



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

September 11, 1997

Mr. Wade J. Henderson
Executive Director
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
1629 K Street, NW, Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Henderson:

President Clinton has asked me to respond to your letter of September 4, 1997, regarding our proposal for national standards and national tests. Before turning to the specific issues you have raised, let me first share my view of the larger context in which the debate about national standards and tests is occurring.

President Clinton and I are firmly convinced that one of the biggest obstacles to improved educational opportunities and results for low-income and minority students has been the widespread and mistaken belief that students from these backgrounds cannot learn to the same high levels as other, more advantaged students can. This belief -- the foundation of what I have called a tyranny of low expectations -- has pervaded the schooling experience of our most disadvantaged youngsters, resulting all too often in watered down curricula, poorly prepared teachers and under investment by the public in their schooling.

Challenging national standards and tests are a fundamental tool for overcoming these obstacles. They will help raise expectations for all of our students in the basic skills. They will provide parents and communities with accurate, reliable information about student and school performance. They will make it impossible for schools to mask inadequate performance and to claim that students and schools are performing satisfactorily when in fact they are not. And they will help mobilize parents and community leaders in serious national, state and local efforts to raise student achievement in the basics, including through the commitment of additional, needed resources.

Student testing has often been a difficult and controversial issue. I know that tests have all too often been used to penalize rather than expand opportunities for minority students, and that there is great fear that these national tests may also do more harm than good. But they can, and I believe will, ultimately help lead to increased student achievement and greater opportunities for the students we all care about.

The President and I are aware that not everyone will do well on these tests the first time around and that some will need extra help to master the basic skills. But, difficult as this may be for students, teachers and schools, we believe that there is far greater risk for our most disadvantaged

students in accepting the status quo. These tests will empower parents and communities, and challenge students to realize their full potential. Denying these tests to parents and students will simply perpetuate lower expectations, limited accountability, and continued poor results for the most vulnerable young people in our society.

Raising standards and measuring student and school progress toward meeting them works. Last week I was in Philadelphia when Superintendent Hornbeck announced the results of such efforts. One year after instituting a program of higher standards and tough tests, Philadelphia students made significant gains in reading, math and science at the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades. They were able to achieve these impressive gains at the same time that student participation in the tests also increased substantially, with some 40% of the increased participation brought about by increasing the number of students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient students, and low-income students taking the tests. This is a tribute to the parents, students and teachers in Philadelphia who were willing to make real, constructive reforms that made progress possible.

We have similar evidence from Milwaukee, where only 21% of the school district's eleventh grade students initially passed a rigorous mathematics proficiency examination required for high school graduation. The next year, students, staff, and the community, including business groups, worked together to help students pass the tests, by providing special classes before and after school, instituting Saturday academies, utilizing business volunteers, upgrading teaching, and increasing parental involvement. As a result, 98% of the seniors in the class of 1996 passed the test. This shows that high standards and rigorous tests can indeed mobilize whole communities to support student achievement.

In this context, let me address a number of the issues you have raised:

Safeguards against invalid and inappropriate use of test results: The President and I have strongly encouraged states and local school districts to institute policies that require students to demonstrate they have met challenging academic standards before moving from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school, and in order to graduate from high school, and that require schools to provide students who need it extra help in order to meet the standards. Such policies would help make standards real in every school and classroom, underscore the seriousness of increased expectations, better focus and increase the efforts of both students and teachers, and strengthen each school's accountability for the success of every child.

Decisions about promotion and graduation policies are and must remain primarily state and local matters. We believe it would be a mistake to institute policies with respect to the national tests that would limit the ability of state and local policymakers to incorporate student performance on the national tests into sound, non-discriminatory promotion policies.

However, we believe just as strongly that promotion policies must be sound and fair, and that test results should not be used for high-stakes purposes -- such as for school-to-school promotion or graduation -- unless they have in fact been validated for those purposes. Because test validity for

high-stakes purposes depends heavily on the extent to which local curriculum prepares students for the test, it can only be demonstrated in the specific local or state context in which the tests will be used. Therefore, it is the responsibility of state and local school systems wishing to use the national tests for high-stakes purposes to first demonstrate their validity for these purposes, prior to implementation.

To support state and local school systems in making sound and appropriate decisions about the use of national tests, and to avoid the misuse of tests, the Education Department is developing a strategy designed to eliminate potential problems before they occur. Our approach will include the following steps:

- o Guidance from the Office for Civil Rights: Within the next three months, the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education will issue final guidance for its regional enforcement offices to assist in the evaluation of cases surrounding the discriminatory use of tests, including but not limited to the national tests. The guidance will set forth well-established federal legal standards relating to the use and misuse of tests, and will clearly articulate the existing principles of law that should guide any decision regarding the use of tests under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

This guidance has been made available to the public in its draft form, and the settled legal principles set forth in the guidance have established the basis of OCR's test-related work. When the guidance is issued in final form, it will reflect extensive Department of Education review, as well as that of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Testing and Assessment. In addition, we plan to make it widely available to school systems and the public, so that educators, policymakers, parents and community groups can all be well-informed about the requirements a test must meet in order to be used for high-stakes purposes. I believe that this approach will go a long way toward helping state and local school systems make appropriate judgments about the use of tests, and ensure that they take the steps necessary to validate the tests as needed. The Department welcomes your continued input regarding this guidance prior to its issuance in final form.

