't help but wonder about their competence if the perspective of the administration is so seriously flawed. If that's the prevailing mind-set it's no wonder our colleges and universities need to provide remedial math courses.

The theory behind division of a fraction by a fraction is no more complicated than the fact that if both numerator and denominator are multiplied (or divided) by the same quantity the value of the fraction is unchanged. Any competent instructor can make that point and drive it home with a variety of well-chosen examples. It is necessary to understand this concept as subsequent math, technology and science courses often contain algebraic equations presented in the form of complex fractions.

We need to give our children the best education we can deliver. Testing our students for what they've been taught has validity only if they've been taught what they need to successfully further their education.

PHILIP CUTLER

Costa Mesa

Superintendent of Schools John F. Dean offers us the reassurance that our fourth- and eighth-grade students really are not doing as poorly in mathematics as we might conclude from the results of the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress tests:

He cites results from a variety of other tests to back up his claim that students really are doing OK. Is it any wonder that 53% of the freshmen who enter the California State University system are unable to pass a simple test on high school algebra?

Dean admits that he is unfamiliar with the NAEP mathematics test even though NAEP has been in use since 1973 and is widely regarded as the only nationally

representative, continuing assessment of what elementary and secondary students can do in a variety of subjects.

Given that this test has such a prestigious pedigree and that it forms the basis of our "National Report Card" on the quality of K-12 education, I'm more than a little surprised that our county superintendent of schools doesn't seem to have a clue about it.

The NAEP math test examines a student's conceptual understanding, procedural knowledge and problem solving ability at a very basic level.

This is not rocket science! The test examines the basic mathematical knowledge that a person needs to function in society: to be able to balance a checkbook, to decide if the interest on that credit card you are thinking about signing up for is more than you can afford, or to figure out if you are getting a good deal on your home mortgage.

The fact that California students do so poorly on the NAEP is an indication that both our curriculum and our teaching techniques are out of step with the rest of the country, and that our students are not learning the mathematical skills they need to be able to function in a society where the good jobs require at least some number sense.

MARK H. SHAPIRO

Professor of Physics

Cal State Fullerton

* As a volunteer tutor of community college mathematics students I wish to disagree with John Dean.

Our students are bad in mathematics. Many students from Orange County high schools are graduated without a useful understanding of basic mathematical concepts. If a student cannot explain his reason for using a particular procedure, how does he know that the result is correct? Dean treats the learning of "how and why" as exercises in committing facts to memory.

One person can only commit a few facts to memory. We compensate for that limitation by generalizing, by combining many facts into one concept. Mathematics is generalization. Learning and applying concepts requires much more than a good memory.

The process builds on previous concepts and expands the range of

problems to which the concepts apply. Even history, which is often perceived as a study of facts, finds the reasons behind actions that produced historic events. We don't serve our students well if we don't have a system that teaches concepts, reasoning from concepts and applying concepts to problems.

To decide whether we are successful we must test the ability of every student to reason and explain. Our measure of success must withstand comparison with other states.

FRANCIS N. EASTMAN

Costa Mesa

I was dismayed to read John Dean's "defense" of mathematics education in Orange County schools, doubly so when I realized that these words were coming from the county schools superintendent. This type of trashing of mathematical reasoning is the precise reason test scores are low.

Dean belittles mathematical education altogether by implying that simple division is useless knowledge for the general public. He then suggests that only "serious, professional mathematicians" need to know how division works. I expect this sort of rationale from Talking Barbie, or perhaps Beavis, but not from an education professional.

We live in a technological society. Tools such as computers and calculators require more knowledge from the user, not less. The ability to divide a pair of fractions is a good thing to have; understanding why we "invert and multiply" is what separates a student from an electronic calculator; the ability to express that knowledge is what separates a good student from an average one (or from a superintendent of schools).

The purpose of tests such as the NAEP is to determine the depth of knowledge students are attaining. If a child can divide twelve by three, but can't set up and solve a word problem requiring the same level of arithmetic skill, what has the child learned? The ability to recognize the nature of a problem is inherent to solving that problem.

JAMES REPKA

Laguna Beach

88. Los Angeles Times

* 05/11/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Opinion; Opinion Desk; Page M-6

L.A.'s School District Doesn't Deserve to be Called a Failure

By Richard Rothstein

Richard Rothstein is a research associate at the Economic Policy Institute

The Los Angeles School Board sought a superintendent who could "save a failed system." But Ruben Zacarias should repudiate such terms as the basis of his appointment. The Los Angeles Unified School District needs a leader who will boast about its successes and try to rebuild public confidence—and the self-confidence of teachers, students and administrators—in its mission.

To do so, Zacarias should explain truths rarely discussed in polite company nowadays: The general academic performance of LAUSD students will always be considerably below national averages. William E.B. Siart, a candidate for the district's top job, said his goal, as superintendent, would be to bring test scores up to the national average. This was irresponsible. If taken seriously, it guarantees the system will always be judged a failure. Were LAUSD ever to meet this standard, it would prove American public schools dysfunctional.

Unreal ways of talking about public schools have origins in a 20-year-old insight. In the 1970s, educators realized that many minority students were poor achievers because teachers expected them to fail, and when teachers didn't believe in their students, students stopped believing in themselves. If challenging course material was considered beyond poor children's abilities, it was not taught. In turn, children without opportunities to learn confirmed everybody's expectations by not learning.

This colonial pedagogy is now discredited, but it has been replaced with an equally malicious idea: All children, regardless of backgrounds, have equal capacities to achieve at high levels. If they don't, it must be because teachers' and schools' standards are too low.

The notion that children in LAUSD—87% minority, 28% from homes in poverty, 13% who don't speak English—should, if only schools did their job, achieve at the same level as children from more advantaged communities is a conceit with

unfortunate appeal across the political spectrum. But expecting all children to meet a similar standard defies everything we know about education.

For 30 years, experts have acknowledged that the most important determinants of student achievement are family and community characteristics. Children from literate homes with secure economic environments will always, on average, perform better academically than children without such advantages.

Can disadvantages of poverty, of less literate parents, of limited economic opportunity be overcome by dedicated and inspired schools and teachers? Somewhat. Some poor children enrolled in good schools will outperform most middle-class children, although most middle-class children will outperform most poor children. Some inner-city schools will have better academic programs, better teachers and higher test scores than typical suburban schools. Can this feat be duplicated in every inner-city school? No, because we are describing relative accomplishments. Unless we stop educating middle-class children, their average achievement will continue to surpass that of disadvantaged students, no matter how good a job our urban schools do.

Almost all data on student achievement is "norm referenced." This month, LAUSD students are taking standardized exams. The "norm" (students' score at the 50th percentile) has been established by administering the tests to a representative national sample of students, then determining the average score for each grade and subject area.

We all know what the results will be: A few L.A. schools and children will score above the national average, but most will not. This doesn't mean L.A. schools are failing. Indeed, it could be consistent with success. We don't know, because in the rush to denounce urban schools for their relative nonperformance, we have not bothered to develop absolute standards for what it is reasonable to expect urban children, with their socioeconomic handicaps, to learn.

In the absence of meaningful

standards, clichés and anecdotes abound. We like to say, for example, that early in this century, immigrant children learned English without special programs and used education to assimilate to the middle class. What's forgotten is that this achievement took three generations and that few immigrant children graduated from grade school 70 years ago, much less high school or college.

Because there are no good standards by which to judge schools, a predisposition to see failure filters most anecdotal impressions. Tales about high school graduates not being able to make change are plentiful. But when a Hollywood film ("Stand and Deliver") depicts L.A. immigrant children passing advanced-placement calculus, people assume this was an exception. It's not. Last year, more than 5,000 College Board advanced-placement tests were given to Latino students in LAUSD; about half the scores were high enough for college credit.

Most are convinced that LAUSD's bureaucratic bungling makes education impossible, but they don't wonder how, in that case, the El Camino Real High School academic decathlon team made it to the national finals last month. El Camino Real's students, unlike most LAUSD youngsters, are comfortably middle class. While their accomplishments should be applauded, it should also be recognized that teachers in inner-city high schools who guide their students to the 30th percentile on national achievement tests may bring as much "value added" instruction to education as teachers in more comfortable communities, where students coast to the 70th percentile.

LAUSD's role, like that of many urban school systems, is to give disadvantaged children a hand up the ladder of integration into middle-class America. From 1980 to 1995, Latino enrollment in the University of California increased by 220%; African American enrollment increased by 43%, despite a 29% drop in the number of African American adolescents in California's population. These are not results

20. Education Daily

May 9, 1997

STATES SEEK HIGHER CAP ON IDEA ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING

State education administrators are lobbying Congress to ease a proposed spending cap on their share of federal special education grants.

States should be guaranteed the amount they received for administrative expenses the previous year, plus an increase for inflation, say the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).

Current law allows states to retain 5 percent of their Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant to administer the law, such as by running mediation programs.

But a bipartisan plan the House and Senate education committees passed this week would cap that amount and a 20 percent setaside for direct support services to schools at the state's fiscal 1997 level, plus inflation, or plus the percentage increase in the state's IDEA allocation, whichever number is lower (ED, April 21).

With little time before H.R. 5 goes up for a House vote Tuesday, CCSSO yesterday sent a letter on the topic to every lawmaker.

"We're saying that that drop is too severe," said Carrie Hayes, CCSSO's director of federal-state relations.

The chiefs and NASDSE say other parts of the IDEA legislation would

likely impose new costs on states, such as requiring them to develop performance goals and indicators for students with disabilities (ED, March 3).

Hayes also said requirements to ensure charter schools receive their share of IDEA funds will add to state costs.

GOP Senators are sponsoring an omnibus education bill, S. 1, to boost IDEA funding by \$10 billion over seven years (ED, Jan. 23).

Members of the bipartisan IDEA working group have said they will oppose all amendments to their compromise bill. — William J. Cahir ■

21. Education Daily

May 9, 1997

ED TO PARLAY BEST IDEAS ON MATH IMPROVEMENT

Education Department officials are working on ways to show states, districts and schools how to improve eighth-grade math.

The initiative, which ED officials will present today to the National Assessment Governing Board, will emphasize curriculum analysis as well as reviews of exemplary programs.

By the end of eighth grade, ED says students should be learning algebra and geometry; routinely using basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division skills to solve problems; and performing multi-step calculations.

Stung by the country's below-average scores on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the president directed ED to review its programs. ED officials

are training their sights on the eighth-grade level, a key juncture for initial college preparations.

Working with groups such as the National Science Foundation and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the initiative—still under development—would.

- * Create, by year's end, a mathematics "ex-pert" panel to review curricula submitted as models worth copying.

- * Provide a curriculum analysis tool, available in July, with models from TIMSS and the other groups, and examples of good math practices and policies that will allow administrators to determine whether a school's standards align with state and district standards; and

- * Highlight best practices in professional development and teacher preparation in mathematics. Those sets of guidelines would begin in the fall.

The initiative is designed to give states and districts ideas, but not dictate curricular decisions, **Rick Miller, an ED spokesman**, said yesterday in an interview.

The president has called for voluntary national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math (ED, Feb. 5).

For more information, contact Joy Belin, Education Department, 600 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C.

20202, (202)401-0962. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

19. Education Daily

May 9, 1997

BATTLE OVER RACE IN ADMISSIONS LEADS GA. COLLEGES TO COURT

Georgia is the next legal battleground over racial preferences in college admissions, a state legislator told a presidential advisory panel this week.

A federal lawsuit seeking to implement uniform admissions standards in Georgia's public universities is really a veiled attempt to abolish historically black colleges, said state Rep. Calvin Smyre, Democratic chairman of the legislature's higher education committee.

"We consider this suit to be mean-spirited and divisive," Smyre told the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities Tuesday at the group's annual meeting in Arlington, Va.

A group of 11 students and educators filed suit in February in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, arguing that the use of racial preferences in admissions perpetuates segregation, in part by steering minority students with lower SAT scores toward historically black colleges where they have a better chance of being accepted.

In *Wooden v. Board of Regents* (497-45), the plaintiffs are asking the court to close any institution that can't be integrated quickly.

African-American students compose from 88 percent to 94 percent of enrollment at Georgia's three historically black colleges. At the state's 31 formerly all-white public schools, blacks compose from 1.8 percent to 22.5 percent of the student body,

according to John Wolfe, a state university regent.

Smyre said at the heart of the lawsuit is a challenge to the state university system's policy granting "special emphasis" for minorities in admissions.

Hopwood Mess

Last year, then-state Attorney General Michael Bowers advised Georgia's colleges to align their admissions policies with a ruling by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, although Georgia is in the 11th Circuit.

In *Hopwood v. Texas* (78 F.3d 932), the Fifth Circuit said a college cannot consider race in admissions unless it is intended to correct continuing discrimination at that school (ED, March 21, 1996).

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to review *Hopwood* because the law school in question abandoned its admissions policy.

At the time, two justices indicated they would like to address the issue in an ongoing controversy (ED, July 2, 1996).

The Education Department recently conceded the authority of the Fifth Circuit's ruling on college admissions in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, but encouraged schools elsewhere to consider race as one factor (ED, April 15).

Smyre said Georgia's public universities "are disregarding the Fifth Circuit edict." He said Georgia instead is following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1978 decision in *Regents of the*

University of California v. Bakke (438 U.S. 265). In *Bakke*, the justices said schools can consider race as one factor in admissions.

"As far as we are concerned, *Bakke* is still the law of the land," Smyre said. "We feel we should fight [Wooden] all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court."

"It's the only way to get the issue resolved," Smyre added later in an interview. "You cannot live from circuit [court] to circuit; region to region. We contend race ought to be used as a factor in admissions. We intend to proceed that way to enhance historically black colleges."

Georgia Gov. Zell Miller last month appointed Thurbert Baker, a former legislator, as the state's first black attorney general. Smyre said Baker has not announced his position on racial preferences, but added, "hopefully we'll get clearer leadership from our new attorney general."

Smyre and Wolfe said the state university system was already raising admissions standards across the board before the lawsuit was filed.

Advisory board member Kassie Freeman said uniform admissions standards are "one of the most crucial issues facing historically black colleges' survival" and asked Wolfe how such schools should deal with the issue.

Wolfe said the colleges should ask alumni to donate to scholarship funds so the schools can recruit minority students who are "second- or third-tier down from National Merit Scholars."

—Dave Boyer■

41. Sacramento Bee

May 14, 1997

Funding asked for students' state test

By Dan Smith Bee Capitol Bureau

About this time next year, if Gov. Pete Wilson gets his way, parents of all schoolchildren in grades two through 11 will be learning how their kids did on a new statewide standardized test of basic skills.

Impatient with the state's lagging effort to write academic standards and develop a new test, Wilson on Tuesday proposed that the state spend \$82 million in the coming year to simply buy a test and require all school districts to administer it.

If lawmakers agree to the expense in the upcoming state budget debate and approve a related bill on the policy, Wilson's move will bring standardized testing back to California schools next school year, two years ahead of the existing schedule. It also will provide individual test scores for each child, in addition to assessing performance by classroom, school or school district.

Administration officials said Wilson is eager to see test results before he leaves office in early 1999, so the impact of his two key education initiatives — smaller class sizes and a shift to phonics-based reading instruction — can be assessed.

"We've got all this stuff going and parents are telling us we have to start measuring for accountability," said Dan Edwards, spokesman for Wilson's education secretary, Marian Bergeson. "We need to move from the anecdotal into the tangible and we need a test to do it."

Wilson's testing proposal is roughly \$60 million larger than his original one in January, when he released his budget plan.

The boost is made possible by new estimates that state tax revenues are about \$2 billion higher than what was forecast in January. Because of the formulas in Proposition 98, Wilson is legally obliged to send most of the surplus to public schools and community colleges.

While the governor will officially revise his budget proposal today, the administration has revealed a daily dose of new spending proposals since Saturday, including more money for smaller classes, local governments and subsidized child care.

The test plan comes less than two years after Wilson signed a bill setting the state on a more deliberate course toward student testing. After dumping the controversial California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) test, Wilson agreed to a two-tiered testing system in late 1995.

That program allows school districts to pick from a list of 65 tests published by 16 companies to assess basic skills in grades two through 10. The state pays only part of the cost and districts are not required to do any testing. Because districts use different tests, it is impossible to make any statewide comparisons, said Bill Lucia, executive director of the state Board of Education.

In addition, a commission is working on statewide academic standards for all grades to be adopted by the state board. Using those standards as a guide, the state will seek a contractor to develop its own statewide tests of more complex skills in grades four, five, eight and 10, and districts will be required to administer them.

When he signed the bill, Wilson said the testing measure "goes a long way" toward establishing an exam that can provide "valid, reliable (and) individual" test scores.

But the academic standards will not be adopted until next year, Lucia said, with test development at least another year away. Most likely, the first test would not be given until spring of 2000, he said.

The plan Wilson presented Tuesday would have the state board, before adopting academic standards, purchase one test for use across the state in the 1997-98 school year. Under the plan, all

districts would be required to give the test, but the state would pay the full cost.

Once academic standards are adopted by the board, the policy-makers may have to decide whether to modify the test, purchase another test, or go with the original plan to develop a custom test from scratch.

Capitol reaction was mixed.

Sen. Leroy Greene, D-Sacramento, author of the 1995 legislation, said he supports the current approach, although he is concerned about how long it is taking to develop new standards.

"I'm anxious because it's taking too long," Greene said, "but I'm afraid this would be rocking the boat. Do they want individual scores for the child, or is the purpose of this test to test the system?"

To Assemblyman Steve Baldwin, a Republican from El Cajon who led the fight against the CLAS test, providing individual test scores is a key element in judging academic programs.

"We want parents to find out how little Johnny is doing, so he can be compared to a kid 700 miles away," Baldwin said. "If we have to take this to the grass roots and go nuts over it, I'm certainly willing to do it."

The California Teachers Association would likely oppose the plan because it would rush a test into use before academic standards are adopted, said CTA spokeswoman Tommye Hutto.

"We ought to just wait to get the standards," she said. "We don't know if this would be a valid test or . . . even meet the curriculum."

A spokesman for Senate President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer, D-Hayward, praised the plan but warned about its chances in the Legislature. "It's very positive," said Sandy Harrison. "But the extremist element among us will find something to be offended by. Hopefully, the governor will be an ally in helping to overcome that." ■

42. Charlotte Observer

May 14, 1997

Revamp promised for scholarship rules

By MONA BRECKENRIDGE
The Associated Press

While the selection process for the Palmetto Fellows scholarships wasn't as bad as some senators made it out to be, Higher Education Commission Executive Director Fred Sheheen admitted Tuesday some changes are warranted.

In a presentation to the state House Education Committee, Sheheen identified areas in the process that need to be revamped. He said some new rules will be needed to ensure a more uniform evaluation.

Some senators complained in March about how the scholarships were awarded, saying the procedure was too subjective and should put more emphasis on college entrance-exam scores and grade-point averages.

Questions arose after Sen. Nikki Setzler, D-Lexington, said there had been too many complaints from students who were turned down. More than 2,600 students applied for the scholarships, but there was only enough money to fund 612.

"There's going to be new regulations.

There's no doubt about that," Sheheen said.

However, Sheheen, who ends his 10-year stint as head of the commission on June 1, was cavalier in defending this year's process. He also told committee members to be careful not to offend students who did receive scholarships and who may now feel they were undeserved.

"The students who won were outstanding. But there were some outstanding students who didn't win," Higher Education Commissioner Dianne Chinnes said.

The scholarships are worth as much as \$5,000 a year and are usable at any South Carolina college.

In an attempt to smooth the ruffled feathers of parents and students, the Senate last week approved a change to the proposed 1997-98 state budget to include \$1.3 million for 200 more scholarships this fall.

Most of that money will come from Chem-Nuclear Systems Inc., which owns the low-level radioactive waste dump in

Barnwell County. When the landfill reopened, the state promised dump fees would pay for scholarships and school construction.

Sheheen rejected the Senate's call for a strictly objective selection process, saying most colleges require students to do well in a variety of areas.

"The use of multiple criteria is standard in higher education," he said.

Sheheen also told committee members that no one complained about the selection criteria, which included an essay portion and extracurricular activities, until after it was over and many students were left empty-handed.

Committee Chairman Ronnie Townsend, R-Anderson, said he wanted his panel to take part in crafting the new standards. Until now, only the Senate Education and the House Ways and Means committees have been involved.

Townsend and other committee members also thanked Sheheen for his service as head of the Higher Education Commission.

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43. Associated Press

05-14 1:50a

Tuition tax credit bills shipped off to subcommittee

By DENNIS PATTERSON
Associated Press Writer

RALEIGH (AP) - A House subcommittee is studying two bills granting tax deductions for tuition paid to colleges or private schools.

Rep. Edgar Starnes, R-Caldwell, told the House Education Committee Tuesday that both of the bills he sponsored needed more work to answer questions about who would be eligible and for how long.

"I introduced these just to get the discussion started," Starnes told the committee as his bills were sent to a subcommittee for more study.

One measure allows parents to deduct tuition paid to private grade schools from their taxes. Analysts estimates it would cost the state from \$17.1 million to \$19.8 million a year.

Rep. Don Davis, R-Hamett, wondered why home-schoolers, who number about 12,000 families in North Carolina, were not included in the proposed tax deduction.

"To my knowledge, no home schoolers charges themselves tuition," Starnes said.

"They may not charge tuition, but they are paying taxes to support the public schools," Davis replied.

Rep. Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, questioned whether some religious schools would support the bill. Administrators of one Christian school in his district did not want state funds for fear the state would tell them what to teach, he said.

Starnes said administrators of private schools do not view the measure as a

benefit to the schools.

"They view it as a benefit to the parents who send their children to private schools," he said.

A second Starnes bill allows a tax deduction for college tuition, whether paid to a private college or one of the state's public universities.

Legislative analysts say the measure could cost the state from \$42 million to \$50 million a year.

"I'm not sure we can afford it," said Rep. Mike Wilkins, D-Person. "Even though I like the sound of the bill, because of the cost, I can't support it."

Several committee members questioned whether there were limits to the tax deduction, so that people could not continue to take it for years while they worked on a degree.

Schultz said. "If the bond issue passes, we will use the portables until the year 2002. If the bond fails, then we'll need the portables for a considerably longer period." The June 9 ballot will contain three bond requests for: * \$100.6 million to build a new high school, remodel the two existing high schools, add technology improvements to the high schools and renovate the district's Alternative Center for Education. Approval would add 1.78 mills to school

district property owners' tax bills. * \$2.585 million to consolidate the maintenance and transportation departments into one building. Approval would add 0.07 mills to property tax bills. * \$8.41 million for computers, technology and other enhancements in the kindergarten through eighth-grade programs. Approval would raise tax bills by 0.16 mill. If all three bond requests are approved, property tax bills would increase by 2.01 mills or about \$201 a

year for a person owning a home with a market value of \$200,000. District voters have rejected the previous two bond requests: A \$110-million bond issue in December 1995 to expand and remodel the two high schools and a \$112-million bond issue in April. The Rochester district draws 13,000 students from a 66-square-mile area that includes Rochester, Rochester Hills, Oakland Township and small portions of three other communities. ■

32. Detroit Free Press

May 10, 1997

Educators downgrade state test

Rethink results, House panel told

BY TRACY VAN MOORLEHEM Free Press Education Writer

Categories used to define performance on the state's High School Proficiency Test say little about a student's work, testing experts told members of the Michigan House Education Committee at a hearing in Clinton Township on Friday.

Four educators from Macomb, Oakland and St. Clair counties said the designations "proficient," "novice" and "not yet novice" are unflattering and so general as to be inaccurate.

Joanne Jacobson, assistant superintendent of Fraser Public Schools and president of the Macomb Association of Curriculum Administrators, said the word "novice" denotes beginner. She said that isn't fair, given the difficulty of the test, which asks students to apply knowledge instead of merely selecting among multiple-choice answers.

Ernie Bauer, a testing expert with Oakland Schools, that county's intermediate school district, said the 44

percent of students who fell in the novice group demonstrated a wide range of achievement.

"What we have is an A, C and D, but nothing for the Bs," Bauer said.

He suggested adding a fourth category, "competent."

The 11-hour exam, which made its debut in 1996, tests high school juniors in reading, writing, math and science. Students who score in the proficient range earn endorsements on their diplomas.

But the test drew fire this year, as schools disseminated the first set of scores and held the second round of testing.

Barely one-third of students statewide passed the science and writing tests, and fewer than half passed in math and reading.

Faced with the prospect of a lackluster showing this year, students in Troy,

Birmingham and Monroe County stayed away in droves. Parents said they agreed to let their children opt out of the test because students had little to gain — but much to lose if the word "novice" were stamped on their transcripts.

Experts said Friday the state must give students a reason to care about the test if it is to be taken seriously.

Pamela Crosby, testing director for the St. Clair County Intermediate School District, said students could see, like everyone else, that colleges and businesses don't appear to care about the endorsements.

Robert West, a testing consultant with the Macomb Intermediate School District, suggested offering a scholarship to a Michigan college or university to students who earn the endorsements.

The hearing was the first of five for the House committee, led by Rep. Sharon Gire, D-Clinton Township. ■

33. Minneapolis Star Tribune

May 12, 1997

Neediest kids make big gains in for-profit program

Maureen M. Smith / Star Tribune

The movement to privatize education has chalked up points as a for-profit remedial program in St. Paul schools has students of color showing the plumpest test-score gains.

Although results are somewhat

preliminary, district officials said their first evaluation of the Sylvan Learning Centers seems to show some bang for their buck. The annual \$2 million contract provides intensive math and reading help to about 800 students in five

schools.

It remains unclear, however, whether the group has raised test scores for all students by the amount required by the contract.

The biggest bang has been with the

work-group," Vigilante says. "It wasn't just a blatant upfront lecture."

Classes incorporating interaction via listservs and e-mail, and those involving group projects in which the students must band together are the most effective in distance learning.

The method works well with business-related and strategy-building courses, because team projects are often an integral aspect.

As for liberal arts, Brown believes the interactive discussion sections demand more of students than does a live classroom setting.

"In a class, you can just sit there, keep your mouth shut, and hope they don't call on you," she says. "When you get a question online, you can't duck it."

But there are those rare times when you have the answer, and you want to look Dr. Whomever right in the eye: The charming, popular young prof a la Indiana Jones, the mousy academic with the oversized glasses and monotone, the mad scientist philosophy instructor with the wild hair and existential air about him.

The quirky qualities of teachers, their individual styles and personalities, add dimension and depth to a student's experience.

Where does the teacher fit into a distance-learning environment?

Or more importantly, does a teacher fit into a distance-learning environment?

"We're not talking about the Brave New World ideas of the '60s," Brown says. "There will always be traditional stand-up teaching."

The guide on the side

It's the role of the teacher that's

changed. More responsibility is put on the students to steer themselves, but the guiding hand is there if they need it.

"The prof is no longer the sage on the stage, but the guide on the side," Wilsey says.

My instructor isn't even much of a guide. If I didn't call her repeatedly at the beginning of the semester, I doubt we would have any direct contact at all.

The requisite e-mail's are few and far between. An initial syllabus here, a mid-term and final there, a mid-quarter update that's about it.

It's not that she doesn't answer my questions when I ask them; she always does. It is something more abstract. I feel like I am operating in a vacuum. How can my instructor have any concern for my progress if we aren't even intended to hear each other's voices for the duration of the class?

My grade isn't even sent to me as a matter of course. I have to e-mail the prof weeks after the end of the semester to get the results.

Maybe Skip Knox, a self-proclaimed computer geek and online teacher of Western civilization at Boise State University in Idaho, could teach her a lesson or two.

"I'm a kind of monitor," says Knox, "I keep people on track and provide directions."

Knox places a lot of emphasis, and a large proportion of his students' grades, on interactive discussion sections. They need to post a minimum of three messages a week to get a C.

Although no one claims that such technology will render the traditional teacher extinct, some instructors can't

help but feel a little threatened.

Courses designed to educate professors about the workings of the Internet, and how to adapt classes successfully, are a step toward alleviating these fears, according to Wilsey.

"They don't have to reinvent the wheel every time they put a course online," she says.

Internet excess

Professors aren't the only ones who are frightened.

Computers scare me more than the latest John Tesh album. I manage to mess up the only Internet-involved facet of my class. I have to send hard copies of my work by mail to the prof because my e-mail attachment is a jumble of indecipherable characters. I am working from a Mac, she is receiving on a PC.

"Having a PC as an appliance of entry is going to scare some folks," Vigilante says. "There's a perception of difficulty."

But when it comes to computers, I'm an aberration of my generation.

Most of my peers are wild about computers — e-mail, Web sites, the whole enchilada. As for me, give me four walls, a hot prof, a corner with my friends and a pile of Russian literature books.

Maybe my attitude would be different if I actually took the class in bed, as the ad suggested. I end up taking it in various coffee shops, the Northwestern computer lab and my friend's apartment.

Not to say that the day one can complete a class under the covers will never arrive.

Anything's possible.

After all, I do get an A. ■

31. Detroit News

May 13, 1997

In Oakland County: District boom fuels need for portable trailers

By Douglas Ilka / The Detroit News

At least 30 portable classroom trailers are needed in the next five years to serve high school students in the Rochester Community School District, officials say. The trailers will be needed whether district voters approve or disapprove a June 9 bond request to build a third high school, said schools Supt. John Schultz. "We need a new high school now, not

tomorrow," Schultz said. Rochester High School has about 2,000 students and Adams High School has 1,800 students — both above the recommended capacity of 1,500 students each. "In the next five years, we project our high school enrollment will increase to a total of 4,500 students, making the need for a new high school critical," Schultz said.

The district has six portable classrooms. Each trailer is the size of a classroom and can accommodate 25 to 30 students. Schultz said the district during the next three to five years will buy 24 additional trailers at a cost of about \$55,000 each. "I can't emphasize enough that we are going to need the portable classrooms whether the bond issue passes or fails,"

5. USA Today

May 7, 1997

New AFT union president named

Sandra Feldman, president of New York City's teachers' union, Tuesday was named to head the 940,000 member American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Feldman succeeds Albert Shanker, who headed the powerful AFT for 23 years before his death Feb. 22. She is the first woman president since 1930.

"Al Shanker put school reform and high standards on the map," says Feldman, described by some as combative and outspoken. "I'll work to make these things a reality - raising student achievement, ensuring that all

students are challenged by a rigorous curriculum, and getting the resources and support they all need to succeed."

Feldman, 57, will fill Shanker's unexpired term, ending in 1998. She will retain her position as president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the largest union local in the USA.

A native of New York City who attended its public schools, Feldman earned a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College and a master's in English Literature from New York University. She taught at a Manhattan

elementary public school before joining the UFT staff as a field representative. She became UFT president in 1986.

Feldman is a member of the AFT team working on a possible merger with the National Education Association. Not only does she pledge to keep the merger talks going with the nation's largest teachers' union, but she admits the talks "accelerated into an intensive series of meetings." She describes the talks as "very serious" and says they may one day lead to "a unique new organization."

By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY ■

6. The New York Times

05/07/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 16, Column 1

Gender Gap in Testing Narrower Than Believed, Study Finds

By PETER APPLEBOME

WASHINGTON, May 6 — An ambitious study of the differences in how well girls and boys perform on tests has found much less of a gender gap than is commonly assumed.

Though girls do better in some tests of verbal skills and boys do better in some mechanical and mathematical ones, there are more similarities than differences, according to the study by the Educational Testing Service, which administers the SAT and other tests. The findings also show that the gap remaining between boys and girls is narrowing, particularly in the sciences.

The study, billed as the most extensive look ever at gender and testing, involved a four-year review of more than 400 different tests and more than 15 million students. And the findings are broken down in ways that provide new insights into how boys and girls achieve.

Though the gender gap in testing appears to be narrowing, the results added fuel to the continuing questions about the fairness of high-stakes college-entrance tests like the SAT, on which math scores of boys are much higher than those of girls. Critics of the testing service have called for

de-emphasizing tests like the SAT, saying they are culturally biased and do not do a good job of predicting college performance.

Releasing the report here today, the testing service's president, Nancy Cole, defended the SAT and said that gender differences in the results largely reflect the self-selected nature of students taking the test. She said boys are disproportionately represented in both the top 10 percent and bottom 10 percent of students in general. Boys at the low end are unlikely to take the SAT and boys at the high end extremely likely to take it, so it is not surprising that boys score higher, she said.

She said the results over all show a largely promising picture. "The similarities are much stronger than what you would expect from the studies that have focused on differences," she said. "This is really a story about similarities."

But critics, who contend that the SAT and other standardized tests are culturally biased toward white males, said today's report obscured this issue by focusing on the broad universe of tests.

Janice Weinman, executive director of the American Association of University Women, which in 1992 released an

influential study on continuing gender differences in education, said the study released today drew on an unusually broad range of tests and therefore provides some useful information.

"Unfortunately," she added, "there is a big difference in demographics and rewards between the SAT, a key gatekeeper to college admissions, and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. This is really a missed opportunity."

The report found that there was little gender difference up to the fourth grade and that even at 12th grade, gender differences in general were modest.

"The familiar math and science advantage for males was found to be quite small, significantly smaller than 30 years ago," it said.

In fact, the report said the most persistent gap was not for girls in math, but for boys in English, suggesting that schools should pay more attention to boys' language skills.

The report also identified gender differences for 12th graders in far more detail than is usually presented. Thus, though boys do better in math in general, girls do better in mathematical computation. Though girls do much better than boys in writing, boys and girls have almost identical results in verbal

in early elementary grades.

She also said that she opposed hiring private companies to manage public schools, an idea that a growing number of public school districts are trying or considering.

"Teacher unions have been called obstacles to school reform," Feldman said. "That is nonsense."

But some education groups said yesterday that both unions are still mired in old habits that hurt schools and expressed doubt that Feldman will create much change.

"You hear a lot of talk about new unionism, but what's changing are their semantics, and their public relations — not their policies," said Jeanne Allen, president of the Center for Education

Reform, a Washington group that backs school vouchers. "Beyond their support for high academic standards, I don't see anything new."

Attacks against both unions are increasing in part because of new Republican dominance in state legislatures. Both unions have long had much stronger ties to the Democratic Party. Some Republican lawmakers are criticizing the unions for blocking their attempts to limit or scrap teacher tenure in schools. But union leaders contend that many of those kind of proposals would eliminate due process for teachers.

Feldman, who is the union's first female president since 1930, also said yesterday that she would continue the

discussions that Shanker launched several years ago about merging the union with the NEA. The AFT's membership is concentrated in the nation's large cities; the NEA represents more teachers in suburban school districts. Leaders in both groups said yesterday that those talks are accelerating.

Feldman, who has a master's degree in English literature from New York University, is a former public school teacher who has been president of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City since 1986. That AFT chapter has 120,000 members and is the nation's largest local union. She also has been an AFT vice president. ■

4. Los Angeles Times

* 05/07/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro Desk; Page A-28

Teachers Union Elects N.Y. Chief to Succeed Shanker

By ELAINE WOO
TIMES EDUCATION WRITER

The American Federation of Teachers, the nation's second-largest teachers union, got its first new president in 23 years Tuesday—Sandra Feldman, the longtime head of the New York City teachers union.

Feldman, 57, will fill out the term of Albert Shanker, the visionary unionist-turned-reformer whose death from cancer in February left a void at the top of the 900,000-member organization.

Elected by the American Federation of Teachers' 38-member executive council, Feldman was already serving as an AFT vice president and has been president of the United Federation of Teachers, the New York local, since 1986. She said Tuesday that she will continue to head the New York union.

A former third grade teacher and native of Brooklyn, Feldman assumes the leadership of the national union at a time when teachers unions and public education are under sharp attack. Conservatives have portrayed both the AFT and its longtime rival, the 2.2-million member National Education

Assn., as obstacles to school reform, more focused on preserving teachers' rights than improving the quality of public education.

But union analysts described Feldman as an activist for school reform. "She has taken some very bold stances," said Ann Lieberman, an education professor and expert on teachers' unions at Teachers College, Columbia University.

In New York City, Feldman has helped develop strategies to give teachers a larger role in making hiring decisions at the school level and to redesign teacher evaluation procedures.

She also has supported a sweeping effort to make public education in New York more effective by making schools smaller and easing union rules governing teacher seniority and transfer.

But Feldman, like her predecessor Shanker, opposes vouchers to pay for private schooling and efforts to privatize the management of public schools. She says she has many reservations about the growing charter school movement, which is designed to raise educational achievement by giving local schools the

power to make their own budgetary, hiring and curriculum decisions.

Feldman said Tuesday that her election was "bittersweet," coming as a result of Shanker's death. Shanker had been her mentor, preceding her as president of the New York local as well.

"But we're taking his agenda and moving it to the next stage," she said, referring to Shanker's push for higher academic standards and tougher classroom discipline.

She also promised to initiate programs to help the youngest children gain the skills they need to succeed in school.

Feldman assumes the top union post at a critical time for both national teacher unions. The NEA and the AFT have been in merger talks for the past two years. If they succeed, the new organization would be the largest labor union in the country.

Her election was welcomed by many Los Angeles-area teacher leaders. "I was hoping she would be the one," said Day Higuchi, president of United Teachers-Los Angeles, which is affiliated with both the NEA and the AFT. ■

protect against inflation, but that too may prove too costly. Estate taxes: Republicans had hoped to double the \$600,000-per-person exclusion of value from taxation. A \$1 million limitation may emerge as a less costly alternative. Family tax credit: A credit of \$500 per

child would be offered for most families. The original GOP proposal would cost \$105 billion, however, so it is certain to be scaled back through income limitations or by delayed phase-in.

Both committees will be under pressure to find at least \$50 billion in

revenue-raising tax changes. Negotiators assume that the 10% airline ticket tax due to expire this year will be renewed, providing \$30 billion.

By William M. Welch, USA
TODAY■

TRADE

17. Education Week

May 7, 1997

Riley Faces Panel's Questions On New National Student Tests

By Millicent Lawton
Washington

Even as the Department of Education began soliciting proposals from test contractors last week, House lawmakers both criticized and praised the Clinton administration's plan for new national student tests in reading and math.

Members of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families used an April 29 hearing to do publicly what they and others have been doing behind the scenes for weeks: grumble about the plan and the administration's decision to put it on a fast track without seeking explicit congressional approval.

Under the plan, the Education Department is to create, for the first time, annual voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math that would yield results for individual students.

The content of the tests, to be given for the first time in 1999, is to be based on the subject-area tests of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. NAEP, mandated by Congress and given to a sampling of students since 1969, provides a broad picture of student performance but is not allowed to generate individual results.

Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, the sole witness called to testify before the subcommittee, said the proposed tests are meant to set high expectations for students—something state-run tests often fail to do, especially

when compared with the rigorous content of the current national assessment. "Parents deserve to know how their students stack up, no matter where they live or move," Mr. Riley said.

'Great Reservations'

Last week, the Education Department also released the request for proposals for the writing of test items and the administration of pilot and field testing, among other tasks. The proposals are due June 24, and the awards are to be made in September.

In his remarks to the subcommittee, Mr. Riley also said that the Council of Chief State School Officers, along with California-based MPR Associates, has won a competitive bid to write the larger blueprint for the national tests.

It will cost about \$22 million over this year and next to develop the tests, Mr. Riley told the lawmakers.

While Democrats on the panel mixed support with some concerns, strong complaints were registered by Republican Rep. Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania, who chairs the House Education and the Workforce Committee and sits on the subcommittee. He said he had "great reservations about individual tests."

"Eventually," he said, "they become nothing more than opportunities to rank schools. I don't see the purpose of ranking schools."

National tests yielding individual

results should not be given the go-ahead until teachers are thoroughly prepared to use the results to help students, said Mr. Goodling, a former superintendent and teacher.

Mr. Riley replied that states and districts would decide how the test results would be used, though he said he views the results primarily as a tool to help parents, teachers, and students.

A point of contention between members of Congress and the Education Department continues to be whether the department has the legal authority to launch such a testing program. ("Cost of Test Proposal Up to \$10 Million In First Year," April 2, 1997.)

At the hearing, Mr. Riley said the department is launching the testing program under the authority of its \$40 million fund for improvement in education.

But Rep. Frank Riggs of California, the Republican who chairs the subcommittee, said he favored a slower, more deliberate approach.

And Mr. Goodling was blunt: "Politically, I don't think it's very smart to move ahead with this program without the consent of Congress."

A spokesman for Mr. Riley said later in the week that the administration intends to involve Congress, as early as this year, in determining such issues as who should oversee the testing program once it is up and running.■

much on target. I will become an aged person while these kids are making decisions. These students will make decisions about me, and I'm not concerned that they will make the wrong decisions. I have just about as much confidence in them as is—as this student has in them, you know? I really do.

HUSSEY: The generation of 2000 works just as hard as their parents and is capable of the same level of achievement in school, if not more.

ROBELOT: Michael and Sheila and Jodi and the other students that we're following have really grown up since I first met them last fall. And I'll be following them all the way through their graduation in the year 2000. I'll also be

reporting to you on the progress of Greenville's new accountability plan. Maybe some other schools can benefit from what they learn at Greenville County.

And tomorrow on the Class of 2000, Jose Diaz-Balart takes us back to Miami, as the freshmen there wrap up their first year of high school.

MARK McEWEN (Co-host): Good job.

ROBELOT: It's fun keeping up with these kids.

McEWEN: Yeah. Now the accountability program is one thing. What other innovative ideas are we seeing down at Wade Hampton?

ROBELOT: One thing I'm excited

about as an alum is we're starting an alumni association, which is unusual for public schools. So there is a Web site, classmates. Give me a call, and I'll tell you what it is.

McEWEN: A Web site, that's the other thing.

ROBELOT: A Web site for the alumni association.

McEWEN: Jane, thanks, as always.

Fifteen before the hour. The drama is building at a landmark Broadway restaurant. Who will be this year's Tony nominees? You'll find out live, when THIS MORNING continues.

(Announcements) Program Time: 7:00-9:00 AM Nielson Rating N/A Reference: 970505■

16. USA Today

May 7, 1997

GOP leaders push fast-track tax cuts

WASHINGTON - Americans will see tax cuts passed by this summer, Republican congressional leaders promised Tuesday.

Just what they'll look like remains an open question.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott announced an ambitious set of deadlines as Congress began writing legislation that would enact the balanced-budget and tax-cut agreement reached last week with President Clinton.

Their timetable calls for Congress to act with unusual speed: They want to have the tax-cut bill passed through the House and Senate and to Clinton by July Fourth.

One other bill that would restrain spending in entitlement programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, will be introduced separately. GOP leaders said Congress will try to pass it by July Fourth as well - probably before the tax bill.

"I think it's realistic if we have this much accord," House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas), said.

Despite the leadership's public commitment, senior GOP committee staffers caution that a July Fourth approval for the tax bill was unlikely. They suggested that a more realistic target is passage of everything by early August.

The first step is for Congress to

approve the outlines of the agreement, known as the budget resolution. The GOP leaders promised that would happen before Congress departs on May 24 for Memorial Day recess. It does not need Clinton's signature.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), the chief critic, said the package can't accommodate both Clinton's \$35 billion in education-targeted tax breaks and all the GOP tax goals. They include a \$500-per-child credit, a big cut in capital gains taxes, a reduction in estate taxes and expansion of individual retirement accounts.

"We're misleading people by saying you're going to get a \$500-per-child tax cut," Gramm said. "Most middle- and upper-income families are going to get excluded. You watch."

Making the deal's tax numbers accommodate the goals remains a concern for GOP leaders, however.

Senate Finance Chairman William Roth (R-Del.), said that while he is pleased with the deal, compromises will have to be made to make all the tax cuts fit. "Frankly the tax cut is not as much as I would like, and it will be difficult to accomplish all that we would like, but we'll do our best," Roth said.