- o Technical Assistance to State and Local School Systems: The Office for Civil Rights will offer technical assistance to state and local school systems based on the guidance discussed above. OCR regional office staff will work with school systems to ensure they understand the practical implications of the legal principles set forth in its guidance, and can incorporate them into their own efforts. Moreover, relevant offices within the Department, including the Office of Educational Research and Improvement and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, along with OCR, will also work to identify and disseminate best or promising practices with regard to the validation and use of tests, and will offer information about "what works" in specific cases where feasible. Along with the guidance, this technical assistance strategy can help prevent potential misuse before it occurs. We welcome your thoughts and strategies for ensuring that the best information regarding model practices is widely available.

o Enforcement: The Office for Civil Rights will continue to conduct compliance reviews and conduct investigations to ensure that the nondiscrimination requirements of the law are met. While we do not oppose use of the tests for high-stakes purposes, we will do everything within our power to ensure that such uses comply with all legal requirements.

As you know, we are working to ensure that the President's request for funding for OCR in FY 1998 -- a \$ 6.6 million increase -- is supported by Congress. Without adequate funding, much of the core work of OCR -- enforcement of antidiscrimination laws at our schools and colleges nationwide based on complaints of discrimination -- will be in jeopardy. If all students are to achieve to high standards, they must be able to learn in environments free of discrimination.

o National Tests -- Guidelines for Test Use: The Department plans that guidelines for test use -- which would acknowledge the need to validate the national tests if they are to be used for high-stakes purposes -- will be developed by the test contractor and approved by the National Assessment Governing Board. These guidelines will be used by school districts and states as part of their participation in 1999.

o National Tests -- Independent Evaluation: Our proposal includes an overall evaluation of the national tests to be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences. The Academy will report on how states, districts and schools are using the tests, along with how they have handled test administration and reporting. This evaluation will provide objective and independent information that will help determine if the tests are being used appropriately.

Public Reporting and School Accountability: I believe we are in complete agreement that the tests will accomplish their intended purpose only if they are reported to the public on a school-by-school and school-district-by-school-district basis, and only if these reports show the performance of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups and of males and females, as well. Such public reporting is at the heart of increased public accountability for results. I will urge NAGB to require testing contractors to provide states and school districts with aggregate results for districts and schools, and to provide disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, and other populations. This will go a long way toward facilitating the provision of this information to the public.

Further, states and school districts throughout the country are already well on the way to reporting all test score results in this fashion. For example, according to a recent study by the Council of Chief State School Officers, 42 states already require or use school profiles or school performance reports to make public the results of student assessments, and 38 also require district level reports.

At present, some 17 states require the disaggregation of results at the school- or district-level for at least one demographic subgroup. While this is a good start, it is not enough, and we must do better if schools are to be held accountable for the performance of all students.

An important tool to improve the current situation is through the implementation of the Title I assessment and reporting requirements, which have historically had a powerful impact on state and local practice. Title I requires states to fully implement their assessment systems by school year 2000-2001. By that time, state assessment and reporting systems must enable the disaggregation of test data at the State, local school district and school levels, by gender, major racial and ethnic group, English proficiency status, migrant status, students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged. In addition, each local school district is required to publicize and disseminate the results of the annual review of all schools in individual school performance profiles to parents, teachers and other school staff, administrators, students, and the broader community.

Because Title I funds are received by every state, nearly every local school district (and every school district serving significant numbers of low-income and minority students) and two thirds of all public schools, the Title I requirements in this area will affect the reporting of test results in virtually every school and school district in the Nation. And, with respect to the public reporting of test results, they will accomplish exactly what we agree is needed.

In order to accommodate and support state and local efforts to raise academic standards and implement assessments aligned with the standards, Title I appropriately provides states with ample time to implement the testing and reporting requirements. Once the implementation deadline is reached, this Department will vigorously enforce compliance with it.

Based on experience and on conversations with state and local officials around the country, I am convinced that jurisdictions that participate in the national tests will report the results in a fashion consistent with how they will report the results of other test scores. The Council of Great City Schools has recently indicated that the cities participating in the national tests have pledged to do precisely that. Indeed, enhanced public accountability for schools compared with national standards and international benchmarks is clearly one of the main reasons for state and local interest in the national test initiative. State and local school officials in jurisdictions participating in the tests would be hard-pressed to justify a more restrictive and less informative reporting policy for national tests than for state and local tests.

Appropriately reporting individual test results to parents is as important as reporting aggregate results to the public. The Department of Education will undertake an aggressive campaign to help parents understand the reading and math standards on which the tests will be based, so they can have a very clear understanding of the kind of work expected of their children. Test publishers that provide the tests to states and local school districts will be required to provide the results to parents in easily understandable formats, including providing the test results and other appropriate information to parents in languages they understand. And the Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs will work with a group of urban school districts that enroll large numbers of LEP students to develop strategies and materials to help inform parents about the purposes of the tests, and to help prepare students to meet the standards.

Title I requirements will reinforce these efforts. Under Title I parent involvement provisions, each school and local school district is required to provide assistance to parents in understanding assessments and monitoring their children's progress, and to provide appropriate interpretations of individual student assessment results.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: I must respectfully disagree with your assessment that large numbers of students with disabilities are likely to be excluded from the assessment. We are working hard to make precisely the opposite the case, and I am committed to seeing these tests as a model for inclusion of students with disabilities.

Under our proposal, final decisions on inclusion guidelines as well as on the type and format of accommodations will be made by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), after broad public participation and input. Our intention is that the national tests be a model for how to best accommodate students with disabilities and to be as inclusive as possible. I will urge NAGB to act in accord with this intent. And test publishers that provide the tests will be required to incorporate the approved accommodations and inclusion criteria into the tests.

The test development contractor, in consultation with test advisory committees and others will develop draft guidelines for the inclusion of students with disabilities, as part of the development and field test process. Studies of accommodations for students with disabilities will be conducted by the test development contractor, and will be included in the evaluation by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). These studies will include examinations of the validity of the test results for students with disabilities tested with accommodations, using data from the 1998 field test. The NAS evaluation will examine the actual accommodations offered, and adherence to the inclusion guidelines during test administration.

The development and refinement of accommodations will also be informed by National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) research on the most effective types of accommodations. Accommodations that will be considered during the test development and field test process include extended time and/or multiple testing sessions; one-on-one testing or small group sessions; the use of a scribe or computer; assistance with test directions (though not with test items); an audiocassette version of the mathematics test; a sign language interpreter; a microphone worn by the test administrator; the use of magnifying instruments; or other appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities will receive accommodations as specified in the student's Individualized Education Plan developed under IDEA. Under the IDEA Amendments of 1997, students with disabilities must be included in assessments and each student's IEP must state the accommodations the student needs to participate in assessments.

Accommodations for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students: Similarly, we will strongly encourage NAGB to develop appropriate accommodations and inclusion criteria for LEP students.

Our proposal includes the development of a bilingual Spanish-English version of the mathematics test by 1999, and bilingual versions in languages other than Spanish in subsequent years. This will enable students to demonstrate their competency in mathematics regardless of their English language proficiency.

As you know, we have a difference of opinion regarding the language of testing for 4th grade reading. As I indicated in my September 3, 1997, letter to members of the Hispanic Caucus, in our proposal, the purpose of the 4th grade test is to test student proficiency in reading in English, not general reading comprehension. Therefore, we do not propose to develop the 4th grade national test in other languages.

As I also indicated in that same letter, we will work vigorously to assist states and local school districts in meeting the LEP-related assessment requirements of Title I, including assessing general reading comprehension in the language in which students can best demonstrate competency.

There are a number of high quality native language reading tests, and at least one that, according to its publisher, is by design based on the NAEP 4th grade reading framework and achievement levels and yields individual scores reported in terms of the NAEP achievement levels. Any district that, at its option, wishes to test LEP students in reading comprehension in terms that are consistent with NAEP, and would like to do so in coordination with its administration and reporting of the national reading test, already can do so.

In addition to these specific responses, let me also point out that President Clinton and I see these national standards and tests as an integral part of an overall strategy of improving education by raising standards and increasing our federal investments in education where they can do the most good. Since the beginning of this Administration, we have increased federal investments in elementary and secondary education by \$4.1 billion, some 30%.

For example, since the beginning of the Clinton Administration, we have increased Head Start funding by 55% including the increase secured in the Bipartisan Budget Agreement. Title I and IDEA have both increased by more than \$1 billion. We have initiated significant new funding for education reform in support of higher standards, with a total of \$1.3 billion for Goals 2000 since its enactment in 1994, and we will continue to urge Congress to fully fund the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. We have provided substantial new resources to help schools use computers in the classroom, with \$425 million secured this year toward a goal of \$2 billion over five years. In addition, the FCC has approved a plan that will provide discounts worth \$2.25 billion annually to help schools and libraries bring technology into the classroom and gain access to the Internet at a fraction of the full cost -- meaning a discount of up to 90% for our poorest schools. We are working to help ensure that these funds go to schools and classrooms most in need.

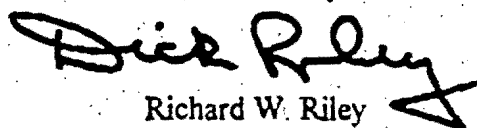
Page 8 - Mr. Wade J. Henderson

We have also made significant increases in higher education spending as well, including record increases in Pell Grant and work-study funding and \$35 billion in tax cuts to help families pay for college.