Negotiators agreed to net tax cuts of \$85 billion over five years and \$250 billion over 10 years. Gross tax cuts may total \$125 billion over five years and \$350 billion over 10 years.

Revenue-raising tax provisions would make up the difference.

Included in that total is \$35 billion in tax breaks for higher education, which Clinton sought.

Already there is uncertainty, however. The No. 2 Senate GOP leader, Don Nickles (R-Okla.), said there was "ambiguity" over whether the commitment was for \$35 billion over five years of the budget deal, or over 10 years.

Nickles said he was also concerned there might not be enough room for all the tax cuts the GOP seeks. "The committees are going to have to put the numbers together and make it work."

The other tax committee leader, Ways and Means Chairman Bill Archer, R-Texas, resisted putting specifics in the deal in order to preserve options for his panel. "The chairman's view is that the Constitution is clear: Tax bills start in the House, not the White House," his spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said.

GOP tax proposals include:

Capital gains: Lott said he hopes the maximum 28% rate can be dropped to 20% or so. But some suggest that will prove too costly, and that a rate of 21% or 22% is more likely. Also at issue is the date the cut takes effect. Roth said no decision has been made, despite questions from Wall Street, where the question could affect trading. Archer would like to index future gains to

30. Education Week

May 7, 1997

Milwaukee Mulls 'Radical' Revamping Of Central Office

By Bess Keller

The Milwaukee school board has taken aim at the school system's central office, calling for its "radical restructuring" into a service center for schools.

The board unanimously approved a proposal late last month for a study of the central administration leading to possible changes in the 1998-99 school year. But the panel balked at creating a task force from outside and voted instead to ask district administrators and principals to do the study.

Under the plan, the work will go to a standing budget committee made up of administrators and principals, although teachers and parents will be included.

The change in the task force's composition left the proposal's sponsor, retiring board member Mary Bills, doubtful that the restructuring would be significant.

During the board's April 24 budget meeting, Ms. Bills' last, she put her impatience on display with the help of a classic children's toy. Each time the board took up an amendment Ms. Bills regarded as mere tinkering, she added an element to a ramshackle Tinkertoy

structure in front of her.

"We tinker, we say the words," but the changes fall short of what is needed, Ms. Bills said in an interview last week.

"I've had 12 years of trying to work within the system," she added, "and I was coming to the realization that the only way you're going to change education is to break the habits, the culture developed over the years where adults feel entitled to the benefits of their jobs and that is more important than children being entitled to an education."

Nudging Administrators

Ms. Bills' original proposal called not only for the radical restructuring of the central office but also specifically for the elimination of all central-office positions not required by state or federal law or auditing functions.

Spending authority would rest with the schools, a shift that is already under way in the 106,000-student district. More than 70 percent of the district's operating budget is controlled by the schools.

But Ms. Bills argues that isn't enough. Administrators "have to be nudged to really put these resources at the school level so [educators in the schools] can do

their jobs," she said.

In a farewell interview with The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, she suggested that all schools in the metropolitan Milwaukee area should become charter schools, independent public schools that remain largely free to control their budgets, staffing, and programs.

Ms. Bills, 53, said last week she will begin working for the Wisconsin Council for Children and Families, an advocacy group.

Warren D. Braun, the school board's vice president, voted against Ms. Bills' proposal for an outside task force. With some principals already protesting bigger workloads and the unions representing Milwaukee's teachers and principals opposed to central-office cutbacks, a group steeped in current realities would be an advantage, he argued.

"If you're supposed to work together," Mr. Braun said, "then [a task force of outsiders] doesn't help." He added that he is worried that the committee the board created will not have enough time for thoughtful work. Its recommendations are due in October. ■

31. Education Week

May 7, 1997

NAEP Assigns No Grades on Science Exam

By Millicent Lawton

The nation's science report card came out last week, but it lacks an important feature — grades.

U.S. Department of Education officials issued the results from the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress in science without the now-customary explanation of how well students performed against set levels of basic, proficient, and advanced achievement. That omission leaves the students comparable only with one another.

The executive committee of the

National Assessment Governing Board, the independent citizens' panel that sets policy for NAEP and defines the achievement standards, decided April 15 to delay releasing the part of the report that makes a judgment about student performance.

The move drew jeers from some observers, who said it left the report bereft of helpful information. But it earned the support of others, who underscored the gravity of taking care on such an important task.

Michael J. Guerra, a governing-board

member, said in a prepared statement that the board simply wasn't ready to sign off on describing what students should know and be able to do in science.

"The board has not quite finished the job of weighing all the factors involved and making a final decision on what the levels should be," said Mr. Guerra, who is also the executive director of secondary schools at the National Catholic Educational Association. NAGB plans to release the data on how students did relative to achievement levels in the fall, said Roy Truby, the governing

29. Education Week

May 7, 1997

Seeking To Turn Summit Promises Into Service

By Jeff Archer
Philadelphia

The nation's corporate leaders, nonprofit officials, and past and present chief executives made scores of promises last week at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, but it will fall on people like L. Nathan Hare to make sure they're kept.

As a delegate to the April 27-29 event from Buffalo, N.Y., Mr. Hare spent much of his time here helping draft a plan for his community to do its part in meeting the summit's overall goal: giving 2 million more young Americans the tools to succeed by 2000.

The Buffalo delegation now envisions a network of community centers around the city—safe places where students can stay as late as 9 p.m. to work with volunteers who will tutor them, help with homework, and run other after-school programs.

"If we can move kids from the street to organized after-school, out-of-school activities, we will have won," said Mr. Hare, who heads Erie County's department of youth services. As he prepared to head home last week, he admitted the plan would take an investment of both expertise and money.

"Whatever we can't get from our corporate community, we'll beg and borrow from our state and local government," he said, adding that he was optimistic. "I think this summit has placed enough of an emphasis on [volunteering] that if we take advantage of it right now, we can enact a fundamental change."

Blueprints

With pleas from national figures ranging from retired Gen. Colin L. Powell to talk-show host Oprah Winfrey, the summit's leaders urged more Americans to donate their time on behalf of children considered to be at-risk.

Former Presidents George Bush, Jimmy Carter, and Gerald R. Ford joined President Clinton in focusing volunteerism on five elements they said children need to succeed: an adult mentor, health, organized activities in a

safe place, education for work skills, and a chance to serve the community. ("Summit To Issue Call for Service in Name of Youths," April 23, 1997.) Organizers stressed that while government has a role in providing services, a substantial corps of volunteers is needed to provide one-on-one contact between adults and young people.

As the summit's dignitaries gave speeches and took part in a massive one-day street clean-up, the local delegates—about 10 from each of roughly 140 communities—drafted their plans for enlisting volunteers.

The delegation from Providence, R.I., drafted a plan to find 2,000 volunteers to tutor students and create 500 neighborhood homework sites over the next three years. Providence also is planning to hold a local summit next fall.

"Part of our strategy was to set our sights on things that were not too contentious, so we can have a feeling of success," said delegate Mary Sylvia Harrison, a member of Rhode Island's state board of regents for elementary and secondary education.

Many participants were hopeful that the heavily publicized event would boost the number of volunteers, especially if all the corporations and organizations that made summit-related commitments honor their pledges.

The National Education Association-Retired, for instance, announced it would train more than 1,000 retired teachers to work as volunteers tutoring younger children in reading.

The federal government also anteed up. President Clinton pledged to tap the departments of Defense and Transportation to provide tutoring and mentoring to 2 million children over the next four years.

Some of the mentoring is expected to come from older students. The 12-year-old Campus Compact program, which helps colleges and universities work community service into their curricula, pledged to raise the number of

volunteer hours given annually at member schools from 543,000 to 750,000 in 2000.

The Denver-based Education Commission of the States, which founded Campus Compact, announced plans for a similar effort at the K-12 level.

A study released last week by the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics indicates that students respond positively to calls for service. Ninety-three percent of students who were asked to volunteer actually did so, compared with 24 percent of those who were not asked, according to the 1996 National Household Education Survey.

Resources Needed

Some summit participants cautioned that even though the effort is based on volunteerism, that doesn't make it free. Recruiting individuals to mentor children one-on-one, as the summit encouraged, is more time-consuming and costly than getting volunteers to pitch in for a one-day street clean-up or building project.

Supporting more volunteers will likely require nonprofit agencies across the country to hire more staff members, added Linda Selvin, who helps run the School Volunteer Program, which recruits tutors for children in New York City schools. Of her program's 38 staff members, 20 are devoted to training and supporting its 9,300 volunteer tutors.

"If there's money out there, I think it can work," she said.

As the summit drew to a close, many delegates said the event's biggest benefit may be in encouraging so many municipal, social service, and education organizations to put their heads together on reaching one goal.

"There are scores of groups doing this," said delegate John A. Riggs, the president of the Little Rock, Ark., school board. "Now it becomes part of the master plan for America dealing with its youth." ■

board's executive director.

The National Center for Education Statistics forged ahead without the performance standards because "we've made a commitment to bring out the data on our assessment on an earlier schedule than has heretofore been the case," said Arnold A. Goldstein, a policy analyst at the NCES, an arm of the Education Department. "We wanted to release what was available at this time in order to get the information to the public."

The national assessment is the only ongoing, nationally representative measure of U.S. students' achievement in several core subject areas. Mandated by Congress, it has been given since 1969 and is a project of the statistics center.

A total of 22,616 public and private school students in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades took the 1996 science exam. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia participated.

New Structure

Because the science test, last given in 1990, is a newly revised one based on a new content framework, the stakes are high for the governing board to be confident of the levels of achievement they expect from students and to be able to describe those levels in a way compatible with their legal charge. According to statute, the standards must be "reasonable, valid, and informative to the public."

This year, for the first time, the exam included hands-on science tasks or experiments. The exam asked students to spend 80 percent of the testing time on open-ended questions—such as those related to hands-on work—in which they write in their own answers, as compared with multiple-choice queries.

That change complicated the board's task of deciding what made student work

"good enough" at each grade level, said those familiar with the process, in part because some of the answers could earn partial credit.

In addition to weighing outside advice from teachers and others, the board had to consider how its standards for U.S. science achievement stack up against the ones established as part of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. The 41-country results of how 8th graders did on the science part of TIMSS were issued last fall. ("U.S. Students About Average in Global Study, Nov. 27, 1996.") But the board has not seen the 4th grade results on TIMSS; that report is slated for release next month.

"We felt it was better to get it right than get it quick," Mr. Guerra said.

Results Disappoint

What the report, "NAEP 1996 Science: Report Card for the Nation and the States," relays is students' ability to tackle certain types of questions.

Ninety percent of 4th graders could identify items that conduct electricity, but fewer than half understood what causes windows to rattle during a thunderstorm. Fewer than one-fourth of 8th graders could identify areas that have warm summers and cold winters. About 90 percent of seniors could discern, given some data, which planet has the longest year, but only slightly more than 10 percent could understand the role of trees in the water cycle.

By the end of high school, students seem to have some grasp of basic facts and principles, can read graphs, and can carry out directions to do simple experiments, NAGB member Michael T. Nettles said in a statement.

"But when NAEP asks students to go beyond that—to apply scientific knowledge to a new situation, to design

an experiment themselves, or to explain their reasoning clearly—the results are disappointing," said Mr. Nettles, who is a University of Michigan professor and the executive director of the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute of the College Fund/UNCF.

Senta A. Raizen, the director of the National Center for Improving Science Education, based in Washington, said she was encouraged that 8th grade boys did not significantly outperform girls, as has been the case on previous NAEP science assessments. As earlier exams have found, the gender gap is not apparent in the 4th grade on this latest test, but it persists for 12th grade boys and girls.

Ms. Raizen also said it was not surprising that students didn't do as well on the kinds of open-ended queries and hands-on tasks advocated by the voluntary national science standards, because "many of the reform goals haven't, as yet, been incorporated."

But without the achievement-level information, said Chester E. Finn Jr., a former NAGB member, the report "won't be very useful."

"Imagine looking at a thermometer after it has come out of your mouth," said Mr. Finn, who is the John M. Olin senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, "and seeing the column of mercury but seeing no scale, no little lines, no numbers."

The report, minus the criterion for determining how well students did, recalls NAEP before the board introduced achievement levels in 1990. But, Mr. Finn argued, the national assessment then "was not very interesting to legislatures or governors or anybody else because it never could answer the question, 'How good is good enough?'"

■

32. Education Week

May 7, 1997

Voucher Plan in Cleveland Is Overturned

By Mark Walsh

An Ohio appeals court struck down the Cleveland school voucher program last week, ruling that it violates federal and state constitutional provisions barring government aid to religion.

The three-judge panel in Columbus ruled unanimously May 1 that the state-established program primarily

benefits religious schools in Cleveland because most of the 1,900 participating students use their vouchers to attend such institutions. The program also violates a separate state constitutional provision because it is targeted at a single school district, the court ruled.

The Cleveland program, which is

nearing the end of its first academic year, is the first large-scale program in the nation to provide vouchers that allow low-income children to attend religious schools at state expense.

The 31-page ruling by state Court of Appeals Judge John C. Young did not say when the program would have to

cease operations. Lawyers on both sides of the nationally watched case said they agreed the program would likely be allowed to finish the school year.

State officials said they would appeal the decision to the Ohio Supreme Court, and that they would ask the high court to delay the effect of the appeals court ruling to allow the program to continue next fall.

"We will ask for a stay so that the program can continue to operate and plan for next year," said Mark R. Weaver, a deputy attorney general in Ohio. "We think this will be vindicated at a higher level."

Robert H. Chanin, who argued against the program before the appeals court, said the challengers did not wish to shut the program down before the end of this school year but probably would oppose any delay of the ruling's effects beyond that.

The court "rejected the two pillars of the arguments that have been made in defense of vouchers across the country," said Mr. Chanin, the general counsel of the National Education Association.

He said the ruling dismissed the idea that vouchers are a neutral government benefit "because the benefit available is primarily an incentive to send your children to religious schools." And the court rejected the argument that government aid is flowing to religious schools only through the private, independent choices of parents, he said.

'Direct Subsidy'

The appeals court was clearly troubled by the fact that 80 percent of the participating private schools are religious. And the court noted that no suburban public school districts had agreed to accept Cleveland students bearing vouchers, even though the program authorizes them to do so.

"The only real choice available to most parents is between sending their child to a sectarian school and having their child remain in the troubled Cleveland city school district," Judge

Young wrote. Such a choice, he added, "steers aid to sectarian schools, resulting in what amounts to a direct government subsidy."

The court also said that a separate component of the Cleveland program that authorizes \$500 tutoring scholarships for public school students could not rescue the voucher component from a constitutional violation. The vouchers are worth as much as \$2,500 for low-income parents, and thus "provide far greater educational benefit than the tutoring aid," the ruling said.

Voucher proponents may see some hope for the future of such programs based on two portions of the ruling. The first was the court's suggestion that the constitutional concerns might be lessened if the state compelled suburban districts to accept voucher students.

"It was within the state's power to assure the neutrality of the scholarship program by compelling public school participation," Judge Young said.

The other ray of hope for voucher supporters was the court's decision to analyze the constitutionality of the program using federal case law about government aid to religion.

State Law Issues

National groups advocating vouchers welcome any court ruling on vouchers that is based primarily on federal law, which would provide a vehicle for the U.S. Supreme Court to consider the issue.

In recent years, Puerto Rico's highest court and a Wisconsin trial court have struck down voucher programs that included religious schools. But they did so based on state constitutional provisions, not the U.S. Constitution. A proposed expansion of the existing Milwaukee program to include religious schools is pending before a state appeals court.

Opponents of the Cleveland program had argued before the appeals court that even if the program passed muster under

the U.S. Constitution, it still violated Ohio's, which they argued has stronger prohibitions against government aid to religious schools.

But the appeals court said the program violates the state constitution for the same reasons it violates the federal Constitution. The Ohio Supreme Court has interpreted the language of the state document to be consistent with the federal Constitution's prohibition against government establishment of religion, Judge Young said.

The court also ruled that the legislature's decision to target the pilot voucher program to Cleveland violated a state constitutional provision requiring general laws to "have a uniform operation throughout the state."

The legislature had limited the program to districts that were under federal court orders requiring supervision by the state superintendent. Cleveland was the only district to meet that definition.

The appeals court ruling in *Simmons-Harris v. Goff* overturns a state trial court's ruling last summer that upheld the constitutionality of the program and allowed it to begin operating.

Process at Work

Voucher proponents in Cleveland and Columbus contend the program is off to a good start. Republican Gov. George V. Voinovich has proposed expanding the program to another grade next year. This year, it is open to children in grades K-3 who come from low-income families. ("Battle Waged Over Vouchers in Cleveland," Feb. 19, 1997.)

Bert Holt, the program's administrator, said late last week that about 1,000 additional children are in line to join the more than 1,900 participating this year.

The appeals court ruling "is the judicial process working," Ms. Holt said. "We want to continue to realize our hopes and aspirations for choice for all parents." ■

LOCAL

41. Associated Press

05-07 10:31a Category: Local

College financial aid error overstated

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Fewer poorly prepared students are receiving special state honors scholarships than originally thought, the state's top college financial aid official said Tuesday.

The executive director of the Louisiana Office of Financial Assistance said an errant computer program produced a faulty report showing 60 percent of the students eligible for the state's honors scholarship scored below the state average on a national college readiness test.

Office of Financial Assistance Executive Director Jack Guinn said re-examining the data showed that, during the past two years, about 12 percent of those eligible for the Louisiana Honors Scholarship scored below 20 on the American College Test.

And Guinn said only about 15 percent of those accepting the scholarships scored below 20 on the ACT.

The state average on the ACT last year was 19.5. The national average was 21.5, and a perfect score is 36.

Louisiana Honors Scholarships pay the basic tuition at any Louisiana public university for high school graduates who finish in the top 5 percent of their class.

Guinn said his agency "made a mistake" in coming up with the 60 percent figure given to a Senate panel

last week.

"And, in a way, we're glad it was a mistake," Guinn said. "The numbers weren't as bad as we thought."

Guinn said that, contrary to the earlier report, none of the recipients of the Honors Scholarship over the past two years scored less than 12 on the ACT.

The revised numbers show that of the total 2,544 Honors Scholarship winners from 1994 and 1995 together, 377 scored less than 20 on the ACT.

The figures also show 140 of the Honors Scholarship recipients from the same period scored between 30-34.

During discussion Monday about a proposal to fund a new scholarship with lottery revenue, Guinn told the Senate Finance Committee the computer program that analyzed data initially had an undetected error.

Guinn first cited the low ACT scores to the Senate Education Committee last week as a basis for revising criteria to receive the Louisiana Honors Scholarship.

The committee was considering a bill by Rep. Charles McDonald, D-Bastrop, which would eliminate a ban that keeps Honors Scholarship recipients from receiving other awards.

McDonald and others said they assumed students who graduated at the

tops of their classes would have good ACT scores.

No one had ever analyzed ACT scores for recipients of the Louisiana Honors Scholarship because the test score was not a factor in awarding the scholarships, Guinn said.

Guinn said that under the existing Honors Scholarship criteria, it is possible for a student from a highly competitive school, with top grades and high national test scores, not to make the top 5 percent of graduates.

By the same token, Guinn said a student at a less competitive school who scored poorly on the ACT could be in the top 5 percent of his or her graduating class.

The only requirement for a student to receive the Honors Scholarship is to be certified among the top 5 percent of his or her graduating class.

Often the ranking is based on grade point averages that give the same weight to an A in business math as to an A in calculus.

The Senate Education Committee last week amended McDonald's bill to revise Honors Scholarship requirements. The changes would require recipients to post ACT scores at least equal to the state's average, plus complete a college preparatory high school curriculum. ■

42. Boston Globe

May 7, 1997 Category: Local

State testing young readers: Pupils get preview of exams to come

By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff

CAMBRIDGE - Edith Spurlock, age 8, set down her sharpened No. 2 pencil, now somewhat dulled, and pronounced her verdict: "Pretty easy."

But she has only just started.

Like every other third grader in the state, Edith is taking a new standardized reading test this week. It is just the first in a frenzy of new statewide tests that, unlike all others before them, will have high stakes for students, and for schools.

This test was ordered by the state Board of Education, to see which schools

are most successful teaching children to read. And under the Education Reform Act of 1993, every student will take a test that is different from this week's in grades 4, 8, and 10, beginning next spring. Schools where a wide margin of students do not pass could face state takeover. And students who do not pass will not get a diploma.

"That one makes me a little nervous," confessed Laura Sender, sitting next to Edith in Debra Pierce's third-grade classroom at the Peabody School in

Cambridge.

State education officials and reform proponents worry that not enough parents know the tests are coming, and fear mass outcry when the state begins denying diplomas. In other states, parents have sued to have graduation tests repealed.

With that in mind, boosters of reform are using the third grade test to launch a public relations campaign aimed at making parents aware of the graduation test.

While the students in Cambridge carefully filled in ovals on test forms to define words like "slit" and "snout," a coalition of representatives from 15 school districts held a press conference in Quincy to publicly announce their support for the tests, and to begin to rally parent support, as well.

Based on test scores on the last statewide tests, last spring, state education officials estimate that 40 percent of high school students won't get their diplomas when the graduation requirement kicks in within the next few years. Yet two-thirds of parents surveyed in a statewide poll in November said no more than 20 percent of students would fail.

"There's a gap between perception and reality, and we have to change that," said William Guenther, head of Mass Insight, a business-backed group that helped organize the coalition of schools.

Some teachers said they are worried the state is imposing too many tests on

students. Indeed, the students inside Pierce's cozily-decorated classroom in Cambridge can rattle off the acronyms or formal names of tests they've taken - the CAT (California Achievement Test), which Cambridge gave these students last year and again last month, and the Iowa (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), which they took yesterday.

But to state Education Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci the tests are the critical step of the state's \$2 billion, seven-year reform effort.

"This is where we see whether it works, and whether people are committed to it," Antonucci said. "When the first student is denied a diploma, when the first parent sues, that's when we're going to answer the question, 'Are we committed to this? Are we willing to stand behind reform and say that high standards matter?'"

About two dozen other states have adopted so-called high-stakes tests, which are required for graduation. But

court rulings have said that states have to tie the tests specifically to what students are learning in the classroom, and give advance notice. A Florida court ruled in favor of parents who said that the state could not deny their children diplomas because it had not given enough warning. With that in mind, the Massachusetts Board of Education is trying to decide when it can begin denying diplomas, although it was generally agreed when the reform act passed that the "high stakes" would kick in by 2000, the last year of the reform effort.

The tests have been delayed because the Board of Education has been slow to adopt the guidelines on what students should be taught in history and social studies.

The state gave trial questions on the new test in math and science this week to 4th, 8th, and 10th graders, and next year will test students in those grades in all subject areas. ■

43. Boston Globe

May 7, 1997 Category: Local

Nearly \$10m is pledged for Hub schools: Corporate gifts to meet grant challenge

By Richard Chacon, Globe Staff

In an unprecedented outburst of local corporate philanthropy - and a sign of hope for Boston public schools - a group of contributors has pledged nearly \$10 million to support teacher training and career development.

The contributions, which organizers hope will total \$15 million by the end of the year, will enable the city to easily meet the match requirements of a \$10 million challenge grant from the Annenberg Foundation.

Taken together, the donations constitute by far the largest private gift to the city, aides to Mayor Thomas M. Menino said.

Among the corporate donors, Boston-based Fleet Bank and Nellie Mae, the student loan corporation based in Braintree, have made their single largest gifts ever - \$1 million each. And Harcourt General, the Boston-based textbook publisher that also owns Neiman-Marcus and the General Cinemas movie theaters, has pledged \$1.35 million.

"We were given two years to raise \$10 million and we have nearly all of it in six months," said William Boyan, president of John Hancock Financial Services, who has coordinated the fund-raising for the Boston Annenberg Challenge Grant.

"One thing everybody wants to do is improve things for the kids and there may not be another opportunity like this again. Our message to everyone was school reform and it's been a very attractive message," Boyan added.

Boyan said other local firms - including BankBoston, Fidelity, Gillette and the Boston Globe Foundation - have also expressed interest in contributing but have not made final commitments.

In addition to the roughly \$20 million to come from the Annenberg grant and the matching funds, School Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant will also solicit another \$10 million from local, state and federal agencies.

The \$30 million, which will be spent over the next five years, will be used to

pay for enhanced teacher training and career development for principals and other school staff, Payzant said, emphasizing that none of the money will be used to cover the system's operating budget, for school construction or to hire additional department staff.

"This is a very focused and disciplined grant," Payzant said. "It's our way to leverage change on a school-by-school basis."

Yesterday's announcement essentially squelched the skepticism voiced by some after last fall's Annenberg grant announcement that such large sums of private money for public schools couldn't be raised in Boston.

Vartan Gregorian, Brown University president and an adviser to the Annenberg Foundation, urged local officials to seek even more money.

"This speaks greatly of the place where public schools began," Gregorian said.

Executives from some of the contributing companies yesterday cited a

73. The New York Times

05/07/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; Editorial Desk; Page 24, Column 4

Letters to the Editor

Regents Test Proposal Is Divisive and Unsound

To the Editor:

In responding to Gov. George E. Pataki and others who oppose the plan to have Regents examinations in math, history and science given in five languages, Richard P. Mills, the New York Education Commissioner, should do more than say, "My view is my view" (news article, April 30). In fact, the proposal is logically confused, politically divisive and academically unsound.

TD It is illogical to require all high

school students to take a rigorous English Regents exam that assesses reading, writing and analytical skills, and at the same time assume that students cannot read the subject textbooks they have been using.

It is politically divisive to suggest that only exams in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian and Chinese, in addition to English, be permitted in a city where hundreds of languages are spoken.

It is academically unsound to separate subject matter by language, creating

another form of bilingualism when schools are having a tough time already trying to address English as a second language.

Students protected from using English will be patronized and hurt, unprepared for college and unable to meet the professional criteria of work. JOAN BAUM New York, April 30, 1997 The writer is director of professional development at Marymount Manhattan College.

04:38 EDT May 7, 1997■

74. Education Week

May 7, 1997

The Splintered Curriculum

By Richard Shavelson

In his State of the Union Address in February, President Clinton took significant strides toward improving education for all students by calling for, among other things: the establishment of national standards measured by reading tests for 4th graders and mathematics tests for 8th graders; and increases in spending for reading programs, school construction, and Internet connections for schools. ("Clinton Gives Top Billing to Education Plan," Feb. 12, 1997.)

The president should be commended for placing the education of our nation's children and young people, and the training of our workforce, as a top priority for the next four years. Nevertheless, for all his good intentions to have a positive effect, he must move beyond the ephemeral level of "policy talk" to improve the core business of education: the teaching and learning that goes on every weekday in this nation's classrooms. Simply put, the United States, when compared with its "competitor" nations, lacks a coherent vision of what students should know and be able to do, national standards and testing notwithstanding.

The findings from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study provide strong evidence that for

school reform to be effective, the United States must remedy the splintered curriculum encountered daily by its students. ("U.S. Students About Average in Global Study," Nov. 27, 1996.)

As part of TIMSS, researchers evaluated the math and science curriculum content and instruction in over 40 countries at the 3rd and 4th, 7th and 8th, and 12th grade levels from 1992 to 1995. They found that math and science education in our country lacks a coherent vision: We teach a little of everything, but nothing in great depth. America's 7th and 8th graders, for example, cover more than double the number of math and science topics than do their counterparts in Japan. Germany's 7th and 8th graders, likewise, cover some 40 percent fewer math topics and 23 percent fewer science topics than do American students. But more, apparently, does not mean better. America's math and science curriculum is spread so thin that it limits opportunities for teachers to build on what students have already learned. Teachers in Germany and Japan teach many fewer topics, and typically only at one grade level, building on knowledge and skills developed in earlier grades. For example, fractions and decimals are typically completed in other countries well before junior high, yet

they are included in the U.S. curriculum from the 4th grade through the 8th grade.

The current policy thrust toward national content standards is an important first step in correcting this situation. But the standards are unlikely, in their present form, to alter it substantially. The content standards in science, for example, represent a political compromise among competing science disciplines. They are a mile wide and an inch deep, with all topics having equal priority.

The splintering of the curriculum is exacerbated by textbook publishers. To ensure widespread adoption across the 50 states, publishers produce textbooks that are a mile wide and an inch deep to appeal to this diverse market. Moreover, to be current with the latest policy initiative (standards today), they revise their texts by accretion, not tough priority decisions, by continually adding new material called for by one or another set of standards. TIMSS has found that the United States is No. 1 in one area of mathematics and science: Our country has the fattest textbooks of the 40-plus nations participating in the study.

Furthermore, national examinations, such as the Stanford Achievement Test and the National Assessment of

Educational Progress, contribute to the splintering. These exams test for this wide range of material.

The teachers, then, are simply "doing their job." They reported to TIMSS researchers that they attempt to teach all of the topics in the textbook and on the standardized tests: That's the nation's message to them.

The splintered curriculum encountered by our students may very well account for why their performance on the international math and science achievement test fell below national aspirations. Further research with TIMSS data will shed light on this conjecture.

Some may infer from the TIMSS findings that we need a "national" curriculum to improve students' achievement. But such a "one size fits all" curriculum could not be hammered out in our country. What makes

education succeed as well as it has in our diverse society is the opportunity for parents, politicians, educators, and the public to debate alternative visions of education from vastly different value positions. Local education represents a compromise among these positions. Research using TIMSS data can and should provide a range of curricular visions, drawn from our country and others, to focus state and local debate on alternatives likely to raise achievement.

Our government has invested \$30 million in collecting the Third International Mathematics and Science Study data, an investment we cannot afford to squander by resorting to sound bites that lament the sorry state of math and science education. There are no silver bullets here; no simple policy-talk fixes. We need to focus our curriculum

and raise the level and quality of the mathematics and science taught in our schools. The TIMSS data should be used to address the lack of focus and dilution of topics in our curriculum and to create alternative visions. As we gather, debate, and implement these new approaches, we must also commit the resources to sustaining and evaluating education reform long enough to have an impact on the achievement of all of our nation's children.

Richard Shavelson, the dean of Stanford University's school of education in Stanford, Calif., is a member of the U.S. steering committee for the Third International Mathematics and Science Study and the chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' board on testing and assessment. ■

75. Education Week

May 7, 1997

Connecting K-12 and College

By Joni E. Finney

The recent report by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley on the "baby boom echo" describes an unparalleled enrollment increase in the public schools: Last fall, school enrollment reached 51.7 million students, more than the 51.3 million record set by the baby boomers 25 years ago. ("Enrollment Crunch Stretches the Bounds of the Possible," Sept. 11, 1996.) Enrollment will rise to a new high of 54.6 million by 2006. The enrollment growth is the test, the secretary said, of whether America will invest "the time, energy, and resources, so that these children and this nation can look to the future with confidence."

According to federal education officials, maintaining the current service levels in elementary and secondary education will require 190,000 additional teachers, over 6,000 more schools, and approximately \$15 billion in added annual operating expenditures. Most of the growth in enrollment will be in about half the states, with the Western states facing the greatest increase.

Increases in school enrollments will result in about a 14 percent rise in college enrollments nationally. Again, about half the states will account for most of the increase. In California,

colleges and universities will have to absorb about another half-a-million new college students by 2006. The costs of accommodating growth in California higher education alone are staggering. Some 5.2 billion new dollars for operating and construction costs will be required (on top of a base of \$6.5 billion) to provide about the same level of service.

It is unlikely that the next generation of young people will want to see their opportunities for education beyond high school reduced. In fact, they will probably insist that opportunities be expanded. From 1990 to 1995, the proportion of high school graduates going on to college increased by 7 percent nationally. Due to rising employer expectations for job skills and a public belief that a college education is the gateway to middle-class opportunity, demand for higher levels of education is likely to increase even more.

At present, there are only two alternatives for addressing this college enrollment growth. The first is to simply jam more people into college classrooms and hope that they absorb something. The other is to curtail access to higher education. Neither alternative has

anything to recommend it. Both would be economically shortsighted; both would severely weaken reform efforts in the public schools. Both would undermine educational quality and three decades of public policy that have expanded college opportunity. Most important, neither alternative would instill a sense of confidence in the future.

How can the country meet these unprecedented levels of enrollment demand? At the same time, how can we create higher levels of achievement for all students? Many of the gains to be made in both the educational and financial productivity of the system can be achieved by focusing on the interface of the educational sectors. Collaboration has never been easy, and it will be even more difficult in the future, for it is likely to challenge conventional wisdom in both the public schools and higher education about how each sector organizes and delivers its services. But by working together, schools and colleges can accomplish what neither has been able to accomplish alone during the past decade of reform: significantly improved student achievement, better access to and preparation for college, and

said.

Pike, who is co-chairman of the Governor's Council of State Academic Standards, said many states have based their science standards on the state DPI's curriculum guide for science.

He warned, however, that states can fall from best to worst relatively quickly. California once had one of the best science programs in the country, but its average score on this test was well below the national average.

The state's largest school district, Milwaukee Public Schools, has placed an

emphasis on hands-on science instruction in elementary schools to help combat any racial or economic gaps in test scores before they develop, said spokeswoman Denise Callaway.

"It's hoped that if you can take a subject like science and make it more interesting for students, it makes it more meaningful to learn and they'll do better further up the line," said Callaway, who did not know whether any MPS students were tested.

MPS, which this year received a grant from the National Science Foundation for

a science teacher mentoring program, recently began testing on its own to measure how students comprehend science.

The district, one of the first in the nation to do so, requires that students take a science assessment in fifth and seventh grades and sometime during high school. The assessment an effort by the School Board to increase schools' accountability is part of a districtwide effort to measure performance in math, science, communications and the arts. ■

7. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

05/03/97; Edition: Final; Section: News; Page 7

Questions range from oil to mayonnaise going bad; Science test requires students to consider variety of problems

Here are examples of the science questions given to fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders last year as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tracks the performance of American students.

Fourth grade

Question: Some fourth-grade students were doing a project for their science class. They were trying to find the answer to the question, "Do beetles choose to live in bright light or in the shade?" The picture shows one way that a student can set up an experiment to find out whether beetles choose to live in bright light or in the shade.

(The picture shows a light bulb above a gravel-bottomed container. A lid and hanging wall keep one side shaded while still giving the beetles a chance to move

over to the lighted area, where there is a dish of water, the only water dish in the container.)

Is this a good way to set up this experiment? Tell why or why not.

Answer: If students explained that creating light and dark areas was a good idea, they were given credit for a partial answer. If they added that there should be a separate water dish in the shaded area, they received a complete.

Eighth grade

Question: A group of students took potato salad made with mayonnaise to a picnic on a very hot day. Explain how eating the potato salad could cause food poisoning and describe something that could be done to the potato salad to prevent the people who eat it from getting food poisoning.

Answer: One student's handwritten answer, spelling errors and all, regarded as complete: "When mayonnaise gets to hot it starts growing poisonous bactrias which can give you food poisoning. It (the mayonnaise) can be kept in a cooler and stay cool until they want to it it. then they should put it back in the cooler."

12th grade

Question: The petroleum fields of the North Slope of Alaska are a major energy source. What does the presence of these fields indicate about the climate and ecology of the North Slope millions of years ago?

Answer: One student with a complete answer, again with the spelling as given, said the climate "was warm and humed" and described the ecology as a "swamp like area with much vegetation." ■

8. The New Orleans Times-Picayune

05/03/97; Edition: THIRD; Section: NATIONAL; Page A1

LA. PUPILS BOMB IN SCIENCE NATIONAL TEST SCORES ARE LOW

By SARA SHIPLEY
Staff writer

Once again, Louisiana students have failed to measure up in national testing, this time in the first science exam given to eighth-graders by the U.S. Department

of Education.

Louisiana public school eighth-graders scored near the bottom of the pack with an average 132 points on a scale of zero to 300. Maine students scored the highest at 163, and the District

of Columbia scored the lowest at 113.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress science scores are similar to the program's math scores released in February, which ranked Louisiana 44th out of 47 states and

jurisdictions participating in the study. Participation is voluntary.

"Once again, Louisiana ranks very low when compared nationally," state Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard said. "Of the 44 participating districts, Louisiana scored higher than only two districts, Guam and the District of Columbia."

Picard said the test "points out the extreme need for all of us to work together to transform Louisiana's educational system." He said he hopes that new initiatives, such as a redesigned curricula, new state tests, and a proposed school accountability program, would turn things around.

Louisiana's private school eighth-graders did much better, scoring 156, above the national average of 150. Private school scores were not provided for other states.

The tests, administered by the Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics, are given to representative samples of students in grades four, eight and 12 in various subjects. Science was tested for the first time this year.

The battery of tests was created by federal law 27 years ago and is the only nationwide testing program for American students. President Clinton has launched a plan to develop voluntary national tests for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, a proposal that has touched off partisan controversy in Congress.

The science tests show that 19 of the 44 participating jurisdictions scored above average, 11 performed at or near average, and 14, including Louisiana, performed below average.

The tests also typically rank students on performance standards, telling how many scored at proficiency levels such as "basic" and "advanced." Arnold Goldstein, a researcher with the national testing agency, said that a governing board was not able to set science performance standards in time to release the scores, but the board plans to set those standards and publish the results, perhaps in the fall.

The science test measured content and skills in earth, physical and life science in grades four, eight and 12. State-by-state results were provided only for eighth grade.

In addition to multiple-choice questions, the science test used short-answer questions and hands-on laboratory experiments to measure students' problem-solving skills.

A sample eighth-grade question asked students to explain why eating a potato salad made with mayonnaise could cause food poisoning. An eighth-grade experiment called for students to measure a pencil floating in different known solutions of saltwater, and then to determine the salinity of an unmarked sample by creating a comparison graph.

The Louisiana results showed that boys averaged a slightly higher score (136) than girls (129), and that white students scored higher (148) than black students (113) or Hispanics (104).

The results also correlated strongly with parental education and income level. Students whose parents graduated from college scored better (136) than those whose parents were high school graduates (128). Students who met federal low-income guidelines scored worse (121) than those who didn't (145).■

9. Portland Oregonian

05/03/97; Edition: SUNRISE; Section: LOCAL STORIES; Page A01

OREGON EIGHTH-GRADERS SCORE ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE IN SCIENCE

By STEVEN CARTER

of the Oregonian Staff

Bill Graves of The Oregonian staff contributed to this report.

Summary: Local experts say the state results on the exam reflect a drive to make science less abstract for students.

Oregon eighth-graders rank above the national average in their knowledge of science, according to a national study released Friday.

Oregon public school students scored 155 out of a possible 300 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress science test, seven points above the national average. Maine had the highest score, 163, and Washington, D.C., the lowest, 113. Forty states, Guam, the District of Columbia and two Defense Department school systems participated in the assessment.

When all students, public and private, were included in the scores, Oregon ranked five points above the national

average.

"We're pleased with our results," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Norma Paulus. "Our students are excelling in science through hands-on learning."

About 23,000 students took the test on a random basis — 2,100 of them in Oregon. Oregon ranked 12th among the states, tied with Connecticut and Colorado. But officials said that only four states — Maine, North Dakota, Montana and Wisconsin, were high enough above Oregon to be statistically significant.

The national test was given to samples of students in fourth, eighth and 12th grades. For the first time, the assessment made state-to-state comparisons of eighth-grade scores.

Officials gave the test a new framework, adding open-ended questions and one hands-on experiment to the traditional multiple-choice questions.

The test questioned students on their knowledge of earth, physical and life sciences and their ability to conduct the experiment.

Barbara Wolfe, assessment coordinator for the Oregon Department of Education, said the Oregon results reflect a drive to make science less abstract for students.

"Since the mid-1980s, Oregon has really been pushing science teachers to give kids hands-on experiments which help to make the scientific theories more concrete," Wolfe said. "When students can see it happening right before their eyes, they then can often understand the complex theories behind what they are seeing."

As good as the results were, some observers said Oregon students must do better — both to meet tough new academic standards and to compete in a global work force. The 1991 Legislature set a goal of having the best-educated

NATIONAL

1. The New York Times

05/04/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section I; National Desk; Page 36, Column 1

U.S. Pupils Score High on Science Facts but Falter on Reasoning

By PETER APPLEBOME

American students have some understanding of basic scientific facts and principles, but their ability to apply scientific knowledge, design an experiment or clearly explain their reasoning is "disappointing," according to the latest national test of science education.

The findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a continuing test of American students, show continuing gaps between racial groups in scientific achievement. And the report shows a stark gap between the ability of students in general to learn basic principles and their ability to apply knowledge or explain what they have learned.

In those areas, "the results are disappointing," said Michael T. Nettles, a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, created by Congress to monitor and interpret the tests.

The test, which is given to a representative sampling of American students, has been in existence for more than 25 years. But this year's science test results cannot be compared with previous years' findings because the test is entirely new. It took 90 minutes, instead of an hour and did not rely heavily on multiple choice questions. Such questions made up only 20 percent of the test; the rest

consisted of written explanations and hands-on experiments.

Still, the results were revealing in many ways. Although boys usually do better than girls on science tests, this test found no difference between boys and girls at grades 4 and 8. A significant gap was found among the highest-scoring students in grade 12, where boys did better than girls.

The difference in scores between white and African-American students was a disturbing result. Previously, the science tests had shown the gap between blacks and whites narrowing significantly from 1970 to 1986 and then beginning to widen again. This test showed a substantial and consistent gap — wider than in 1994 — between whites and blacks at the three grade levels tested.

Private school students generally scored higher than public school students, but the top 10 percent of high school seniors in public and private schools scored the same.

In a surprising finding, the gap between private and public school performance was much lower in New York than in most other states, with New York's private schools scoring only slightly higher than public schools and well below the average for private schools nationally.

The test format reflects persistent calls for tests that go beyond multiple-choice questions, commonly used in standardized tests.

"I'm pleased to see that we have moved to the type of assessment that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge by actually engaging in science activities," Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said in announcing the results on Friday.

Fourth graders, for example, were asked to use a pencil to test fresh and saltwater by determining which fraction of the pencil floated above water and to explain the differences.

The findings were often disappointing. Asked to look at the contents of a plastic bag and explain what properties of the mixture would allow the contents to be separated with a magnet, filter paper or sieve, only 2 percent of the 12th graders answered correctly. Nine percent got the answer essentially right, and 29 percent got it partly right.

New York's eighth graders scored around the national average. Connecticut's eighth graders scored above it, and New Jersey did not have a big enough testing sample to be included. No state-by-state findings were given for other grades.

03:44 EDT May 4, 1997

2. The Washington Post

05/03/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A06

U.S. Students Get Hands-On Science Test; Experiments Must Be Performed in Revamped National Exam

This story also appeared in the Houston Chronicle and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

A new version of a national test in science has taken the rare step of assessing students' ability in the subject by requiring them for the first time to

perform hands-on experiments, not just answer multiple-choice questions.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, a test that students from around the country take every few years and that is widely used to judge the

progress of schools, was revamped in an attempt to make science instruction more relevant and rigorous.

"This tough, new test is going to notch up what our young people know about science and it's long overdue," Education

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Secretary Richard W. Riley said yesterday in announcing the first results of the test. It was given last year to randomly selected groups of fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders in 40 states and the District.

Student scores nationally in science have improved this decade, but in a recent international study U.S. schools still lagged behind schools in many Asian and European nations. The study suggested that too many American schools emphasize rote learning of scientific facts and principles, instead of giving students hands-on lab and field work that would better bring the subject to life.

Since the national test is new, students' scores this time cannot be compared to previous years' scores, education officials said. Maryland and Virginia finished slightly above the national average on the new test, while the District was much lower than the national average.