In addition, for the coming fiscal year, we fought to ensure that the Budget Agreement included an effort specifically targeted to children who need extra help in learning to read, as well as a 27% increase in funding for bilingual education, to nearly \$200 million, and a 50% increase, to \$150 million, for immigrant education. We will continue to propose increases in the federal investment to strengthen education, including new initiatives such as President Clinton's five-year, \$350 million initiative to attract and prepare nearly 35,000 talented people of all backgrounds for teaching at low-income urban and rural schools across the nation. The Administration will continue to push Congress to help address the serious need for renovating and building schools nationwide.

All of these investments are important, because they provide families and schools with resources to help all children achieve high standards. We need to challenge our students to reach high standards and challenge our schools to respond to their needs. At the same time that we press forward to raise standards for our nation's students, we will continue to fight for the necessary investments as well.

Yours sincerely,


Richard W. Riley

From The Desk of

WILLIAM L. TAYLOR

May 1997

Thought you might be interested in the enclosed.

Bill

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CLINTON'S EDUCATION REFORM AGENDA:
WHERE'S THE BEEF?

William L. Taylor

Cubberley Auditorium, Stanford University
May 20, 1997

Good evening. It is an honor for me to be asked to deliver the Cubberley lecture and I am delighted to be with all of you today. Thanks to Dean Rich Shavelson and to his colleague Dean Paul Brest at the law school, I have had a wonderful academic year teaching at Stanford. I have been greatly impressed by the ability, energy, idealism and commitment of the graduate students in education and the law students I have taught and indeed of other students I have met and talked with during the year. The experience has made me more hopeful about the future of the country. I should add parenthetically that I make these statements without having seen the student evaluations for my course. So I don't know for sure whether my high opinion of the students is reciprocated. A friend of mine at a midwestern university recently told me of an evaluation he had received in a course. It read as follows: "if I contracted a fatal disease and had only one hour to live I would like to spend it in Professor Carson's course, because it would seem like a full lifetime." But I'll stand at least provisionally by my high opinion of Stanford students and determine later whether I can add good judgment to the qualities I admire in them.

In choosing the perhaps provocative title and theme for my talk this evening, I am operating on a number of beliefs and assumptions. The first is that public education in this nation is urgently in need of reform. The second is that the times have provided us with a window of opportunity to make positive and significant changes in public education. The third is that we are at a decisive point. I believe that if we fail to grasp the opportunity to make changes soon, we will be faced not just with stagnation but with the fragmentation and deterioration of public schooling as a central institution in our society.

I make these assertions with a recognition of how difficult it is to secure significant institutional change. Having worked for more than forty years in civil rights, much of that time on issues in public education, I can testify from experience about some of the difficulties. Indeed, when someone asks me what my specialty is, I'm tempted to reply "incrementalism". I have also read *Tinkering Toward Utopia* by Messrs. Tyack and Cuban of the Education School and if I ever decide to write my memoirs I may use that title. (There is no copyright in book titles, you know).

With that caveat, however, few would disagree with the proposition that at times conditions arise that create opportunities for dramatic change. Generally, these conditions involve a crisis or a perceived crisis. In the 1930s, the great Depression led to the New Deal and to the creation of the modern welfare state. In the aftermath of World War II, the emergence of the United States as a world leader put into bold relief the conflict between our promises and our practices on race matters and led to the legal revolution in civil rights.

Out of each of these crises there emerged leaders who seized the day and helped to determine the direction of change. In the 30s, FDR moved the nation from political and economic instability to

a situation where a degree of economic security and opportunity was guaranteed to the majority of citizens. Earl Warren, Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King, Jr. in very different ways set the stage for the great changes that occurred in civil rights. And when we reached a critical point of conflict in the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson (with the help of John Gardner and others) secured the enactment of laws that enabled millions of people to improve their lives and that made us a fairer society. In none of these cases was the outcome foreordained. Were it not for the quality and strength of the leadership demonstrated by FDR and the others I have named, the results might have been quite different.

Is There a Crisis in American Public Education?

In addressing the question of whether there is a crisis in public education, I would like to avoid taking a macro view, in large part because I do not feel well qualified to make judgments about American education as a whole. People whose views I respect have marshaled data showing the ways in which public education has improved over past decades. And, in large measure because of the civil rights revolution and the adoption of national laws and policies mandating equality of opportunity in public schools, large numbers of children -- children of color, disabled children, female children -- have received opportunities that had never before been available to them. Most have made excellent use of these opportunities.

But in the central cities of this country, where I do much of my work, the story is different. I am not going to burden you with many statistics or with narratives you already know. But in Cincinnati where I have a longrunning case, there are large numbers of students who every year are kicked out of the public schools. In one recent year, 1 child in every 5 was suspended from school at some time during the year and many were suspended on multiple occasions. The racial disparities are such that for black children in the system 1 child in every 4 was suspended. And these are not only older children who are being put out of school. In some (but by no means all) of the elementary schools hundreds of 8, 9 and 10 year old students are being suspended. These are schools where an environment conducive to learning has not been established, where even students who are not suspended are not learning to read and achieve at grade level, and where those who have been suspended or retained in grade are very likely to drop out of school altogether later.