In previous years, the national science test found that among eighth- and 12th-graders, boys consistently outscored girls. This time, their scores were quite similar in fourth and eighth grade. But in 12th grade, boys had higher scores again. At all three grade levels, white students scored higher than all minority groups.

As part of the test, students had to

perform at least one hands-on experiment. Fourth-graders, for example, were asked to distinguish between fresh and salt water by floating a pencil and observing how much of it sank. In another experiment, high school seniors taking the test had to separate five components of a mixture and explain their steps.

Education officials said that although student results on the experiments were quite mixed, most of them showed more interest in those tasks than they did in answering the multiple-choice questions and essays that also were part of the test. ■

3. Los Angeles Times

* 05/03/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro Desk; Page A-1

California Students Get D in Science Exam: Eighth-graders in state rank 39th among 44 groups taking tough new national test.

By ELAINE WOO
TIMES EDUCATION WRITER

California students earned the equivalent of a D—worse than 65% of eighth-graders in the rest of the country—on a tough new test of science knowledge.

Nationally, the testing found, most U.S. high school graduates know only enough science to read a graph and follow directions to carry out a simple experiment. But the majority cannot apply scientific facts and principles or explain their reasoning clearly.

Out of 44 states and territories participating in the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress, the nation's only ongoing survey of student achievement, California's students ranked 39th, higher only than Hawaii, Mississippi, Louisiana, Guam and the District of Columbia.

The figures, released Friday by U.S. education officials in Washington, are only the latest in a series of poor test results for California schools and students. The state has ranked near the bottom in similar analyses of math and reading ability issued by the federal government since 1995.

The results also showed that two group of students who historically perform at the bottom of the heap—the

poor and Latinos—do worse in California than in most other places tested.

State Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin termed California's science ranking "very disappointing" and called again for establishment of high academic standards and a statewide testing system.

The news was not dramatically cheerier for the nation as a whole. Students in only 19 states—mostly in the Northeast and central regions—performed better than average, with the majority in all the states tested falling at or below the national mean.

Their performance amounts to another form of illiteracy, as potentially grave as an inability to read and compute, said scientists, who noted that being scientifically literate enables people to keep up with the exploding developments in technology and "inoculates" them in an age of Internet cults and other charlatans.

"We are confronted by a paradox of the first order," said U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. "We Americans are fascinated by technology. Yet, at the same time, some Americans remain profoundly ignorant." This ignorance—of scientific advances and principles that influence daily

living—can lead, he said, to "confusion, suspicion, even hostility."

On the brighter side, girls generally performed as well as boys in the fourth and eighth grades, easing concerns about a gender gap in science. The only substantial gap was found among the highest-achieving students in the 12th grade, where boys scored substantially better than girls. That difference raises concerns about who goes on to college-level courses and careers in science, where women remain underrepresented, experts said.

There was no change in the long-standing differences in achievement between white and black students. Black eighth-graders averaged 120 points on the 300-point scale, compared to 127 for Latinos and 159 for whites.

A notable exception to this trend was found in schools operated by the Defense Department for the children of its employees. African American and Latino students in those schools scored better than their counterparts anywhere else in the country.

The military schools "may well have some important things to say—about discipline and focus and family and community support—to other schools across the nation," said University of

Michigan professor Michael T. Nettles, a member of the board that oversees the federal assessment of educational progress.

The national assessment tested 123,000 students in the fourth, eighth and 12th grades on their knowledge of earth, physical and life sciences. State-by-state comparisons were based on the performance of eighth-graders alone.

The test, which cost \$11 million and was administered last spring, was more difficult than previous science assessments, which were dominated by multiple-choice questions.

In the 1996 exam, about two-thirds of the questions required students to write out an answer that could be a paragraph or more. Reflecting a new emphasis on "hands-on" science and the need for practical reasoning skills—as opposed to just regurgitation of science facts—the test also required students to perform actual experiments using materials provided in a kit.

Because the test was so different from previous versions, no comparisons can be made to earlier results. What it did offer were examples of the type of science knowledge attained by students at particular score levels.

For example, the average fourth-grader scoring at the 50th percentile could tell the difference between functions of different types of teeth by their structure. An average 12th-grader could explain what happens when a magnet is placed inside a coil.

A typical eighth-grader could understand the complex relationships between man and his environment in producing acid rain.

In California, however, the average student lacked the knowledge to identify the source of acid rain. The type of question within range of the typical California eighth-grader was one asking students to interpret a graph showing seed production and rainfall.

The report provided some clues as to why California's performance was so low. It has more students who are not fluent in English than any other state and tied with Utah for the largest class size.

Among poor children, California's fared worse on the science test than similar children in most other states.

Slightly more than a third of California's students are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch, and their average score was 120. Texas, by contrast, has slightly more students who fall below the poverty line, but they scored 10 points higher than California's poor.

"The children who are doing poorly are doing especially poorly in California, which is a serious problem," said Lawrence Feinberg, assistant director of the national assessment's governing board.

California officials said the state's problems are caused by a lack of high, uniform standards for learning, inadequate training of science teachers, and the absence of statewide testing.

"Most states that are making progress in science as well as other core subjects are doing the same things that our successful international competitors are doing," Eastin said. "They have standards, and they have assessments of their progress meeting those standards."

California is setting standards in the core academic areas, including science. The science standards are not expected to be completed until next year.

Federal and state officials said the generally lackluster results point to an overall need for better training of science teachers and overhauling an illogical curriculum that moves too quickly and superficially through too many topics.

Some science educators said inadequate equipment and supplies are another huge problem.

"I know science teachers who have no sink in their classroom. There are elementary schools I've visited where they were teaching without a microscope," said Duane Nichols, a veteran biology and physiology teacher at Alhambra High School, who won a presidential award for science teaching.

Nichols, past president of the California Science Teachers Assn., said many districts are making science lessons more hands-on and focused on problem solving, efforts that have not had enough time to produce results. "We need to have a little faith here," he said.

Researcher D'Jamila Salem contributed to this report from Washington.

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX /

INFOGRAPHIC) How California Rates

Here is a comparison of how the average California eighth-grader fared on the 300-point science test administered in the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress Top 6

Maine: 163

North Dakota: 162

Montana: 162

Wisconsin: 160

Minnesota: 159 Bottom 6

California: 138

Hawaii: 135

Mississippi: 133

Louisiana: 132

Guam: 120

District of Columbia 113 Science Knowledge of Eighth-Graders

The chart below shows the increasingly difficult problems that measure the science knowledge of eighth-graders across the nation. Each problem is placed on the scale at the point where a student at that performance level is likely to answer it correctly.

213 Explain cause and prevention of crumbling of ancient monument.

205 Identify part of cell that contains genetic material.

194 Explain why lightning is seen before thunder is heard.

184 Understand markings of contour map to find direction of river flow.

180 Identify areas that have warm summers and cold winters.

172 Explain where earthquakes occur.

166 Measure pH of four types of soil.

163 Describe direction of movement after collision.

158 Identify source of atmospheric oxygen.

153 Classify organism from characteristics.

139 Draw orbits on model of solar system.

138 California's score.

127 Explain impact of fish death on ecosystem.

124 Explain advantages/disadvantages of planting near a stream.

104 Find typical yearly rainfall from graph.

89 Identify organism that produces its own food.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1996 Science Assessment. ■

great culinary discovery has been peanut butter. It isn't sold in the Czech Republic, and Dohnalova had never seen or tasted it until she arrived in Newark.

At least part of her schooling has been the same as in Prague. Dohnalova said the students there have made telephone bomb threats.

She experienced the American version recently when Newark High was closed three days because of such threats.

Dohnalova described it as a little eerie but, like other students, said she thought it was nice to get a break from classes.

Dohnalova said she'll miss the traveling she has done in the United States and the Dickmans, who have hosted several international students.

The Czech student is considered one of the family, traveling with them and helping with the chores, or most of them.

"We've not had a single international student interested in cooking," Karen Dickman said, "but they all like to eat." Photo: Caption: Mike Lafferty/Dispatch
Zuzana Dohnalova, center, is surrounded by her hosts in America, from left, Joe and Karen Dickman and their daughter, Melissa. Dohnalova said the schools are easy and the traveling fun in the United States. ■

34. The New York Times

05/04/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section 4; Week in Review Desk; Page 4, Column 1

Imperfect Measures

Tests, Too, Have Their Failings

By PETER APPLEBOME

NEW YORK's Education Commissioner and Governor offered opposing views last week on an issue that goes to the heart of educational quality and opportunity in an increasingly diverse America: should the state offer its college-preparatory Regents examinations in languages other than English?

The Commissioner, Richard P. Mills, was concerned that English-only Regents exams — which New York uses to award merit scholarships — don't fairly test the math or science skills of the state's many immigrants. But the controversy over his proposal to offer test booklets in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian and Chinese is only one of many cases questioning the enormous and increasingly contentious role that testing plays in American education.

From S.A.T. college-admission tests to President Clinton's proposed national tests for reading and math, from public schools in New York to public universities in Mississippi, this is the golden age both of testing and of disputes over how schools test, what tests measure and how fair they are.

At a time when education is seen as the essential route to opportunity, it is not just the details of specific tests that are at issue, but the nature of what the writer Nicholas Lemann calls America's evolving meritocracy, and what the legal scholar Lani Guinier calls America's evolving testocracy: the network of standardized tests that determine access to scholarships and the best schools and colleges.

"As access to educational quality, who

gets a limited number of places in schools and jobs, becomes more competitive, we're seeing many of the big social issues in American life played out on the playing field of tests," said Robert Schaeffer, a spokesman for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, or Fair Test, which is critical of the reliance on standardized tests.

A Search for Standards

Across the country, educators increasingly depend on standardized tests even as challenges to their use spread. Current controversies include the following:

In New York, supporters of Commissioner Mills's proposal say immigrants should not be penalized since the Regents are used for both high-school graduation and merit scholarships, and students would still have to pass an English Regents test. Critics say testing in other languages would deter students from learning English.

In Mississippi, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled last month that the state's five white public universities continue to discriminate against black students by using ACT college-admission scores to award scholarships. Of almost \$6.9 million dispensed in 1992-93, \$6.6 million went to whites.

Mr. Clinton, in an effort to raise academic standards, has proposed what would be the first national tests, a reading test for fourth graders and a math test for eighth graders. They would not be mandatory.

Despite persistent claims that standardized tests are culturally biased in

favor of white males, the bans on affirmative action in California and Texas now have the potential to make those states, two of the nation's most diverse, more reliant on standardized tests than ever.

The role of standardized testing in American life is not a new issue. For decades many experts have argued against overreliance on what Ms. Guinier calls "one size fits all" paper and pencil tests. Many critics prefer systems in which students build portfolios of their work, or tests like the revised National Assessment of Education Progress, released last week, which has multiple-choice questions but also asks for written analyses of scientific experiments.

Why then are traditional multiple-choice tests more influential now than ever before?

In higher education, when the best colleges and professional schools are deluged with applicants, standardized tests like the S.A.T. are still seen as a cost-effective and time-effective way to sort applicants. Even if schools wanted to downplay test scores, the near hysteria about rankings like those in U.S. News & World Report's annual college guide, which penalizes colleges for low S.A.T. averages and rewards them for high ones, would argue against it.

In elementary and secondary education, the sense of urgency about improving educational quality has led lawmakers to insist on "objective" measures of performance as a way to gauge how effectively tax dollars are being used.

And the argument over affirmative

action is regularly framed in terms of racial or ethnic preference versus merit — with merit defined by grades and supposedly objective tests.

Many political and business interests agree that better measures of performance are needed, and that schools and students won't improve without a way to adequately assess their performance.

Diane Ravitch, a senior research scholar at New York University, said standardized tests have become increasingly valuable as looser grading standards have made high-school grades less useful.

"Tests shouldn't be the only thing," she said, "but a real meritocracy replaces inherited privilege with merit, so a poor kid with good test scores can in fact do better than a rich kid with bad test scores."

Mirroring Society Too Well

But Mr. Lemann, who is writing a book on meritocracy in America, said standardized testing like the S.A.T. tended to reproduce, not negate, family background; for as long as there have

been such tests, well-to-do children from families with high levels of education have done much better than poorer ones.

He argues, however, that there are limits to tests' power as arbiters of opportunity. Higher education in America is available to almost everyone, even if Harvard and Yale are not, so low test scores do not rule out a college education as in countries with make-or-break national examinations. And while success in some professions — law, for example — is closely linked to attending elite schools, in many other fields — business and entertainment, for example — it is not.

Still, like Ms. Guinier, he argues for a more sophisticated analysis of what tests measure and their fairness.

Ms. Guinier and a colleague at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Susan Sturm, argue in a widely circulated paper, "The Future of Affirmative Action: Reclaiming the Innovative Ideal," that the question least addressed in the national debate about affirmative action and merit is what standardized

tests measure and how well they do it.

They maintain that when almost two-thirds of the people entering the work force are projected to be women and members of racial minorities, the tests in use are becoming less and less reliable and fair in apportioning educational opportunity. "The existing meritocracy creates a modern-day aristocracy that gives further advantages to the already advantaged and creates barriers for those who are not," they wrote.

The issue traverses often hidden fault lines of economic class. If tests like the S.A.T. often serve to a large degree as proxies for class, radically de-emphasizing them could dramatically redefine who gets into Harvard or Berkeley — to the disadvantage of the largely privileged students who are admitted now.

Still, Mr. Lemann says, it's essential to remember that while tests matter, the larger issues of education and equity matter more. "You can't fix education by fixing testing," he said.

03:44 EDT May 4, 1997■

35. The Kansas City Star

05/03/97; Edition: JOHNSON COUNTY; Section: ZONE/SHAWNEE-LENEXA; Page 2

Languages are an integral part of an education

Knowledge of a foreign language - or of languages - is becoming even more necessary because of the shrinking of our world. Americans conduct business in many countries overseas, and they travel abroad for more than just vacations. They need to understand other cultures, and how to communicate with other peoples.

The Shawnee Mission School District has been a leader in the teaching of foreign languages and the customs of other countries through the Center for International Studies. But while the district offers foreign languages at the middle and high school levels, it has barely scratched the surface at the elementary level.

A lack of funding as well as a lack of focus on the importance of starting foreign language instruction as early as

possible has kept language classes at the elementary level to a minimum.

Increasing community support for language instruction in the lower grades finally is changing that.

Elementary school is a perfect time to introduce students to other countries, their ways of life - and their words. Children are naturally curious at this age, and learning a language even can be easier - and more fun - than in later years.

Next fall, the district plans to provide district-financed Spanish instruction for fourth- through sixth-graders at some of its schools. Elementary schools have applied to start these programs. The five schools that currently have language instruction financed largely by parents and grants - Belinder, Somerset, Westwood View, Ray Marsh and

Roesland - will be given priority to continue their programs with district funding.

The district should move toward the goal of every elementary school having language instruction by the 1998-1999 school year. Shawnee Mission also should encourage partnerships between elementary schools and middle schools to make an easy transition for students who continue in a language, or choose another, in seventh grade.

Although Shawnee Mission has many priorities for the expenditure of limited state and local funds, language instruction deserves better attention than it has gotten in the past.

Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board of The Star.■

36. The Kansas City Star

05/03/97; Edition: METROPOLITAN; Section: METROPOLITAN; Page C2

Other Languages, or ESOL, classes, which are costly for the system largely because of the smaller student-to-teacher ratio.

"Unfortunately, also, there is a high correlation between minorities and economic status," Kelly said. "The greater number of minority students will bring with it a greater number of families in economic need."

That often relates to the student's educational preparation, Kelly said. So the system must respond with extra financial and academic support.

Although administrators are not complaining about the shift, it does add a burden to an already strapped system that is struggling to build new schools and renovate old ones.

But Johnson said the added vitality in the schools is well worth the cost, financial or otherwise.

"It's absolutely wonderful, just the visual richness," he said. "And in the classrooms, any discussion benefits from these viewpoints."

SCHOOL CHANGES

The minority population of Prince William County schools is increasing rapidly. Here's a look at the trend since 1990.

Minority enrollment
Elementary School 1996 1990
Antietam 22% 17%
Bel Air 36 31
Belmont 41 25
Bennett 9 6
Coles 8 3
Dale City 45 37
Dumfries 60 43
Enterprise 42 32
Featherstone 45 30
Henderson 16 11
Kerrydale 39 25
Kilby 67 46
King 41 24
Lake Ridge 19 13
Leesylvania 45 n/a*
Loch Lomond 26 15
Marshall 9 n/a*
Marumsco Hills 58 25
McAuliffe 34 25

Minnieville 48 35
Montclair 24 n/a*
Mountain View 7 n/a*
Mullen 47 34
Neabsco 49 31
Nokesville 3 4
Occoquan 47 33
Old Bridge 28 n/a*
Parkside 10 7
Pattie 19 12
Potomac View 61 45
River Oaks 62 49
Rockledge 31 22
Sinclair 37 18
Springwoods 24 12
Sudley 14 7
Triangle 47 37
Tyler 8 6
Vaughan 47 23
West Gate 60 38
Westridge 20 10
Yorkshire 34 19
Not applicable, school was not open in 1990.
SOURCE: Prince William County Schools■

60. Chicago Tribune

May 5, 1997

Litmus test for progress: School status rests on Iowa test scores

Fifth in an occasional series

By Michael Martinez

TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

As relatives before her have done since 1973, 12-year-old JoMarie Oquendo heard the final bell at Von Humboldt Elementary School and joined 1,300 students exiting its doors, another day done, another homework assignment in hand.

With a loaded backpack, the 6th grader picked up her 3-year-old preschool sister at Von Humboldt's child-parent center across the corner.

Together they headed toward their father's barbershop four blocks away. Past the mural of the Puerto Rican flag unfurling over Lake Michigan, past the community garden just now turning a fragile green, past the street corners that gangbangers and drug dealers would claim later in the day--JoMarie and Melanie Oquendo walked side by side, a sisterly portrait that offered the makings of a sweet childhood memory.

As well, it was one snapshot of the

myriad scenes that unfold in the lives of students at Von Humboldt after the school doors close and teachers no longer have control of their time and education. What happens at home -- perhaps as much as in the classroom -- is critical in determining whether Von Humboldt students improve enough to lift the school off the system's academic probation list. But that, of course, is open to a range of ungovernable forces.

In this case, the girls entered the back room of Jayuya Barber Stylist at 2606 W. Division St., where Reinaldo Oquendo, 37, was clipping men's hair at \$10 a cut. The sisters spend afternoons there because their mother works days as a clerk for warehouses.

They shed their coats, dumped the book bag on the floor and climbed into an old leather barber's chair. After pulling a blanket around themselves, the girls promptly took a nap.

An hour later, they were awakened by their father and a visitor. Startled and sleepy, Melanie started crying, but her

good humor quickly returned. Soon she was playing hide-and-seek under the blanket.

As Melanie chattered and ran about the shop, JoMarie finally opened her homework and pulled out a language arts book, a ritual carried out unfortunately in front of a small black-and-white TV set. A cherubic girl with long black hair, JoMarie laughed at some of the jokes on "Full House" while she wrote answers.

"I didn't write down my reading homework," she confessed. "I'll do it in the morning (at school)."

A review of her homework revealed that it was poorly done. In a few sections, most answers were wrong, and one portion was only half completed because JoMarie didn't read the instructions thoroughly.

Asked if she rushed through her homework to watch TV, she confessed. "That's one of the reasons."

JoMarie's mother, Margarita, 36, concedes that her daughter requires a vigilant eye.

parents compliment me on that." ■

59. The Washington Post

05/04/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Prince William Extra; Page V01

Diversity Brings New Challenges To Educators; County Schools Are Changing To Reflect Influx of Minorities

By Ann O'Hanlon

Washington Post Staff Writer

In six of Prince William County's 41 elementary schools and one of its 11 middle schools, "minorities" are now the majority of the student body. Overall, minority students make up 33 percent of the school system's enrollment of 49,000, a dramatic change from 22 percent in 1990.

The shifting makeup of the schools spells challenges in management, in the classroom and in the bottom line of the system's \$320 million budget.

As enrollment changes, school officials agree that staff demographics must change accordingly. But opinions differ as to whether the staff is changing quickly enough.

School Board member John Harper Jr. (Neabasco), an African American and the only nonwhite on the panel, said a student at Potomac High School recently told him, "We see more minority janitors than minority teachers." Harper bemoans the statement and the reality — 56 percent of the custodial staff is minority compared with 13 percent of teachers.

"There are no minority high school principals," said Harper, "and only one [in] middle school. . . . The minority recruitment is not good enough."

Superintendent Edward L. Kelly disagrees, saying strides have been enormous over the last five years.

"I think our efforts have been significant," he said, citing a jump in total minority employment from 12 percent five years ago to 16 percent today. "There's a limited number of minority youngsters graduating from high schools and universities, and they're in great demand. But we're doing okay."

But the problems presented by an increasing minority population extend beyond the staff. Administrators ponder how to coax minority students who don't speak English well into the mainstream, so that such vulnerable newcomers aren't easy prey for gangs, and how to continue to monitor student relations so that tensions don't erupt between different

racess or ethnicities.

Ed Johnson, Gar-Field High School's mediation coordinator, said mediating conflicts between students is a challenging job.

"It's very busy, and a lot of it has to do with the fact that we don't communicate across cultures," he said. "If we only had a few Islamic students, it's like they were esoteric, it's unusual. But if you have large numbers of Islamic students and they tend to stay together . . . the other kids react to that the same way any other group reacts historically. Then the name-calling starts and that kind of thing. And I think we're just beginning to see that here."

Most of Johnson's 200 mediations so far this school year have been between students of the same race or ethnic background. So far, he said, interracial tension is down from years gone by.

"Compared to tremendous confrontations between blacks and whites in 1974," Johnson said, speaking specifically of Gar-Field, "the situation now — race or ethnic differences have no place. It's almost like the kids are beyond race."

But others, including Harper, worry that is not quite the case. They point to Brentsville High School, where the enrollment is almost entirely white and where the use of a racist symbol as a good luck charm by the baseball team led to a coach's suspension and controversy in and around the school two years ago.

Many educators and Brentsville residents maintain that most or all of the students had no idea of the symbol's meaning and that it was not malicious. They point to the fact that that very school year, the homecoming queen was African American, as was the president of the student body a few years earlier.

While the event's meaning is still debated, Brentsville is working to change its image. It is holding a four-part seminar on multicultural education and is reaching out to students who typically are excluded somehow in the classroom.

Larry Bell, the county's supervisor of

multicultural education, said that there are those who raise their eyebrows even at the term but that multicultural education done well is "anything but controversial."

He exhorts teachers to call on girls, who are often neglected, he said. He has teachers modify lesson plans to include references to different cultures and countries.

When Bell, a former earth science teacher, taught about hurricanes, he would invite a female meteorologist in to speak to the class, giving the subtle message that women can. When studying Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" in high school English, offered one teacher during Bell's seminar, she could talk about women's role in Egypt and Rome. When teaching Hermann Hesse's "Siddhartha," another teacher proposed delving into Buddhism and Hinduism.

"How about the math teachers?" asked a Brentsville teacher at the session. Her colleague Dianne Marshall, a seventh-grade math teacher, answered the question.

"I teach nothing to my knowledge that comes from America," she said. "Much of the theories are German and Greek. The numerals come from Arabic."

Multicultural educating, she said, "just comes naturally."

Marshall said she once taught at a Chesapeake, Va., school much more diverse than Brentsville. That can have an effect on your teaching, she said.

"I think you teach the same things, but maybe from a slightly different perspective," she said. "Kids learn that different isn't bad."

Bell said his assignment can be stressful.

"We talk about race less than we talk about sex," he said. "The other thing that's tough is you're asking teachers to teach what they have never been taught."

There are financial ramifications to the changing enrollment, as well. Many of the minority students filling the schools are immigrants. Those students typically attend English for Speakers of

"JoMarie can work your mind over. She's very well-spoken. You got to be hard on her, sometimes, because she'll work you over," the mother said. "Other than that, she is learning a lot."

Von Humboldt's probation journey, as well as JoMarie's 6th grade education, will soon reach a climax when all 483 elementary schools -- including the 71 on probation -- take the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills this week, the only objective measure of whether any Chicago public schools have improved since Mayor Daley's executive team assumed control almost two years ago.

The school's performance on the test will be riding on the small shoulders of students like JoMarie and a dozen other 6th graders who have been receiving extra reading and math classes the past several weeks for the Iowa Tests.

Students in other grades whose math and reading scores are just below national norms like JoMarie's are receiving similar instruction in the hope that their scores can be raised to national norms.

But the volatile factors that occur after school complicate, and sometimes undermine, the mission of Von Humboldt, at 2620 W. Hirsch St.

Even for families where two parents are at home and are involved in their kids' lives, there's a serendipitous quality to whether kids complete homework, avoid the distractions of television, get to bed early and pursue healthy activities in neighborhoods controlled by gangs and drug dealers.

While the thrust of probation efforts has been training initiatives for teachers and principals, along with scrutiny of classroom procedures, how a child's education is affected by the vagaries of growing up in a typical inner-city neighborhood is harder to delineate.

According to many parents interviewed, blame is not so easily assigned in explaining why a child cannot read or is several years behind grade level when the culprits may be of an extensive you-pick-'em variety: Crime, family disintegration, drugs, poverty, dropout parents who are fearful and ignorant of schools, or the material condition of a decayed neighborhood that is depressing and intimidating despite new low-income housing.

At the same time, it is equally hard to ascertain parents' prevailing view of, and their participation in, the probation process, an initiative the Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees says should

help schools.

With just eight weeks left in the school year, Von Humboldt's experience with probation has created dramatically divergent opinions among parents. Perhaps most surprising is that a significant number of parents interviewed did not even know Von Humboldt was on probation -- a finding that baffled Principal Christ Kalamatas.

"How could they not know? Every month in my newsletter I write 'Probation Update, Probation Update,'" Kalamatas said. "I think it's because people have been oblivious to (accountability) for so long. It's never been an option done by the board before. It's disappointing. . . . Yeah, it bothers me, especially after we were on remediation for a half a year last year."

In general, parents felt their children were learning more this year, though some said they have noticed no difference. Most parents aware of Von Humboldt's probation status said they have found teachers and the principal more responsive than in the past. Yet many teachers insisted they have been working as hard as ever.

Among the more emotional responses from parents was the matter of whether their school should be on probation.

"They got a lot of nerve," said Vanessa Lee, 38, who has two children at Von Humboldt and whose two daughters have graduated from the school, including one who was valedictorian and now attends Lane Tech High School.

"The board should have asked the parents whether Von Humboldt should be on probation, and we would have said, 'Hell, no!'" Lee said. "This school is a hidden treasure, even though it's in a bad neighborhood."

But others parents felt the school was in want of a wake-up call.

"It needs to be on probation," said Linda Zayas, 32, a neighborhood resident since age 5 who graduated from Von Humboldt in 1979. She has a son in 4th grade and daughter in 6th. A Clemente High School dropout, Zayas said she wanted her children to learn more than she did.

"Before they first got on probation, the kids didn't want to go to school because the teachers weren't teaching them," Zayas said. "Now, the teachers are putting an effort to helping the students."

Margarita Oquendo has been acquainted with the school since enrolling in 1973 and graduating in 1975.

Since then, Margarita Oquendo's siblings, three children, and nieces and nephews have been attending Von Humboldt--a rare phenomenon when the trend for Chicago middle-class families is to move to the suburbs in search of better schools.

The Oquendo family tradition is expected to last until 2007, when Melanie should graduate, marking 34 years of family ties to Von Humboldt.

Given the family tradition, Oquendo expressed some embarrassment for not knowing about Von Humboldt's probation status. She added that she has hardly seen any of the school newsletters that Kalamatas said he writes every month.

"Until you mentioned it, I didn't know," Oquendo said, who added that the news struck her as funny.

"What are they doing wrong? Now, I'm worried that with all the school (extracurricular) activities they do have, it may be taking them out of the classroom," Oquendo said.

At report card pickup day last month, an occasion that typically draws 85 percent of the school's parents, many moms and dads were puzzled when asked about their experience with probation.

LaTerra Hadnot, 37, who has daughters in 3rd and 6th grades, was standing with another mother also unaware that Von Humboldt was on probation.

"I didn't know the school was on probation," said Hadnot, turning to the other parent as both stood outside a 6th-grade classroom waiting their turn to pick up report cards. "Jeez, he's (a reporter) from the outside and he's telling us, and we're on the inside."

At the same time, Hadnot said she has noticed several changes in the past year: More student discipline, security guards who walk some children home, the offer of a payment plan to buy the navy-blue-and-white school uniforms and Von Humboldt Dolphins T-shirts, and a school key chain distributed during report card pickup day.

"It's improved to me," Hadnot said.

Julio Irizarry, 33, a Cook County Forest Preserve police officer who lives across the street from Von Humboldt, has lived in the neighborhood all his life, but he, his wife and their two children who attend Von Humboldt are planning to move out of the neighborhood because they want to buy a home of their own.

"I went to public schools, and it's different today," Irizarry said. "You don't

have the influence from the parents. I remember my mother being involved in the school programs, and there used to be a clique (of parents) in the community. It's a tough world to grow up out there. . . . It's frustrating, and it's like a domino effect. It starts out at home, and it runs into the schools."

Irizarry said he has noticed many improvements while Von Humboldt has been on probation, such as more involvement between teachers and parents. Ultimately, he said, good schools depend on good homes.

"(T)here has been a dramatic improvement, and if it has to do with

probation, then so be it," Irizarry said. "You . . . wonder why did the school let itself get to where it's at? . . . Maybe I as a parent should be more involved with the school. It's a joint effort: The parents, the community, the school, the teachers. If I'm going to blame the school, then I'm going to blame the parents."

61. San Francisco Chronicle

May 5, 1997

Poor Kids Have Worst Schools, Survey Finds

Teresa Moore, Chronicle Staff Writer

Although American schools have steadily improved over the past decade, the 7.1 million children growing up in poor neighborhoods continue to attend the worst schools and post the lowest test scores, according to an annual survey of the nation's children to be released today.

Kids Count, an annual assessment of children's well-being prepared by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, reports that the high school dropout rate for poor children is five times that of middle-class children. When they grow up, high school dropouts are 10 times more likely to live in poverty than college graduates, researchers found.

The study, which looks at a number of indicators of child welfare, including infant mortality, teen pregnancy, violent crime arrests and single parenthood, compares this information by state.

According to figures from 1992 through 1996, California children are much more likely to be uninsured and less likely to receive court-ordered child support than the national average.

Out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, California ranked 50th for children living with parents who were high school dropouts. Twenty-six percent of the state's parents failed to finish high school, compared with 15 percent nationally. And one out of five young Californians lives below the poverty line.

"These data underscore the tough challenge California faces in achieving

economic independence for families who now receive welfare since key supports for children, such as health insurance and child support, are not in place for millions of children," said Lois Salisbury, president of Children Now, a children's issues research and policy development institute in Oakland.

Tony Cipollone, director of evaluation for the Casey Foundation, said that events like the recent Presidents' Summit for America's Future and the national conference on infant brain development are focusing public attention on children's issues. But he cautioned that a call for volunteerism was no substitute for government investment in education.

"We need to pay specific attention to supporting better schools," Cipollone said. "Volunteers are not the magic fix."

The study by the children's research and policy development foundation calls for a number of educational reforms to improve the nation's poorest schools. Among them:

- Smaller schools
- More intellectually engaging preschools
- High standards in curriculum, instruction and education
- Strong family participation
- Making education part of a larger community commitment to developing healthy families.

The study indicated a number of examples of effective programs in poor neighborhoods, including New York

City's Beacon schools, which are open late at night and on weekends; North Carolina's Smart Start program that combines state money, child care providers and community leaders to make sure poor children get good preschool education and health care; and the statewide Kentucky Education Reform Act, which increased funding for poorer school districts and for teacher development.

"There are innovative ideas all around the country," said Cipollone. "It's not that we don't know what constitutes good education, but we've got to find a way to make educational excellence the norm and not the exception."

The survey found that although the juvenile violent crime arrest rate has been rising for the past decade, the most recent figure — for 1994-95 — shows a slight decline.

"This suggests that this upward trend may be coming to an end," said Bill O'Hare, lead demographer for the Kids Count study. "But people are at a loss to explain why."

O'Hare said that overall, the research indicates a great need for more comprehensive approaches to problems affecting young people.

"Too often, an agency deals with just health or just housing or just education," O'Hare said. "This is not as effective as a program that deals with the whole child. We need more integration of services for children and families." ■

62. Detroit Free Press

May 5, 1997

Education benefits even the children

David Copperfield kind of crap." The ironic allusion to Dickens — just like the confused and scared voice of the adolescent narrator — is rarely understood by today's younger readers. But if we assign Dickens and teach students how to read him, they will begin

to gain the perspective they need to understand the intellectual and moral challenges presented by much of modern fiction.

So let's put Salinger back on the shelf and assign a classic. Students will learn

more. And — who knows? — they may even acquire a taste for Hawthorne or Cather or Thoreau, not to mention the modern writers. In due time of course. All in due time.

Special to The Bee ■

75. Los Angeles Times

* 05/04/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Metro Desk; Page B-9

ORANGE COUNTY VOICES

Students Aren't That Bad in Math Education: The county's fourth- and eighth-graders do well when tested on what they have been taught.

By JOHN F. DEAN

John F. Dean is Orange County superintendent of schools.

Claims are made in the media that California's fourth- and eighth-grade students rank among the worst in the nation in mathematics. What's the problem? Don't your public schools teach arithmetic and mathematics any more? The answer is, of course they do. It's time to set the record straight.

News stories deriding mathematics performance are based on one test: the NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress). Although I have never seen that examination, I must assume that it is a nationally standardized test.

On evidence, it is given across the nation to what we believe is an anything-but-representative sample of students in our fourth and eighth grades. California has 5.5 million K-12 students, with about 450,000 fourth-graders. More than 2,000 took the test statewide. Only a handful of those, two classes, were from Orange County's 442,000 K-12 students. Eighth grade numbers are close to the same.

Several Orange County school districts tested all of their students, not just a sample. Saddleback Valley fourth-graders, for example, took the California Achievement Test, a nationally standardized, reliable and

regularly updated test used for decades. Saddleback's fourth-graders scored in the 76th percentile; 76% of the students across the nation scored lower.

Santa Ana, with 86% Latino children, used the CTBS (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills), another nationally ranked exam, and scored at the 50th percentile, and these are students whose home language is not necessarily English.

Garden Grove's fourth-graders took the Metropolitan Achievement Test and scored at the 66th percentile.

Again, what's the problem? Why are our students showing so poorly on one test and so well on another? Basic to teaching is that you test what you teach. Good teachers teach the subject, then test what they taught.

One clue we learned recently is that the NAEP test spends half the testing time asking students to explain their reasoning. I'm not sure how recently you had to divide a fraction by a fraction and, unless you're a chef or an engineer, you probably don't have much need for that information.

But do you recall how to do it? Invert and multiply, right? But do you know why we do that? I don't have the slightest idea why I do. I was a journalism major at the university and journalism majors don't use that information very often. Serious, professional mathematicians need to know not only how but why, but

I am not certain that it needs to be among that list of facts everyone should commit to memory.

What is taught in California public schools is the province of the Legislature, the State Board of Education and the state Curriculum Commission. This commission sets subject matter guidelines on what shall be taught, then textbooks that embrace those guidelines are adopted by the State Board of Education. California is a major player in textbook adoptions, since we buy about 12% of all textbooks sold in the United States; in essence, we call the textbook-publishing shots.

Our teachers are teaching content the State Board of Education has directed. Several nationally recognized, reliable and respected tests prove that our students are not among the lowest performers in the nation. Test our students on what they have been taught, according to state guidelines and curriculum frameworks, and we are among the best.

Could we do better? Of course, and we will. New guidelines are being developed where more attention will be paid to the basics, but Orange County schools are not falling apart.

If you want to prove to yourself that our teachers are teaching and our children are learning, call and visit your local public school. ■

76. The Sacramento Bee

05/04/97; Edition: METRO FINAL; Section: FORUM; Page FO3

WHOSE NATIONWIDE STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION WILL BE ADOPTED?

By Lynne V. Cheney

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

news indeed.

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

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

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

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CAPTION:

Los Angeles Times illustration / John MacDonald

accreditation.

The state's unprecedented payment is an unintended result of a complex spending formula in the Education Reform Act of 1993, which sent more money to poorer cities.

While those communities were supposed to be paying more of their own costs by now - the fourth year of education reform - the state has continued to send them more money, letting Lawrence off the hook for school funding.

When the Lawrence school system's problems first came under scrutiny in the fall, state education officials complained that 98 percent of the city's school budget was being paid for by the state. But this year, the state only increased its share of Lawrence's budget.

Meanwhile, wealthier suburban school systems are complaining that the state didn't give them enough money. In towns such as Concord, Milton, Lexington, and Westwood, per-pupil spending has dropped an average of 6 percent since the reform act, because local property taxes haven't been able to keep up with rising enrollment and special education costs.

State education officials say they may challenge the city if the spending continues to go to what they have called frivolous expenses.

"We know Lawrence has significant problems, and there's no way we're going to let the state pick up the tab," said Commissioner of Education Robert V.

Antonucci. "I'm concerned that it's business as usual up there. And if it's business as usual, they might as well stop the budget planning right now. We're going to make sure this money is spent on the purposes of the reform act."

Globe stories beginning in the fall documented the city shortchanging textbooks and teachers, which the accreditors said were needed at the high school. Instead, receipts showed tens of thousands of dollars going to bagpipe and skating lessons, landscaping, and a bubble gum machine for an elementary school.

The regional accreditation agency formally stripped the high school of its seal of approval in March, making Lawrence High School only the second school in the state to lose accreditation. The accreditors said school officials had for almost a decade ignored a list of 50 specific problems that needed to be corrected. There is not enough air on the fifth floor of the school, where the school has its programs for pregnant teenagers and special-education students. There is not enough light in other classrooms.

The problems in Lawrence prompted Governor William F. Weld to form an audit team to examine whether schools were spending their money properly. The state auditor, working with the Department of Education, is expected to release a report on the schools sometime next month.

"The real question isn't so much the source of the money, it's how it's being spent," said Michael J. Sentance, Weld's education adviser. "That's still a big question."

The \$2 billion reform law was written for school systems such as Lawrence, which lacked the money to pay for good schools. It set a minimum that communities had to spend on education, and it sent more state money to communities that couldn't raise enough money from their own property taxes.

Much of the state money was in the form of subsidies - known as overburden aid - that were to be paid for only a few years. Communities were supposed to pick up more of the tab as they got more money from the state lottery.

Yet while the state has increased the flow of lottery money to local districts, it has kept up the overburden aid, handing out \$108 million this year.

Lawrence is getting the best deal of all.

For while other school systems are getting overburden aid, they are paying out of their own pocket, according to Department of Education figures. Springfield, for instance, will get \$8.5 million in overburden aid next year, but will also spend \$24.5 million of its own money. New Bedford will get about \$5 million in overburden aid, but will pay \$11.4 million of its own money, about 13 percent of its total school budget. ■

Minneapolis Star Tribune

April 30, 1997

Basic skills testing results: Minneapolis schools launch big plans for better scores

David Peterson / Star Tribune

Facing a problem that officials describe as "astronomical" in scope, Minneapolis public schools are getting serious about student test scores.

At Chiron Middle School, where 70 percent of eighth-graders failed the state's basic-skills math test, homework may be required on weekends.

At Banneker, where 80 percent failed the state reading test, if you don't know your stuff, you won't go to the next grade.

At Anthony, where a third failed both tests, students may have to drop an

elective, take reading and English at the same time, and stay after school.

And at Franklin, where 77 percent failed the reading test, ex-Army recruitment commander is trying to hustle kids into summer school.

"The problems are astronomical," three top officials told school board members in a recent memo, "and challenge fundamental assumptions about the instructional methods."

The city's two-thirds failure rate on the recent statewide basic-skills tests has school board members glaring at their

senior staff, demanding to know what "The Plan" is. Students must pass the tests to graduate from high school. And schools all over town are compiling lists of what they're going to do to boost scores next year.

"I don't know what the solution is, but what we're doing now is not working," said Jonathan Berry, the ex-Army officer leading the summer-school charge at Franklin. "Our scores are at a crisis level."

And time is desperately short. The next round of testing will be in October.

including considering whether it would be better to decriminalize some drugs, she was demonized as an irresponsible liberal. And when, in response to a question about whether a discussion of masturbation should be part of sex education in school, she said perhaps it should, she was booted out of Washington before she could pack her stethoscope.

With a mishmash of social policy coming out of Washington, one longs for a Jocelyn Elders to talk sense to our policymakers. Teenage pregnancy is still higher in the United States than in any other industrialized country, and a national campaign aimed at reducing it is being launched this week in Washington.

Elders ought to be there to remind the heavy moralizers that with 80 percent of young people having sex before they're 20, urging chastity on them can't be the only approach.

"We still believe we can legislate morals, rather than teach responsibility," Elders says. "We teach sex on TV, in the movies, on the streets, but we don't want to teach it in the schools."

National antidrug groups have

squared off over the wisdom of President Bill Clinton's drug policy. The current approach involves targeting marijuana smoking among teenagers and giving stiff prison sentences to drug offenders. Elders would say that demonizing marijuana smoking as if it were as devastating as using crack and heroin, and packing the prisons with nonviolent drug offenders is not sound policy.

"Marijuana has never killed anybody," she says. "Tobacco, which your government subsidizes, kills 400,000 people a year, and alcohol kills 100,000. Only 3 million people in this country are drug addicts, while maybe 33 million use drugs at some point."

If she were still in office, she'd excoriate the current approach to welfare reform, which will cut off already minimal benefits to the poor and unskilled without assuring them jobs, child care and medical coverage. The one thing she will never forgive Bill Clinton for, Elders says, is signing the welfare reform bill.

In her speeches, Elders talks about public health not just from the medical point of view, but with a broad view. Her

gripe is that we already have the wherewithal to solve many social problems, but lack the will and the consensus: "We have so many advances in technology, yet we can't prevent teenage pregnancy, the consequences of tobacco smoking, slow down the speed of AIDS, immunize all children or even feed all children."

Elders believes poverty is the No. 1 problem in our society today, because it causes so many other ills. She calls for reforms - including a health-care system that stresses preventive medicine instead of delaying care until people are really sick, better family planning, improved education and health education for young people.

The surgeon general's job has been vacant ever since Elders left, and you can feel the void in Washington. "You've got to have leaders who are willing to lead," Elders says, and you remember why she was such a great public servant. Her insistence on simple common sense in shaping public policy makes our current crop of public officials look all the more pathetic. ■

Associated Press

05-01 4:59a

Onslow County schools settle pair of Title IX issues

JACKSONVILLE (AP) - Onslow County school Superintendent Ron Singletary has signed a "voluntary resolution agreement" with the Office of Civil Rights to resolve two Title IX complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Education.

In the resolution, Onslow County schools agreed to publish a "general notice of nondiscrimination on bulletin boards at all schools in the district"

because Title IX is designed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and athletics.

In addition, the student grievance procedure will be revised in the student handbook to include a cross reference to the Title IX grievance procedure, according to the resolution.

The revised student handbook will not be distributed until the start of the 1997-98 school year.

In the first complaint filed against Jacksonville High School in November 1996, the complainant alleged there were nine areas where the school violated Title IX. In January, a second complaint alleged Onslow County schools didn't meet Title IX requirements because the policy and the name of the Title IX coordinator were not publicized.

Singletary signed the agreement April 16. ■

Boston Globe

May 1, 1997, page B1,

Lawrence to spend nothing on schools: Quirk in ed reform means state pays bills

By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff

Even as the Lawrence public schools are being challenged by a state audit and allegations of misspending, the state will pick up the entire tab for their \$80

million budget next year.

Lawrence will be the only school system in the commonwealth to have its schools paid for entirely by state taxpayers. That gives a new distinction to

a district already notorious for spending money on laptop computers for administrators, sleeping bags, flower arrangements, and canoes, even while its high school was being stripped of its

There aren't that many school days between now and then — one reason senior managers are recommending that summer school be made mandatory for some students.

Summer sign-up week

The students at the center of it all are feeling the heat.

Four eighth-graders gathered at a table in the media center at Franklin Middle School replied with a simultaneous "Yeah!" this week when a reporter asked whether the need to pass the test to graduate is weighing on them.

"A lot," added 14-year-old Jamar Esaw. He's going to summer school this year, having been tripped up by the test. "It didn't seem hard. I guess I was overconfident."

Spurred in part by the disclosure that 91 percent of black eighth-graders in Minneapolis schools failed at least one part of the test, the City Council and Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton have declared this week Summer School Sign-up Week in the city. The schools hope to attract 10,000 students to 80 sites.

At Banneker, a kindergarten-through-eighth grade school, staff members and parents have agreed that "we cannot 'socially promote' students any more. If you do not understand the material, you will have to stay back" and repeat your grade, said principal Azell Smith.

Will the school soon have 6-foot second-graders stealing other kids' lunch money? Smith laughed. "We're not talking about a large number of kids," he said. "Probably two or three at a grade level who do so poorly on exams. Those who are borderline will pass and get extra help."

Five factors for failure

Berry went from being commander of an Army recruitment unit in the southern Twin Cities suburbs to math teacher at Franklin to his current job as a "TOSA" — teacher on special assignment — who is organizing Franklin's summer school. He's well positioned to have a feel for the underlying problems.

"First," he said, "a lot of kids come to middle school without the basic skills. If they start falling behind in first grade, it gets wider and wider each year. They need special help early.

"Second, we get kids in from Chicago or Gary Ind. who were not raised in Minneapolis.

"Third is a lack of time on task. When school starts, we have 120 kids absent, 60 of whom trickle in during the day.

"Fourth is disruptive kids. We have hundreds of kids referred each month for being disruptive, and when they are pulled from class, they get further and further behind.

"Fifth is negative self-image from having parents in jail, things like that, a lot of negative values. We need to focus on the positive, on not letting other people control who you are — and we will do that."

Either the School District as a whole or individual schools are addressing most of those issues. A 12-page summary given to the school board in recent days of steps being taken and planned at all schools states that Roosevelt High, for instance, is planning to "emphasize attendance for 1997-98," in part by "reporting daily absences to a specific person."

At Franklin a similar strategy is being used to deal with disruption. Instead of sending disruptive kids to a room that is watched over by a series of different

people, they'll see the same face each time.

Looking at early grades

Districtwide, meanwhile, officials are emphasizing that, important as it is to offer catch-up help to kids in the eighth grade and beyond, the real work of teaching reading goes on at the kindergarten-to-third-grade level. Said one memo to school board members: "The district needs to focus its long-term instructional efforts on K-3 reading and math."

For older students, a key tactic will be summer school. Plans vary, but at Franklin kids who need extra help will be in school in the mornings only, beginning in July. Berry has 50 people signed up and wants 150. He has picked teachers for the task whom he calls "people magnets," teachers who stay after school and are always surrounded by kids.

Summer school doesn't start until July 7, though, he said, "so it's going to be a challenge to reclaim those students when they've been away from school for a few weeks."

The school has "practice-tested" sixth- and seventh-graders on the basic-skills tests to see what problems are looming in coming years and to target instruction. There's also a Saturday school at Franklin, with classes from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. About 180 students are signed up, of whom 40 to 70 show up on a given day.

Are the state tests a good thing, on the whole?

"I think so," Berry said. "It forces everyone to come up with a curriculum and makes us accountable. If we give a kid a high school diploma, that kid ought to be able to do this, this and that." ■

Los Angeles Times

* 05/01/97; Edition: Orange County Edition; Section: Metro; Zones Desk; Page B-3

Community News Focus

IRVINE: School Administrator on List for Florida Job

By TINA NGUYEN

Dennis Smith, the administrator who guided high-achieving Irvine Unified School District out of bankruptcy, has been approached by officials in Florida to head one of the nation's largest school districts.

Smith and three other candidates

chosen by a search firm have been invited to interview with Florida's Orange County School District, a 130,000-student system with a \$1-billion annual budget.

The district, the 15th-largest in the nation, encompasses downtown Orlando and outlying agricultural areas.

Rapid enrollment growth and diversity are major issues in the district, whose students come from 194 countries and speak 93 languages, including Spanish, Creole and Portuguese, school officials said.

The opportunity came as a surprise, said Smith, who has spent much of his

career in California and became superintendent in Irvine in June 1995.

"I'm very much a part of the Irvine family, and it's a wonderful district and a quality school system," Smith said. "I

believe it's one of the finest in all of California."

Smith will meet for the first time this weekend with the Florida school

officials, who say they expect to make a choice by the end of next week.

The person hired will succeed Supt. Donald Shaw, who is retiring in June. ■

Chicago Tribune

05/01/97; Edition: SOUTH SPORTS FINAL; S; Section: METRO CHICAGO; Page 7

CITY SCHOOLS CLAMP DOWN ON VIOLENCE BY STUDENTS

By Eric Ferkenhoff, Tribune Staff Writer.

The Chicago Public Schools added to its arsenal against violent students Wednesday, authorizing automatic expulsion hearings for pupils accused of serious felonies outside of school hours and off school grounds—with or without a conviction.

The updated discipline code, adopted during Wednesday's monthly board meeting, is based upon the premise that a child who commits violent acts on a Saturday is equally prone to acts of aggression on a Monday.

"We need some mechanism to be able to deal with violent youthful offenders who are in our schools," said Marilyn Johnson, chief attorney for the school system.

While previous discipline codes called for a mandatory hearing only in cases of weapons violations on school grounds and during school hours, the expanded policy requires hearings in cases involving any Class X felony. Those

crimes range from criminal sexual assault to murder, drug offenses to arson—no matter when or where the alleged offense occurs.

The new policy also widens the definition of weapons under the discipline code to include "any array of things that could cause bodily harm." That includes guns, knives, homemade gadgets and such common tools as screwdrivers and hammers, said Johnson.

The hearings would be mandatory for all students in 6th grade and up who are arrested and charged with a violent offense. Younger children will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

"Even though this change mandates a hearing, that does not translate into the kid being immediately expelled," said Johnson.

Those students who are expelled will have the option of enrolling in one of the system's alternative schools for violent or otherwise troubled students. And school officials have said they do not fear constitutional challenges to the policy,

since it provides for hearings.

In other action Wednesday, the board divested nearly \$8.4 million in surplus property, including the sale of the historic Chicago Building at 7 W. Madison St. to the Art Institute of Chicago for \$1.3 million. It also sold the land at 22 W. Monroe St., upon which the Shubert Theatre sits, to Monroe Presentations for \$2.3 million.

The board also relinquished a 4-acre site at Division Street and Clybourn Avenue, selling the land to a developer for nearly \$4.4 million to construct a shopping mall as part of the Cabrini-Green public housing redevelopment project.

The \$8.4 million in sales will be used to offset the purchase of the Commonwealth Edison building at 125 S. Clark St., the board's new headquarters. The acquisition of the building, which in itself will cost \$8.3 million, was formally approved Wednesday. ■

The Washington Post

05/01/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: Metro; Page D03

Roosevelt High Closing Leaves Most Students Home

By Debby Wilgoren
Washington Post Staff Writer

More than 70 percent of students from the District's Roosevelt Senior High School have stayed home this week rather than attend classes at alternative sites while a leak in their school's roof is repaired, Principal Learie Phillip said yesterday.

Roosevelt — the third D.C. school closed for at least a day by the D.C. fire marshal in the last five weeks — is tentatively scheduled to reopen Monday. In the meantime, faculty members have

organized field trips and makeshift lessons using local museums, libraries and four nearby schools. But relatively few students are showing up.

"To miss a day of school, you miss a lot," said Phillip, who has instructed his staff to call the homes of absent students and urge them to come to school. "To miss a half a day of school, you miss a lot. It is an unfortunate situation that is beyond the control of the local school."

Only 256 of 979 students showed up at the alternative sites Tuesday, the first day Roosevelt, in the Petworth

neighborhood, was closed. Yesterday, the number increased to 276 students: 38 12th-graders, 50 11th-graders, 95 10th-graders and 93 ninth-graders. Before the roof problem, he said, the absentee rate rarely was more than 15 percent.

The seniors went with their teachers to Martin Luther King Memorial Library to work on research papers. Others went to the National Zoo for a program on environmental and life science, then were given homework based on that trip.

Phillip said teachers are discussing

schools taught a "word of the day" in every class.

South Shore focused on grammar for a month. At Jones Metropolitan, which showed the system's biggest math jumps, teachers gave students a diagnostic math test last September and required them to

do worksheets keyed to their test weaknesses on their own time.

Vallas said the gains are real because "there's a lot of arrows pointing up," such as increased attendance and college entrance exam scores.

If scores had gone down, Vallas said, critics would have put stock in them. Now that they're up, he said, "People who failed in the past are trying to make excuses for our success."

Contributing: Jon Schmid

Associated Press

05-01 8:05a

House approves bill to require testing for high-school diploma

By DAVID GERMAIN
Associated Press Writer

JUNEAU (AP) - High-school students would have to pass a basic competency test in reading, writing and math before they could graduate under a bill passed Wednesday by the Alaska House.

The legislation, which would take effect with students entering ninth-grade this fall, would direct the state Department of Education to develop standards for the statewide exam.

Such a test would make schools more accountable for producing capable graduates and force students to take more responsibility for learning, since they could not receive a diploma until they passed the exam, said Rep. Con Bunde, R-Anchorage, the bill's sponsor.

Schools do a disservice by handing out diplomas to students who are illiterate or cannot do basic math, Bunde said. The test would help ensure that graduates reach a basic level of competency in those subjects, he said.

"There's supposed to be value in a

high-school diploma, but right now it's a birthright, you get it whether you have any ability or not," Bunde said.

The bill would allow students to take the test once every three months for up to three years after they leave school. That would give students ample opportunity to prepare and eventually pass the test to receive their diplomas, Bunde said.

Opponents said it was a good idea in principle but that a single test toward the end of high school was too simplistic.

"A statewide competency test of necessity will be of the lowest common denominator," said Rep. John Davies, D-Fairbanks. "It won't set the bar high enough for some students and will set the bar way too high for some students."

Critics said such a test could unfairly deny diplomas for less gifted students who have spent years attending classes. A better solution would be to offer periodic testing throughout the school years to identify students who need help to graduate, opponents said.

"It's just not effective to give a test

and say, 'Gee, you have some problems. You've got to take the test again next year and hope you pass,'" said John Cyr, president of NEA-Alaska, the union representing most state teachers.

Supporters of the bill said schools already should be evaluating students as they progress through school and offer remedial instruction to those who fall behind.

Rep. Scott Ogan, R-Palmer, said the test also would give Alaskans some assurances that their tax dollars were being well spent by school districts.

"I see it as a report card on our educational system," Ogan said.

The bill passed 26-13, with the 12-member Democratic minority and one Republican, Rep. Beverly Masek said she opposed the bill because of the costs to administer the test, estimated at about \$1.8 million over the first six years.

The bill is subject to a final vote in the House before it moves on for Senate consideration.

Associated Press

05-01 4:30a

Poll: public schools earn a B-minus

MILWAUKEE (AP) - Wisconsin's public schools get no better than a grade of B-minus, a new poll shows.

Despite school reform, "only 13 percent of Wisconsin adults say the quality of education provided by their local public schools is 'excellent,'" researcher Andrew Smith said.

He worked on the poll released Wednesday by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Social Science Research Facility.

Forty-seven percent say public

education is good, 23 percent say it is fair, 11 percent say it is poor and 2 percent say it is very poor, Smith said.

Those with low incomes, who are not registered to vote and those surveyed in La Crosse and Eau Claire were most likely to say the quality of education provided by their local public schools is poor or very poor.

The random telephone survey of 505 adults was conducted March 26 through April 15. The margin of error was listed as plus or minus 4.4 percent.

The survey also asked questions about disparities in school spending and the school choice program that uses taxpayer money to send poor Milwaukee children to private, nonsectarian schools.

Residents were split over the use of vouchers for parochial schools.

Forty-nine percent said they "strongly favor" or "favor somewhat" the use of vouchers for parochial schools. But 46 percent either "oppose somewhat" or "strongly oppose" their use. The others said they didn't know.

ways to make up for lost instructional time. But he said he is not likely to penalize students who are absent by lowering their grades or failing them — even if they exceed seven unexcused absences, after which school regulations say grades should be lowered.

Parents may have decided the alternative programs held this week are of little academic value, he said, and "would be totally up in arms" if their children were punished for not attending. "It's almost like penalizing them for a

situation that is not their fault. Because the building is not their fault."

Fire code violations have been a chronic problem in the long-neglected D.C. school buildings. As a result of a lawsuit, the city is under court order to have buildings inspected every six months.

The new D.C. school administration has asked for tens of millions of dollars to repair buildings. Officials also plan to use two vacant schools for "swing space" next year, so there will be classrooms and

facilities readily available if a school is temporarily closed. Currently, auditoriums and cafeterias of neighboring schools are used.

Roosevelt seniors should report today to nearby Petworth Elementary, at 801 Shepherd St. NW. Juniors are being bused from Roosevelt to Lincoln Middle School, at 16th and Irving streets NW. Sophomores should go to MacFarland Middle School, at 4400 Iowa Ave. NW, and freshmen should go to Sharpe Health School, at 4300 13th St. NW. ■

Chicago Sun-Times

May 1, 1997

City high schools' test scores surge

BY ROSALIND ROSSI

Education Reporter

Is it real, or is it Memorex?

That was the gist of questions that bombarded Mayor Daley on Wednesday when he put on his leader-of-the-schools hat and unveiled test score gains in the city's public high schools.

Were the gains real improvement or just a huge new emphasis on teaching to the test? Was this just a statistical blip?

But Chicago Board of Education President Gerry Chico asked, what's wrong with teaching with the idea of passing a test as a goal? "Everybody who succeeded in life was taught to the test," Chico said. "Physicians, doctors, accountants — they were all taught to the test."

Scores from nationally normed Tests of Achievement and Proficiency announced Wednesday showed 52 of the city's 62 regular high schools increased the percent of students at or above national norms in reading, and 61 of 62 schools gained in math.

Schools and Regions Chief Blondean Davis called the jumps dramatic and in some cases phenomenal. Sixteen schools doubled at least one score, 22 showed double-digit math gains, and five had double-digit reading gains.

But even Daley conceded that the scores were nothing to boast about.

Systemwide, only 24.5 percent of all ninth- and 11th-graders met or exceeded national reading norms, up from 21.7 percent last year. The latest scores were the highest in four years.

Math scores hit their highest mark in seven years. About 30.4 percent of

students met national math norms, up nearly nine percentage points from 21.7 percent last year.

Nationally, 50 percent of students will hit at least the norm, or the 50th percentile, on a test such as this.

Only seven high schools had more than 50 percent of their students meeting or beating national norms in reading. Hubbard, the school ranked eighth, had only 37.2 percent. In math, only six schools had at least half of their students at or above the national average.

"We have a long way to go," Daley said. "[High schools] have been lousy in the past, and no one's been fired about it. The high school system was a complete mess. You know it. I know it."

But Julie Woestehoff, head of Parents United for Responsible Education, is waiting for more than just a one-year gain under Daley, who has been watched nationwide since he gained control of the School Board.

"A one-year jump is not significant," Woestehoff said. "I think it could be a statistical anomaly. I think it's a very good reflection of how much time was put into test-taking. The question is, is improved test-taking what our schools should be about?"

At Amundsen High School, which nearly doubled its scores after being placed on academic probation last October, Principal Edward Klunk said the entire state has become "test-crazed" because of the stakes attached to state tests.

"This is the direction we have to

take," said Klunk, whose teachers started giving practice reading tests in November as part of a schoolwide reading push. "They want us test-crazed."

Officials conceded that this year's systemwide count left out about 580 students who were held back in eighth grade last summer because they were at least two grade levels behind. However, 11th-grade gains were strong.

Woestehoff said the scores reflected pressure put on teachers and principals to produce on the proficiency exam or face probation or restaffing. Half of the high schools are on probation because at least 85 percent of their students are not at national reading averages. Officials said Wednesday's scores could pull four to eight schools off the list.

In addition, there was pressure on ninth-graders who faced summer school for the first time this year if their proficiency test scores were below grade level.

"A little pressure never hurt anybody," said schools Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas.

Tests may have reflected performance for the first time because students finally took them seriously. Before, said Kelly High School Principal John Gelsomino, "There was no visible goal. You took it, and it was gone."

The pressure also produced a host of academic initiatives, especially in schools with probation managers. Some started speed-reading classes; others taught reading or writing in every subject. Many

Educators uncertain over testing

Some ask whether call by Clinton for national standard is needed.

By KATE BEEM
and LAURIE J. SCOTT
Staff Writers

Area educators who watched President Clinton's State of the Union speech Tuesday night praised the president's emphasis on education.

The blanket endorsements ended there, with critics skeptical of Clinton's suggestions of teaching students character qualities, such as honesty, or expanding experimental charter schools.

In his "call to action for American education," Clinton urged the development of national standards and testing in reading and math to judge whether students meet those standards.

That sounds good to Missouri educators, who just went through an exhaustive process in coming up with the Show-Me Standards, the state's new testing program. Independence Superintendent Bob Watkins said Clinton's speech "lends credence to that effort."

But Center Superintendent Bill Hawver said that there's already some national testing and that he doesn't know if more is needed.

The federal government already has standards — Goals 2000, a 10-year push toward educational excellence begun in 1990 — and the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, which periodically test samples of students from each state.

Rick Miller, spokesman for the Department of Education, said the fourth- and eighth-grade tests proposed by Clinton would complement the assessments many states already have.

"This gives them a national and international benchmark, which their own testing doesn't do," Miller said. "It used to be if you were in Kansas City you'd only compete against students in that area. Now you're competing against students in Spain or Japan. It's good to know where you measure up."

Both proposed tests are based on existing exams, Miller said. The tests would be redesigned to make them more accessible to all students in those grades.

The first year the government will provide funding to make the tests available to every fourth- and eighth-grader. After that, local dis-

tricts would pay to administer the tests. But it's not mandatory, Miller said.

Jim Morris, spokesman for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, said the state has already emphasized many of the things Clinton suggested.

As for a national test, Morris said state officials were taking a "wait-and-see" approach.

"Clearly, there are pros and cons to national tests," Morris said.

After much research and retooling, Missouri's Show-Me Standards were approved by the State Board of Education last year. Along with that, educators have developed new assessment tools.

The state requires the Missouri Mastery Achievement Test, which is available for students in second through 10th grades, although not all districts give the test at all

grades.

A new standardized math test will be introduced this spring to several districts as part of an overhaul of all state tests.

The new math test is voluntary this spring, but all districts will be required to give the test to students in the fourth, eighth and 10th grades in 1998.

The state is developing new English, reading and science tests, which will be ready for districts to use voluntarily in 1998. They will be mandatory in 1999.

There also will be tests in health, physical education and the arts ready in 2000. Those will be given at grade levels to be determined later this year.

The Park Hill School District will give the new math test this spring. Larry Gardner, the district's assistant superintendent for curriculum, said he hopes the state models will be used in creating national tests.

"Our educational leaders in this state have already taken steps to raise those standards the president addressed as well as implement a better test for evaluating student achievement," Gardner said.

Kansas educators also appreciated the president's attention to education, especially his call for bipartisan support.

But Shawnee Mission Superintendent Marjorie Kaplan also questioned establishing more standards and tests.

Kaplan would like to see how Kansas students compare nationally and internationally, but she said she needed more information about the president's plan.

UNIVERSAL, CHIEFS SAY

By the upcoming school year, nearly every state will have a statewide testing program in place, says a new report.

Currently, 46 states have assessment programs, says an annual report released yesterday by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Two states, Colorado and Minnesota, are developing their tests. Only Nebraska and Iowa—where 99 percent of districts voluntarily participate in local assessments—aren't developing statewide programs.

The only change from last year's survey is that Colorado now has a test in place (May 31, 1996).

Quality More Than Quantity

In addition to the almost universal acceptance of state tests, the assessments themselves are getting better, officials said.

"The major changes in the last six years are not so much in number but in character and content" of the tests, said Ambach, referring to a desire to align curriculum and testing that a national education summit spurred in 1989.

States are tailoring the tests to state content standards and relying less on "off-the-shelf," commercially available tests, the report says.

States report using a variety of test items. Last year, 41 used multiple choice items, but nearly as many, 36, used extended written responses. In fact, 23 states have at least one assessment that includes no multiple choice items at all.

"States appear to be almost as

comfortable administering and scoring writing assessments with extended responses as they do about administering multiple choice tests," the report said. However, some states have found out the hard way that alternative forms of testing can be fraught with peril, the report noted.

California, for instance, abandoned its test that relied heavily on extended written responses in the face of political pressure from conservatives over the content of some essay questions (ED, Sept. 30, 1994).

Indiana had to fend off a lawsuit alleging that the tests it was developing invaded children's privacy. It actually expanded its use of open-ended items last year after involving the public, including having a citizen's panel review the items.

"The current emphasis on performance or alternative assessments is not going to disappear," the report predicted.

Link To National Tests

Though states are developing their tests at a furious pace, they are being driven by developments at the federal level, including using the state allotment of Goals 2000 funding to develop exams and requirements in the reauthorization of Title I to include assessments, noted Gordon Ambach, CCSSO's director.

In turn, states will have significant input into developing President Clinton's proposal for voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math: CCSSO was recently awarded the contract to design the specifications which will be used by commercial test

developers to write the actual questions.

The grades most often assessed by states are fourth, eighth and eleventh, which not only mirror the levels measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress but also fit with Clinton's proposal.

"This bodes well for efforts to link state and national tests," said Ed Roeber, CCSSO's director of the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (ED, March 4).

Comparing state and national tests has proven to be a bewitching problem so far.

Education Secretary Richard Riley recently told House members that students generally score better on state tests than on NAEP (ED, April 30).

But that data doesn't compare the actual state tests to NAEP, Ambach protested, likening it to comparing "apples and bananas and pears." For instance, the SREB report compares some third-grade state scores with fourth-grade NAEP scores.

"We've got to work with states and NAEP on consistent ways to compare, or else the public is going to go nuts," Ambach said.

"Trends in State Student Assessment Programs, Fall 1996" is \$10.95, plus \$2 shipping, from Council of Chief State School Officers, 1664 Algoma Dr., Okemos, Mich. 48864-4059, (517)347-1145. Paper and electronic versions of the data tables are \$199 for testing companies and \$49 for nonprofit organizations, from the same address. —Laureen Lazarovici■

25. Education Daily

May 6, 1997

AT&T GIVING \$22.5 MILLION TO EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 1997

AT&T recently announced it will give \$22.5 million in foundation, corporate and product donations to education initiatives this year.

All giving to K-12 education this year will fall under the company's two-year-old AT&T Learning Network

program, set to give \$150 million over five years to meet a White House goal that, by 2000, every U.S. elementary and secondary school have Internet access (ED, Oct. 15, 1996).

Under the Learning Network initiative, projects should focus on training and professional development;

family involvement; community collaboration; and mentoring.

Turning Teachers to Mentors

AT&T encourages projects that "change the role of teacher to coach and mentor," said Marilyn Reznick, vice president of education programs at the AT&T Foundation.

TRADE

23. Education Daily

May 6, 1997

SCHOOL FUNDING HOLDS UP IN BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Most of President Clinton's education agenda remains intact after negotiations with congressional leaders produced a fiscal 1998 budget deal last week.

Lawmakers and the White House announced late Friday that \$35 billion in higher education tax credits and deductions will be in the budget plan, nearly hitting the \$36 billion mark that Clinton requested. The deal cinched \$10 million more for higher education than sources had reported on Friday afternoon.

The negotiations also produced a \$3.2 billion increase over this year's spending level for discretionary spending across K-12 and higher education, from Title I to Work-Study.

Clinton originally asked for a \$2.9 billion increase (ED, Feb. 7).

Clinton's America Reads literacy initiative would receive the \$260 million that the president requested. And negotiators agreed to Clinton's Pell Grant increase, which would boost the maximum award from \$2,700 to \$3,000.

"The president has fought very hard for the last two years to make the point that you can invest in education while still balancing the budget," said Education Secretary Richard Riley in a statement.

Construction Cut Out

One loser in the deal was Clinton's plan to help states and localities make interest payments on school construction and repairs, contrary to reports earlier Friday. Clinton had estimated that the one-time \$5 billion expenditure would spur \$20 billion in school construction (March 18). From the start, GOP leaders had

resisted the school construction aid, calling it a new entitlement.

"The withdrawal of support for school infrastructure improvement means that a longstanding problem of huge proportions will only grow worse," said a statement from Edward McElroy, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers.

'Considerable Ambiguity'

Although the deal set funding levels for broad categories of programs, the specifics still have to be hammered out by congressional appropriators and tax writers.

The \$35 billion for higher education tax relief would include a \$1,500 nonrefundable tax credit called Hope Scholarships, as well as a \$10,000 annual tax deduction for postsecondary education expenses. How the two are divvied within that total spending level will be determined by the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees.

That spending total also does not include tax relief for employer-paid tuition or education spending from Individual Retirement Accounts, efforts supported by Clinton and lawmakers from both parties.

"There remains considerable ambiguity," said Terry Hartle, director of government relations for the American Council on Education. "It is not enough money to do the things popular on Capitol Hill."

The White House and lawmakers also are looking at carving about \$2 billion in savings from the Family Education Loan and Direct Student Loan programs.

Hartle said it is still unclear where

those savings will come from, but said that interest subsidies paid to lenders and federally funded reserves for student loan guarantors could be possible areas from which to cut.

Clinton already has proposed finding savings in those two areas (ED, April 23).

Robbing Peter

Although education programs whose funding is set yearly will see an overall \$3.2 billion increase, budget negotiators are leaving the specifics up to the appropriations committees.

Hartle said the increase for education could come at the expense of other worthy health and labor programs.

"If they do not increase the pie, they will have to trim or eliminate programs," he said, adding that the National Institutes of Health and Head Start are two areas that could suffer.

Just The Beginning

While Clinton and Congress congratulated each other on the budget deal, it is only the beginning of a long legislative process.

Congressional leaders hope to take a budget resolution to the floor of both chambers as soon as possible. The resolution sets spending targets and does not have to be signed by Clinton.

Once that budget resolution is passed, the appropriations committees will begin to determine specific spending levels.

The House and Senate already have introduced legislation that would continue to fund the government at 98 percent of its current level if appropriators do not finish spending legislation by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year. — Rebecca S. Weiner ■

24. Education Daily

May 6, 1997

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS NEARLY

black students and expand their proficiency with standard English.

Left out is the politically charged

language about ebonics and the suggestion that the district should pursue bilingual financing for African-American

students just as it does for students who speak Spanish or Chinese at home.

04:44 EDT May 6, 1997■

4. The Washington Post

05/06/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A04

Oakland Group Retreats on 'Ebonics'

The Oakland schools task force that six months ago created a worldwide furor by declaring the speech patterns of some black students a separate "genetically based" language — one deserving of being preserved in classrooms — has issued a new report that does not use the term "ebonics."

The new document, to be presented to the Oakland Board of Education on Wednesday, also omits past suggestions

that teachers be trained to speak black English and that the school district consider applying for federal bilingual education funds for black students. What it does propose is a comprehensive but conventional series of moves to improve the educational achievement of the black majority in the 52,000-student district.

But Jean Quan, the president of the Oakland Board of Education, said the district is not backing down from its

original intent of helping improve student achievement by recognizing linguistic differences.

"Our kids don't speak standard English and we want to respect the culture they bring from home and want to use it to help them speak standard English," Quan said. "Whatever you call it, many of our children from our poorest neighborhoods don't speak standard English."■

5. Chicago Sun-Times

05/04/97; Section: NEWS

U.S. students receive hands-on science exam

RENE SANCHEZ
WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON A new version of a national test in science is assessing students' ability in the subject by requiring them, for the first time, to perform hands-on experiments, not just answer multiple-choice questions.

Students nationwide take the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is widely used to judge the progress of schools every few years. The test has been revised to try to make science instruction more relevant and rigorous.

"This tough, new test is going to notch up what our young people know about science and it's long overdue," Education Secretary Richard W. Riley said Friday in announcing the first results of the test. It was given last year to randomly selected groups of fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Student scores nationally in science have improved this decade, but in a recent international study, U.S. schools still lagged behind schools in many

Asian and European nations. The study suggested that too many American schools emphasize rote learning of scientific facts and principles, instead of giving students hands-on lab and field work that would better bring the subject to life.

Since the national test is new, students' scores this time cannot be compared to previous years' scores, education officials said.

In previous years, the national science test found that among eighth- and 12th-graders, boys consistently outscored girls. This time, their scores were quite similar in fourth and eighth grades. But in 12th grade, boys had higher scores again. At all three grade levels, white students scored higher than all minority groups.

Education officials said that although student results on the experiments were quite mixed, most of them showed more interest in those tasks than they did in answering the multiple-choice questions and essays that also were part of the test.

Most students grasp basic facts and

principles by the end of high school, said Michael T. Nettles, a member of the government-supported National Assessment Governing Board, the test-givers. "The students could read graphs and follow directions to carry out simple experiments," he said.

But when students must design an experiment, apply the knowledge or explain their reasoning clearly, "The results are disappointing," he said.

Some examples of questions and answers from the test indicate that education in science — not to mention spelling, grammar and syntax — has a long way to go.

Twelfth-graders were asked: "The petroleum fields of the North Slope of Alaska are a major energy source. What does the presence of these fields indicate about the climate and ecology of the North Slope millions of years ago?"

A student wrote that the climate "was warm and humed" and described the ecology as a "swamp like area with much vegetation."

Contributing: Associated Press.■

Angelou and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. Critics blasted the idea, saying that it would do more to hold African American students back than it would to help them.

The Los Angeles Unified School District board considered but did not adopt a similar proposal, voting instead to evaluate its current programs.

The Linguistics Society of America voted to support Oakland's position, however, saying that it made sense for students to understand their own language patterns as a bridge to learning to speak in a more standard fashion.

But, in the face of continued opposition from Jackson and others, the Oakland board revised its resolution in January, removing some of the more explosive terms. Jackson then became a supporter and began urging a broader examination of ways to improve academic achievement.

Jason Hodge, a member of the Oakland board who had criticized the previous task force report, said the new recommendations "get down to what it was supposed to address, which is the needs of African American students."

"With the explosive language gone, maybe we can focus on doing something."

The resolution adopted in December directed Oakland Supt. Carolyn Gettridge to work with the task force to come up with policies and programs to improve the performance of black students. That process, in turn, gave the task force the opportunity to tone down its rhetoric.

Gettridge's cover letter on the new recommendations states that "it is the combination of rigorous, high-quality educational programs, family and community support and consistent monitoring and evaluation that will make

significant and measurable improvements in the achievement of African American students."

The recommendations, which would cost about \$2 million, include expanding the district's "standard English program" to more predominantly African American schools and child-care sites, purchasing reading textbooks that are culturally sensitive, and training teachers in African American culture and linguistic patterns. The task force also recommends hiring a "community coordinator" to work with parents and setting up Saturday schools throughout the district for extra tutoring.

In addition, the report says that the district ought to hire more African American teachers and administrators, revise the district's policy on identifying gifted students and recruit more mentors for students. ■

3. The New York Times

05/06/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 19, Column 1

'Ebonics' Omitted in Oakland Report on Teaching English

By PETER APPLEBOME

Four months after Oakland, Calif., became the nation's first school district to declare that blacks speak a separate language called ebonics, the Oakland schools task force studying the subject has come up with final recommendations in a report that does not mention ebonics at all.

The report, a detailed proposal to spend \$2 million over five years to help improve the English skills of black students, is an attempt to put the recommendations adopted by the school board last December into practice. It is not clear how much the final document reflects a backing away from the original plan to help students learn English by instructing teachers in ebonics, described as a separate language spoken by many black Americans, and how much is just a more politic wording of the original proposal.

But school board members say the report is a more carefully worded attempt to reach the original goals of greatly improving the language skills of African-American children. The proposed program awaits a vote by the board, which is to be given the report at

its meeting on Wednesday.

"I think they're trying to be very careful," said the Oakland School Board's president, Jean Quan. "They're probably trying to clear things up and stay away from any indication that they're going for bilingual funds. And it may have also been an emotional decision: I think they took so much ribbing for this they may have just backed down."

The word ebonics is not mentioned in the 17 pages of the report. The only mention of the uproar over ebonics comes in a cover letter from the Oakland Superintendent of Schools, Carolyn Gettridge.

"The resolution sought to establish a policy that would link learning success with the students' mastery of standard English," she said. "But in stating this linkage, the intent of the resolution and policy became lost in controversy over terms such as 'genetically based' and references to ebonics as a primary language of African-American students."

Experts who have followed the furor over ebonics say they are not surprised that the district backed away from the controversial language of the original resolution.

"They realized they were in a political box, and they had to do something to get out of it," said John Baugh, a Stanford University linguist teaching this year at Swarthmore College. "I'm sure they're trying to implement a plan without igniting any further controversy."

The original resolution, unanimously passed with little review by the board of the 52,000-student district, said all teachers should be trained to respect the ebonics language spoken by many black students.

The resolution was later toned down, and some of the more provocative language, like an assertion that African language systems are "genetically based," was removed. Supporters of the resolution said references to genetics referred to language groups, not to human genetics, and did not mean to imply that blacks are genetically equipped with a particular language.

The task force's final recommendations maintain most of the elements of the report released in December. It calls for better language and reading programs, aggressive recruitment of black teachers, additional tests to measure the language skills of

PLANO STAR COURIER, Feb. 16, 1997 A 6

GET SMART

Dedication to quality education requires national resolve, action



RICHARD
Riley

Americans can celebrate President Clinton's State of the Union call to action on behalf of educational excellence. The people of this nation are united in their belief in the crucial role of education in improving the lives and futures of each and every resident.

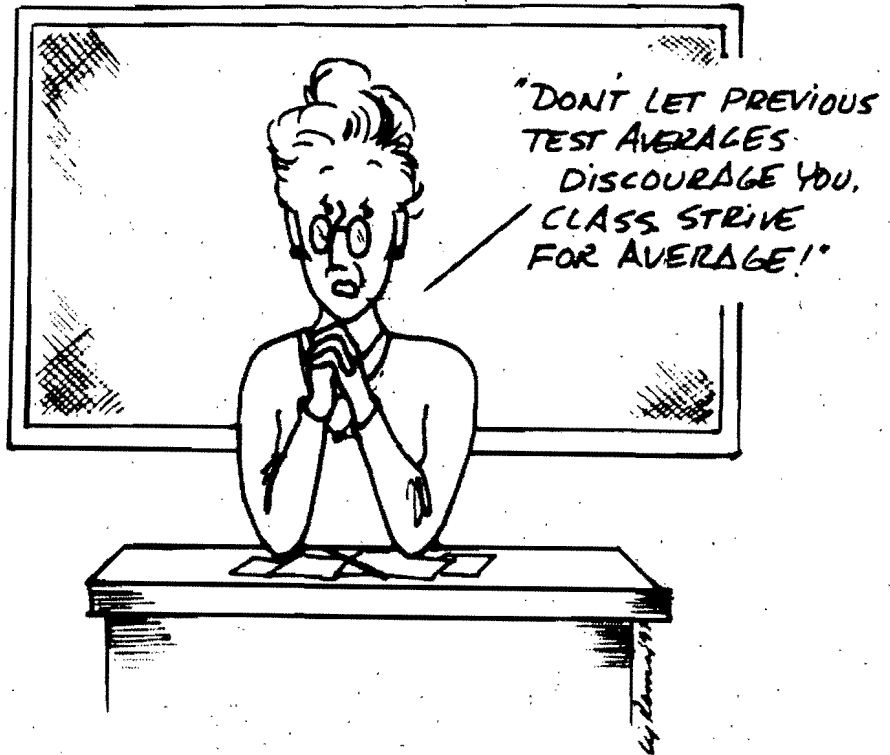
Because education is such a shared priority, and because we already know what creates a good school, we begin this crusade for American education with a

strong foundation. Years of national and international studies reveal that the most successful schools are those that have clear, high standards of achievement and discipline. They are schools that are safe, that have talented and dedicated teachers in every classroom and that promote parent and community involvement.

To achieve this, we need a means of measuring at what level our schools are progressing. American corporations have already learned the benefits of "benchmarking" their operations against other firms that have demonstrated excellence. With a recently released report, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, teachers, students, parents and communities have the opportunity to do likewise with their schools in math and science.

The TIMSS report studied 500,000 students in 40 countries, including 40,000 Americans, in what is by far the most ambitious and rigorous such comparison ever taken. The first part of the report released data on how American eighth-graders performed in comparison with their counterparts worldwide, and data on fourth-graders and 12th-graders soon will be released. The results were decidedly mixed. At the eighth-grade level, among all the countries, we were above average in science and below average in math.

But for the United States, in this education era, average is not good enough. We must strive to be the best.



Kids meet expectations

We can only do that if we look beyond the rankings and focus on what the report revealed about how to strengthen our efforts to create world-class teaching and learning. The TIMSS study revealed that our problem is not the amount of time U.S. students spend on mathematics and science, but what they do with the time they have. TIMSS has shown us that countries that do well on these evaluations set higher expectations for their middle school students. For instance, virtually all Japanese students take a heavy load of algebra and geometry by the eighth grade, whereas in the United States geometry is rarely in the curriculum in the eighth or even the ninth grade, and only students in high-level classes receive algebra in the

More...

GET SMART, continued...

eighth grade. We expect less from our children, and, to our dismay, they meet our expectations.

High standards are not a foreign concept to American teachers. TIMSS found, for instance, that 95 percent of all U.S. math teachers were aware of standards released several years ago by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Unfortunately, a sample of videotapes of actual classroom teaching revealed that American teachers were still focused on less productive teaching strategies rather than challenging standards and the need to understand how to solve problems. (Paradoxically, Japanese teachers widely practiced what the American standards recommend, and the result was that Japanese students did very well in the TIMSS evaluation.) And this study found that high performing countries value teachers and give teachers the time and training to teach better and more rigorous lessons.

World-class districts

Many American schools already are working to implement these kinds of tests. In Illinois, for example, 20 school districts took the TIMSS test and placed first and second in the world. Other schools are well on the way to providing challenging courses so their students will achieve more, and the test scores and success rates of their students show it. Unfortunately, however, too many schools still expect too little.

In some states, more than 80 percent of the students meet state educational assessments, but less than 20 percent of these students make the grade when held up to higher standards of achievement based on excellence. That makes

no sense, and it is why the time has come to reach for national standards — not federal government standards — that define what our students must know to master the basics. Algebra is algebra in Plano, Peoria or Pasadena.

President Clinton's 10-point call to action for educational improvement will move us toward this goal. For the first time, parents and teachers would have access to a voluntary national test for individual students in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math if their states and local school districts participate. This test, to begin in 1999, will let each student, parent, teacher and community know how their children are doing and what they can do to meet these standards.

Reading challenge

Studies show that children who can't read well by the fourth grade are students who might be locked for the rest of their lives in

a struggle to learn. It is why President Clinton has challenged this nation to make sure every American student can read well by the end of the third grade. Similarly, eighth grade is a crucial time for our students to know whether they have mastered the basics of math, algebra and even geometry and have the foundation to take on the tougher math and science courses in high school that will prepare them for college and careers.

A recent National Assessment of Education Progress reading evaluation shows us 40 percent of our young people are reading below the "basic" level. And the TIMSS test revealed all too clearly that the only way to learn and succeed at world-class levels is to embrace higher standards of learning.

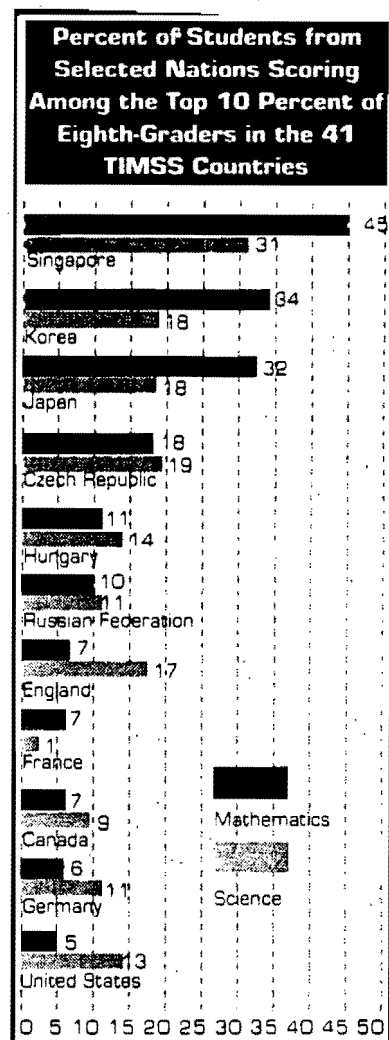
Although states and local school districts would have the option not to participate in the national test, they would have everything to gain by doing so — most importantly, a better understanding of what their students know and a ticket to standards of learning excellence in the basics.

We must be, as the president urged, shapers of events, not observers. If we do not embrace education as an issue of local action born out of national concern and national security, if we do not reach for higher standards of learning and develop a means of measuring student achievement at these pivotal points, then we will surely see too many young people left behind in this information age. They will be on the wrong side of the education fault line.

The president has made it his No. 1 priority to help every American have opportunity for a quality education and to help families pay for college. With this call to action, we have a clear means to reach these goals. But it will require national resolve and state and local action.

When we set our sights low, the results reflect underachievement. But when we aim high and challenge our students, they can be the best in the world. For our children to fulfill their promise, we must fulfill our promise to our children.

Richard W. Riley is the U.S. Secretary of Education.



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Falling Short In Volunteering

continued... —

State officials are more upbeat. Many of the seniors who have been slow to accumulate hours appear to be the same ones who struggle academically, they said. Others may not

have taken the new requirements seriously at first.

School districts throughout the state report that their underclassmen are much further along now than the seniors were at this point, and many are allowing students to begin their service in middle school.

testing

"As it gains maturity, Maryland will provide a beacon" for other states, said Harry D. Shapiro, a State Board of Education member.

Tiffany Butcher, the student member of the State Board of Education, said the requirement prompted her to organize a club at Winston Churchill High School in Bethesda to help other students find volunteer opportunities.

The club has organized tutoring sessions for elementary and middle school students, provided volunteers for soup kitchens and "adopted" six

families during the Christmas holidays, collecting food and gifts for them.

Butcher said she'll treasure her memory of the tears of joy she and her classmates evoked from one poor family who otherwise wouldn't have been able to celebrate the holidays.

"Students don't always get an experience like that," Butcher said.

WASHINGTON TIMES, Feb. 26, 1997 C 3

Virginia gets tougher on schools, tests

By Michelle Crouch
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RICHMOND — The state Board of Education decided yesterday to require students to take more math, science and history classes and to pass statewide tests in order to graduate.

But the board said it would get input from teachers and education experts before putting into effect a proposal for tougher standards unveiled Monday by the Department of Education.

The department proposed requiring high school students who want to earn a standard diploma to take four history classes instead of three, and three courses each in math and science instead of two. Then, they must pass statewide tests in a variety of subjects to graduate.

The tests will be phased in over three years instead of all at once as originally proposed, the board decided.