In St. Louis, high schools that are racially isolated graduate fewer than 30% of their students in four years -- this despite the national figures you may have read showing virtual parity between black and white students in high school graduation rates. (As I will note later, high schools in St. Louis that are not racially isolated do better.) Even if we assume that some larger proportion of students in the racially isolated schools will graduate later over a period of five or six years or more, the graduation rate still remains disgraceful. In a federal court hearing last year in which the black parents and school children I represent were seeking to hang onto the remedies that had worked in some schools and to improve them, I asked an expert witness what was likely to happen to these youngsters who drop out. The judge interrupted: "I know what happens to them. I see them in my criminal court every day for sentencing." Even those who are not headed for prison have only a small chance of leading productive lives. Most will not acquire the skills demanded for remunerative employment in today's and tomorrow's job market.

And, of course the dire condition of the schools in central cities is reflected in achievement scores not only in St. Louis and Cincinnati but throughout the nation. Here in California, for example only 27% of disadvantaged urban 4th graders performed at the basic level or above in the National Assessment of Educational Progress 1992 math examination. In other words, 73% did not master even basic skills, much less meet a standard of proficiency.

The children of the inner city are a minority isolated in many ways from mainstream American society. And it is not clear from public opinion polls how many more affluent people care about the education of "other people's children". But the polls do appear to show that large numbers of people are worried about the state of public education. They perceive a general deterioration of standards which they believe is not good for the general welfare of the Republic. If one takes the assessments of the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a reliable indicator, these public perceptions are not inaccurate. No state in the union has a majority of its fourth graders reading at proficient or advanced levels or a majority of its eighth graders performing at these levels in mathematics. And so education has moved up on the list of major problems that people articulate in response to poll questions, rivaling crime in some inquiries. This public concern naturally has caught the attention of governors, legislators and other politicians in a period when the economic prosperity of the nation makes it feasible to increase investment in public education. So the times present an opportunity for significant reform.

The Clinton Program

Moreover, President Clinton would seem to be an ideal person to lead the campaign for reform. As governor of Arkansas, he was successful in materially increasing appropriations for public education and he became a leader among all the governors in the drive to upgrade teaching performance and to secure high standards for students. Anyone who has heard him talk in a small group about education knows that he does not give the rote politician's speech; he has internalized the need to transform public education and he musters a good deal of conviction in support of his proposals.

It was not a surprise therefore that the President chose to devote a significant portion of his 1997 State of the Union Address to setting forth a 10-point "call to action" for American education. The ten points deal with a wide variety of subjects including school construction, school safety, technological improvements and the expansion of Head Start. I want to focus on two points -- Mr. Clinton's effort to advance the cause of standards-based reform by initiating national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics, and his proposals to "make sure there's a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom."

The proposal for national tests in reading and math to be given for the first time in April and May, 1999 and annually thereafter is really the heart of the Administration's program. While the word is not spoken very often in the rhetoric surrounding the proposal, the basic rationale for a national test is the effort to secure *accountability* by public school authorities. While the talk is that the new tests will show how students are doing compared to their peers around the country and the world, we already have the well-regarded NAEP assessments for this purpose. The problem is that NAEP is administered on a sample basis. In contrast, the Administration

advertises that the new test will be taken by all students in jurisdictions that cooperate. The results will be reported to parents who will then have an authoritative indicator of how their children are doing. If their children are not doing well, the argument runs, parents can take appropriate action, including steps to hold teachers, principals and school systems accountable.

Who Will Be Accountable? For Which Children?

While this means of seeking to achieve responsiveness by school officials has a surface appeal, the Administration is refusing to establish basic groundrules that might make it a reality. There are several problems:

1) *Lack of Reporting.* The notion that receiving their children's test results will galvanize parents into taking informed action may require a leap of faith. But one thing is certain: accountability can not be achieved if parents lack a context in which to assess the test results. This means at a minimum that parents will need to know how the results in their schools compare to the results in other schools. They will need to know also how their school system stacks up against other school systems in the state. And it will be helpful to have information as well that would permit judgments about how good a job the school and the district are doing in educating economically disadvantaged students, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities and students of color.

This would seem like elemental stuff. Such information is required in a variety of other contexts. But schools and school systems, particularly those that are doing badly, have little or no incentive to report such data voluntarily and as of today the Clinton Administration has indicated that it will not require such reporting. The rationale is that if state and local officials are required to inform the public about how they are doing they may decide not to participate in the national tests. But without such reporting, the notion of promoting accountability is simply false advertising.