That takes some of the pressure off eighth-graders, who will be the first to face the new requirements, said board member Cheri P. Yecke.

"If I had a child in eighth grade and I knew my child had to pass something like 12 tests in order to graduate, I'd be in a panic," she said.

Schools will be judged on how well students perform on the tests. Those with low test scores would have to devise a plan for improvement, said Richard T. LaPointe, superintendent of public instruction. If the school continued to perform poorly, the state could obtain a court order forcing it to correct the problem, he said.

"We ought to have minimum standards so that no matter where a child lives, no matter how rich or poor, they [parents] have the expectation that that child will get a good education," said board member Lil Tuttle.

The board plans to hold public hearings on the proposals in late March and early April.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



testing
47
NEWS

FOR RELEASE
February 25, 1997

Contact: Rick Miller
(202) 401-3026

RILEY CALLS PUBLIC MEETINGS ON TESTING

Moving quickly to advance President Clinton's call for mastering the basics in America's schools, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley today announced a series of meetings that will give the public an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions on a national reading test in grade 4 and a national math test in grade 8.

Three weeks ago, in his State of the Union address [Feb. 4], President Clinton said, "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.

"Raising standards will not be easy," the president continued, "and some of our children will not be able to meet them at first. The point is not to put our children down, but to lift them up. Good tests will show us who needs help, what changes in teaching to make, and which schools need to improve."

The public meetings will be held at the Education Department headquarters [600 Independence Ave. SW, Room 2411]. A Wednesday meeting [Feb. 26, 9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.] will feature a panel of test publishers. State and local officials will form a panel at a meeting on Friday [Feb. 28, 12:30 - 3:30 p.m.]. An additional public meeting will be held next Tuesday [March 4, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.].

-MORE-



Riley said the department will award contracts this fall to develop the tests. The contracts will require the test developers to convene independent panels of successful reading and math teachers, parents, business representatives, state and local officials, and other experts to advise them on content, assessment and interpretation of results.

The reading test will be linked to the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the math test will be linked to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. Thus, parents and teachers will be able to compare performance to nationally recognized reading standards and internationally established standards for math.

The tests will be conducted under license agreements with test publishers, states and school districts that spell out all procedures to be followed in administering and scoring the tests.

The tests will be available in spring 1999, with results available to parents in the fall. New tests will be prepared annually.

Riley noted that participation in the tests will be voluntary and no personally identifiable information will be provided to the federal government.

In his fourth annual State of American Education address [Feb. 18 at the Carter Center in Atlanta], Riley said, "All of our research tells us that reading well by the 4th grade and having good math skills -- including algebra and some geometry -- by the 8th grade are critical turning points in the education of our young people.

"Reading is reading. Math is math. These proposed tests are an opportunity and not a requirement; they are a national challenge and not a national curriculum."

In making the announcement Riley said, "I wish my friend Al Shanker were here to lend a hand in this important work." Shanker was a vigorous champion of standards and testing. The long-time leader of the American Federation of Teachers died Saturday [Feb. 22] in New York.

IN LANSING

Engler agrees school buses should be inspected every year

By Kenneth Cole
Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING — Gov. John Engler said Wednesday that Michigan state police acted hastily carrying out a plan to inspect school buses biennially instead of every year, as required by state law.

"I think they got a little out in front of themselves," the governor said, outside an immunization conference at Michigan State University.

Nearly 900,000 Michigan school children ride the buses daily during the school year.

Engler did not say if he would order state police to return to annual inspections.

But a state senator spearheading efforts to continue the yearly bus exams said Engler should force State Police to comply with the law.

"The governor seems to be the best person to get the director's (Commander Michael Robinson) attention," said Sen. Ken DeBeauvoir, D-New Baltimore. "I would hope that he takes a moment to direct the state police to reinstate the annual inspections."

"After all, it is still the law."

Specifically, Michigan law states the police "shall inspect each school bus or pupil transportation vehicle annually, and more frequently at a school where defects have been found."



Engler

Despite that, the state police started the biennial inspections in October. The move already has been figured into Engler's \$8.5-billion budget for fiscal year 1998, which starts Oct. 1.

State police contend the annual inspections are too costly and unnecessary because many school districts keep their buses in tip-top shape.

"The thought was that some of the districts' school bus safety records were so outstanding that we ought to be able to give people a two-year license, and focus on those (districts) where more work needs to be done," Engler said. "The important thing is our safety record is good and continues to be good and will be good in the future. We'll assure that."

Still, DeBeauvoir said any bill seeking to change the frequency of bus inspections from one year to two "will face a hard sell in the Legislature."

He noted that current law also forbids school districts from putting buses on the road that have not undergone an annual inspection.

"So, districts will have to either not put buses on the road, or break the law come next school year," DeBeauvoir said. "I don't think that's a gamble any of us should be willing to take."

In 1996, the most recent year for which complete data is available, state police found mechanical problems with 3,770 buses, about one in every four inspected. The department forbade districts from using most of those buses until they were repaired.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

MAR 27 1997

Board OKs new tests to strengthen high schools

BY ROSALIND ROEST
EDUCATION REPORTER

Chicago public high school students will have to pass standardized tests in core courses to get credit for each year's work, regardless of grades awarded by teachers, under a plan to rejuvenate the city's high schools approved Wednesday.

The new tests are designed to attack grade inflation, social promotion and watered-down curriculum that have allowed some students to graduate from high school with sixth-grade reading levels and little or no knowledge of algebra or geometry.

"This lets us assure that when kids pass a course on one side of the city, they have obtained the same level of mastery as another child at the other side of the city," said School Accountability Chief Patricia Harvey.

The tests would be based on new standards, to be unveiled at the end of this school year, Harvey said.

To receive credits needed for graduation, students would have to meet standards in tests given after each of four years of English; three years of math (algebra, geometry, advanced algebra or pre-calculus); three years of laboratory science (biology, earth science, and chemistry or physics) and U.S. and world history. Advanced students could take the tests before taking a course to see if they can skip the course.

The new tests are in addition to another set of tests the School Board ordered Wednesday for students to pass into junior year and to earn a diploma.

Adding new tests drew some criticism, but schools critic and political activist Walter "Slim" Coleman said he looks forward to them, saying it will let parents know "what it is their child is expected to learn."

Michael Klonsky, co-director of the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said the new tests are just more evidence Chicago schools are "test-crazed." But he praised other elements of the high school reform.

The new tests are part of a massive plan to attack the crisis in high schools, where only 18 percent of students are reading at national norms.

But board members conceded that the plan—already two months behind schedule—is still a "work in progress."

Meanwhile Wednesday, the board also voted to yank Internet access for any student caught visiting X-rated Internet sites. The Internet and e-mail policy prohibits students from using Chicago public school computers for "any other purpose than educational or to transmit, produce or disseminate."

testing

Md. Educators Weigh Rate Of Failure for Planned Exams

Students May Have to Pass 10 Tests to Graduate

By Dan Beyers and Lisa Frazier
Washington Post Staff Writers

It was just a tiny note to explain a budget estimate, but few comments in the 363-page report delivered to the Maryland State Board of Education last week seemed to sum up so succinctly the stakes involved in the state's decision to develop a set of final exams required for high school graduation:

"Assumes 50 percent repeat rate during the first five operational years and 20 percent thereafter," the note said in justifying costs that could reach \$23 million a year.

The prospect that half of all Maryland high school students might fail one of the 10 new final exams the state wants to develop is driving much of the debate over how to launch the testing program. State education officials are scheduled next month to decide what shape the testing will take, and parents, school officials and even the

state's consultants already have appealed to board members to consider starting with a simpler, less rigorous set of tests or delaying the whole thing.

"The worst-case scenario is to set the bar extremely high, then in the face of protests or legal challenges have to retreat," said Wayne J. Camara, a research scientist with the New York-based College Board, a non-profit group that oversees national standardized testing. He was hired by the state to analyze the testing proposal. "You risk losing some of the political support you had for the tests."

Maryland's struggle to design the new tests reflects the difficulties faced by many states throughout the country as they start similar campaigns to raise academic standards.

Maryland is basing much of its reform effort on requiring students to

pass 10 exams at the end of courses in English, math, science and history. The mandate would take effect with the graduating Class of 2004, which is now in the fifth grade.

Only New York, which last year announced plans to raise testing standards by requiring all students to pass the state's more rigorous honors exams established by the state Board of Regents by 1999, is attempting a testing program comparable to Maryland's. Virginia, by contrast, is planning to require only 11th-graders to take one graduation exam that will include questions from all the basic subject areas.

"This is really uncharted territory," said Daniel Koretz, senior social scientist for the Rand Institute on Education and Training in the District. "Even if Maryland is phenomenally successful in its education reform, you're still going to have a lot of kids who fall below the threshold due to the wide variability of student performance in any school or system."

Determining where to set passing rates for the new tests "is obviously of prime importance," said Christopher Cross, president of the State Board of Education and executive director of the District-based Council for Basic Education. "But so is having a diploma that demonstrates you have mastered the core learning goals we've established."

Cross said he does not expect the exams to stop large numbers of students from getting a diploma because they will be given multiple chances to pass each test. But the need to balance the desire for high standards against concern about failure rates may lead the board to offer different types of diplomas, he said. One might reflect basic competency based on test scores, while a so-called "meritorious" diploma might reflect a higher level of proficiency.

The state board's consultants suggested other options. The board could phase in the number of tests so that students are required to pass only, say, three at first, giving school districts time to adjust to the change. Or the state could set passing scores lower in the initial years and ratchet up their standards over time. The state could even play with the way graduation is determined: Instead of requiring students to pass all the tests, the state could allow students to combine their scores to meet some threshold. That would allow students who do poorly on one exam to recover with a high score on another.

Cross noted, however, that the concerns are similar to the ones expressed in the early 1980s when Maryland instituted functional exams measuring basic competency in reading, math, writing and citizenship for ninth-, 10th- and 11th-graders. No one complains about the functional exams anymore because passing rates exceed 80 percent, he said. Similar performance gains are possible with the new exams, he said, adding that he hopes any student receiving a diploma can step right into college.

But many parents and school officials question the assumption that high school needs to prepare every student for college. And many are skeptical that the state will provide school districts with all the resources they need to deal with the potentially large numbers of students who would fail the exams and need remedial help.

"We think it can have a detrimental effect," said Leroy Tompkins, chief administrator for instruction in Prince George's County. "It almost certainly will increase the dropout rate."

More...

Md. Considers Failure Rate For New Tests

continued...

Prince George's County Board of Education member Alvin Thornton (District 7) put it this way: "If we are willing to hold our children accountable, we can hold our children accountable. As long as the gap exists between the wealth of the state of Maryland and the amount it spends on its children, how can we justify holding children accountable?"

There are other concerns about the new tests beyond their effect on graduation rates. Montgomery County school officials said they worry that the state's tests could force them to revamp their curriculum—stripping them of the control they have over what is taught in county schools. Montgomery, for instance, traditionally has required students to take two semesters of algebra with a final exam at the end of each semester. The single algebra exam mandated by the state could effectively force the county to discard its two-exam regimen, which county officials said covers more material than the state is contemplating.

"We had hoped to fold their test into ours and work as partners," said Joy Odom, coordinator for student exams in Montgomery.

"We're headed for a state-mandated curriculum," said Joseph I. Headman Jr., principal at Winston Churchill High School in Potomac and co-chairman of a team of Montgomery educators studying the state exam program. "I'm very concerned we are moving ahead too fast."

Camara, of the College Board, said there are practical reasons for not developing different tests for different school systems. Such variety could open the state to challenge by a parent who argues that one test is easier than another.

Karl Pence, president of the Maryland State Teachers Association, said he remains concerned about what kind of questions the test will ask. The state currently uses performance-based tests for grades 3, 5 and 8 that require students to work in groups and that feature open-ended questions for assessing whether students know how to put what they learn to practical use. The tests are intended to reform elementary school and middle school instruction.

But state test officials are leaning toward multiple-choice exams for the high school tests because they can be scored faster and are less subjective to administer.

"I'm afraid we might have a malfunction junction if we're not careful," Pence said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To compare your county's average Scholastic Assessment Test scores with those of other counties in the area, click on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's site on the World Wide Web at
<http://www.washingtonpost.com>

testing

The Wall Street Journal
2/6/96

Politics & Policy
Clinton's Plan for Tough Student Tests
Is Expected to Bring High Failure Rate
By June Kronholz

WASHINGTON -- The national reading and math tests proposed by President Clinton in his State of the Union address would be so strenuous -- with up to a 40% failure rate the first year -- that the Department of Education foresees an outcry from parents demanding tougher standards and improved teaching.

Riding a tide of public sentiment for better school performance, the administration is proposing voluntary 90-minute fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math tests to begin in 1999. Although that would leave time for the administration's program for volunteer reading teachers to begin, it wouldn't be long enough to turn around the country's woefully low reading and math scores.

There already are two national tests: the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, for reading and the Third International Math and Science Study. Congress funds NAEP. In any event, the way the test is devised, only state-by-state results can be calculated, not those for individuals, schools or districts.

About 40% of fourth graders don't reach minimum standards on the reading test, and 55% of eighth graders scored below an international average on math last year.

President Clinton's new national tests would be written to the same standards as the current tests. Thus, "You can expect a high failure rate the first year,"

said Michael Smith, deputy secretary of education. In fact, the administration is expecting achievement to be low enough and community outrage high enough, that it could force the states to set higher educational standards and schools to teach up to them.

"To do well in the national test, curriculum and instruction would have to change," said Mr. Smith. Currently, most states are rewriting their minimum standards. But those vary widely, and there's little way for the states to require individual districts to teach to those standards.

Moreover, there's no public appetite for school standards set by the federal government; the public still wants control over its local schools. But the administration clearly sees the tests as a way to achieve improved performance, nonetheless.

The tests should avoid much of the outcry from both conservatives and liberals provoked by the Goals 2000 initiative that attempted to set voluntary standards two years ago. For one thing, the tests wouldn't measure history or science achievement, which were so controversial then.

On the other hand, the tests could focus on lower inner-city achievement -- an incentive for improvement, but a potential sore point politically.

Under the administration plan, a new test every year would be written by a private contractor with \$7 million in yearly federal

funding. The contractor would license the test to the states, which would have several months to administer it. After that, the test itself and school-by-school results would be released on the Internet. And parents would receive scores for their children.

The government would pay to administer the test the first year -- about \$5 a child, or some \$40 million. Later, states would have to pay.

Federal education grants wouldn't be linked to the tests, keeping them voluntary. But in brief appearances around the country, both the President and Mrs. Clinton would campaign for the tests, stimulating public demand, the administration hopes.

By Heather Knight
Los Angeles Times

The Agriculture Department received reports earlier this year that a San Diego firm was illegally purchasing foreign-grown strawberries for use in school lunches but failed to take action in time to prevent the recent hepatitis outbreak, a department official told lawmakers yesterday.

Kenneth Clayton, deputy administrator of agricultural marketing services, said USDA officials had been informed that Andrew and Williamson Co., which processed and packed the strawberries that exposed thousands of schoolchildren and adults to the hepatitis A virus, was buying foreign produce in violation of school lunch program requirements.

Department officials planned to investigate the reports, which surfaced in January and February, but had not done so by the time the contaminated

strawberries reached school districts in six states last month, Clayton told the early childhood, youth and families subcommittee of the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

"I certainly would agree that in hindsight, which is 20-20, I wish we would have followed up more quickly," he said, adding that a hold should have been placed on the frozen berries until officials could inspect them.

One reason the reports were not acted upon, he said, is that competing packing plants sometimes spread rumors about each other. But he said he did not know if that happened in this instance.

Several members of Congress expressed concern the USDA had not acted on the reports. "When you hear rumors, it seems there should be some urgency," said Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D-Mich.). "Especially since this food is intended for our children."

USDA officials said stepped-up

investigation of such reports is one of several reforms the department is undertaking in response to the hepatitis A outbreak.

More than 150 students in Michigan were infected with hepatitis A after eating the contaminated strawberries in early March. Before that, the USDA relied only on processors' signatures to ensure their food was domestic. Occasionally, agency officials inspected packing plants on a random basis to ensure compliance. Now, the USDA will demand more information from the processors, including the packing date, lot number and country of origin of all foods for the school lunch program.

Because the hepatitis A virus is thought to have originated in Mexico, the USDA and Food and Drug Administration are working with Mexican farmers to help them make their farms more sanitary, according to Fred Shank, an FDA official. ■

U.S. News & World Report

04/21/97 Section: U.S. News; Page 40

Testing, testing—1, 2, 3

Why foes of national school standards could beat Clinton

By Joshua Wolf Shenk

When Bill Clinton made national standards and testing a centerpiece of his education agenda, the stars finally seemed aligned for this popular reform. Endorsements came from Republican leaders like Gov. John Engler of Michigan, a coalition of state school superintendents, and other education luminaries. National standards, they contend, will inspire higher performance among students and create consistency in a system presided over by 15,000-some separate school districts.

But despite Clinton's plea that "politics stop at the schoolhouse door," his initiative could easily founder. Opposition comes from the same camps that joined to defeat similar plans in the past. "If national testing goes down in flames," quips Chester Finn, a former Reagan administration official who supports Clinton's plan, "it will be because of people on the left who hate the word testing and people on the right who hate the word national."

TD Clinton tried to craft his plan to capture the political middle ground. To appease conservatives suspicious of

federal power, he said the tests would be purely voluntary—Clinton's mantra is "national, not federal, tests." He vowed that the tests would cover only reading and math, not controversial subjects like history. To appease liberals who think that schools' main problem is financial, he also has asked for \$5 billion for school repairs.

Despite the concessions, influential conservatives have attacked the president's plan as the beginning of the end of local authority over schooling. "Clinton's reading and math tests are merely the first step on a path toward central control of all aspects of education," Lynne Cheney wrote recently in the Wall Street Journal. Jennifer Marshall of the conservative Family Research Council argues that tests will lead to federal "coercion and manipulation" that could, for example, force local school districts to teach reading by "whole language" rather than phonics, the method preferred by traditional educators. The next step, she warns, is for federal authorities to dictate sex-education and history curricula.

Yes, but ... Clinton faces another line

of opposition from Rep. Bill Goodling, perhaps the most influential Republican on education issues and a man who originally endorsed the testing idea. Goodling told U.S. News he now objects to testing that would produce results for specific students and school districts. He wants results compiled only on a state level. Individual testing, to assess student and district progress, is central to Clinton's plan, but Goodling contends that this would do little more than prove that rich areas score better than poor ones. This echoes an argument by congressional Democrats when they rejected George Bush's plan for national tests in 1991—one developed in close consultation with then-Gov. Clinton.

Thus the second challenge for the White House: Balking liberals will provide only lukewarm support, if that. Rep. Major Owens sums up the problem many have with standards: "Without up-to-date books and decent classrooms"—in other words, without more money—"kids don't have the opportunity to learn."

Still, party loyalty does matter here. Sen. Edward Kennedy, for example, has endorsed the plan. White House officials

also are counting on vigorous support from Republicans like Engler and corporate leaders like IBM chief Louis Gerstner. At a summit he co-hosted last year, Gerstner lobbied hard among GOP governors for backing on national

standards, and he could sway congressional Republicans.

The White House also has public support. More than 80 percent of Americans want higher standards and,

according to a recent Education Week study, "states haven't made much progress." With more than 40 percent of American 8-year-olds barely able to read, that is painfully clear. ■

TRADE

Education Daily

April 18, 1997

SENATE APPROPRIATORS SOUND COOPERATIVE TONE

In contrast to the grilling House appropriators gave him last month, Education Secretary Richard Riley was handled with kid gloves by Senate appropriators this week.

"I look forward to working with you to craft a balanced budget while keeping education funding at the highest possible level," said Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

Specter helped broker last fall's deal to add \$3.5 billion to the Education Department's fiscal 1997 appropriations (ED, Oct. 1, 1996). At the panel's first hearing Wednesday on fiscal 1998 education funding, he said he and the panel's ranking Democrat, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, "have fought large cuts by the House."

Focus On Early Childhood

In anticipation of yesterday's White House conference on brain research, Senate appropriators also heard from advocates of early childhood education.

Ohio Gov. George Voinovich, incoming chairman of the National Governors' Association, said Congress should encourage states to augment federal Head Start funding.

Ohio leads the nation in the percentage of eligible children served and state investment—\$181 million this fiscal year—in the program, he said.

Voinovich, a Republican, also plans to use part of Ohio's welfare block grant to expand its Early Start program, which provides parent education, speech therapy, counseling and home visits to

young families.

Film director and actor Rob Reiner urged lawmakers to focus federal funding on health care, child care, parenting programs and intervention for at-risk kids.

"We know the answers; it is just a question of implementing them," he said. Reiner is spearheading a public education campaign on early childhood development called "I Am Your Child."

Reiner, who participated in the White House conference, also previewed a Rand study, due in late spring, showing that early childhood interventions can lead to higher IQ scores, a reduced need for special education, higher eventual earnings and fewer emergency room visits.

Usually, these programs save the government more than they cost because they lead to higher earnings, lower welfare payment and fewer prison costs.

ED Priorities

Cognizant of the newfound focus on early childhood education, Riley showcased the portion of ED's budget request aimed at helping young children. He said:

* Goals 2000 helps fund 28 parent resource centers, with 14 more opening this year.

* America Reads, the president's initiative to ensure children can read by the end of third grade, stresses the role of parents as "first teachers".

* Title I schoolwide programs can help children when they leave Head Start; and * Early intervention programs for disabled infants and preschool

programs can be replicated for nondisabled children.

Harkin suggested expanding early intervention programs for disabled infants and Head Start, saying a greater federal role in preschool programs would not be at odds with attempts to limit the federal role in K-12 education.

Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., said he wants to give \$1 billion in block grants to states for early childhood education.

The lovefest was interrupted when committee members turned to President Clinton's plan for education tax credits and deductions.

Clinton wants to fund a \$1,500 nonrefundable tax credit and a \$10,000 annual deduction for postsecondary expenses (ED, April 17). Specter said he supported the plan, but other senators from both sides of the aisle criticized it.

Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., said he would prefer a tax-exempt education savings plan modeled after Individual Retirement Accounts, and state-run prepaid tuition plans, both of which Riley endorsed.

Sen. Dale Bumpers, D-Ark. said "I'd rather forgo the tax cut and put the money in Pell Grants, where I know it will help."

Riley countered that middle-income families often struggle with sending several children to college and should be considered "educationally poor."

No other appropriations hearings are scheduled in the House or Senate. House appropriators have said they expect to start writing their fiscal 1998 education bill in May. — Laureen Lazarovici ■

FEB 27 1997

National test finds rise in math performance

Eds: For release at 2 p.m. EST.

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - American students are improving in math, the Education Department said Thursday, but tests of fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders found most know no more of the subject than the basics.

President Clinton seized on the results Thursday to push for voluntary tests of all eighth-graders starting in 1999. Bothered that American children lag behind their counterparts elsewhere, the administration also wants schools to teach algebra in the eighth grade rather than waiting for high school.

"The scores are getting better, but they also show us why every child should be tested based on these standards," Clinton told business leaders. The test results released Thursday relied on a sampling of students who took different parts of a long, involved test. Individual scores were not assigned.

Results from the tests given last year offered some encouragement, although almost four eighth-graders out of 10 still failed to reach the basic skill level. All students did better than in 1992 and 1990, the last two years of testing under the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The assessment takes periodic measures of achievement in basic subjects. It is sponsored by the Education Department but run independently.

Some results:

-Fourth-graders scored 224 on the test's scale of 0 to 500. That's up from 220 in 1992. Sixty-four percent scored at or above the basic level, up from 59 percent. Basic meant a score of 214 to 248. Twenty-one percent were proficient, and 2 percent were advanced.

Fourth-graders with basic skills could probably measure lengths beyond 12 inches, and solve a math problem using money to show they understand decimal places.

-Eighth-graders scored 272, up from 268 four years earlier. Sixty-two percent scored at or above basic, up from 58 percent. Basic required a score of 262 to 298. Twenty-four percent were rated proficient, and 4 percent were advanced.

An eighth-grader with basic skills could probably look at a rectangle partitioned into squares and convert shaded squares into a fraction of the rectangle. They could probably identify acute angles - angles of less than 90 degrees.

-Twelfth-graders averaged 304, up from 299. Sixty-nine percent of 12th-graders scored at basic or above, up from 64 percent. Basic was a score of 288 to 335. Sixteen percent were proficient or above; 2 percent were advanced.

A 12th-grader with basic skills could probably find the volume of a sphere, which would require knowing a formula (four-thirds times pi times the radius cubed) and the value of pi - 3.14159. Some could select which one of several graphs shows an algebraic function: a fixed relationship between two variables, x and y.

-more-

Here's what some eighth-graders were asked:

A car odometer registered 41,256.9 miles when a highway sign warned of a detour 1,200 feet ahead. What will the odometer read when the car reaches the detour?

- A. 42,456.9
- B. 41,279.9
- C. 41,261.3
- D. 41,259.2
- E. 41,257.1

The correct answer is E.

A quarter of the students in the basic range got the answer, as did half in the proficient range and 70 percent in the advanced.

Educators said the improvements reflect higher standards adopted by some states. The scores also reflect changes pushed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics since 1989 that urge teachers to have students work through problems and explain their reasoning.

"That's one very powerful, strong influence," said Carolyn Smith, math supervisor for the Arlington, Va., public schools.

The mathematics report card also found:

-Boys and girls scored no differently in the eighth and 12th grades, although fourth-grade boys scored higher than girls.

-Scores improved for white students in all three grades between 1990 and 1996. Black and Hispanic students posted increases in the fourth and 12th grades, but blacks, Hispanics and American Indians still lagged behind whites.

-The more education the parents had, the higher their children scored.

-Students at religious and other private schools did better.

Children from Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, Oklahoma and South Dakota did not participate.

This Associated Press story appeared under the following Feb. 28 headlines:

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

FEB 28 1997

U.S. children rising to 'average' in school math, testing reveals

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARIZONA REPUBLIC

FEB 28 1997

Student math scores show improvement

Associated Press

More...

Math students getting better, need improvement, U.S. says

Education Dept. study, 1st since 1992, finds Md. below U.S. average

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — The mathematics skills of students are improving, but the national math grade still isn't world class and "needs improvement," the Education Department said yesterday.

The study, which assessed the progress of students in fourth, eighth and 12th grades, was the first national measurement of math performance since 1992.

About 64 percent of fourth-graders showed basic math skills, 62 percent in the eighth grade and 69 percent of 12th graders, the

study indicates. That is up from 59 percent of fourth-graders, 58 percent of eighth-graders and 64 percent of 12th-graders in 1992.

Less than mastery

But on the more ambitious goal of mastery in math, the latest scores were discouragingly low. Just 21 percent of fourth-graders, 24 percent of eighth-graders and 16 percent of 12th-graders showed high levels of competency in the most challenging math areas.

In Maryland, both fourth- and eighth-graders showed improvement since 1990, though state scores fell slightly below the national averages, said Ronald A. Peiffer, spokesman for the state Department of Education.

The average score for eighth-graders in the state's public schools was 270 out of a possible 500, and 221 for fourth-graders.

Twenty-four percent of the state's eighth-graders performed at or above the proficient level, up from 17 percent in 1990, and those scoring below the basic level dropped from 50 percent in 1990 to 43 percent last year.

The state does not have scores for 12th-graders.

Math and science are widely viewed as areas where educational improvements are urgently needed if America is to cope with the challenges of an increasingly technological society.

Clinton calls for tests

"The scores are getting better, but they also show us why every child should be tested based on these standards," President Clinton told business leaders at the White House yesterday.

Clinton used the occasion to push again for an administration proposal that all eighth-graders be voluntarily tested nationwide starting in 1999.

The study released yesterday

measures student math scores on a scale of 0-500, scored from a standardized test developed with help from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The average score was 224 for fourth-graders, 272 for eighth-graders and 304 for 12th-graders.

N.C. shows biggest gain

The state showing the most improvement in math performance since 1992 was North Carolina, which gained 17 points on the 500-point scale, rising to 288.

The states scoring highest at the eighth-grade level were North Dakota, Maine, Minnesota and Iowa at 284. Eighth-graders in Washington had the lowest average at 233.

"This is good news and another sign that we are turning the corner when it comes to improving American education," added Richard W. Riley, education secretary, at a news conference yesterday. "But we cannot rest on our laurels. Our national scores may be going up, but we are still far behind the world-class standards."

Gail Burrell, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, was not satisfied with the results. She implored teachers to work harder at teaching children how to think.

"This is not enough," she said. "Too many of our nation's students continue to demonstrate inadequate achievement."

The idea of making students develop thinking and problem solving skills is at the heart of the low numbers, according to Riley.

"In the rest of the world, the vast majority, if not all, students have studied algebra by the end of the eighth grade," he said. "We need to get rid of these dead-end courses with nominal math work. There's no place for general math in the future."

Sun staff writer Mary Maushard contributed to this article.

Math scores rise in U.S. schools

But 40 percent of eighth-graders still lack proficiency

By Carol Innerst
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

American students continued to improve in math over the past six years, but nearly 40 percent of eighth graders still can't perform at a good, solid "proficient" standard of achievement, the Department of Education said yesterday.

More troubling for what it says about the condition of urban schools, four out of five eighth-graders in the District of Columbia's public schools failed to meet even the below-grade, "basic" level of achievement and performed worse than six years ago on the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test of mathematical ability.

Eighth-graders who can't function at the basic level have difficulty with whole numbers, decimals, fractions, percentages, diagrams, graphs, charts and fundamental algebraic and geometric concepts.

"This report shows we've made solid progress, but we cannot be satisfied," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley.

"Our children are smarter than we think, and we've already shown that they can achieve to international standards of excellence. The First in the World Consortium proved that."

The consortium is composed of Chicago-area districts whose eighth-graders participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and came in second in math to Singapore among 41 nations.

"About half of these consortium students take algebra and geometry by the end of the eighth grade, compared to 20 percent of eighth-graders nationally who take algebra," Mr. Riley said.

Mr. Riley singled out North Carolina, Michigan and Texas for making the most progress on the NAEP test for eighth graders. North Carolina raised its scores 17 points in six years. Seven other states, including Maryland and

AREA MATH SCORES

Some states made significant gains on the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress test of mathematics achievement, but a few jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, lost ground.

Grade 4 Public Schools		
	1996 Average Score*	Change from 1992
West Virginia	223	8
Virginia	223	2
Nation	222	4
Maryland	221	3
District of Columbia	187	-5
Grade 8 Public Schools		
Nation	271	5
Virginia	270	2
Maryland	270	5
West Virginia	265	6
District of Columbia	233	-2

*Scores are based on a scale of 0-500.

Source: NAEP 1996 Mathematics Report Card

West Virginia, which went up nine points, also were cited. The highest scores, but not the greatest gains,

were posted by North Dakota, Maine, Minnesota and Iowa.

Commenting on the "intriguing patterns" in the test results, William T. Randall, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, observed, "The public schools in D.C. have the lowest-scoring group of black students in the nation and the highest-scoring group of whites."

The test results:

- Fourth-graders scored 224 on a scale of 0 to 500, up from 220 in 1992. At this grade, 64 percent scored between 214 and 248, at or above the basic level and up from 59 percent; 21 percent scored between 249 and 281, at or above the solid, proficient level; and 2 percent scored 282 or above to attain the advanced level.

- Eighth-graders scored 272, up from 268 on the 1992 test. Among eighth-graders, 62 percent scored between 262 and 298, at the basic level, up from 58 percent; 24 per-

cent scored between 299 and 332 or proficient; and 4 percent were advanced, scoring above 333.

- Twelfth-graders averaged 304,

up from 299. At this grade, 69 percent scored between 288 and 335, at the basic level, up from 64 percent; 16 percent were proficient or above, at 336 to 366; and 2 percent were advanced, scoring above 367.

- Boys and girls scored about the same in eighth and twelfth grades, boys higher than girls in fourth grade.

- White students improved in all

three grades, blacks and Hispanics in fourth and twelfth. Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians lagged behind whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders, who posted the highest scores in twelfth grade and matched scores of whites in fourth grade. No eighth-grade scores were posted for the group.

- Private-school students did better than public-school students.

Student Math Scores Improve, But 'Have a Long Way to Go'

By Rene Sanchez
Washington Post Staff Writer

The nation's latest report card in math is a promising one. From elementary grades to high school, student scores are steadily rising.

The Education Department reported yesterday that 64 percent of fourth-graders nationwide are demonstrating at least basic math skills on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a test highly regarded for its rigor. In 1990, only half of students that age had mastered the basics. Eighth-graders and high school seniors have made similar strides in the last six years.

But even as they cheered the signs of progress, educators yesterday warned that the performance of the nation's students in math is still mediocre and often trails the work of students in Asian and European countries. A widely respected study last year showed that American eighth-graders rank below the international average in math. It faulted American math classes for not being as rigorous as those in other nations.

"Our national scores may be rising, but we still have a long way to go," said Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. "We are still far behind world-class standards, and certainly that is not good enough."

President Clinton also seized on the math results yesterday to promote his call for new national tests in reading and math, and for students to meet higher academic expectations. "The scores are getting better but they also show us why every child should be tested based on these standards," Clinton said.

Maryland was among a handful of states showing the most improvement on the math test. Its scores among eighth-graders increased by 9 percentage points. North Carolina led all states with a 17-point gain. Virginia's eighth-graders have gained 5 points since 1990. But neither Maryland nor Virginia ranks in the tier of states with the highest math averages. In the District, eighth-graders scored 1 point higher than they did in 1990.

The progress that students nationally are making in math stands in contrast to the stagnant, and often quite low, scores they have earned in recent years on the same assessment test in other vital subjects such as reading or history. Educators credit the rising math scores this decade to steps many schools have taken to toughen their curricula, including new requirements that algebra be taught before high school.

Most students, however, are still failing to earn high marks on the national assessment, which is given every few years to a representative sample of students from across the country. This year, 43 states and the District participated in the test, which emphasizes reasoning and problem-solving, not just knowledge of math formulas. The test has three categories of achievement: basic, proficient and advanced.

Despite the gains on the latest test, only 24 percent of American eighth-graders showed proficiency in math, meaning that they demonstrated

relatively strong skills. Only 16 percent of high school seniors, and 21 percent of fourth-graders, were deemed proficient. There are other signs of lingering trouble: Nearly 40 percent of the eighth-graders did not even demonstrate what the test considers basic math skills.

Large gaps in achievement also persist between students of different races. Among fourth-graders nationwide who took the math test, 76 percent of white students demonstrated basic skills, but only 41 percent of Hispanic students and 32 percent of black students did.

Scores are rising, however, for black and Hispanic students in grades 4 and 12. The scores of both boys and girls also are improving. Their averages are roughly the same among eighth-graders and high school seniors.

Gail Burrill, the president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, said that while the overall test results are encouraging, "too many of our nation's students continue to demonstrate inadequate achievement."

Riley said that even with the abundant classroom reforms evident in math this decade, only 20 percent of American eighth-graders now take algebra. That percentage is much lower than schools in most other industrialized nations, he said. Math educators consider eighth grade a pivotal year for students to start making the transition from basic math concepts and arithmetic to more advanced subject matter.

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER FEB 28 1997

U.S. mathematics scores improve; but performance termed mediocre

By RENE SANCHEZ

WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — The nation's latest report card in math is a promising one. From elementary grades to high school, student scores are steadily rising.

February 28, 1997

NAEP MATH SCORES UP, BUT MANY STILL FALL SHORT

The "nation's report card" shows student's mathematics scores climbing since 1992, but about a third still are unable to do basic level work, new results show.

The first results from the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math exam, released yesterday, show average scores up four-points each for fourth- and eighth-graders, and five points for 12th-graders on the 500-point scale.

"This is the best news we have received from the NAEP tests in a very long time," Education Secretary Richard Riley said yesterday at a news briefing releasing the results.

While Riley cited the mathematics standards by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) as a reason for improved scores, NCTM President Gail Burrill pointed to specific classroom practices they encourage.

Those practices include allowing students to develop their own methods of solving problems rather than mimicking the teacher's, and letting students talk about concepts, rather than focusing rote practice.

Mastery Elusive

The percentage of students performing at or above the basic level—partial mastery of fundamentals—also increased significantly, from 59 percent to 64 percent for grade four, 58 percent to 62 percent for grade eight and from 64 percent to 69 percent at 12th grade.

But that means 31 percent of high school seniors still have trouble with skills such understanding the validity of a survey, or using an equation to solve a rental problem.

Since 1990, only eighth-graders had

an increase in the percentage of students at the advanced level, from 2 percent to 4 percent, but there was no significant difference since 1992.

Math achievement for minorities and the poor continue to lag. Whites outperformed their black and Hispanic counterparts at all three grade levels, even though those two groups posted gains in average scores for grades four and 12 between 1990 and 1996.

In fourth grade, the average score for whites was 232, while black students averaged 200 and Hispanics averaged 206. The scores for white eighth-graders rose to 282, compared to blacks at 243 and Hispanics at 251. And at 12th grade, white students garnered average scores of 311, compared to 280 for blacks and 287 for Hispanics.

Scores for fourth-grade males were four points above those for females, but there was no statistical difference in scores between males and females in eighth and 12th grade.

While Riley praised the progress, he said U.S. students must now work to "measure up to international benchmarks."

In November, results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study showed U. S. eighth-graders slightly below average in math and slightly above average in science among the 41 countries in the comparison (ED, Nov. 21, 1996).

Eighth-grade math is receiving further scrutiny as President Clinton calls for national tests, in math for eighth-graders and reading for fourth-graders (ED, Feb. 27).

Some Shining Stars

Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, North

Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia reported increases in the percentage of fourth graders who scored at or above the basic and proficient levels between 1992 and 1996.

Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina and Wisconsin showed gains in the percentage of eighth-graders who scored at or above all three achievement levels between 1990 and 1996.

Riley said he would give his "most improved player award" to North Carolina, Michigan and Texas, which made the most progress on eighth-grade math scores since 1990. North Carolina posted a 17-point raise, and the other two states each had a 12-point gain.

Although students attending private schools continue to outscore their public school peers, public schools raised their scores at all three grade levels, and private schools only at grades four and eight.

For the first time, NAEP analyzed the results of students receiving Title I and those eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, and generally found both groups scoring lower than their peers.

ED plans to release a more in-depth analysis of the 1996 math results this fall.

Single copies of "NAEP 1996 Mathematics Report Card for the Nation and the States" is free from National Library of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Education Department, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20209-5641, (202)219-1651 or on the Internet at <http://www.ed.gov/NCES/naep>. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

February 27, 1997

NATIONAL TESTS RAISE QUALITY, RESPONSIBILITY CONCERNS

Test publishers told the Education Department yesterday that President Clinton's call for national tests in reading and mathematics in two years may be overly optimistic.

In the first of three meetings ED plans within a week on Clinton's testing proposal, about a dozen private testing officials raised concerns ranging from ensuring test quality to clarifying the responsibilities of schools and contractors.

ED plans to spend \$90 million over five years on national tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. Schools and districts may choose whether to participate in the testing, slated to start in 1999 (ED, Feb. 7).

The tests would be aligned with international exams and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

No Time For Errors

ED plans to request proposals by May from private contractors to develop the

tests, but many unanswered questions remain.

Leading test publishers were skeptical yesterday about the time line from ED's National Center for Education Statistics, which calls for field tests in 1998. That would leave little time to fix problem items before the first proposed assessment in spring 1999.

And while ED says the tests will be conducted under license agreements with test publishers, states and school districts, it hasn't sorted out who will be responsible for administering, scoring and reporting the results.

NCES expects parents to have the test results by fall 1999.

But test publishers raised concerns about who would score the tests, especially extended-response questions, to ensure reliable results.

"You may license a [school] district to administer the test but have a separate license for scoring," said Joanne Lenke, executive vice president of The

Psychological Corp. of San Antonio.

Clinton's call for national tests and standards is a political turnaround for Democrats, who squelched national tests from the Bush administration's education agenda (ED, Jan. 28, 1993).

Clinton first started his call for national tests in a January visit to school districts in Illinois which took the Third International Math and Science Study, then made it part of his education "crusade" during his State of the Union address this month, sending ED into a dizzying pace to get input on getting the tests in place.

ED plans to discuss the national test with state and local officials tomorrow, and the general public on Tuesday.

For more information, contact Gary Phillips, Project Coordinator, National Center for Education Statistics, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20208, (202)219-1763. -Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

NEA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES HAVE FAMILIAR RING

The legislative agenda unveiled by the National Education Association (NEA) Tuesday looks a lot like President Clinton's—including a focus on school safety—but union officials declined to explicitly endorse the administration's proposals.

"We have been very careful not to tie on to any [specific] programs, either the administration's or either party's," said Bob Chase, president of the nation's largest teacher union. "Rather, we are talking about what we think is important."

In fact, Chase took pains to emphasize that the union—traditionally allied with Democrats—is "working with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle." Safety First School discipline and safety topped the NEA's

legislative agenda. "Too many students—and teachers—complain that their classes are disrupted by disorderly students," Chase said. NEA calls for federal grants for before- and after-school programs and summer programs, so that children won't be home alone. In his fiscal 1998 budget, the president proposed spending \$50 million for such programs.

NEA also put school repair high on its agenda. "There is no excuse not to fund the \$112 billion necessary to bring our nation's school buildings up to par," Chase said, referring to a General Accounting Office report that found a massive infusion of funds will be necessary to repair crumbling schools (ED, Feb. 3, 1995).

Clinton has asked for \$5 billion over four years to pay half the interest costs

states and localities incur for school repair and construction (ED, Feb. 6).

Teacher Training

The federal government also should provide grants and loans to cover the cost of coursework for state license and certification requirements for those who want to teach in underserved schools, Chase said.

Teachers also will need training to take advantage of new technology in their classrooms, Chase said. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a member of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, is pushing a bill that would mandate technology training in existing training programs, including the National Teacher Training Project. Murray's bill was the only specific piece of legislation NEA endorsed yesterday. -Laureen Lazarovici ■

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testing

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Students face new tests.

BOSTON (AP) - Third-grade and 10th-grade students in Massachusetts public schools will face the standardized Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the first time this spring.

The tests will be given between April 28 and May 9.

Third-graders will be tested in reading, and 10th-graders will be tested in reading, language arts, mathematics, science and social science, state Education Commissioner Robert Antonucci said Wednesday.

The state this year is dropping use of its Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program examination, which was considered expensive and tedious to grade.

Next year, students will face the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test, which is still being developed.

Students in the fourth grade and 10th grade will be asked pilot questions in math, science and technology from the new test to aid its development.

State officials said that school districts, such as Boston, which use standardized tests now have until March 14 to ask for a waiver from giving the Iowa Test.

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Yale tuition raised to \$29,950

bgnhr

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) - Tuition, room and board for Yale University undergraduates during the 1997-98 academic year will rise to \$29,950, a slight increase.

The 3.7 increase from the current academic year's cost of \$28,880 is the smallest rate of increase since the 1960s.

"We think this is a reasonable level, but we are going to keep trying," said Yale President Richard C. Levin. "The truth is every dollar buys more good services for students."

The \$1,070 increase includes a 4 percent tuition hike and a 2.5 percent hike in room and board.

Levin said the university sought to keep the room and board increase to a minimum in a bid to stem the flow of students living in off-campus housing.

A portion of the revenue generated by the term bill increase will be used to offset a nearly \$700 million, five-year capital improvement project at the school.

Despite the increase, Levin said the university remains committed to a "need blind" admissions policy, which guarantees that all qualified undergraduates are admitted without regard to their financial means.

Yale's 5,200 undergraduates are expected to receive a total of more than \$34 million in financial aid next year.