2) *Exclusion or Accommodation?* As we all know, some children, particularly students with limited English proficiency and disabled students, require a degree of accommodation if they are to participate meaningfully in test-taking. Again, we know from experience that left to their own devices, many school officials would exclude these students and economically disadvantaged students from these assessments so that if results are reported by school or district, these officials will look better (or less worse) than they otherwise might. So there is a need here too for basic groundrules. But what the Administration has said so far is that the 8th grade test in mathematics will be given in Spanish as well as English. It has said that the 4th grade reading test *will not* be given in Spanish and it has had little or nothing to say about accommodating children with disabilities.

In my judgment there is little or no justification for the Administration's position. Title 1 of the revised Elementary and Secondary School Act says explicitly that students shall be assessed in the language most likely to yield reliable information about what they know and can

do.

Research tells us that students who read proficiently in Spanish at grade 4 will have little trouble reading proficiently in English.

The failure of the Administration to insist that all children be included and that accommodations be made for those who need them is not a trivial matter. If accountability is the name of the game, children who are excluded from the tests will become *nonpersons*. When the time comes to prepare children to demonstrate what they know and can do, you can be sure that the nonparticipating students will receive little attention.

3) *Accountability for reaching what standard?* In retrospect, the Clinton Administration's positions (or non-positions) on these issues may have been foreshadowed by its stance on the implementation of Title 1 of the revised ESEA, the law that provides about \$7 billion each year to states and localities for the education of disadvantaged students. The reauthorization of 1994 was a major effort to secure educational reform -- to end the two-tier system in which disadvantaged children were expected only to master the basics while others were achieving higher standards. I was privileged to participate in that effort along with Mike Smith (both before and after he entered government) and many others. We proposed and Congress accepted language that said "all children can master challenging content and complex problem-solving skills. Research clearly shows that children, including low-achieving children, can succeed when expectations are high and all children are given the opportunity to learn challenging material". Acting on this finding, Congress required as a condition of receiving federal assistance that each State develop challenging content and student performance standards and assessments that would gauge whether students were meeting the standards.

We were all pretty proud of our efforts -- but as you know the devil is in the details, or in this case the regulations. So we came to learn from the Clinton Administration that despite the explicit language of the law to the contrary, the Administration would deem it acceptable if a state simply bundled together differing standards developed by local districts and submitted them as fulfilling the requirement for "state standards". What this means is that as far as President Clinton and the leaders of the Department of Education are concerned, it is O.K. for the State of Michigan to have one set of standards for the City of Detroit and another for Grosse Pointe or Bloomfield Hills. It is O.K. for the State of California to have one set of standards for the Ravenswood School District and another for Palo Alto. (This problem will not be cured by having a "national test" because the only meaningful way of enforcing accountability is through Title 1 which sets the basic rules that states must follow to qualify for federal funds).

When a few of us met with Secretary Riley on the subject he informed us that this had been the demand of a handful of governors and that the Administration was bound to respect the longstanding tradition of state and local control of education. I would agree that whatever reforms may occur, states and local agencies will continue to exert powerful influence over the content and conditions of public education, and that may well be for the best. But there is another tradition as well -- that the Federal government is the guarantor of equality of educational opportunity. That tradition has its origins in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and it has been operational since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. What the Administration

has done in its interpretation of Title 1 is to abandon that role and to substitute one type of two-tier system for another. And make no mistake -- this new dual system has racial implications. The districts where lower standards will be tolerated are those that house most of the children of color in this country. If in the end the school officials who teach poor and minority students are accountable only for having students meet second class standards it will be a hollow kind of accountability indeed.

Conditions for Successful Reform

If we are truly concerned about raising the level of public education, there are a couple of other important matters to consider -- when we cross that bridge into the next century that President Clinton keeps talking about, who will be the teachers and what will be the conditions under which they teach?

1) *Teachers and school resources.* If we were truly to confront the barriers to improving public education, we would be discussing the archaic way in which public schools are financed. If relying on local property taxes as the principal source of revenue for public schools ever made good sense, that day is long gone. The enormous growth in real estate values during the 80s created a chasm between the resources available to property-poor and property-wealthy districts. The decreasing number of Americans with school-age children has made it more and more difficult to secure local approval for local school bonds or tax increases. And the notion of local control as a justification for property tax funding falls apart once it is recognized that people in property-poor districts can vote to tax themselves until they turn blue and still not raise nearly the revenues that those in property-wealthy districts can with a much lower effort.

The interests of the federal government are implicated too because Title 1 aid to disadvantaged children is predicated on the notion that the states have provided a level playing field and that Title 1 is extra aid to meet special needs. That of course is a massive fiction; Title 1 money cannot begin to compensate for the services that the Camdens, New Jerseys and Baltimores of this country cannot provide because of inequitable state finance systems. The Clinton Administration surely understands this, but it resisted efforts to achieve even modest reform in Title 1 on grounds that it would be improper for the federal government to tell states how to distribute their resources, even when gross inequities at the state level undermined the national goal of meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. And the Administration put up only a tepid fight to approach the matter in a different way by requiring states to meet minimal standards, called opportunity to learn standards which would enable local districts to meet their new responsibilities under Title 1.