Clinton Begins Campaign for His Education

By JAMES BENNET

ANNAPOLIS, Md., Feb. 10 — Clearly comfortable in his own tribe, President Clinton began politicking among the politicians today, starting his itinerant national campaign to create education standards and to soften changes in the welfare system by addressing a special session of the Maryland Legislature.

In the first of what aides say may be many such exhortations of state legislators, Mr. Clinton urged Maryland and other states to embrace as-yet-undeveloped national standards in reading and math. And, mocking those who attacked previous welfare laws, Mr. Clinton warned the legislators to gird for the impact of changes in the system.

"This welfare reform bill had this ringing declaration: Everybody who can work, everybody who's able to work, has to take responsibility for their own lives," said Mr. Clinton, who signed the bill into law. "No

Seeking national support for school standards.

more permanent dependency. Full of moral precepts. Well, the morality shoe is now on the other foot.

"The challenge is primarily on you and the employer community, which is the way you said you wanted it."

But Mr. Clinton said he was willing to "jump off this cliff, to hold up this high standard."

Members of the General Assembly — overwhelmingly Democrats — sat shoulder to shoulder on folding chairs in the House chamber for Mr. Clinton's speech. Before Mr. Clinton arrived, they sat silently when told that he would shake their hands in a receiving line after his speech. But a moment later they burst into applause at the news that the President, whose popularity is surging in the polls, would pause after his address to be photographed with each of them, preserving the moment for their constituents.

The legislators seemed thrilled to be hosts for the reigning champion of their profession. "Your presence to-

day makes this the single most prestigious day in the history of this great institution," the House Speaker, Casper Taylor, a Democrat, said in introducing Mr. Clinton — no mean statement about a building where George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson walked.

Famously empathetic, Mr. Clinton, a former Governor, adapted easily to this audience, perhaps because, as he noted at one point, "I've been through a zillion state legislative sessions."

But even as he took to the bully pulpit, Mr. Clinton appeared to worry about its potential limitations. "It's hard when you're not threatened by a foreign enemy to whip people up to a fever pitch of common, intense, sustained, disciplined endeavor."

In his 55-minute address, President Clinton frequently praised Maryland for already having done what he wants the states to do.

Mr. Clinton said Maryland had made a "good start" by developing standards for what children should learn by third, fifth and eighth grades. His own system would set standards for literacy in fourth grade and math in eighth grade, and he hopes to encourage all states to test against such standards by 1999. He also praised efforts by the University of Maryland in College Park to have college students tutor reading through a program similar to one he has proposed.

Michael D. McCurry, the White House spokesman, said that Mr. Clinton wanted to highlight states where ideas like his own were already working, before approaching less welcoming audiences. "You need to continue to make that case everywhere in the country, and there are other places where we'll have to make it in the face of those who might be opposed to some of the President's ideas," he said.

Perhaps preparing for tougher crowds, the President tried out a new

defense of his education standards today, rejecting the criticism that they amounted to, as he put it, "a Federal power grab."

"That's nonsense," he said, emphasizing that the standards would be national and voluntary, not Federally mandated. "I say, from Mary-

Proposals

land to Michigan to Montana, reading is reading and math is math," Mr. Clinton said. "No school board is in charge of algebra, and no state legislature can enact the law of physics. And it is time we started acting the way we know we should."

Mr. Clinton analyzed some of the problems that states might face as the new welfare law takes hold over the next two years. He went into some detail, urging the legislators, for example, to address the needs of "young, single men who are unemployed, who are eligible for food stamps but not welfare."

Mr. Clinton became impassioned as he tried to build support for one of his budgetary priorities, restoring welfare benefits to legal immigrants who become disabled. He offered the hypothetical example of a native of India who came to Maryland to develop computer software, stayed for three years, had two children and then faced a medical emergency without enough insurance.

"So what do we say?" Mr. Clinton asked. "Tough luck? You had misfortune? Yes, you've worked hard; yes, you've paid your taxes; yes, you've been perfectly legal; yes, you've complied with every provision of the law; yes, you didn't try to sneak in our country, you waited your turn just like everybody else. But I'm sorry."

He added: "This is wrong, folks."

Clinton Promotes Education Initiative for National Testing

■ **Schools:** President says failure to measure learning will hurt America's children as well as the country. But his idea remains controversial.

By ELIZABETH SHOGREN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

ANNAPOLIS, Md.—President Clinton tried to head off grass-roots resistance to his education initiatives Monday, saying that America's children will be hurt and "the rest of the country will pay the price" unless schools begin administering nationwide tests of student performance.

The president made his most fervent and lengthy pitch yet for his proposal to institute standard tests to ensure that all fourth-graders have learned to read and all eighth-graders are proficient in math.

The proposal, perhaps the most controversial of Clinton's broad package of education initiatives, has been criticized by some educators and politicians as an attempt by the federal government to usurp state control over education.

"That's nonsense," Clinton said in response. He accused his opponents of hiding behind a "very small fig leaf" and suggested that the only way U.S. students will be able to catch up to those in other industrial countries is if people stop talking about states' rights and start giving students national tests that reflect global standards.

"I say, from Maryland to Michigan to Montana, reading is reading and math is math," Clinton told members of the Maryland Legislature gathered in the ornate House chamber of the state capitol. "No school board is in charge of algebra and no state legislature can enact the law of physics."

Although Clinton made a point of describing his quick trip to Annapolis as an effort to persuade states to support his education priorities, he was clearly

preaching to the converted in Maryland, where both legislative houses are controlled by Democrats and state officials are already pursuing education initiatives similar to the president's.

"He has very little to sell here," said Nancy Grasmick, Maryland's state superintendent of schools, adding that the president's proposals are "totally congruent with what Maryland is doing."

But the president clearly would receive mixed reviews on his testing proposal in many other state capitals, and in Washington the GOP-controlled Congress already has expressed skepticism.

"This is not the federal government's job. It's the state's job," said Robert Calfee, a professor of education and psychology at Stanford University and a co-chairman of the California commission charged with developing statewide academic standards.

"If you're going to move ahead on a nationwide test, it makes sense only if you move ahead with nationwide curriculum," he added. "But then states would ask: 'Why is the federal government taking over our responsibility?'"

California's experience shows how controversial even statewide tests can be. Its latest statewide exam system was dismantled a few years ago amid criticism from conservatives that it failed to measure basic skills and was intrusive. The standards being developed by Calfee's commission likely will be turned into a new statewide assessment system, but new tests are not expected to be ready for classroom use until after the year 2000, Calfee said.

Most states, however, have their own statewide testing programs. They also use the National Assessment of Education Progress Test to evaluate a sample of their students. Clinton's proposed fourth-grade reading test would be modeled on this exam and the eighth-grade math evaluation would be derived from the Third International Math and Science Study, a test that the United States and a dozen other nations use to determine and compare student achievement in those

subjects.

Richard Wolf, a professor of psychology and education at the Teachers College, Columbia University, who worked on the Third International Math and Science Study, argued that a national test would end up telling educators what they already know.

"Kids in well-to-do, suburban areas are going to do well and kids in poor urban areas are going to do poorly," Wolf said.

"A national test is just going to throw another set of failures in the faces of those students."

For all its critics, the president's proposal has many strong advocates, including California Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin.

"We jolly well better set national standards or people should stop wondering why we're behind Germany, Singapore and Japan when it comes to personal achievement," Eastin said.

She predicted that the proposal will be controversial with California politicians but will receive strong support from state businesses.

"The army doesn't have different standards for different bases," she added.

Clinton used the same analogy to explain why nationwide testing is so important.

"Just think how silly it would be," Clinton said, if in every state where troops underwent basic training, instructors decided it was too difficult to abide by "uniform standards," so they were told to come up with their own programs and "we'll hope it works the next time we're in the Persian Gulf."

"We've got the most diverse democracy in the world," Clinton said. "Who are we kidding that we're going to create the kind of country we want—where everybody's got a chance to make it—when we haven't even taken the first elemental step to say, here's how everyone should read by the fourth grade, here's the math everybody ought to know by eighth grade."

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Why the President's Testing Plan Fails the Test

By Romesh Ratnesar

In the weeks since his second term began, President Clinton has argued repeatedly that improving the performance of American students requires establishing uniform standards and voluntary national examinations in our schools. The Department of Education plans to develop nationwide fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math tests, and the president promises to stump for their adoption. "Children will grow according to the expectations we have of them," Clinton said in a recent address to the Maryland legislature. "They cannot be expected to know what it is they should know, or even how high they can soar, until we give them the right set of expectations."

To bolster such claims, Clinton cites the example of a consortium of 20 school districts in suburban Chicago. Last year, 3,000 fourth- and eighth-graders from the consortium, which calls itself First in the World, participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which tested randomly selected students from 41 countries. The consortium's students, who entered independently of the general U.S. sample, were topped only by Singapore in science and were among the top five scorers in math. In his State of the Union address, Clinton used the consortium's performance to make his most ardent pitch for national school standards. "Those students ... prove that when we aim high and challenge our students, they will be the best in the world."

Clinton failed to mention, however, that outside of the 20 Illinois districts, American students did tepidly at best in the TIMSS: The United States finished 29th out of 41 countries in math, and 18th in science. The omission of that fact shows the danger in the administration's focus on national standards—and its use of the

First in the World consortium to claim that they work: The testing crusade may blind it to the deeper maladies afflicting America's schools. First in the World's success provides valuable lessons about public education, but they don't all relate to high expectations.

The consortium was created two years ago, when 10 superintendents from the northern Chicago suburbs agreed to collaborate on an effort to raise academic standards in their schools. They held frequent inter-district teaching workshops, instituted a math curriculum designed by the University of Chicago, and set their sights on the 1996 TIMSS. "It doesn't matter if you're first in the world or 50th," says consortium president Paul Kimmelman, who is superintendent of the West Northfield 31 district. "By setting a benchmark by which to measure yourself, you can build a better program. Benchmarking gives the opportunity to make improvements." The consortium's results seem to prove him right.

Or do they? The snag is that the First in the World schools are not representative

of American public schools. On average, the 20 districts in the consortium spend over \$8,000 per pupil; nationally, the average per-pupil spending in public schools is \$5,767. Illinois board of education spokesman Tom Hernandez concedes that "the consortium schools are among the most fortunate in Illinois, in terms of their funding, the resources, the level of support, the ability to give kids what we wish all our students had. This is one case where the amount of money you spend on students does correspond to their success."

The First in the World schools have other assets, too. Their teacher-student ratio is a manageable 14 to 1. (Nationally, the figure is closer to 17 to 1.) And 62 percent of their teachers have at least a master's degree, well above the national average of 47.3

percent. Asked what lures such well-credentialed instructors to Chicago's North Shore, Daniel Johnson, superintendent of the Glenview 34 district, says, "It would be foolish to say good salaries don't have something to do with it. And the school districts in this area and the communities in this area have a reputation for placing high expectations on students."

Indeed, the school districts sit in a predominantly white, mostly affluent region, which, not insignificantly, also indicates that most parents are well-educated and likely to demand more of their kids on their own. According to Arthur Beaton, the Boston College professor who designed and conducted the TIMSS, that's one variable that crosses national boundaries. For every country that participated in the TIMSS—including the United States—"there was a relationship between socioeconomic factors and performance. Children of parents who graduated from universities did better than those whose parents graduated from high school, who did better than those whose parents didn't graduate. That's true of every single country. It happened 41 times." The same goes for other factors, such as the presence of books and computers, in the home.

So while the success of the First in the World consortium does speak to the value of high standards, it says as much, or more, about the indispensable importance of generous funding, qualified teachers, intimate classrooms and parents who value their kids' education. Yet too many American students lack those bare necessities for learning. In Chicago's public schools, for instance, 37 percent of students live in homes with an unemployed head of household, and 40 percent live in poverty—more than four times the number in suburban districts like those in the consortium. The crises that face poor and working-class schools—decaying buildings, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of qualified teachers—won't be fixed by giving students tougher exams.

What the president perhaps meant to say last week is that "when we aim high and challenge our students, some of them will be the best in the world." The rest probably will still struggle to succeed, until the country makes a bolder effort to invest in the future by correcting some of the disparities of the present.

Romesh Ratnesar is a reporter-researcher at the New Republic.

testing

Views vary from pass to fail on national school test

By Robert Greene
The Associated Press

A14

WASHINGTON If President Clinton has his way, millions of children will take national reading and math tests in 1999.

In eighth grade, they'd have to answer questions like: If a rubber ball is dropped from a rooftop 18 feet high, and rebounds to half the height it drops, what's the distance traveled by the time it hits the ground the third time?

But some Republican governors fret that Clinton is really pushing federal control over schools. States pay almost all the costs of education, they note, and should decide what children learn.

Liberal critics, meanwhile, worry that poor schools with large numbers of minority children will bear the stigma of low scores. Teachers will rely on "drill and kill" instruction, making it hard "to tell what kids really know from what they just memorized for the test," said Monty Neill of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing.

Many children might flunk.

States could avoid embarrassment by refusing the offer of the test, paid for by federal taxpayers the first year. But Clinton says it's time for everyone to know how kids and schools stack up, no matter where they live.

"We have been hiding behind a very small fig leaf for very long," Clinton said last week.

The idea also has garnered wide support. Republican Gov. John Engler of Michigan says it will help states make schools accountable. Engler wants the state to be able to take over school districts where students do poorly.

The nation's top business leaders also back the idea as a way to make sure new workers have basic abilities. Employers, facing worldwide competition, worry about what their young workers know.

After all, a Republican "education president," George Bush, in 1991 had floated the

try, can take on tough math and science in high school.

The rubber ball question comes from an international math and science study for eighth-graders. A pupil at the international level could correctly answer "45 feet" when asked the question.

Some failures will occur, if results from previous versions of the tests give any clue.

"This will be a real shock," said Marshall Smith, acting deputy secretary of education.

Still, the government isn't telling anyone what to do about students, schools or districts that fail.

idea of a standard national test for high-schoolers. It was shelved because of complaints the test would be unfair and expensive and lead to national textbooks.

Governors last March set a two-year deadline for creating goals in each state for what students should be able to know and do, and for testing them.

The administration says the proposed national tests, providing some teeth to those standards, would gauge the right skills at the right time.

Pupils who learn to read by the end of the third grade can read for a lifetime. Eighth-graders who know the basics of math, including some algebra and geome-

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, Oct. 30, 1996 p. 1B
(Best Copy Available)

Student Testing Far From Standard

By Susan C. Thomson
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Are students learning? And how much are they learning compared with other students?

What the public might have wanted to know most is hard to tell from the first yearly "report cards" Missouri public school districts issued earlier this month.

As the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education decreed, the reports include students' achievement test scores along with reams of data on such matters as finances, staffs, courses of instruction and extracurricular activities.

But the department didn't require a particular test or format for reporting scores.

So different districts reported different scores from different tests in different ways. Some printed charts; others, columns of numbers. Few cited averages or other statistical benchmarks or offered interpretations of the numbers and pictures.

Third-grade reading scores, as the 57 districts in the St. Louis metropolitan area reported them, are a typical case. This begs for study because many educators believe that students who don't learn to read by third grade fall increasingly behind in school after that. That theory apparently underlies President Bill Clinton's proposal for a \$2.75 billion initiative to ensure that all American children read by third grade. He implied not enough of them do.

Most of the 57 districts reported results from last spring's Missouri Mastery and Achievement Tests — a two-hour multiple choice exercise with forms for second through 10th grades, each with separate parts for reading, mathematics, science and social studies.

Not all districts tested third-graders. Of those that did, a handful reported only the percentages of students scoring "above average" in reading and the other subjects. But they didn't say what they meant by that term.

More helpfully, other districts reported third-grade reading and other MMAT scores as:

- Three-digit numbers. A few of the 57 showed their own third-grade reading scores against the statewide average of 325; none noted that scores of 300 to 350 are considered within the "average range."

- Percentage of test material "mastered" by the average student. Many districts reporting scores this way neglected to add that the average Missouri third-grader mastered 78 percent on the latest reading test.

- Percentage of students scoring in the top 40 percent of all students statewide.

Sung Soo Kim, an assistant professor of education at the University of Missouri at St. Louis, said the reading skill of Missouri's third-graders is impossible to tell from these disparate scores.

James L. Friedebach, director of assessment for the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, takes a longer, more optimistic view.

When the MMAT first came into use in 1987, the statewide average on all of its subtests was 300.

Over the years, all of the averages have risen, telling Friedebach that in third-grade reading and all other grades and subjects, the state's students are "doing pretty well."

But he added, "There's still some room for improvement."

Kim and Friedebach cautioned against using the scores to compare districts.

That wasn't the intent of the report cards, Friedebach said.

He advises parents and other readers of them not to obsess about "box scores" or data from any single year but to watch their districts' trends over time.

The MMAT and other multiple choice achievement tests make no allowance for the varying socio-economic backgrounds of today's students. So, Kim said, "there's no way you can use the scores to determine the success of the school district."

A few states, including Missouri neighbors Arkansas and Kentucky, have no qualms about doing that.

They give the same tests to all of the state's students at the same time every year — and report the results district by district.

Proponents say it's only fair to hold all of a state's schools and students accountable by the same standards.

Some go further, saying that if statewide testing is good, nationwide testing of all students in all schools would be even better.

Critics counter that the typical multiple choice achievement test doesn't begin to assess the complex knowledge and skills today's society demands.

Mike Fulton, director of testing for the Pattonville School District, takes a middle view. "There's nothing wrong with multiple choice tests," he said. "They do a fine job of what they do. . . . But their limitation is they deal primarily with recognition and recall and don't deal with the ability to make applications."

On that general philosophy, Missouri is developing a new test that will replace the MMAT by 2000. The new test will include not just multiple choice but also short-answer questions and problems for students to solve.

Clinton Testing Proposal Pits Calif. Officials

By David J. Hoff

Washington

At the White House last week, California's top school official said the state would embrace the national tests the Clinton administration plans to offer in two years.

"We are confident that a vast majority of school districts will come on board voluntarily," Delaine Eastin, a Democrat, said at a meeting with President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and a bevy of technology executives who also endorsed the tests.

But on the other side of the country, the response from the state's Republican governor was simple: Not so fast.

"We haven't seen enough there for anybody to give an endorsement," said Dan Edwards, a spokesman for California's office of child development and education, which, unlike Ms. Eastin, is under the direct control of Gov. Pete Wilson.

Last week's events show the dicey politics involved in recruiting states and schools to participate in the president's plan to assess the reading skills of 4th graders and the math knowledge of 8th graders. Mr. Clinton has put the voluntary national tests at the top of his second-term agenda.

On one coast, Mr. Clinton basked in support from Ms. Eastin, California's superintendent of public instruction, and more than 200 executives of technology companies—many of them Republicans.

On the other, a Republican politician who at one time had national political ambitions spoke for the social conservatives who abhor Mr. Clinton's proposal.

And both sides have well-rehearsed arguments.

A 4th grade reading test "would be very compatible with our quality-control efforts" in California, Ms. Eastin said at the White House. The companion 8th grade math assessment "would not only be compatible, it would be downright helpful." But conservatives say Mr. Clinton's proposal would create an unprecedented role for the federal

government that most parents and local school officials don't want.

"We don't think you can set national standards that can be considered world-class," Mr. Edwards said. "When you factor in all of the concerns of all the states, you end up with a watered-down product."

In the middle are almost 1,000 school districts in the state, which Ms. Eastin acknowledged she cannot force to participate in Mr. Clinton's testing plan.

Campaigning for Support

"It's a pretty recalcitrant bunch of people" in the state, said Paul Houston, the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators and a former superintendent in Riverside, Calif. "My guess is if they are encouraged by the state, a lot of the locals will jump on."

But that's not guaranteed, especially in the face of objections from Gov. Wilson and the members of the state board of education he appoints.

To gather support, Ms. Eastin, a former state legislator, is acting as if she's running for the superintendent's office she won in a statewide election in 1994.

"We are going to campaign with business leaders to make sure this is something California embraces," she told reporters outside the White House after last week's meeting. "We're an unbeatable group. We're bipartisan. We're the whole state of California."

The business community will promote Mr. Clinton's tests in meetings with local officials and through media campaigns, said John Doerr, a partner in a Menlo Park, Calif.-based company that underwrites technology businesses. Mr. Doerr, at Mr. Gore's urging, rounded up support from the chief executives of such companies as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, America Online, and other household names.

"It's a very smart strategy to get CEOs involved," said Mr. Houston, who attended last week's meeting along with several other national education leaders. "If you get the

money people on board, it changes the geometry of it."

'Powerful New Momentum'

But support from the business community does not guarantee success among all Republicans.

In recent years, Mr. Wilson has vetoed a state-assessment bill and held up the state's money from the federal Goals 2000 school reform program, citing concerns similar to those expressed by social and religious conservatives.

The state's assessment system asked questions about sexuality, parents' beliefs, and other issues that "clearly were inappropriate," Mr. Edwards said. What's more, it did not assign specific scores to individual students.

The governor has appointed a panel to write new state standards and create an assessment that would yield individual results.

Even though the tests Mr. Clinton is proposing would give similar results, the governor is unlikely to buy the final product because it will come from the federal government, Mr. Edwards said.

Regardless of the squabbles in California, Mr. Clinton last week reminded testing supporters and opponents that the concept is still high on his agenda.

"The most important thing of all is that we know whether we are learning what we need to know," he said. "And that requires something America has put off doing for too long: the embracing of a genuine commitment to national standards of learning for our young people."

The endorsements of Ms. Eastin and the technology executives gives "powerful new momentum" to his proposal, he said. Ms. Eastin joins the governors of Maryland, Michigan, and North Carolina as state leaders who plan to promote Mr. Clinton's test to schools.

If all students in those states participated, Mr. Clinton said last week, 20 percent of the children in the nation would be involved.

testing

Political Shift Emboldens Clinton To Urge Tests

By David J. Hoff

Annapolis, Md.

When President Clinton stood before most of the state governors at last year's education summit, he challenged states to craft academic standards and new tests but avoided saying the federal government would give the tests.

Now, 11 months later, national standards and testing are at the top of Mr. Clinton 10-point plan for education, and he visited the Maryland capital last week to use his bully pulpit to promote them.

"To compete and win in the 21st century, we must have a high standard of excellence that all states agree on," Mr. Clinton told Maryland legislators here. "That is why I called ... for national standards of excellence in the basics—not federal government standards—but national standards representing what all our students must know to succeed in a new century."

The new policy, which came together quickly in the past month, reflects Mr. Clinton's long-held belief that states need a national benchmark for comparing student achievement, current and former aides to the president say.

But it also demonstrates a shift in the political climate that has put education at the top of voters' concerns—a change giving Mr. Clinton latitude to risk criticism that his plans could usurp local control of schools.

Some Republicans, although cautious, say they will consider Mr. Clinton's plans, which hinge on national tests of 4th graders' reading skills and 8th graders' math achievement.

"It's one of the more intriguing parts of his education proposal," said Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif., the chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees K-12 policy. "We need some sort of standardized assessment and performance-based assessment to ensure learning in the core academic subjects."

Questions of Process

To get the testing into classrooms by 1999, the administration's strategy is to operate without Congress, tapping accounts that give the Department of

Education wide latitude in spending.

By avoiding Congress' laborious legislative process, the department should have tests ready to be piloted early next year and in use the year after that, said Michael Cohen, Mr. Clinton's education policy adviser.

But Mr. Riggs said he would push to give Congress some control.

"I want the administration to work with the authorizing committees," he said. "I do not want the president to bypass the authorizing committees in the House and Senate."

The ideal time to consider Mr. Clinton's testing plan, Mr. Riggs added, will be in the fall, when Congress considers revisions to the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the nonpartisan governing board that oversees it.

But now that Mr. Clinton has seized on the issue, he wants to see action to go along with the debate.

"We want to get this done," Mr. Cohen said last week. By waiting for congressional debate next fall, he said, it "would give us legislation by 1999, but not a test by 1999."

For some, the national-test debate is familiar. In 1991, President Bush proposed national testing in his America 2000 school reform agenda. That plan eventually died in Congress. While President Clinton has come slowly to his call for new tests, aides and observers point to a series of events that show that national testing has been a consistent interest for him.

The gathering of governors and corporate executives in Palisades, N.Y., last March refocused the president on his long-held belief that schools need tough academic standards and tests to determine whether students meet them, aides said.

Strategic Planning

But it was not until this month's State of the Union Address that he voiced his long-standing desire for national tests.

If he had called for a national test last March, strategists expected Republicans to respond by criticizing Mr. Clinton as wanting to use federal programs to bully local school

boards—a charge that might have helped them argue for scaling back federal programs, according to Dick Morris, Mr. Clinton's former political adviser.

But the political landscape changed when Republicans backed away from large-scale cuts in April and then in September proposed major increases for federal programs such as Title I, the program aimed at children in poverty, special education, and Pell Grants for college students.

"The budget battle and the campaign resolved an issue that was still contentious," Mr. Cohen said.

After the campaign, Mr. Clinton began to think more seriously about backing national tests and started laying the groundwork as he contemplated his second term.

Plan Takes Shape

"I am for local control. I am not for federal government national standards," Mr. Clinton said in a Dec. 11 speech to the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. "But I am for national standards of excellence and a means of measuring it so we know what our children are learning."

Two days after his second inauguration, Mr. Clinton traveled to northern Illinois to release the scores of international math and science tests taken in 20 school districts there.

Mr. Clinton strayed from his prepared remarks and started to refine his ideas, Mr. Cohen said.

"To pretend that somehow ... agreeing that there has to be some uniform way of measuring [student performance] is giving up local control is just an excuse to avoid being held accountable," Mr. Clinton said in his Jan. 22 visit to Glenbrook North High School in Northbrook, Ill.

After that speech, the president assigned Mr. Cohen, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, and Undersecretary of Education Marshall S. Smith to create a plan to make the new tests a reality.

-more-

SAT is biased against girls

Test scores don't reflect their abilities

By Leslie R. Wolfe
and Phyllis Rosser

This year, more than 1 million high school seniors will pin their college dreams and career aspirations on their performance on the Scholastic Assessment Test. Sadly, the SAT will shortchange the 53 percent of test takers who are girls.

Girls score an average of nearly 40 points lower than boys on the SAT. The reason is:

- a) Boys are smarter than girls.
- b) Boys earn higher grades.
- c) Boys take more math classes.
- d) The SAT is biased against girls.

The correct answer is "d." The SAT has only one purpose — to predict first-year college grades — but it consistently underpredicts the grades of girls. If the SAT were an accurate predictor of grades, girls would outscore boys every time because they earn higher grades than boys in all subjects in high school and college.

A recent civil rights settlement to eliminate sex discrimination on the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test should have propelled the test maker to end sex bias on the SAT, but it has announced no such thing. The refusal by the College Board, which administers the PSAT and SAT, and the Educational Testing Service, which writes the tests, to produce an unbiased college entrance exam is tantamount to consumer fraud.

The SAT gender gap harms girls in three crucial ways. First, it lowers their chances of attending the best colleges and universities. College admissions officers weigh an applicant's entire background, but low SAT scores can be a significant deterrent or disqualifier. Some large universities even have SAT cutoff scores.

Second, the gender gap robs girls of valuable scholarships. Girls win only 40 percent of prestigious National Merit Scholarships, which are based on PSAT scores and total about \$27 million a year; that inequity led to the recent civil rights settlement involving the PSAT.

Third, the gender gap diminishes girls' aspirations and career goals. Studies show that SAT scores are more influential than grades in shaping students' assessment of their abilities, and that low test scores cause women to apply to less prestigious colleges than their high school records warrant.

The SAT has failed girls since at least 1967, when the College Board began reporting scores by gender. Beginning in the mid-1970s, numerous studies by women's advocates and educational researchers — including those by the test publisher itself — have shown that the SAT underpredicts young women's first-year college grades. Yet the College Board and ETS refuse to budge.

ETS did not hesitate to intervene when girls outscored boys on the verbal section. In 1972, ETS added questions about sci-

ence and business and, lo and behold, boys began to outscore girls.

In 1989, we published "The SAT Gender Gap: Identifying the Causes," the first study to reveal the reasons for the gender gap and to make public those questions that created large differences in answers between the sexes. The same year, a federal judge ordered New York State to stop relying solely on the PSAT to award merit scholarships, which went overwhelmingly to boys. "SAT scores capture a student's academic achievement no more than a student's yearbook photograph captures the full range of her experiences in high school," wrote Federal Judge John M. Walker.

More recently, ETS researchers Howard Wainer and Linda Steinberg, analyzing first-year college math grades and previous SAT scores of nearly 47,000 college students, found that women who earned the same grades in the same courses as men had averaged 33 points lower on the math SAT.

While the College Board and ETS earn millions of dollars from their tests, young women and their parents pay dearly in terms of diminished educational opportunities and loss of scholarships. The test makers must eliminate bias. After more than a quarter century of inequity, it is past time for college-bound girls to get a fair shake.

Wolfe is president of the Center for Women Policy Studies. Rosser is director of Equality in Testing Project.

Schools await state summary of '96 skills tests

By Connie Langland
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

In February 1996, thousands of Pennsylvania students took a standardized test that area educators said would provide "a snapshot" of how the state's public schools were performing.

More than a year later, it's a snapshot that is still in the darkroom, so to speak; a school-by-school summary of how students fared has yet to be released by the state.

Fifth, eighth and 11th graders in public schools were tested in math and reading, while sixth and ninth graders completed a writing assessment. The testing program, with an annual price tag of about \$4 million, is called the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

Dan Langen, spokesman for the state Department of Education, has been fielding inquiries from reporters and citizens who have been seeking PSSA results since December.

Langen said that 1996 results have been held up while education officials review them. "We want to make sure that the data we are presenting are accurate, that people can understand it," Langen said. "Last year, we spent considerable amounts of time explaining the results to callers."

School districts were alerted last fall as to how their students fared, and some districts have shared that information with the public, Langen noted. However, that data are not as comprehensive as the state-

wide summary.

In 1995, the PSSA's first year, schools tested students in March and full school-by-school results were released that December. Testing for 1997 was done in February and March.

Langen estimated complete PSSA data for 1996 would be available by the end of April.

The state analysis will show how students from individual schools rank against their peers across the state.

Results from 1995 revealed wide disparities in student performance among local schools and school dis-

tricts. Chester Upland's poor showing, for instance, was cited in recent testimony in federal court about the slow pace of reform in that system.

The results will show how each school fared. But the report has been delayed.

Norman Ness, a frequent critic of policies in the Kennett Area schools, said the 1995 data revealed the need for improvement in his Chester County district. He said he had made repeated inquiries to Harrisburg about the 1996 results.

Unless the results are released in a timely manner, the testing effort is wasted, said Ness, who is seeking election to the Kennett Area school board this year. "We need to understand how our students are doing, how our public schools are performing," he said.

Much of the value in Pennsylvania's test, said Ness, is that it is conducted annually, so that the public can measure improvements — or stagnation — from year to year.

"The thing about standardized tests," said Ness, "is that you need to stick to them for a number of years, and watch the progress, and determine what changes need to be made in the educational system. It's not just a one-time affair."

Stinson Stroup, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, a professional group in Harrisburg, said education officials were focused on efforts now under way in the Ridge administration to write a set of academic standards.

"Our sense is that it is important to have standards adopted first and from there be sure that tests are developed to assess how well schools are meeting the standards," said Stroup.

But the state testing program, put together by teams of teachers and testing officials, already is proving a powerful influence on the curriculum in local schools. Teachers last year reported they had rearranged when some math topics were taught, for instance, to be sure students had covered the math problems likely to be on the state test.

Langen said the PSSA data also would be included in profiles being developed of all 500 school districts in Pennsylvania. The profiles also will include data on enrollment and attendance, financing, dropout rates, class size and staffing, plus the test results. The department plans to make the profiles public about the same time the 1996 testing analysis is released, he said.

Eastin in the testing war

tearing

STATE SCHOOLS Superintendent Delaine Eastin last week jumped out onto the limb of endorsing President Clinton's voluntary national testing proposal. Almost before you could say National Assessment of Educational Progress, Gov. Pete Wilson and the state Board of Education sawed the limb off.

It's still not clear just what Eastin told Clinton and the feds — her own press release, sent as she went off to Washington for her White House photo-op, says she “announced her support” of Clinton's plan, which calls for national tests in fourth grade in reading and eighth grade in math. The White House acted as if California had signed on, and made an enthusiastic public announcement indicating as much.

“Today,” said Clinton, “America's largest school system [has joined] in the support of a national standards movement.” Most of the national stories at least indicated that California would take part. “With California's participation,” White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry said, “20 percent of the nation's schoolchildren will be enrolled in the type of testing regime the president has recommended.”

COMMENTARY

Peter Schrag
Contributing Editor

r Bb

But within 24 hours of the announcement, state Board of Education President Yvonne Larson sent a very public letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley stating that Eastin had “exceeded her authority,” and “respectfully” asked “that you no longer indicate that California is among the states that have formally endorsed this effort.” She apologized “for any embarrassment this causes you or the president.”

NONETHELESS, the real story in this exchange is not the embarrassment that Clinton (and Eastin) may have suffered from the disavowal (which was almost certainly drafted in Wilson's office), but the strong indication at the heart of the Larson letter that Clinton's proposed national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math are fraught with larger problems and that a lot of booby traps — pedagogical and political — are buried on the road to any national testing program that most states will accept.

Larson's letter declared that California was embarked on its own efforts to develop school standards and tests. It would thus take a change in law for California to join the national program. “Moreover,” it added portentously, “such a commitment would not be advisable, in my view, until we can see exactly what the national standards and assessment would be and how it would be aligned with our state standards and assessment system.”

There is a world of meaning in that sentence. Clinton's proposed voluntary national tests, to be in place by 1999, are supposed to be modeled on the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests. But NAEP was designed to measure overall national performance (in a wide spectrum of academic subjects), not the performance of individual students.

And since Clinton wants to release the test items and develop a new set of questions each year, among them some calling for open-ended (constructed) answers, the technical task of validating new items and making certain that scoring is consistent throughout the country represents an enormous (and very costly) undertaking.

Equally important, while NAEP is supposed to be the national gold standard of testing, it's never been put out for public evaluation, and few parents, legislators or school board members have ever had a chance to see or examine a full NAEP test, as they all will if the president's plan goes into effect.

Clinton has said “reading is reading and math is math,” but anyone who has followed the testing battles in California or Texas knows better.

Will conservative parents, and the people who represent them, be happy about injunctions (in the current NAEP Reading Framework) about how good readers have “positive self-perceptions of themselves as readers?”

Will they accept a personally searching question (one of the sample items in the framework) asking, “How is this story like or different from your own personal experience?” Will they be content with a test that does not really seek to find out whether students can understand the specific meaning of a sentence? California's uproar over the CLAS test three years ago suggests otherwise.

CONVERSELY, what course will the feds follow with respect to testing of Limited English Proficient students, or handicapped students? What attitude will the liberal critics of testing take to the prospect that, in some places, students will be tested even though (at least in their view) their schools lack the resources to prepare students sufficiently?

And will the test also be used to provide school and district averages, meaning that the jobs of principals and even superintendents could ride on the results? If so, what provisions will there be to prevent widespread fraud and cheating, especially if the test is not given to all students — from Maine to Hawaii — at the very same moment. What about makeup tests for those who are absent the first time the test is given? Will they require a whole new set of items? Clinton's national tests are a worthy idea, but so far they are still a pig in a poke.

Still, Eastin should take heart. She blundered into a battlefield that, beyond Sacramento's mundane politics, is a great deal more complex and dangerous than she probably suspected. But if she is the first famous casualty on that battlefield, she will surely not be the last.

continued...

able or unenlightened from the standpoint of contemporary notions of social justice, these objections must be presented to the General Assembly,” wrote Justice John Nickala in the court's decision.

But if Illinois legislators continue to do nothing, the court will be compelled to act. The Texas, New Jersey and California supreme courts have held that statewide school systems that rely on the property tax are unfair and unconstitutional. Last week, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that funding disparities between rich and poor districts were in violation of the state's constitution.

If Illinois legislators thwart Edgar's initiative and ignore their constituents, the Supreme Court should intervene and reiterate that education is a fundamental right.

Steve Neal is the Chicago Sun-Times political columnist.



HUGO/Special to The Bee

RESEARCHERS STRIVE TO TIE ASSESSMENT TO CURRICULA

CHICAGO—Dissatisfied with average test scores for broad subjects, assessment researchers are looking for better ways to connect results to curricula.

Although the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) went beyond previous assessments by looking at classroom practices and curricula, more needs to be done, researchers at Michigan State University told their colleagues here last week.

To spur improvement of education, a test must be curriculum-sensitive and make distinctions within core subjects, said William Schmidt, the U.S. coordinator for TIMSS and an education research professor.

"Total scores gloss over those distinctions," he said at the annual American Educational Research Association convention.

Math Isn't Just Math

"Teachers do not teach math," Schmidt said, "they teach fractions." Or in the case of geometry, they teach congruence or similarity.

Testing between 10 and 15 sub-topics within content areas and testing students on the curriculum to which they were exposed would produce a clearer picture of how curriculum effects achievement, he said.

Nations don't aim for "mastery of the same topics, at the same times and in the same ways," the researchers say in a paper prepared for the conference, noting variations in the number, depth and timing of topics countries expect to be taught.

For example, U.S. math courses tend to cover many topics in little detail, while countries such as Japan and Germany will concentrate on fewer topics for a couple of years, then move on to others (ED, Oct. 17, 1996).

This kind of variation makes it difficult to identify, for instance, an eighth-grade curriculum, and then develop a test to measure it.

In promoting their proposal for voluntary national tests, President Clinton and Education Department officials, however, often say that basic skills are somewhat standard across the United States, arguing that "reading is reading" and "math is math" (ED, Feb. 19).

The proposed national exam will be based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but will also be linked to TIMSS. The scores will be able to be used to infer a predicted score on the international exam.

Not Always Indivisible

Just as reporting total achievement

scores may "mask" sub-topic scores, reporting total country scores may mask local variations and the differences in curriculum and achievement.

On TIMSS, for instance, the United States scored slightly above the international average in science and slightly below it in math for 13-year-olds (ED, Nov. 21, 1996). But a group of Illinois districts that participated in TIMSS as a unit scored above the mean in mathematics and tied for first with Singapore.

That's lost in overall country rankings, the researchers point out.

The U.S. TIMSS research team plans to further study how to account for curriculum differences within countries while conducting international comparisons, as well as examining individual item scores.

More Data This Year

TIMSS compared mathematics and science teaching, assessment and curriculum in 41 countries for nine-, and 13-year-olds and end of secondary school students.

Results for the nine-year-olds—fourth-grade in the United States—are to be released in June, followed by 12th-grade results expected in the fall. —Regina Lightfoot-Clark■

testing

SCHOOLS TURN ATTENTION TO TESTING EDUCATORS, TOO

ORLANDO, Fla. -- While assessing student achievement has been a focal point for educators, they also are now looking for the best ways to evaluate each other.

At workshops during the American Association of School Administrators' conference last weekend, researchers described emerging techniques for evaluating education professionals, painting a picture of students, teachers, principals and superintendents all critiquing each other's performance.

For instance, some school districts use "360-degree feedback" to evaluate teachers, getting input not only from supervisors but also students, peers and the teachers themselves.

"360 degrees means getting feedback from all who have contact with that person," said Richard Mannatt, director of the School Improvement Model project at Iowa State University in Ames.

Student Expectations High

Student evaluations of teachers have been controversial, Mannatt acknowledged, but he defends them as one of the best sources of input.

Even small children can use surveys where they point to happy and sad faces, and questions can screen for student biases. For instance, students are asked whether they like the teacher and what grade they expect to get.

Students judge teachers more critically than do principals, which "stiffens the principals' resolves to do a more discriminating job of teacher evaluation," Mannatt said.

And while some teacher unions have resisted student evaluations, Mannatt says he's never seen it lead to a formal grievance.

"It takes a while for staff to get away from the idea that students are 'grading' them," said Mary Ann Rogers, assistant superintendent of the Lincoln County School District in Diamondville, Wyo., which uses the technique.

But, "eventually, teachers look forward to it."

A spokeswoman for the National Education Association said the union is not unalterably opposed to using student evaluations, but that it should be a local

decision.

"I don't know that we'd support it as part of the formal [evaluation] process," Kathleen Lyons said in an interview yesterday. "But they do have some meaningful input."

Student Data

Using student evaluations is one thing. But using student achievement data to evaluate teachers is another, critics say.

"If you want controversy, use student assessment," said James Stronge, a College of William and Mary education professor, during a seminar on designing legally defensible teacher evaluation systems.

The Hopkinton, Mass., superintendent asked Stronge for guidance on how to implement recent state requirements to use student achievement data for teacher evaluation.

Stronge's advice: "Good luck."

Mannatt, however, said student achievement data is "the ultimate 360-degree source" and criticized older models for "ignoring the most important question: Do students learn?" Fred Skoglund, assistant superintendent at Mesa, Ariz., schools, agreed.

His district just finished testing a version of the 360-degree evaluation system and will fully implement it this fall.

"As long as people apply common sense and logic, and as long as the ground rules are known, it is appropriate to use student achievement," he said in a telephone interview.

According to focus group input from teachers in the pilot program, they generally believe students will be fair, and that valuable information can be gained.

Using student achievement data to evaluate teachers, however, works only if student evaluation systems are accurate and reliable. Mannatt acknowledged these can require "several years of curriculum renewal, alignment, and assessment."

School administrators also should be evaluated using input from many sources, according to several education professors making presentations at the AASA conference.

An evaluation system for

administrators implemented this school year in Sandy, Utah, collects input from an administrator's supervisor, teachers, other employees and a sample of parents, and includes a self-evaluation.

The state-mandated review was developed only after district employees, area parents and administrators from around the state honed the qualities to be judged.

"Politically, the credibility of the instrument was important," said Steve Baldridge, an education professor at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida, who helped develop the test when he was at Brigham Young University in Utah.

Mannatt also recommends student achievement data be a part of evaluations of principals; he says principals need to be evaluated by students to set an example for teachers.

Several states have banded together to create a licensure test for principals (ED, Nov. 14, 1996).

Scrutinizing Superintendents

Even superintendents should not be left out of the drive to assess school professionals, but many are, said Tom Glass, professor at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

"Almost no states have criteria for superintendent evaluation," even though AASA adopted guidelines in 1993, he complained.

The guidelines say superintendents should meet specific criteria indicating that they have strong leadership and communication skills, solid governance procedures and other traits (ED, Dec. 14, 1993).

But "20 percent of superintendents say they are not being evaluated," Glass said.

In fact, some states are heading in the opposite direction, loosening the certification process for superintendents in order to attract nontraditional candidates from private industry.

"That's a dangerous trend," said Walt Warfield, executive director of the Illinois Association of School Administrators, at an AASA session on the labor market for superintendents.

"There are a lot of people sitting in coffee shops and taverns who think they can do your job," he said. "The

superintendent in Chicago does not require certification, but a dog groomer

has to be certified." --Laureen Lazarovici

tudents, parents look to restore school's image

y DENISE LAVOIE

Associated Press Writer

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (AP) - A day after the school board suspended the popular principal of the Stratfield School in a test-tampering scandal, more than 10 percent of the student body stayed out of school.

School officials downplayed Thursday's dip in attendance, saying they knew of no organized attempt by parents to keep their children home to protest the suspension of veteran principal Roger Previs.

The Board of Education suspended Previs with pay Wednesday and ordered termination hearings to begin after the results of an eight-month investigation confirmed an earlier analysis showing widespread tampering on standardized tests.

Stratfield, an award-winning elementary school ranked as one of the best in the nation, has an enrollment of 524 students.

Normally, an average of 25 to 30 students are absent on a February day. On Thursday, the day after Previs was suspended, 67 students, or 12.8 percent of the student body, stayed home, said Thomas Failla, a spokesman for the Board of Education.

Failla said the board did not know of any parents who had deliberately kept their children home.

But several parents picking their children up from the school Thursday afternoon said they knew of other parents who had kept their kids home to protest the board's action against Previs.

Glenn Wymer said his daughter, Julie, a kindergartner, went to school Thursday, but was upset after she saw several other children crying over Previs' suspension.

Wymer, like many parents, said he is concerned that the school's image will suffer permanent damage from the testing scandal. Stratfield has won numerous academic awards, including two blue ribbons from the U.S. Education Department and a 1993 listing by Redbook magazine as one of the best elementary schools in the nation.

"I'm afraid that it's going to start going downhill, that nobody is going to care anymore," Wymer said. "I think the teachers' morale will be real low."

Failla said counselors were at the school to speak with teachers and students about the situation, but he did not know how many students had sought out counselors.

The board launched an independent investigation in June after the publisher of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills said that tampering had occurred on tests taken in January 1996.

The publisher found that the number of erasures on the Stratfield tests was three to five times higher than at two other top-performing schools in Fairfield. Of the Stratfield answers that were changed, 89 percent were changed from wrong to right.

A similar pattern of tampering was later found on Connecticut Mastery Tests. On Wednesday, the state Department of Education said its investigation showed that tampering occurred on the 1993, 1994 and 1995 Mastery Tests.

FEB 21 1997

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Test changes lead to suspension of principal

Roger Previs has led prestigious Stratfield Elementary for 14 years. Parents back him.

P.A.2 By Henry Goldman
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

FAIRFIELD, Conn. — With its rich academic program and high test scores, Stratfield Elementary School has long anchored this affluent neighborhood's perception of itself as providing the best suburban life can offer.

Now, that perception has been tarnished.

The school's principal — during whose 14-year tenure the school won numerous awards and national renown — was suspended Wednesday night on suspicion of tampering with students' exams to boost the test results.

Yesterday afternoon, parents milled about in front of the building, waiting to take their children home. Most voiced support for Principal Roger Previs, who was denied access to his office pending administrative action that could result in his dismissal.

"He's one of the best educators in the state, and the parents are upset," said Gail Pecora, whose son is in the fifth grade at Stratfield. "Everyone wants their kid to go here, and the reason why the school was so good was the way it was run by Mr. Previs."

But others raised questions, about their community and themselves, wondering what lessons were really being taught in a school with the kind of reputation that parents bought homes in the neighborhood just to send their kids there.

"Any school where someone would care so much about test

scores is way off-base," said Roberta Temea, a psychologist who was picking up her granddaughter.

The board, in an 8-1 vote, decided to fire the popular principal after spending \$100,000 investigating exams taken by third and fifth graders in January 1996.

They suspect that Previs (or someone) gathered dozens of tests together, and secretly erased wrong answers and substituted them with correct ones, before sending off the forms to testing companies.

The investigators found that tests taken at Stratfield Elementary showed a highly disproportionate amount of erasures — more than 1,000 — on multiple choice answer forms. That's three to five times more than was found in reviews of exams from Fairfield's two other top-performing schools.

Further scrutiny found that the erasures almost always involved replacing an incorrect answer with a correct one. The school's test scores were significantly higher than others in the district.

"I just don't think that Roger Previs would stoop to do that," Pecora said. "He had too many other programs in place, his outlook on the school was so much more than just tests. I hate to think of myself as totally idealistic or naive, but I can't imagine him locking himself in a room and erasing pencil marks on

an answering sheet, just to show off a better score for the school."

The suspension came the same day the state Department of Education, in a separate investigation, determined that similar tampering had occurred on standardized state tests in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

"There never is a good time to announce that tests have been tampered with or that a long-standing principal has been suspended," said

board chairman John Madeo. "Even though the Stratfield tests were tampered with, the students who have attended Stratfield school over the years have received an excellent education due to the principal, teaching staff and the support of parents."

At a specially called meeting Wednesday night, parents in this wealthy community of 53,000 — many of whom commute to New York City — excoriated Madeo

and the rest of the board for thinking about firing Previs, who has not been charged with any crime, without producing any evidence directly linking him to the offense.

The school, nestled atop a rise surrounded by expensive homes on quiet cul-de-sacs, goes from kindergarten to fifth grade with an enrollment of 524. It has won numerous academic awards, including two blue ribbons from the U.S. Education Department. In 1993 it was

listed as one of the top elementary schools in the nation by Redbook Magazine.

Previs has called on the board to make its file on him public. His attorney, Howard Klebanoff, said that Previs had passed a lie-detector test during the board's investigation.

"He will fight to prove that the charges are unfounded and defend his reputation and integrity," Klebanoff said.

The investigation began after the school district, hoping to duplicate Stratfield's success, compared the scores on a test given in January 1996 to third graders to those of the two nearest-ranking schools. The district found a high number of answers by Stratfield students had been erased and changed, the superintendent said.

Some parents say severe punishment is not appropriate for Previs, regardless of what he did.

"Even if it's true, I don't have less respect for the man," said Nancy Yale, who has had three children in the school during the last 10 years. "He's fabulous. I moved to this house to be at his school. If you look at the kids who succeed and go on to the best colleges, many, if not most, come from this elementary school."

Similar support came from Chris Noe, who said that he wouldn't move to fire Previs even if he were guilty.

"I question whether the board's ruling reflects the will of the parents," said Noe. "This is a great school."

Conn. principal suspended for alleged test-tampering

B5

By Richard Weisel
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

FAIRFIELD, Conn. — Award-winning principal Roger Previs was not in his Stratfield School office yesterday on a school day for the first time in more than 17 years.

The Board of Education decided Wednesday night to begin termination proceedings against him for allegedly tampering with last year's Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

The board reached its conclusion after a nearly yearlong, \$100,000 investigation that has received national attention and become known as "Erasuregate." Headed by retired

Superior Court Judge Nicholas Cioffi, the investigative team also included a former FBI agent and famed forensic scientist Henry C. Lee, who worked on the O. J. Simpson case.

The scandal, which has torn the educational community here apart, began in April when School Superintendent Carol Harrington announced publicly that the Iowa Tests publishers had discovered an unusually high number of erased answers on the standardized tests, compared to other elementary schools, with a high percentage changed to correct answers.

The publishing company stated that tampering had occurred, and a state investigation found similar changes made on the Connecti-

cut Mastery Tests.

Previs, who has achieved near-legendary status in this affluent seashore town 50 miles from New York City, was suspended with pay pending the outcome of a termination hearing. The hearing is likely to be held within the next few months by an independent three-member arbitration panel.

"I took a lie-detector test and passed it; that speaks for itself," said Previs after the Wednesday hearing as he hugged dozens of weeping parents and teachers who came out to support him.

"I would like to know what we are supposed to tell our children?" Jeff Ackerman,

parent of a Stratfield student, shouted at the board after it had announced its decision, which left hundreds in the crowd stunned.

The decision means that Previs is no longer allowed in Stratfield, which he helped to win two federal awards as a "Blue Ribbon" school. Redbook Magazine in 1993 named it one of the best schools in the country.

During the meeting, the crowd gave Previs several standing ovations and many walked out during a statement by school board chairman John Madeo.

Madeo said an interim principal will be in place at the school when students return from a weeklong winter break on March 3.

MATH TESTS DON'T ADD UP

EDUCATION: Multiple exams give different pictures of student performance.

By ANA MENENDEZ and KATIE HICKOX
The Orange County Register

One math test says American students lag behind Singapore's. Another says U.S. kids are improving. Another says boys do better than girls. Another says there's no difference.

California's fourth-graders are almost last in the nation, according to the latest test. But there's the one that says fourth-graders in the Saddleback Valley schools do better than 75 percent of their peers in the nation.

Standardized math tests multiply and the questions grow in geometric proportion.

Who's right? What's wrong with math education? Are children learning anything? What do tests measure?

"Sometimes, with standardized tests, there's a mismatch between what you teach and what you test," said Allan Pogrund, principal of Star View Elementary in Midway City.

Like many schools in California, Star View began using new math books this year. It's too soon for any changes to register on tests such as the national exam released Thursday, which showed that about half of California's fourth- and eighth-graders had "below basic" skills in math.

The results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress caused statewide embarrassment, with Gov. Pete Wilson calling them "deplorable."

Orange County districts responded with an almost unani-

mous "not us" and dragged out other test results to prove it.

"I'm concerned for California, yes I am, but let me tell you the students in our district in a national norm test perform way above the national average," said Saddleback Valley Unified spokeswoman Elaine Carter.

The problem with translating national and state math results to the local level is that different districts use different tests.

Saddleback Valley students take the CAT/5. Fourth-graders scored in the 76th percentile in math.

Santa Ana fourth-graders take the CTBS4 (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, 4th edition). Last year, they scored in the 50th percentile.

Capistrano students take the district's own test, which is compared to others nationwide. Fourth-graders there scored 13 points higher than the national average.

Garden Grove gives the MAT6 (Metropolitan Achievement Test, 6th edition). The 2,069 fourth-graders who took the test last year scored better than 66 percent of test takers nationwide.

"So many tests," said Al Sims, a researcher with the Garden Grove school district.

And each measures something slightly different from the next.

Most standardized tests used by districts are multiple choice and measure basic computation skills.

The new national test — based on recommendations from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics — places more emphasis on understanding how math works than on drills or formulas. Nearly half the questions on the NAEP test ask students to explain their reasoning.

Two schools in the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District took the test, given last February, and became part of the national and state sample. But the U.S. Department of Education won't release data from an individual school or district because the sample is so small.

"It may be they were the very top schools, but we'll never ever get the results," said Ann O'Rourke, administrator of evaluation at Placentia-Yorba Linda.

Placentia students take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Last year, the district's fourth-graders ranked in the 55 percentile in

overall math and 72 percentile in computation.

Placentia teachers and administrators are looking at results from various standardized tests as they develop their math curriculum, O'Rourke said.

"There's going to be a real concerted effort for people to sit down and say 'What does this mean?' and to sit down and see what improvements are recommended or needed," she said.

What's expected of students across the county varies as much as the tests. Some districts specify that fourth-graders should know how to make change for a \$5 bill. Others want them to locate points on a graph.

California is developing math standards that would apply to every district in the state. A new state standardized test would be based on those guidelines.

"We cannot afford to wait for more test results or reports about the status of our schools," said Delaine Eastin, state superintendent of public instruction. "California must have world-class standards that tell us what students should know and be able to do."

Many districts aren't waiting for the new state standards, working already to boost their own local expectations. Many are changing their definitions of math. Across the state, schools have adopted new math textbooks that, like the NAEP test, emphasize problem-solving skills and real-life applications of mathematical concepts instead of drills.

At Star View, fourth-grade teacher Jean Rosenbaum uses numerous techniques to teach multiplication tables and problem-solving skills. Her classroom closet is stuffed with dice, CD-ROM software and textbooks.

The textbooks offer a mix of traditional math drills, such as multiplication and division problems, and word problems. But at least two of Rosenbaum's 27 students find the three PC computers in her classroom the most interesting place to learn math.

Naman Pham, 8, and Stephanie Schultz, 9, are learning how to plot spreadsheets, using basic math skills such as addition, multiplication and division. Stephanie worked with other children to create a spreadsheet showing the percentage of kids in the class who preferred different candy bars.

Naman has become an expert with the CD-ROM program Math Munchers, which features green blobs with giant white feet struggling to land on the correct number.

Friday afternoon, Naman navigated his blob expertly through the fifth-grade level quiz, which drilled him on factors of the number eight. He correctly picked the number 64.

"If you play games like this you have to keep thinking of the right answer," Stephanie said. Naman clicked away at the key board.

Pogrund, Star View's principal, watched Friday as first-graders used the new math materials to perform a basic algebraic function: solve for missing number.

"What you have here are first-graders doing pre-algebra," Pogrund said. "In the next couple of years, they'll be in the fourth grade taking these tests. I know they're going to do very, very well."

Math test for Spanish speakers draws fire

By Carol Innerst
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A bilingual version of a new, national mathematics test will be developed and administered to pupils whose native language is Spanish, officials in the Clinton administration said yesterday.

"Ridiculous," responded Jim Boulet Jr., executive director of English First, to the administration's mandate for a Spanish-language version of the mathematics test.

"This is part of a continued attempt to justify failed bilingual-education programs," he said. "The first argument for bilingual education was that

children would learn English better. That hasn't happened.

"Then they said it would help them keep up in the subject matter. Well, if they're giving subject-matter tests in Spanish, I guess that's not true either," he added.

"What are we going to do in Florida about the children who speak Haitian, Creole, Portuguese, Vietnamese?" asked Brewster Brown, spokesman for Florida Commissioner of Education

Frank T. Brogan. "Currently in Florida, we don't give tests in other languages."

Responding to a GOP request for more information on the administration's plan to have the federal Department of Education develop voluntary national tests in reading and mathematics for use by the states and local school districts, acting Deputy Secretary of Education Marshall S. Smith said that the reading test "will be a test of reading in English."

"Consequently, it will not be given in other languages," he said. "However, the mathematics test will be made

available in a bilingual [Spanish-language] version."

Braille and large-print versions of both tests and an audio-cassette version of the math test also will be developed, he said. States and localities voluntarily agreeing to use the new national tests will be expected to provide special accommodations at testing sites for students with disabilities. Accommodations could include extra time or one-on-one testing.

Other red flags went up as the administration responded to GOP queries for more information about the president's order to

Administration plan called 'ridiculous'

press ahead with development of national tests in reading and mathematics:

- Early indications are that the tests will be costlier than anticipated. The cost of developing the tests, first announced at \$7 million to \$8 million for the first year, is up to \$10 million and then \$12 million in 1998. The cost of administering and scoring the tests, originally put at \$5 a head, is now estimated at \$10 to \$12.

- The new tests are likely to be easier than the rigorous congressionally mandated National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests used as their model.

For 30 years, NAEP has served as a report card on how the nation's schoolchildren are doing in various

subjects. In recent years, NAEP was expanded to provide state-by-state scores on a voluntary basis.

Now, the Clinton administration is proposing to use the NAEP frameworks as models for 90-minute national tests in reading and math. The new tests would provide scores for individual students, schools and districts that could be compared with national and international benchmarks and, in theory at least, would encourage the country to strive for higher academic achievement.

The Department of Education two years ago began to push for inclusion of disabled and Spanish-speaking students in the NAEP tests in various subjects.

Many states, including Florida, are interested in participating in the national exams because they believe it is important to have an "apples-to-apples" comparison around the country.

At the same time, the states have already invested heavily in developing their own rigorous standards and assessments and don't want to have to choose between their own newly developed tests and the upcoming national tests.

Florida also is concerned about a lessening of rigor if the national tests deviate much from the current NAEP tests, Mr. Brown said.

The 90-minute tests, as currently conceived, would be "weighted more toward the bottom" of the present NAEP tests,

according to officials close to the development process. And Mr. Smith has said the goal for the reading test is to have every fourth-grader attain only the "basic" or lowest standard of achievement, and not the "proficient" level.

"Before they get out of the gates, they're shooting too low," said Gary Huggins, executive director of the Education Leaders Council, an organization of market-oriented chief state school officers also concerned about how the national tests will evolve.

"The standards have to be high enough that they wouldn't undercut state efforts to set their own high standards," he said.

MAR 26 1997

WASHINGTON TIMES

Sallie Mae dissidents find independent ally

A panel representing dissident Sallie Mae shareholders said an independent advisory firm backed its call for a vote on a reorganization plan for the government-sponsored purchaser of student loans.

Institutional Shareholder Services termed the dissidents' proposed articles and bylaws for the reorganized company "a model of corporate governance," according to the panel.

The D.C.-based Student Loan Marketing Association, known as Sallie Mae, was created by the federal government to support the market for student loans. Now it faces a congressional mandate to privatize.

The company's board and the dissident shareholders are at odds over who should set the course of the revamped company and how it should be governed.

JUDY MANN

SAT Fails the Bias Test Again

Next time your daughter comes home with a college board score that's about 40 points below what you thought she'd get, don't blame yourself for not making her the right breakfast the day of the exam.

Instead, you can blame the Scholastic Assessment Test itself. The exam, with verbal and math components each worth 200 to 800 points for a possible total of 1,600 points, continues to have a bias that favors boys, according to yet another analysis by the Center for Women Policy Studies.

The center first alerted the public to the bias in the questions in 1989, when it published an analysis of SATs taken by 100,000 students and found that certain questions favored boys.

Educational researchers have long known that the context for questions can work in favor of boys when it reflects their interests and relates to their activities—football, for instance—more than girls'. Girls are far more likely to answer, "I don't know," when confronted with questions that use contexts familiar to boys but unfamiliar to girls. For example, researchers found that girls perform better on questions involving algebra and computation while boys do better on those dealing with geometry and word problems.

The latest analysis of SAT bias by the center demonstrates that there are a larger number of questions that favor boys and a far smaller number that favor girls. "If there were equal numbers that favored each sex, we wouldn't care," says Leslie R. Wolfe, president of the center. This bias has been confirmed by researchers with the Educational Testing Service, which publishes the SAT, along with numerous other studies. Boys have consistently scored higher on the tests than girls during the 30 years that scores have been broken down by sex. In 1996, boys averaged 1,034 points while girls averaged 995.

Despite years of controversy over racial and sex bias, SAT scores still are used by thousands of colleges and universities to determine admission and to award scholarships. Some schools put so much weight on them that they have a minimum score a student must have to apply. The SAT scores are an important determinant in the awarding of about \$27 million in National Merit Scholarships. A 40-point bias in favor of boys puts girls at a significant disadvantage. According to the center's

analysis, biases in both the Preliminary SAT and the SAT will deprive young women of more than 1,000 scholarships worth more than \$2 million from the National Merit Scholarship Corp.

The College Board, which administers the test, bills SAT scores as predictors of how well students are likely to do in college. Research published last year found that girls have higher grades than boys when they take the same courses and subjects in college as well as in high school—which means the SAT falls far short of its advertised goal. The easy way to eliminate the bias, Wolfe says, is to remove questions that boys or girls seem to do disproportionately well on.

Instead of doing this, the College Board and the ETS "have become increasingly hostile to the work we've done," Wolfe says.

"The College Board keeps saying the fault is not in the test, the fault is in the girls," she says. Family income is a major predictor of how well a child will do on the SAT. "We have research from ETS's own researcher that says even within the highest [income] group, there is a gender gap. Within every racial and ethnic group, there is a gender gap. There is something wrong with the test," Wolfe says.

The center commissioned a survey of 1,000 parents of children ages 6 to 22, administered by Lake Research. It found that the SAT is both well known and well regarded. But when parents found out about the bias against girls, they changed their minds and felt strongly that the ETS should eliminate it. They also felt that the National Merit Scholarship Corp. should stop using PSAT and SAT scores to award scholarships until the bias is eliminated.

Parents were especially angry about the bias's adverse effects on girls' potential to get scholarships. More than three-quarters of the parents want the ETS to change the SAT to eliminate the bias.

This latest finding should be a wake-up call to parents that they aren't getting their money's worth when they are paying to have their daughters tested. Some colleges compensate for the bias by having lower SAT standards for girls than for boys. This double standard undermines girls.

We have a wealth of knowledge about bias in testing and how to eliminate it. You'd think the folks administering college board exams would be smart enough to use it.

More to learning than test scores

BY BEVERLY JONES

Guest columnist

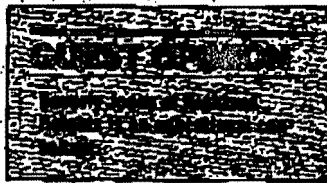
A-23

"Education top issue" headlined *The Enquirer* (March 31). Citizens consistently tell us through their polls that education is their greatest concern. In our sound-bite culture, "education" most often translates to mean test scores — how many students passed whatever test. Conventional wisdom looks at the results and says students need to "do better." Yet all our sophistication in polling, test design and school reform fails to put into the education equation the flesh-and-blood, thinking, feeling students for whom the institution exists.

If the educational discussion included knowledge of how it is that these students actually go about their learning, we would begin to see why so many of them are not achieving what we think they should. Instead of knowing more about the children and their internal learning processes, we hear about inequality in funding and physical plants, teacher salaries, reorganized school schedules and administrative flow charts. We do not hear many "experts" question the learning styles and processes of the young men and women who take the tests.

The concerns about education reflected in the polls are not directed toward our best and brightest — those students whose scores (research psychologist) Gerald Bracey said are the highest in the world ["Schools deserve high grades," March 20]. No, we worry about a much greater number of our children, those whose scores do not match the 90th, 95th and 99th percentiles in reading that Mr. Bracey describes. We continue to search for the magic elixir that can take us to Lake Wobegone, where all our children will be above average.

Our own conditioning and experience limit our search to the ideas that learning is hard; students have to be "made to learn";



that punishments and rewards are the ingredients of motivation; that fear and highlighting negatives will push students onto the paths of higher achievement. This explains why conventional wisdom thinks some struggling 7-, 8- and 9-year-olds just "aren't trying"; that some students in middle and high schools "just don't want to learn." It is these inherited attitudes that hold the red pencils which put Fs on papers and report cards, and mark scars of shame on the self-concepts of the students who receive them.

Our own lives tell us the truth of this; we all carry some of these wounds. We know we are hesitant to try if we are unsure what to do; if what we have tried is not "acceptable" to the persons we care most about, on whose opinion we base our self-identity. We have all surely been taught that it is not good to make a mistake. We don't want to make an error because we don't want to be judged. So closely are error and personhood entwined in our teaching and learning that we often are not aware of any other way to look at error and its role in learning.

Academic achievement is the tip of a student's learning iceberg. It rests on a foundation made from the integration of language, vision, movement. These are the individual's raw materials of learning. How each individual student refines, maneuvers, combines and warps these fundamental processes determines the quality of the raw materials available for building his or her own academic world out of the tasks presented by teachers.

Academic achievement at grade level or beyond requires a particular efficiency of information pro-

cessing, of looking, of vocabulary, of organization, of visualization, of movement. Like cross-country runners who are not in condition, students who have an inefficient base of learning will need to work under greater than usual stress in order to achieve at the level of their more learning-efficient peers. They get fewer results from greater effort. For them trying harder is not the issue. Often low achieving students are trying harder, so hard that many cannot maintain the stress and eventually give up and tune out. Then they are greeted with new labels of judgment: "unmotivated," "under-achievers."

At their best, most parents and many teachers know children are more than the sum of their test scores; but the children are not the only ones being judged by their achievement. Many of the parents and teachers I know often feel caught between empathy for the children as people and the judgments they fear from the institution. They, like the students, want to get high scores.

All reforms are born from awareness; from those who ask and keep asking new questions about commonly accepted assumptions. Helpful answers to how children learn; how their learning affects their achievement and their test scores gather on the horizon largely outside the view of the educational reform movement. Parents, teachers and concerned citizens can direct their schools toward these answers by saying out loud their own concerns and questions when they see that a particular child's learning and achievement issues do not mesh with the demands and expectations of the school. If you want to help, be determined to tell and keep telling the truth of a child's life and learning. Ask and keep asking. You may help not only that child, but the educational system that molds every child within it.

WALL STREET JOURNAL, 3/28/96, P. 1

If You Have Brains, You Might Decide To Skip This Test

Michigan High-School Exam
Has Bright Kids Smarting
And Parents in Revolt

By JUNE KRONHOLZ

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
BIRMINGHAM, Mich. — What if they
gave a test and no one took it?

Or worse, what if they gave a test and
the really bright students — the kids who
study Japanese in their spare time, the
kids whose small talk runs to developments
in robotics, kids with 3.9 grade-point
averages and aspirations to careers in
engineering — refused to take it?

Which is what happened when the state
of Michigan announced it would test all its
high school juniors for academic profi-
ciency, and the juniors in Birmingham
said no.

The American public, hungry for ac-
countability in its schools, tells pollsters it
wants standardized tests: tough ones,
long ones, lots of them. States that don't
have tests are writing them; states that do
have tests are rewriting them to make
them harder. President Clinton, sens-
ing the mood, is proposing national tests
for fourth and eighth graders.

Michigan was a beat ahead of much of
the country. Last year, it drafted the High
School Proficiency Test, an 11 1/2 hour
high-achievement marathon whose results
were to be stamped on a graduate's
diploma as a sort of seal of state ap-
proval.

In February 1996, 100,000 Michigan ju-
niors took the first proficiency test — and
the results were less than commendable.
Statewide, about a third were declared
"proficient" in writing and science, 40% in
reading and half in math.

Those who weren't proficient were la-
beled either "novice" or "not-yet novice,"
designations that
almost everyone
now agrees were ill-
chosen. Birming-
ham's juniors
scored well above
the state average —
but still not as well
as this school-
proud, follow-the-
rules Republican
suburb of Detroit is
used to scoring on
tests.

A third or more
of Birmingham's ju-
niors were declared "novice" at reading,
writing, math or science when the test
results came back last summer. One of
them was Jonathan Salz.

Jonathan, 17 years old, was declared a
novice at writing. But by that time, he had
already been accepted at the Massachu-
setts Institute of Technology, California
Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon
University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Insti-
tute and the University of Illinois. He had
earned a perfect score on the American
College Testing, or ACT, exam, which Mid-
western states favor over the Scholastic
Aptitude Test; he had scored a near-per-
fect 770 out of 800 on the verbal portion of
the SAT; he had accumulated a 3.993 grade
point average; he was a National Merit
Scholar, had a perfect grade in advance-
placement English, and was on his way to
graduating at the head of his class.

Low-Yield Risk

"It scared me," Jonathan says. "I had
never failed a test before in my life." And
because the Michigan tests are never
returned and the grades never explained,
he had no way of knowing why he hadn't
passed this one.

The buzz went around Birmingham:
The test can't help you with college admis-

sion officers because, after all, only public-
school students from Michigan are taking
it. But there is no telling what mischief a
"novice" stamp on your diploma or tran-
script might do. In Birmingham, where
95% of the kids go on to college, and 75% to
50% earn a degree, the proficiency test
took on the character of a high-risk,
low-yield bond.

So when this year's test approached,
the guidance counselor at Jonathan's
school, Anita Farrar, sent home a note
pointing out a clause in the proficiency test
legislation that allows parents to exempt
their kids from the test (she says the law
requires her to let them know). That option
was written for parents of children with
learning disabilities, and parents who op-
pose testing on religious grounds.

The local paper, the *Eccentric*, picked
up the buzz and made it a lead story.
Parents were spooked. The test was too
long, they said. It covered subjects the kids
hadn't finished studying, they said. There
were essay questions and subjective grad-
ing. And the graders weren't even Michi-
ganders, they added.

When test day came last month, two-
thirds of the 500 juniors at Birmingham's
two high schools didn't take the exams —
and by and large, they were the highest-
achieving two-thirds. At Seaholm High, 158
juniors didn't take the test; 148 of them had
B averages or better.

'Never Happened'

Greg Townsend, who has a 3.9 grade
point average and a fascination with robot-
ics, didn't take it: "It might hinder your
chance of going to an out-of-state school."

he reasoned. Ryan Kasprick, who studies
Japanese before school hours, didn't ei-
ther: "If you take it and fail, it goes on your
transcript. If you don't take it, it's as if it
never happened."

Parent Bonnie Brooks urged her son,
Ryan, not to take the test: "What if you
don't pass?" I said. "Jeff Salz had his
son Jonathan retake the writing test (he
passed), but he doubts he will let his
daughter, a sophomore now, take the test
next year."

Only in one other school district did
kids refuse the test: in nearby Troy,
30% of the juniors didn't take it. But
nowhere were there absences like in Bir-
mingham. Meanwhile, Lansing, the state
capital, is up in arms. The state can't lower
the passing grade on the test: It is just
above 50% now, and it is supposed to be
raised, not lowered, every year.

It can't link the test to graduation. That
idea had been around for years, but was
canned when educators warned that the
drop-out rate would rise. It can't require
the University of Michigan to ask for the
exam for admission; what would out-of-
state applicants do?

Bankrupt Schools?

Gov. John Engler has proposed legisla-
tion that would let him declare a school
district "educationally bankrupt" and ap-
point a receiver if too few students pass the
high-school proficiency test. But he hasn't
said what the receiver would do to restore
solvency to Birmingham, where SAT
scores already are 140 points above the
national average.

Indeed, Gov. Engler recently an-
nounced that Michigan youngsters, who
already take standardized tests in third,
fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth grades,
will take the president's national exams as
well. It's not a popular decision: "Public
pressure is growing against testing," says
Diane Smollen, the Michigan school
board's director of assessments.

Test makers say grades on new tests
always start low, until kids learn how to
take them and teachers learn how to coach
them. And Michigan's test was particu-
larly tricky because of its heavy demand
for writing, a skill most schools don't teach
any more.

Lesson for the President

There's a cautionary tale there for the
president. His national tests would be
voluntary, and after the first year, 1999,
the states would have to pay the adminis-
trative costs of giving them. There would
be nothing to gain from doing well, no new
federal grants or aid, and everything to
lose by doing poorly — your school's name
and results would be splashed across the
Internet. And the Education Department is
predicting plenty of kids will do poorly — up
to a 40% failure rate the first year.

Jonathan Salz, meanwhile, figures he
didn't gain anything by taking the Michi-
gan test last year. And Ronnie Victor, who
worried that his penmanship might cost
him points on the writing test, thinks he
didn't lose anything by sitting it out this
year.

"When they wrote the legislation,"
Mr. Ballard says, "they forgot how smart
our kids really are."

THE SPIRAL OF INEQUALITY

If calling America a MIDDLE-CLASS nation means anything,

it means that we are a society in which most people LIVE more or less the same kind of life. In 1970 we were that kind of society. Today

we are not, and we become less like one with each PASSING year.

EVER SINCE THE ELECTION OF RONALD REAGAN, right-wing radicals have insisted that they started a revolution in America. They are half right. If by a revolution we mean a change in politics, economics, and society that is so large as to transform the character of the nation, then there is indeed a revolution in progress. The radical right did not make this revolution, although it has done its best to help it along. If anything, we might say that the revolution created the new right. But whatever the cause, it has become urgent that we appreciate the depth and significance of this new American revolution—and try to stop it before it becomes irreversible.

The consequences of the revolution are obvious in cities across the nation. Since I know the area well, let me take you on a walk down University Avenue in Palo Alto, California.

Palo Alto is the de facto village green of Silicon Valley, a tree-lined refuge from the valley's freeways and shopping malls. People want to live here despite the cost—rumor has it that a modest three-bedroom house sold recently for \$1.6 million—and walking along University you can see why. Attractive, casually dressed people stroll past trendy boutiques and restaurants; you can see a cooking class in progress at the fancy new

kitchenware store. It's a cheerful scene, even if you have to detour around the people sleeping in doorways and have to avoid eye contact with the beggars. (The town council plans to crack down on street people, so they probably won't be here next year, anyway.)

If you tire of the shopping district and want to wander further afield, you might continue down University Avenue, past the houses with their well-tended lawns and flower beds—usually there are a couple of pickup trucks full of Hispanic gardeners in sight. But don't wander too far. When University crosses Highway 101, it enters the grim environs of East Palo Alto. Though it has progressed in the past few years, as recently as 1992 East Palo Alto was the murder capital of the nation and had an unemployment rate hovering around 40 percent. Luckily, near the boundary, where there is a cluster of liquor stores and check-cashing outlets, you can find two or three police cruisers keeping an eye on the scene—and, not incidentally, serving as a thin blue line protecting the nice neighborhood behind them.

Nor do you want to head down 101 to the south, to "Dilbert Country" with its ranks of low-rise apartments, the tenements of the modern prole-

BY PAUL KRUGMAN

Foreign trade and advances in technology are part of the **SPIRAL**

of inequality, but only a small part. They don't fully explain the **DISPARITY** between the **HAVES** and the have-nots. Why is it harder today

for most people to make a living but easier for a few to make a **KILLING?**

tariat—the places from which hordes of lower-level white-collar workers drive to sit in their cubicles by day and to which they return to watch their VCRs by night.

No. Better to head up into the hills. The "estates" brochure at Coldwell Banker real estate describes the mid-Peninsula as "an area of intense equestrian character," and when you ascend to Woodside-Atherton, which the *New York Times* has recently called one of "America's born-again Newports," there are indeed plenty of horses, as well as some pretty imposing houses. If you look hard enough, you might catch a glimpse of one of the new \$10 million-plus mansions that are going up in growing numbers.

What few people realize is that this vast gap between the affluent few and the bulk of ordinary Americans is a relatively new fixture on our social landscape. People believe these scenes are nothing new, even that it is utopian to imagine it could be otherwise.

But it has not always been thus—at least not to the same extent. I didn't see Palo Alto in 1970, but longtime residents report that it was a mixed town in which not only executives and speculators but schoolteachers, mailmen, and sheet-metal workers could afford to live. At the time, I lived on Long Island, not far from the old *Great Gatsby* area on the North Shore. Few of the great mansions were still private homes then (who could afford the servants?); they had been converted into junior colleges and nursing homes, or deeded to the state

as historic monuments. Like Palo Alto, the towns contained a mix of occupations and education levels—no surprise, given that skilled blue-collar workers often made as much as, or more than, white-collar middle managers.

Now, of course, *Gatsby* is back. New mansions, grander than the old, are rising by the score; keeping servants, it seems, is no longer a problem. A couple of years ago I had dinner with a group of New York investment bankers. After the business was concluded, the talk turned to their weekend homes in the Hamptons. Naively, I asked whether that wasn't a long drive; after a moment of confused silence, the answer came back: "But the helicopter only takes half an hour."

You can confirm what your eyes see, in Palo Alto or in any American community, with dozens of statistics. The most straightforward are those on income shares supplied by the Bureau of the Census, whose statistics are among the most rigorously apolitical. In 1970, according to the bureau, the bottom 20 percent of U.S. families received only 5.4 percent of the income, while the top 5 percent received 15.6 percent. By 1994, the bottom fifth had only 4.2 percent, while the top 5 percent had increased its share to 20.1 percent. That means that in 1994, the average income among the top 5 percent of families was more than 19 times that of the bottom 20 percent of families. In 1970, it had been only about 11.5 times as much. (Incidentally, while the change in distribution is most visible at the top and bottom, families in the middle have also

lost: The income share of the middle 20 percent of families has fallen from 17.6 to 15.7 percent.) These are not abstract numbers. They are the statistical signature of a seismic shift in the character of our society.

The American notion of what constitutes the middle class has always been a bit strange, because both people who are quite poor and those who are objectively way up the scale tend to think of themselves as being in the middle. But if calling America a middle-class nation means anything, it means that we are a society in which most people live more or less the same kind of life.

In 1970 we were that kind of society. Today we are not, and we become less like one with each passing year. As politicians compete over who really stands for middle-class values, what the public should be asking them is, What middle class? How can we have common "middle-class" values if whole segments of society live in vastly different economic universes?

If this election was really about what the candidates claim, it would be devoted to two questions:



IRREVERENT ECONOMIST

Paul Krugman has been examining and debunking the popular economic theories of the era he's called "the age of diminished expectations" for over half his life. The 43-year-old MIT and former Stanford professor's criticisms of trade protectionism—as well as his bipartisan and sometimes personal criticisms of prominent Washington policy wonks—has made him anathema to some. But Krugman's work, which includes 16 books and more than 100 articles, earned him the prestigious John Bates Clark Medal in 1991 and recently led *Newsweek* to describe him as "Nobel-bound."

Much to the horror of conservatives everywhere, Krugman's unusual for-an-economist ability to convey his ideas in layman's terms has earned his books, like his 1994 national bestseller, *Peddling Prosperity*, their place on college syllabi everywhere. What's next? Krugman says he's working on a textbook about basic economic principles. "It's something I'm doing because I thought the basics were not getting through," Krugman says. "But I also needed the money."

Why has America ceased to be a middle-class nation? And, more important, what can be done to make it a middle-class nation again?

The Sources of Inequality

Most economists who study wages and income in the United States agree about the radical increase in inequality—only the hired guns of the right still try to claim it is a statistical illusion. But not all agree about why it has happened.

Imports from low-wage countries—a popular villain—are part of the story, but only a fraction of it. The numbers just aren't big enough. We invest billions in low-wage countries—but we invest trillions at home. What we spend on manufactured goods from the Third World represents just 2 percent of our income. Even if we shut out imports from low-wage countries (cutting off the only source of hope for the people who work in those factories), most estimates suggest it would raise the wages of low-skill workers here by only 1 or 2 percent.

Information technology is a more plausible villain. Technological advance doesn't always favor elite workers, but since 1970 there has been clear evidence of a general "skill bias" toward technological change. Companies began to replace low-skill workers with smaller numbers of high-skill ones, and they continue to do so even though low-skill workers have gotten cheaper and high-skill workers more expensive.

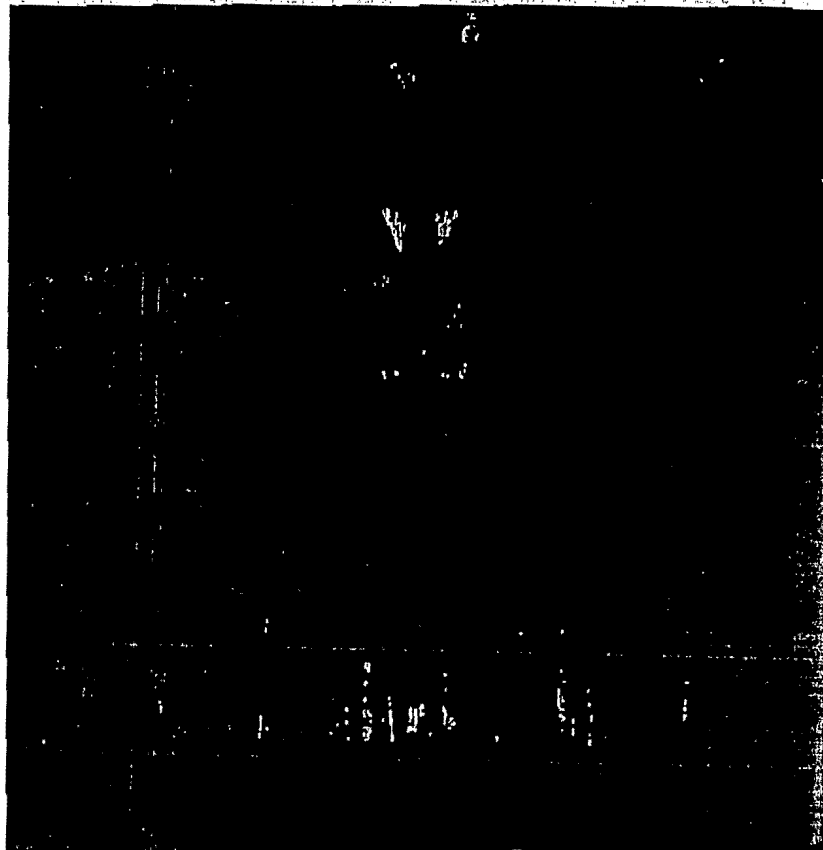
These forces, while easily measurable, don't fully explain the disparity between the haves and the have-nots. Globalization and technology may explain why a college degree makes more difference now than it did 20 years ago. But schoolteachers and corporate CEOs typically have about the same amount of formal education. Why, then, have teachers' salaries remained flat while those of CEOs have increased fivefold? The impact of technology and of foreign trade do not answer why it is harder today for most people to make a living but easier for a few to make a killing. Something else is going on.

Values, Power, and Wages

In 1970 the CEO of a typical Fortune 500 corporation earned about 35 times as much as the average manufacturing employee. It would have been unthinkable to pay him 150 times the average, as is now common, and downright outrageous to do so while announcing mass layoffs and cutting the real earnings of many of the company's workers, especially those who were paid the least to start with. So how did the unthinkable become first thinkable, then doable, and finally—if we believe the CEOs—unavoidable?

The answer is that values changed—not the middle-class values politicians keep talking about, but the kind of values that helped to sustain the middle-class society we have lost.

Twenty-five years ago, prosperous companies could have paid their janitors minimum wage and still could have found people to do the work. They didn't, because it would have been bad for company morale. Then, as now, CEOs were in a position to arrange for very high salaries for themselves, whatever their performance, but corporate boards restrained such excesses, knowing that too great a disparity between the top man and the ordinary worker would cause problems. In short,



though America was a society with large disparities between economic classes, it had an egalitarian ethic that limited those disparities. That ethic is gone.

One reason for the change is a sort of herd behavior: When most companies hesitated to pay huge salaries at the top and minimum wage at the bottom, any company that did so would have stood out as an example of greed; when everyone does it the stigma disappears.

There is also the matter of power. In 1970 a company that appeared too greedy risked real trouble with other powerful forces in society. It would have had problems with its union if it had one, or faced the threat of union organizers if it didn't. And its actions would have created difficulties with the government in a way that is now unthinkable. (Can anyone imagine a current president confronting a major industry over price increases, the way John F. Kennedy did the steel industry?)

Those restraining forces have largely disappeared. The union movement is a shadow of its former self, lucky to hold its ground in a defensive battle now and then. The idea that a company would be punished by the government for paying its CEO too much and its workers too little is laughable today since the election of Ronald Reagan the CEO would more likely be invited to a White House dinner.

In brief, much of the polarization of American society can be explained in terms of power and politics. But why has the tide run so strongly in favor of the rich that it continues regardless of who is in the White House and who controls the Congress?

The Decline of Labor

The decline of the labor movement in the United States is both a major cause of growing inequality and an illustration of the larger process under way in our society. Unions now represent

We should not **IDEALIZE** unions. Occasionally they were corrupt, and sometimes they **ENFORCED** inefficiency. But they helped keep us middle-class society because they provided a **COUNTERWEIGHT** to the power of wealthy **INDIVIDUALS** and corporations.

less than 12 percent of the private workforce, and their power has declined dramatically. In 1970 some 2.5 million workers participated in some form of labor stoppage; in 1993, fewer than 200,000 did. Because unions are rarely able or willing to strike, being a union member no longer carries much of a pay-off in higher wages.

There are a number of reasons for the decline of organized labor: the shift from manufacturing to services and from blue-collar to white-collar work, growing international competition, and deregulation. But these factors can't explain the extent or the suddenness of labor's decline.

The best explanation seems to be that the union movement fell below critical mass. Unions are good for unions: In a nation with a powerful labor movement, workers have a sense of solidarity; one union can support another during a strike, and politicians take union interests seriously. America's union movement just got too small, and it imploded.

We should not idealize the unions. When they played a powerful role in America, they often did so to bad effect. Occasionally they were corrupt, often they extracted higher wages at the consumer's expense, sometimes they opposed new technologies and enforced inefficient practices. But unions helped keep us a middle-class society—not only because they forced greater equality within companies, but because they provided a counterweight to the power of wealthy individuals and corporations. The loss of that counterweight is clearly bad for society.

The point is that a major force that kept America a more or less unified society went into a tailspin. Our whole society is now well into a similar downward spiral, in which growing inequality creates the political and economic conditions that lead to even more inequality.

The Polarizing Spiral

Textbook political science predicts that in a two-party democracy like the United States, the parties will compete to serve the interests of the median voter—the voter in the middle, richer than half the voters but poorer than the other half. And since ordinary workers are more likely to lose their jobs than strike it rich, the interests of the median voter should include protecting the poor. You might expect, then, the public to demand that government work against the growing divide by taxing the rich more heavily and by increasing benefits for lower-paid workers and the unemployed.

In fact, we have done just the opposite. Tax rates on the wealthy—even with Clinton's modest increase of 1993—are far lower now than in the 1960s. We have allowed public schools and other services that are crucial for middle-income families to deteriorate. Despite the recent increase, the minimum wage has fallen steadily compared with both average

wages and the cost of living. And programs for the poor have been savaged: Even before the recent bipartisan gutting of welfare, AFDC payments for a typical family had fallen by a third in real terms since the 1960s.