But let us put these matters to one side because reasonable people have argued that students can achieve at high levels even with lesser resources and instead concentrate on the one resource that almost everyone agrees is necessary -- good teachers. President Clinton has addressed this need by talking about the need for teacher accountability, by calling for federal assistance in the national certification of teachers and by seeking to mobilize "a citizen army of volunteer tutors." While these may be useful steps, it seems to me that they do not go to the heart of the problem. In thinking about teaching needs, the place to start I believe is with the disjuncture between the importance most citizens have long attached to public education and the relatively low status

they have accorded to the most important actors in education -- the teachers. For a long time we avoided paying a heavy price for the gap between our words and our deeds because we had a captive talent pool in teaching -- minorities and women who were prevented by discrimination from using their gifts in other fields. But that advantage for public education is largely a thing of the past, because, happily, minorities and women now have other choices and opportunities. (Every year I encounter in my law and education course people who have served as teachers but who have turned to law for economic reasons or out of frustration about the barriers they encounter to their being effective teachers in public schools).

The beginning of a response to this reality would be for President Clinton and other national leaders to use the bully pulpit to make a determined effort to raise the status, prestige and pay of public school teachers. The public should be told of the importance of good teachers to the economic health of our nation in a post-industrial age and of the key role they must play in promoting civil discourse and a sense of common purpose in a society which continues to be riven by misunderstanding and conflict. And this message should be backed by concrete measures to draw the most able young people into teaching, to make teaching a practical and attractive option for successful professionals interested in mid-career changes and to build the capacity of the existing workforce by investing more resources in professional development.

Most important, the measures should be framed to provide incentives for the best teachers to teach in the places where they are most needed--the areas of concentrated poverty. In the cities where I work some of the strongest teachers have retired and they are being replaced largely by people who themselves are products of a deteriorating school system, who have attended teachers colleges with weak standards and who bring to their teaching some of the very deficiencies they are supposed to cure. The impact of this negative cycle should not be underestimated. It is made vivid by the fact that in each of these cities there are a handful of schools led by strong principals who have assembled a cadre of the most able teachers. In these schools children are not being suspended or expelled, an orderly environment for learning has been established and children are achieving. Yet the demographic profile is no different from that of schools that are failing --the schools typically have a student body that is 90% or more children of color and 90% or more children who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. This should tell us that the problem is not the children and should give us some indication of what we might achieve if we were able to increase the supply of capable teachers and principals with leadership qualities.

So I would suggest that, instead of pushing for a program of HOPE scholarships, Mr Clinton ought to call for a college loan forgiveness program for able students who enter teaching and commit to working for at least five years in schools with high-poverty enrollments. This would be patterned after the loan forgiveness program for physicians who commit to practice in medically underserved areas.. In addition, while seeking to assist the effort to increase the number of master teachers who receive national certification, Mr. Clinton should also seek to provide bonuses for those nationally-certified teachers who agree to teach in high-poverty schools for five years. In short, while pursuing the commendable objective of holding teachers accountable for the success of their students, it would seem reasonable to provide them with incentives and rewards for taking on the toughest challenges.

2) *The School Environment*. Finally, let us talk for a few minutes about the school environment in which teachers operate. I have just finished saying, and I believe, that talented teachers can have a positive impact on children even under adverse circumstances. But at the same time it must be said that there is powerful evidence that the worst possible environment for learning that one can provide is one of concentrated poverty. The most recent evidence is in the *Prospects* report, a congressionally-mandated longitudinal study of some 27,000 students which was issued in final form just last month. The study concludes that:

“School poverty depresses the scores of all students in schools where at least half of the students are eligible for subsidized lunch, and seriously depresses the scores when over 75 percent of students live in low-income households.”

In contrast, the report finds that economically disadvantaged students who attend middle-class schools perform significantly better. And the report strikes a major blow against the proposition that there is an unbreakable link between socioeconomic status and educational performance, by amassing data on more measures of socioeconomic status than anyone previously had collected and yet finding that they could account for less than half of the variance in academic outcomes. The *Prospects* study echoes in many ways the findings of the Coleman report, another major congressionally mandated study, which reported thirty years ago that racial and socioeconomic isolation in public schools is harmful to minority and poor students. Again, make no mistake about it: the findings about the effects of concentrated poverty in the schools have clear racial implications. Only two groups-- African Americans and Latinos-- live and attend school in highly concentrated poverty.

Viewed from another perspective, it is both significant and highly encouraging that NAEP reports show that black teenagers reduced the educational performance gap between themselves and white teenagers by almost one half between 1970 and the end of the 1980s. Indeed a 1994 analysis of this data in a RAND study concludes that the scores of black and Latino students increased by about two-thirds more than predicted. There is evidence that school desegregation-- which breaks up large concentrations of poverty-- has played an important role in this progress. During the 1970s the largest gains in the nation were recorded by black elementary school students in the Southeast in reading on the NAEP assessments. These gains occurred during the period when widespread school desegregation was taking place across the region for the first time.