The reason why government policy has reinforced rather than opposed this growing inequality is obvious: Well-off people have disproportionate political weight. They are more likely to vote—the median voter has a much higher income than the median family—and far more likely to provide the campaign contributions that are so essential in a TV age.

The political center of gravity in this country is therefore not at the median family, with its annual income of \$40,000, but way up the scale. With decreasing voter participation and with the decline both of unions and of traditional political machines, the focus of political attention is further up the income ladder than it has been for generations. So never mind what politicians say; political parties are competing to serve the interests of families near the 90th percentile or higher, families that mostly earn \$100,000 or more per year.

Because the poles of our society have become so much more unequal, the interests of this political elite diverge increasingly from those of the typical family. A family at the 95th percentile pays a lot more in taxes than a family at the 50th, but it does not receive a correspondingly higher benefit from public services, such as education. The greater the income gap, the greater the disparity in interests. This translates, because of the clout of the elite, into a constant pressure for lower taxes and reduced public services.

Consider the issue of school vouchers. Many conservatives and even a few liberals are in favor of issuing educational vouchers and allowing parents to choose among competing schools. Let's leave aside the question of what this might do to education and ask what its political implications might be.

Initially, we might imagine, the government would prohibit parents from "topping up" vouchers to buy higher-priced education. But once the program was established, conservatives would insist such a restriction is unfair, maybe even unconstitutional, arguing that parents should have the freedom to spend their money as they wish. Thus, a voucher would become a ticket you could supplement freely. Upper-income families would realize that a reduction in the voucher is to their benefit: They will save more in lowered taxes than they will lose in a decreased education subsidy. So they will press to reduce public spending on education, leading to ever-deteriorating quality for those who cannot afford to spend extra. In the end, the quintessential American tradition of public education for all could collapse.

School vouchers hold another potential that, doubtless, makes them attractive to the conservative elite: They offer a way to break the power of the American union movement in

its last remaining stronghold, the public sector. Not by accident did Bob Dole, in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, pause in his evocation of Norman Rockwell values to take a swipe at teachers' unions. The leaders of the radical right want privatization of schools, of public sanitation—of anything else they can think of—because they know such privatization undermines what remaining opposition exists to their program.

If public schools and other services are left to deteriorate, so will the skills and prospects of those who depend on them, reinforcing the growing inequality of incomes and creating an even greater disparity between the interests of the elite and those of the majority.

Does this sound like America in the '90s? Of course it does. And it doesn't take much imagination to envision what our society will be like if this process continues for another 15 or 20 years. We know all about it from TV, movies, and best-selling novels. While politicians speak of recapturing the virtues of small-town America (which never really existed), the public—extrapolating from the trends it already sees—imagines a *Blade Runner*-style dystopia, in which a few people live in luxury while the majority grovel in Third World living standards.

Strategies for the Future

There is no purely economic reason why we cannot reduce inequality in America. If we were willing to spend even a few percent of national income on an enlarged version of the Earned Income Tax Credit, which supplements the earnings of low-wage workers, we could make a dramatic impact on both incomes and job opportunities for the poor and near-poor—bringing a greater number of Americans into the middle class. Nor is the money for such policies lacking: America is by far the least heavily taxed of Western nations and could easily find the resources to pay for a major expansion of programs aimed at limiting inequality.

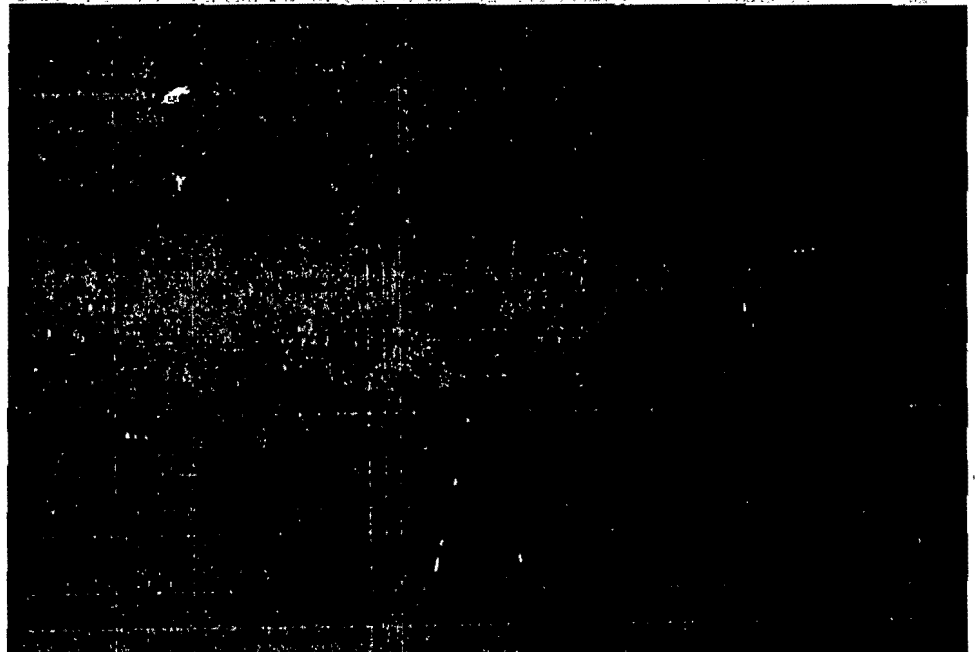
But of course neither party advanced such proposals during the electoral campaign. The Democrats sounded like Republicans, knowing that in a society with few counterweights to the power of money, any program that even hints at redistribution is political poison. It's no surprise that Bill Clinton's repudiation of his own tax increase took place in front of an audience of wealthy campaign contributors. In this political environment, what politician would talk of taxing the well-off to help the low-wage worker?

And so, while the agenda of the GOP would surely accelerate the polarizing trend, even Democratic programs now amount only to a delaying action. To get back to the kind of society we had, we need to rebuild the institutions and values that made a middle-class nation possible.

The relatively decent society we had a generation ago was largely the creation of a brief, crucial period in American history: the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, during the New Deal and especially during the war. That created what

economic historian Claudia Goldin called the Great Compression—an era in which a powerful government, reinforced by and in turn reinforcing a newly powerful labor movement, drastically narrowed the gap in income levels through taxes, benefits, minimum wages, and collective bargaining. In effect, Roosevelt created a new, middle-class America, which lasted for more than a generation. We have lost that America, and it will take another Roosevelt, and perhaps the moral equivalent of another war, to get it back.

Until then, however, we can try to reverse some of the damage. To do so requires more than just supporting certain causes. It means thinking strategically—asking whether a policy is not only good in itself but how it will affect the political balance in the future. If a policy change promises to raise average income by a tenth of a percentage point, but will widen the wedge between the interests of the elite and those of the rest, it should be opposed. If a law reduces average income a bit but enhances the power of ordinary workers, it should be supported.



In particular, we also need to apply strategic thinking to the union movement. Union leaders and liberal intellectuals often don't like each other very much, and union victories are often of dubious value to the economy. Nonetheless, if you are worried about the cycle of polarization in this country, you should support policies that make unions stronger, and vociferously oppose those that weaken them. There are some stirrings of life in the union movement—a new, younger leadership with its roots in the service sector has replaced the manufacturing-based old guard, and has won a few political victories. They must be supported, almost regardless of the merits of their particular case. Unions are one of the few political counterweights to the power of wealth.

Of course, even to talk about such things causes the right to accuse us of fomenting "class warfare." They want us to believe we are all members of a broad, more or less homogeneous, middle class. But the notion of a middle-class nation was always a stretch. Unless we are prepared to fight the trend toward inequality, it will become a grim joke. □

See Hotmedia (page 75) for more resources.

BY J. MYRON ATKIN

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS MAR 9 1997

PRESIDENT Clinton wants the United States to lead the world in the quality of its education, especially in science and math. In his State of the Union address, he pointed to the test scores of students in a group of Chicago suburbs on a recent 40-country study to show that such a goal is realistic

(the Third International Study in Science and Mathematics — TIMSS). These students compared favorably with those in Korea, Japan and Singapore, countries at the top in the international study.

But before he or anyone else tries to draw policy lessons from the tests given in 1995, they might ask if the Asian countries to which he compares the United States are satisfied with the science and math curriculum that presumably resulted in the high rankings.

It turns out that they are not, emphatically so.

The test scores may be fine, but the Japanese, for example, don't like what they see in their schools, especially in science. The changes under way may surprise Americans.

In a recently completed study of innovations in science, mathematics and technology education in 13 countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Paul Black and J. Myron Atkin, "Changing the Subject: Innovations in Science, Mathematics and Technology Education," Routledge and the OECD, 1996), we found that no country in this group of industrialized countries is satisfied with its existing science or math education, irrespective of the scores the students received on the TIMSS tests — and it is those exact tests the president wants the United States to use in determining whether American science and mathematics education is "world class."

All 13 countries are trying to make changes, some of them profound. While each country is fighting its own demons as it tries to improve its schools, it may be particularly instructive to look at what disturbs the Japanese and what they are trying to do about it, since Japan is in the small group of countries that serves as the president's model.

The Japanese are deeply concerned with what they see as a lack of creativity in their society and with the deteriorating quality of their physical environment. Both issues lead to much hand-wringing in the public press and among educational policymakers.

Passivity in their students wor-

ries the Japanese. They want students to become engaged in real-world issues, not solely to learn by imitation. They want them to be more original in thought and action. The new curriculum from the ministry encourages much more inquiry into community issues from students, in place of the rote learning of scientific and mathematics principles emphasized in past examinations.

The emphasis in the new curriculum is on real-world problem-solving and creativity, both toward the end of sensitizing students to the relationships between humans and their physical and biological surroundings.

In a fifth-grade classroom that I observed in Yokohama City, the teacher introduced a unit on acid rain with a video he had made of the "icicles" that form when concrete dissolves. An audible gasp filled the classroom when the camera pulled back to show the icicle's surroundings: a building around the corner from the school.

The teacher and students organized their time for the next few weeks to find out more about chemical deterioration of the neighborhood and what might be done about it. They surveyed their community looking for signs of damage. They found a bridge that was structurally suspect because the concrete was badly dissolved, and they took pictures of the icicles under the bridge for their class.

Working in small groups, they learned not only about how acid rain is formed but also about what kinds of industries add acidic materials to the air, what are the effects, and what might be done at a practical level to mitigate these kinds of problem.

This last focus led to an examination of the political will necessary for changes to happen. Thus this teacher put certain societal goals, including some contentious issues, at the center of his new curriculum. The requisite science information was selected on the basis of the knowledge necessary for informed decision-making about an environmental problem.

It turns out that all the countries in the OECD study are moving in a similar direction as they try to improve science and mathematics education. Every one of them is introducing curricula that

Testing . . . for what?

J. Myron Atkin is a professor of education at Stanford University. He served on the National Academy of Science committee that developed the national science education standards. He wrote this article for Perspective.

are more practical than those of the past, that focus less on encyclopedic acquisition of specific facts, that put knowledge in the service of action to improve the human condition.

Japan strives to enhance creativity and problem-solving. So do the Scots, Canadians, Germans, Spaniards and Australians. In the latter countries, justification for the new programs also includes the arguments that such science education more closely resembles what scientists really do today, and that practical work in school can lead to improved economic productivity.

In many of them, furthermore, the sciences and mathematics are "integrated." That is, disciplinary boundaries among the separate sciences are blurred in the focus on real issues, as in the Yokohama example.

In-country tests are beginning to match the new curricula. In several places, assessment stresses student ability to undertake real problem-based activities, rather than solely skill in responding to de-contextualized multiple-choice questions.

In France, some of the major tests are being introduced at the beginning of the year, primarily for diagnostic purposes. In Norway, students are involved in their own self-assessment, which requires them to have not only a deeper grasp of the subject matter, but also a more responsible approach to their own learning.

The TIMSS tests the president wants the United States to use hardly treat environmental issues or other forms of real-world problem solving at all, nor do they measure other practical goals to which virtually all industrialized countries are now committing themselves.

The OECD study indicates that the picture many Americans have about education abroad is seriously outdated. If the president wants the United States to become "world class," then we had better look beyond the latest round of comparative test scores to find out what countries don't like about their systems of science and mathematical education, even if their scores are high. To emulate other countries at the very time they are trying strenuously to get away from their current practices is strange public policy indeed. ■

Tests offer false hope for reform

By Laura Barrett
and Monty Neill

Special Contributors to The Dallas Morning News

11H

If you gathered a group of school administrators, teachers, parents and students in a room and asked them what improvements are needed to provide our kids with a better education, you would inspire a lively debate.

Among other suggestions, you would probably hear about the benefits of smaller class sizes, better teacher training, more books and supplies, greater access to computer technology and a richer curriculum that feeds children's natural curiosity. You might also hear disputes about the virtues of phonics vs. whole language, more basic skills vs. more emphasis on the arts, and other hotly contested issues.

What you almost certainly won't hear is a clarion call for U.S. students to be subjected to yet another standardized test, on top of the 200 million such tests they as a group take each year. Almost every student already takes at least one a year.

Unfortunately, in his recent State of the Union address, President Clinton called for establishing national reading tests for fourth-graders and math tests for eighth-graders as the centerpiece of his supposedly bold new approach to improving public education.

At first blush, national tests sound innocuous enough. After all, how much can it really hurt to make students take a few hours to fill in bubbles on yet another test? A lot, actually.

The problems fall into three categories:

■ High-stakes multiple-choice tests would lead to a dumbing-down of teaching and learning.

Everyone is for improving public education, but national standardized tests will not help achieve that goal. Perversely, they would have the opposite effect.

Multiple-choice questions, which are the core of the tests Mr. Clinton is proposing, can measure only limited aspects of learning. They are not good for evaluating students' abilities to analyze, synthesize and evaluate or to solve real-world problems creatively — essential skills for all students today.

If these national tests are instituted, teachers will be under pressure to raise test scores by teaching to the test. Historically, that has meant placing more emphasis on boring routines. These techniques can increase scores in the short term, much like holding a match to a thermometer can cause the mercury to rise without making the room any warmer. In the long run, however, they fail to produce real and lasting improvement in student learning.

Experience with the "basic skills" tests required by many states shows that students in low-income school districts, where test scores are generally the lowest, are the most likely to be subjected to a heavy emphasis on rote memorization as teachers strive to raise test scores quickly. The test becomes the curriculum and controls instructional methods. Far from motivating students who are having trouble in school, these teaching methods drive them away.

The Clinton administration will no doubt claim that its tests will be different. However, by planning to spend only \$5 per test, the administration guarantees that the tests will be narrow and will have damaging effects on curriculum and instruction.

■ Establishing national tests will undermine experiments at the state and local levels to improve learning and develop more useful assessment tools.

Today, many states and localities are grappling with how to raise standards and improve teaching techniques. When these efforts involve teachers, parents and other members of the community, they can yield exciting results, as many local districts around the country are discovering.

In addition, educators in many districts and states are exploring new ways to measure learning, including evaluating student portfolios and performances. These techniques often provide a deeper analysis of what and how a child is learning. The

assessment process itself becomes part of the curriculum and is used to help learning, not just measure it at the end.

Establishing a national test could undermine these local efforts. A national test would de facto determine national standards. While Mr. Clinton proposes exams in only two subjects, inevitably this is just the first step down a slippery slope to ever more national tests. The result will be federal control over the nation's curriculum enforced through tests.

We should not accept the back-door establishment of a national curriculum without a terrific amount of debate at the local level — not just inside the Beltway — about what the standards and curriculum should be and whether this really is a sensible way to improve education for all children. Yet Mr. Clinton's tests would impose a national curriculum with no real debate.

■ These tests are not going to tell us anything we don't already know.

Proponents of national tests say they will be helpful in informing parents in Dallas how their children stack up against students in Cleveland. Helpful to whom?

We already have a very good idea how well students in different schools, districts, states and even countries perform on standardized tests compared with students elsewhere. If we didn't, what on earth are we doing with the results of the 200 million tests

our kids take every year, already?

What's more, even without tests, most educators could do a pretty good job of telling you how well students in a certain school would perform, as long as they had the demographic data. For example, we already know that, on average, students in a poorly funded inner-city school will score lower on tests than will students in well-heeled suburban communities. The real question is not what are their scores, but what are we as a society going to do about gross disparities in opportunity that lead to such predictable and depressing outcomes?

Answering that question is much harder and invariably more expensive than supplying kids with more No. 2 pencils and test booklets. In this era of federal budget cuts, it is small wonder that Mr. Clinton would opt for the cheap and easy route. But it is a shame.

There's an old story about a farmer who thought he could fatten his cows if he just weighed them more often. The farmer was wrong, and so is Mr. Clinton. While he is to be commended for using the bully pulpit to focus national attention on public education, his proposed panacea — yet more tests — is a diversion from addressing the nation's real educational needs.

When former President George Bush called for national tests, the idea was rejected. The same thing should happen to President Clinton's proposal.

APPROPRIATORS QUESTION ED SPENDING ON NATIONAL TESTS

President Clinton's plans for national tests in math and reading didn't score well with House Republicans yesterday during an Education Department appropriations hearing.

Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., who chairs the House education funding panel, asked why developing the tests would cost "so much." ED plans to spend about \$90 million over the next five years to devise tests for reading in fourth grade and math in eighth grade.

Education Undersecretary Mike Smith said ED is trying to meet the president's goal of having students take the tests in spring 1999. Because such tests usually take three to five years to develop, Smith said, ED will probably fashion three to five tests "all at once and pick the best." "That costs a little bit more," Smith testified.

Test developers also have told ED that having field tests ready next year and the final version in 1999 will be difficult (ED, Feb. 27). Porter said there are already tests available, such as the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).

But Smith said TIMSS is a "sample test" in which not all students answer the same questions. The president's proposal envisions students taking the same exam and getting individual scores. Scores from the new exam could be used to infer a TIMSS score (ED, March 4).

Unauthorized Spending?

He said ED will pay \$8 million to \$10

million in fiscal 1997 to develop the voluntary tests, out of the Office for Educational Research and Improvement's Fund for Improvement in Education.

But Rep. Jay Dickey, R-Ark., complained that Congress did not authorize money for the tests.

"I never intended any money I voted for last year to be used for this purpose," Dickey said. "I want to cut, not add, staff to the Department of Education."

Porter asked ED Inspector General Thomas Bloom if ED is authorized to spend the money for national tests, and Bloom said he would research the issue. Porter and chairmen of the House education policy panels have also sent ED a letter asking for clarification of the administration's plans.

While Republican committee members questioned the cost of the tests and the legality of their funding, freshman Rep.

Anne Northup, R-Ky., challenged the necessity of the tests themselves.

"When I hear that all eighth-graders should take algebra, I want to scream," Northup said. "If you say all kids can do this, what does that say to the child who can't? Not every child can learn at a high level."

"I respectfully disagree," Smith told Northup. "Their experiences are determined by their environment."

But Northup persisted. "That test is driving the curriculum in academic directions not all children can succeed in.

We're pulling them out of

school-to-work transitions and frustrating them beyond belief."

At Tuesday's hearing on K-12 funding, Northup said her daughter was having trouble meeting a high school algebra requirement.

After-School Programs

President Clinton wants \$510.7 million for OERI in fiscal 1998, an increase of \$112.6 million from its current budget.

Nearly half of the increase would pay for after-school learning centers at inner-city schools.

Smith testified the \$49 million for after-school programs would not only improve students' academic achievement, but also reduce violence by keeping children off the streets.

He said ED plans to start the programs in 200 to 300 schools.

Another \$8 million of the requested increase would pay for studies on school violence and preschool math development, he said. OERI is also asking for an extra \$18 million for teacher innovation challenge grants, with 20 new models planned in 1998.

Much of the rest of the increase would go to developing tests for certifying master teachers and for gifted programs.

House appropriators may begin writing their fiscal 1998 education spending bill in May. Education Secretary Richard Riley is scheduled to testify before the Senate education appropriations subcommittee next Thursday. —Dave Boyer ■

NATIONAL TEST PLAN MAKES STRANGE POLITICAL BEDFELLOWS

President Clinton is finding support for his national assessment proposal from some conservatives, even as the plan is questioned by members of his own party.

National testing "is supported on both sides of the aisle and criticized on both sides of the aisle," said Chester Finn, a leading conservative education researcher, during a House hearing yesterday.

Finn, who served as an assistant education secretary under Ronald Reagan, said he strongly backs Clinton's plan for a voluntary national test of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

During a House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing yesterday on effective federal school efforts, he said the proposal has led to some strange political pairings.

"People on the right cringe at the word 'national,' and people on the left cringe at the word 'testing,'" said Finn, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

"Many on the right demand the accountability that comes only with standards and testing," he added, "while many on the left embrace the extension of responsibility in education."

Some liberal Democrats have complained that national testing would be unfair to low-income students in poor districts (ED, March 6). At yesterday's hearing, Rep. Harold Ford, D- Tenn.,

wondered, "at what point to do performance incentives [inspired by the tests] jibe with [schools suffering with] leaky roofs and textbooks from the early 1980s."

Because of bipartisan objections, Finn said he was pessimistic that the plan would garner support in Congress.

Cheri Yecke, a member of Virginia's Board of Education, told committee members she fears Clinton's plan would lead to a national curriculum, the same concern raised by state assessment directors who met with ED officials last week (ED, March 4).

"I do not see national testing as a legitimate function of the federal government," she said, outlining Virginia's standards and assessment plan that many other states are using as a model. "Virginia is at the forefront of educational reform, and it has taken the lead without federal direction, without specific federal funding and without Goals 2000."

In January, Virginia became the last state to sign up for Goals 2000 funds (ED, Jan. 14).

Yecke labeled "flippant" Clinton's repeated assertions that reading and math are uniform nationally.

"If reading is reading, then why is there a raging national controversy over phonics and whole language?" she asked.

"If math is math, then why is there controversy over various math

curricula?" At least one Republican committee member, however, challenged Yecke.

"It seems that states have pretty much ignored rigorous standards," said Rep. Harris Fawell, R-Ill. "It seems we have to provide some incentives."

Finn praised Virginia's progress, but said a state "may want an external benchmark."

Committee Chairman Bill Goodling, R-Pa., said he opposed international comparisons, which are part of Clinton's proposal (ED, March 4).

"I get upset when we compare U.S. schools to those in Japan and Germany," he said. "It has nothing to do with reality," because the societies are so different.

Echoing liberal Democrats, Goodling also criticized reporting individual students' scores as unfair because students have parents with different education levels.

The committee also heard testimony criticizing the president's student aid proposals. While policy analysts and legislators supported Clinton's proposed maximum Pell Grant increase, from \$2,700 to \$3,000, they said his proposals for tax credits and deductions would not do enough to help low-income students.

The House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee plans a hearing March 26 in New York.

—Laureen Lazarovici ■

Science results are good; math 'not good enough'

By Maureen M. Smith
Star Tribune Staff Writer

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Minnesota eighth-graders rank above those in many other countries on science but about average on math, according to results released Monday from an international study.

That's good, but not good enough, experts suggested as the results were announced. Of 41 countries, Singapore ranked the highest in both math and science.

Minnesota ranked sixth in science, after the Czech Republic, Japan, Korea and Bulgaria, but it fell in the middle of the pack for math.

"Doing fine is not good enough," said Bob Wedl, commissioner of the state Department of Children, Families and Learning. "Minnesota simply must be among the best in the world. Those are the kids that our current students are going to be in competition with."

The results are significant, as Minnesota was one of only three states to compare its results with other countries. Results released in November showed the nation's eighth-graders scoring below average on math and science in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

The study tested about 500,000 students in grades four, eight and 12. Results for the other grades will be released later.

Minnesota eighth-graders received a wide range of scores, reflecting a nationwide need for more focused math and science curriculum and common educational standards, said William Schmidt, the TIMSS national research coordinator.

"Schools do make a difference," said Schmidt. "What we teach — the curriculum — and how we teach — the pedagogy — is what's really important."

The names of 44 Minnesota schools — urban, suburban, out-state and rural — that participated were not released. Most were public schools; a small number of them were private.

Strength in science

Strong student performance in science seems to be driven by consistent curriculum in earth science and life science, coupled with much hands-on learning in the classroom.

"Elementary teachers have been doing hands-on science for some time, and learning theory says kids learn better when they're actively involved," said Bill Linder-Scholer, executive director of SciMathMN, a nonprofit business, government and education partnership that seeks to improve teaching in math and science.

But student achievement in math seems plagued by weaker teaching methods and too little attention to geometry, measurement and algebra. In middle and junior high, not all students take those courses. In addition, many teachers spend much time lecturing and rely too heavily on textbooks and student work sheets.

"A lot of teachers are frightened of math," said Sharon Stenglein, a math specialist with Children, Families and Learning. "They think they can teach math if they show students some rules and if students practice the rules."

Other countries do a better job teaching eighth-grade students chemistry, physics and biology as well as algebra, geometry and measurement, the results indicated. And most countries have stronger standards and more uniform curriculums.

Minnesota has long emphasized local control of what's taught in the classroom. But the state graduation rule will set high standards by calling for students to demonstrate skills and knowledge in science, math and other subjects, said Wedl. And statewide testing will soon establish benchmarks for students at certain grade levels.

"We must continue to be relentless about measuring results," he said.

Minnesota's strength in science has several important roots.

Secondary science teachers are trained in such specific content areas as earth, life and physical science. Many use the same textbooks, as indicated by results of a survey completed by the schools in the study. Science lends itself to hands-on activities that allow students to explore and work in groups, said Kathleen Lundgren, a science specialist with the department.

Hands-on lessons help

At Franklin Middle School in Minneapolis, teacher Jim Bickel loads students with activities and experiments several times weekly to knit chemistry, physics, biology and other sciences together.

Students study weather by watching patterns made by food coloring in hot water and examining weather maps. Outside, they learn about aerodynamics by launching rockets made of plastic bottles containing compressed air and water, Bickel said. "They go really well — a hundred feet or so," he said. "We have an air compressor and a launcher. You put the pressure in, and the kids launch them."

More hands-on activities are needed in math classes, as well, allowing students to explore math concepts rather than watching a teacher solve a problem on the chalkboard, Linder-Scholer said.

In Minneapolis, many math teachers are trained to use activities that involve students. The National Science Foundation provided funding and support to improve math and reading instruction by using curriculum designed by educational researchers rather than by commercial textbook companies, educators say.

"We don't tell the kids what to do," said Judith MacAlpine, an Edison High math teacher whose students use blocks and shapes to learn geometry. She illustrates exponential growth and decay with the story of Alice in Wonderland: When Alice eats cake, she doubles in size; when she drinks liquid, she shrinks by half. "Using those kinds of things that are very visual and hands-on [lets] students find [concepts] themselves and share," she said.

— The complete TIMSS International Reports are available for downloading at <http://www.xtstep.bc.edu/TIMSS-51/TIMSSPublications.html#International>.

More...

Ranking the 41 nations

Singapore students topped the list of 41 nations in both math and science categories. Good curriculum in earth and life sciences put Minnesota scores well above average in science, but math scores revealed a relative weakness in geometry, measurement and algebra.

Average math scores:

Singapore	643
Korea	607
Japan	605
Hong Kong	588
Belgium-Flemish	565
Czech Republic	564
Slovak Republic	547
Switzerland	545
The Netherlands	541
Slovenia	541
Austria	539
France	538
Hungary	537
Russian Federation	535
Australia	530
Ireland	527
Canada	527
Belgium-French	526
Minnesota	525
Bulgaria	522
Thailand	522
Israel	522
Sweden	519
International average	513
Germany	509
New Zealand	508
England	506
Norway	503
Denmark	502
United States	500
Scotland	498
Latvia	493
Spain	487
Iceland	487
Greece	484
Romania	482
Lithuania	477
Cyprus	474
Portugal	454
Iran, Islamic Rep.	428
Kuwait	392
Colombia	385
South Africa	354

Average science scores:

Singapore	607
Czech Republic	574
Japan	571
Korea	565
Bulgaria	565
Minnesota	545
The Netherlands	560
Slovenia	560
Austria	558
Hungary	554
England	552
Belgium-Flemish	550
Australia	545
Slovak Republic	544
Russian Federation	538
Ireland	538
Sweden	535
United States	534
Germany	531
Canada	531
Norway	527
New Zealand	525
Thailand	525
Israel	524
Hong Kong	522
Switzerland	522
Scotland	517
Spain	517
International average	516
France	498
Greece	497
Iceland	494
Romania	486
Latvia	485
Portugal	480
Denmark	478
Lithuania	476
Belgium-French	471
Iran, Islamic Rep.	470
Cyprus	463
Kuwait	430
Colombia	411
South Africa	326

Source: SciMath-MN, a statewide education partnership.

Clinton throws Tar Heel touches into education speech

By DENNIS PATTERSON
Associated Press Writer

RALEIGH (AP) - President Clinton came to a joint session of the General Assembly to talk about education, but he couldn't help putting in a few Tar Heel touches like praising Dean Smith and Gov. Jim Hunt and tossing a soft barb at Jesse Helms.

Clinton admitted to being a basketball fanatic and said he was surprised legislators were in town "because it's tournament time and you've got four teams, as usual, in the tournament."

Clinton said he doesn't take sides in basketball unless the game involves Arkansas or Georgetown, but "I am looking forward to the day when the great Dean Smith breaks Adolph Rupp's record."

The president told an audience that included legislators, state judges, four Democratic congressmen, the Council of State and Hunt's cabinet that William Cohen, his new secretary of defense, had accompanied him on the trip.

"Before I came down here, Sen. Helms asked me to tell you that he is not the guard that Jesse once said I would need to come to North Carolina," Clinton said. "Ever since I got a chief of staff that does not speak with an accent (Charlotte native Erskine Bowles), we've been getting along a lot better, Sen. Helms and I."

In a speech that sounded much like Gov. Jim Hunt's campaign and State of the State addresses, Clinton touted Hunt's Smart Start program and urged lawmakers to make education their top priority. He called for a national testing program that would allow states to compare themselves with each other and with other countries.

And he also called for tougher standards for both students and teachers, including making it easier to remove poor teachers from the classroom.

"I think we understand today intuitively that education holds the key to our future in the 21st century," Clinton said. "And I believe politics must stop at the schoolhouse door."

Republican House Speaker Harold Brubaker, R-Randolph, applauded Clinton for focusing "on the key education issues House Republicans support."

"I particularly like the president's comments that 'politics should stop at the schoolhouse door,'" Brubaker said. "I hope the teachers' union was listening."

"Bill Clinton knows a lot about education," Hunt said later when asked what real effect the federal government can have on what is essentially a state and local issue.

He said Clinton could do a lot to promote school reform "just by using the bully pulpit."

Clinton said Hunt was his mentor and recalled that he, Hunt and Richard Riley, Clinton's secretary of education, were all governors when they met 18 years ago.

Clinton said he and Riley agreed "that Jim was probably the only one of us who could still get elected governor in our home states after 18 years."

More...

Clinton was welcomed to the joint session, which was about evenly divided between Republican and Democratic legislators, with sustained applause and whoops from Rep. Toby Fitch, D-Wilson.

"I believe in having a good time," Fitch said later.

Some Republican lawmakers threatened to smoke cigarettes during Clinton's address, but only one - Sen. Hugh Webster, R-Caswell - actually did. The Clinton administration has approved regulating

tobacco as a drug to combat teen-aged smoking.

Legislative rules allow members to smoke on the floor of the House.

After the speech, legislators and supporters lined up to have their picture taken with Clinton. Rep. Sam Ellis, a Wake County Republican and one of only a handful to vote against the resolution inviting Clinton to speak, was first in line.

Clinton then dined with legislative leaders, Hunt and Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker in the speaker's office before departing for the airport and an appearance in Florida.

The lunch included barbecued chicken, eastern-style pork barbeque, pork ribs, coleslaw, potato salad, cornbread, baked beans, cookies, raw vegetables and fresh fruit.

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► **EDUCATION INITIATIVE:** President Clinton, in a speech to the North Carolina Legislature in Raleigh, urged adoption of national school testing standards in reading and math. He also announced that a White House conference on early childhood learning will be April 17 in Washington.

Engler outlines his plans for takeover of schools

Package of bills to identify districts that have 'problems.'

By Mark Hornbeck
News Landing Bureau

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LANSING — Ecorse, Highland Park and Benton Harbor schools are the worst in Michigan, and they're targets of Gov. John Engler's proposal to have the state seize control of failing districts, the governor said Thursday.

Other districts, including Detroit, could be on the takeover list in future years as districts are judged by their students' performance on new state tests.

Engler, who initially proposed the so-called "School District Educational Accountability Act" in January, provided new details Thursday when Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron, introduced a five-bill package to implement the controversial plan.

"We believe firm, bold action in school districts where they're not getting the job done is necessary," said Engler. "These bills identify districts where we have massive problems and kids are being left behind."

Democrats said the package isn't likely to pass the House in its current form.

"I have serious questions about the state coming in and taking over districts that are floundering and kids had serious problems for years," said House Education Committee

Chair Sharon Gire, D-Clinton Township. "The problems are so complex, to send in one trustee and expect that individual to solve them is too simplistic."

Gire said she would rather have a team sent in to diagnose a district's problems and propose solutions.

Under the legislation, schools may be declared educationally bankrupt by the governor if one or more of these conditions apply: ■ More than 80 percent of students score in the lowest category on fourth- or seventh-grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) math and reading tests for five consecutive years. Scores on the tests are rated "satisfactory," "moderate" and "low."

Ecorse, Highland Park and Benton Harbor are the only school districts in the state where more than half the students scored "low."

■ More than 80 percent of pupils

score in the low ranking on fifth- or eighth-grade MEAP science or writing exams for five straight years. The tests were new this spring.

■ More than 80 percent of students who are graduating fail to pass any portion — math, science, reading or writing — of the High School Proficiency Test for two years. The tests were given recently for the second time and results will not be available until May, state school officials said.

Many districts, including Detroit, had more than 80 percent of their students flunk at least one part of the first battery of proficiency tests.

The governor would review the list of failing districts and decide which ones needed state intervention. The state superintendent recommends three potential receivers and the governor chooses one.

The receiver signs a one-year, renewable contract and has the power to fire the local superintendent and other administrators, juggle finances, transfer teachers and rework curriculum. The receiver would not have the authority to cancel contracts or fire teachers. The local school board becomes an advisory body.

"If the administrator does not perform in one year, he or she will be gone, too," said state schools chief Arthur Ellis.

The criteria for takeover are different from those identified by Engler when he laid out the plan in his State of the State message. Under the governor's original proposal, more than 100 districts would have been eligible for state intervention.

"These standards are sufficiently low that nobody can make a legitimate defense that districts failing to meet them are doing a quality job," said DeGrow.

"I haven't got a real keen feeling about Engler," said Benjamin Dobbs, vice president of the school board in Ecorse, where voters last November approved a \$46-million bond to build a new high school. "I don't like what he's trying to do with schools."

"We're trying to bring back the district, increase academics, make these schools better."

Student scores used to judge principals

By MARIO G. ORTIZ
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

James Balotta knows the numbers by heart: 16.1 percent passage on the fourth-grade proficiency exam and 91.6 percent attendance.

Like school principals across Cleveland, Balotta, principal at Joseph Landis Elementary School, knows that if his students don't meet these numbers, he will hear about it in his evaluation.

The district, in leading the mantra of accountability, has narrowed the focus of principal evaluations to two main criteria: improvements in attendance and proficiency test scores. The district assigned goals to every school last fall.

Like last year, the March 31 notification deadline for contract renewals will be waived. Principals with one-year contracts will be told in May or June if they will have a job. Other principals have two- or three-year contracts.

Livesteen Carter, district chief academic officer, said the new evaluations, which also include input from teachers, parents and students, should be more accurate and meaningful than previous methods.

In the old system, supervisors at each level — elementary, middle and high school — evaluated dozens of principals based on visits during the year.

Carter said these often vaguely worded evaluations were open to interpretation and their goals were hard to measure.

"What we had was just about all of our principals rated at outstanding and satisfactory, even when student achievement went down," she said.

Principals who fail to reach their schools goals will be counseled on ways they can improve next year, she said.

In interviews, principals said they didn't like being judged so heavily on two factors.

Balotta said principals needed more resources, both financial and personnel, to tackle the district's overall poor performance on state exams.

"If I had all the tools necessary to do my job, I wouldn't mind being evaluated," he said. Balotta said he had more areas to cover this year since he lost an assistant principal when enrollment dipped below the 600-pupil threshold. He now has 580 pupils.

Balotta said inexperienced principals especially need sup-

port. Of 33 principal positions filled in the 116-school district last fall, 27 were filled by rookie principals. A similar number of new assistant principals were hired.

"We are not doing a good job at many levels to help the new assistant principal, the new principal and even the older principal," said Superintendent Richard A. Boyd.

As the district moves toward giving school staffs more autonomy, Boyd said, principals will be responsible for buying materials, balancing budgets, hiring teachers and creating curriculum.

"It just takes a different kind of leadership style than was true before," he said.

Kay F. Smith, a first-year principal at Louis Pasteur Elementary School, said principals need time to make changes that lead to improvements.

"Don't judge me after one year. But give me three to five years, and we'll be with the best," she said. Though Pasteur, a kindergarten to third-grade school last year, was expanded to include a fourth and fifth grade this year, Smith still faces a goal for the fourth-grade proficiency test.

William Martin, Collinwood High School principal and president of the Cleveland Council of Administrators and Supervisors, said new evaluations come and go, but one thing never changes.

"You can't hold a principal accountable if we can't hold teachers accountable," he said. Martin said evaluations by people who have not been principals are a "waste of time."

Boyd said some would always resist evaluations because "Nobody wants to be held accountable."

Several teachers said principals should not be evaluated on attendance and test scores.

"I don't think it's the principal's responsibility to get children here," said teacher Lana LaSalle of Landis Elementary School.

Teachers said parents spell the difference between achieving and underachieving students.

Carter, a former principal, said the district would not move forward if the "vicious cycle" of finger pointing continues.

"Parents send us the best they have," she said. "We have to understand that we can't craft their home environment or the community that a youngster comes from."

GOP warns Clinton against initiating national tests in reading, mathematics

By Carol Innerst
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

House Republican leaders on education issues have warned the Clinton administration not to steam ahead with plans to spend \$90 million on new national tests in reading and mathematics without the approval of Congress.

"It would be a big mistake," said Rep. Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Work Force.

"They are going to need Congress to sell their constituencies on anything having to do with national tests or standards, and if they don't go that route, what happened in health care will certainly repeat itself," he said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Goodling said he raised his concerns earlier in sessions with President Clinton and Education Secretary Richard Riley, and in a letter sent Friday to Mr. Riley, which seeks a response by March 19.

"From what we ascertain, the president's national testing proposal in reading and math constitutes a major change in federal education policy," the letter reads.

Mr. Clinton's testing proposal — to test fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math — seeks to de-

termine whether students nationwide are meeting higher education standards, being developed on a state-by-state basis.

While basically supporting the president's desire for higher standards, the congressmen state they do not know the specifics of his proposed testing program and would like to see it debated in Congress and by the public.

"Given this change, we believe Congress should have clear information on the administration's intentions, and that your proposal receive the scrutiny it deserves — both by Congress and the public at-large. In our view, proposals like this must be backed by a consensus on the Hill and in the country if they are to achieve success when implemented," the letter reads.

Also signing Friday's letter were Peter Hoekstra, chairman of the subcommittee on oversight and investigations; Frank Riggs, chairman of the subcommittee on early childhood, youth and families; and John Porter, chairman of the subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies of the Appropriations Committee.

The letter seeks clarification of Mr. Clinton's education initiatives and expresses particular interest in the "explicit statutory authority on which the administration relies

for the testing" as well as what specific category of funds the administration intends to allocate for the tests.

Mr. Clinton's proposal to spend \$90 million over five years to develop new national tests was made too late to be included in Department of Education's budget unveiled in early February.

However, Mr. Riley has said the project will cost \$8 million to \$9 million per year for test development — a total of \$40 million to \$45 million — plus first year administrative costs of \$45 million. After that, states and schools that volunteer to use the national tests will pay the scoring costs.

He said the administration plans to create the tests with money from the Fund for the Improvement of Education and does not need authorizing legislation from Congress.

The original plan called for basing a fourth-grade reading test on a shortened version of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment and the eighth-grade math test on the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) that recently compared student performance in math and science in 41 countries.

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Lott: Take Advantage of Missteps

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Mistakes by Democrats and the Clinton administration are "golden opportunities" for the conservative movement to surge forward, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott says.

"Every assault from the left against America's values has been an opportunity for conservatives to advance," Lott, R-Miss., said at a dinner Friday of the Conservative Political Action Conference.

"They give us the material to build

ramparts for a free society on the ruins of liberalism," he added.

Lott lambasted President Clinton's failed attempt in 1994 to reform health care and said conservatives now must now derail the president's plan to revitalize education standards.

"We are not going to tolerate federal micromanagement of schools," he said.

Lott said little about fund-raising allegations that have plagued the White House and dominated a news conference earlier in the day by Clinton.

But Lott did manage to take a few jabs for the sake of humor, telling his audience of 500: "I haven't seen this big

of a crowd in one room since I was over at the White House last Sunday night in the Lincoln Bedroom."

In his remarks, which drew standing ovations at the beginning and end, Lott focused largely on popular conservative themes such as bans on late-term abortions, balancing the budget and keeping public education under local control.

He also pledged to continue the fight for a balanced budget amendment, which failed by a single vote in the Senate this week, and predicted that next year's election will vote in enough Republicans to make Congress "veto-proof." ■

Analysis Finds Little Change in NAEP

By Jeff Archer

Although students in the Southeastern region of the United States appear to have made some of the greatest academic strides over the long term, the overall picture of student performance in the nation is one of some early gains followed by a recent stabilization, a new U.S. Department of Education study reports.

The department's National Center for Education Statistics released the 292-page analysis of results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress last week. The comprehensive report, "NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress," expands on a summary the department released in October.

While the main NAEP measures student performance with tests that reflect current national education objectives, the long-term NAEP study uses the same exams to chart trends over time.

About 30,000 students ages 9, 13, and 17 have taken the long-term tests in mathematics, science, and reading every two years for more than 20 years.

Writing tests have been given to students in grades 4, 8, and 11 since 1984.

The October summary showed that the average scores of 9- and 13-year-olds in math were significantly higher in 1994 than they were in 1973, the first year the test was given.

The same pattern holds true for the average science scores of 9- and 17-year-olds. From 1992 to 1994, however, those scores showed little change.

In addition, no group tested in 1994 showed significant improvement in reading or writing scores from 1984.

Early Gains

The report released last week includes further breakdowns by such factors as region, type of school, and parents' education background.

The data show that the 1994 average scores of 9- and 13-year-olds in the Southeast were significantly higher than they were in 1970—a claim that no other region could make.

The Southeast also was the only region to show major improvements in the math scores of 9th

graders from 1992 to 1994, although 9th graders in all regions scored higher in 1994 than when the math test was first given.

"I think the results reflect an emphasis in the Southern states, dating back to the early 1980s, in basic skills that did help some of those students on the bottom rung," said Mark D. Musick, the president of the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Education Board and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees the administration of NAEP.

Performance

The regional breakdowns also reflect a general trend that runs throughout the analysis.

Breakdowns by region, gender, and race or ethnicity show that groups that lagged behind in subjects tested for the first time tended to make significant gains through the early 1980s, but have seen their scores stabilize or decline somewhat since.

In math and reading, for instance, the students in the lowest quartile made significant headway from 1978 to 1986 but have shown little or no progress since 1990.