To take more contemporary information, I mentioned earlier how badly students in racially and socioeconomically isolated schools in St. Louis were doing. In contrast, economically disadvantaged students participating in the desegregated magnet schools of St. Louis or in a voluntary interdistrict program which enrolls 13,000 black city students in suburban schools are doing much better. Their achievement scores are higher and they are graduating high school and going on to college at a much greater rate than their peers in isolated schools.

A variety of factors may account for the stronger performance of disadvantaged minority students in middle class schools than in schools of concentrated poverty. Higher expectations for children, access to better teaching and other important resources, the acquisition of non-cognitive skills in how to make it in American society, the influence that middle class parents are able to

exert to bring about change in schools that fall short are some of the more important forces at work.

But what is most distressing is that as evidence of the efficacy of breaking down isolation in the schools mounts, isolation is increasing. In the 1990s, as courts have closed out desegregation court orders resegregation has begun in earnest and, not coincidentally in my view, the gap between the achievement scores has begun to widen again after the progress of the 70s and 80s.

When one gets past the often sterile rhetoric about whether integration is an outmoded concept, it becomes clear that breaking down racial and socioeconomic isolation is one tool for education reform. Moreover, it is a tool with a number of advantages since most often it involves not the daunting task of reconstituting failing schools or building new schools from the ground up, but rather enabling minority and poor students to participate meaningfully in educational institutions that are already successful. And beyond the bottom line of academic performance, schools that are integrated by race and socioeconomic status serve another central purpose of public education --to facilitate efforts to deal with the racial and ethnic conflicts and misunderstandings that are so prevalent in our society.

Mr. Clinton often describes himself as a child of the civil rights revolution in the South and he has certainly talked movingly about the need to deal with racial friction. And his advisors surely have apprised him of the research demonstrating the educational benefits of breaking down racial and socioeconomic isolation in the schools. Yet he has had virtually nothing to say about the need to address these issues with policies designed to increase opportunities for young people to move out of failing schools in racially isolated areas to other public schools that are succeeding. His silence, if not deafening, is hard to explain.

Conclusion

I recognize that the reform agenda I have put forward here --calling as it does for accountability for the educational progress of *all* children, for high standards for *all* children, for raising the status of teachers and providing incentives to them to take on the biggest challenges, for breaking down the environment of concentrated poverty that poses a formidable barrier to progress -- is a hefty one that involves varying degrees of difficulty. I realize the political obstacles to some of the elements of what I have proposed - affluent people who feel a sense of entitlement to public education superior to that offered to others, the indifference by some to the welfare of other people's children, the jealously guarded prerogatives of state and local officials, the general mistrust of government's ability to accomplish anything worthwhile.

But all of what I have discussed is rooted in concerns that are widely shared by the American people about the state of public education. And the task of presidential leadership is not simply to reflect the consensus of focus groups or polls, but to take people beyond where they knew they wanted to go. If the great reforms that this nation has undertaken in the past did not require speaking truth to power, giving offense to some and engaging in battle, there would be many more of them in the history books.

If it turns out that our President is not up to the task, there are still things that we who care about education and are involved in the public education community --by profession, avocation or parenthood-- can do. After all, we are not seeking a magic transformation of public education, but rather the kind of change in institutional frameworks that will empower the participants in the system, teachers, administrators, parents and students, to empower themselves. We can take some consolation from the fact that in almost two hundred years, the prime mission of public education has not varied -- in Jefferson's words, "to bring into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty...for want of means of development." We can draw some strength from the fact that, as complex and fragmented as our society has become, we know more now about how to improve education than ever before in our history.

And all of us , grizzled educators, jaded lawyers and young people just starting out, ought to have the confidence that if we make our case clearly and factually and if we are prepared to persevere we can have an impact, we can make a difference in the lives of children who after all only need the opportunity to succeed.



Phil_Rosenfelt @ ed.gov

08/20/97 01:17:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: William R. Kincaid

cc:

Subject: National tests and title I requirements

Bill: As we discussed after this morning's meeting on the "Obey Amendment," below is the latest version of the questions and answers (Qs and As) on national tests and title I requirements. This version incorporates all of the comments I have received so far. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments on the latest redraft. Thank you for your cooperation.

Phil

Q. May the national tests be used by the States, in part, as the assessments required under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?

A. Yes. Title I requires a State to use challenging content and student performance standards developed for all students under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act or under another process or, absent such standards for all students, to develop for children served under Title I challenging content and student performance standards that reflect the State's expectations for all children. The State must also develop or adopt assessments aligned with these standards. Thus, if a State determines that the national tests are aligned with the State's standards, those tests may be used for Title I purposes. Because the national tests will be based on the content frameworks of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, they will reflect a national consensus among educators, testing experts, and other leaders on what children should know and be able to do in reading English at the fourth grade level and in mathematics at the eighth grade level. We therefore expect that the tests generally will be aligned with most, if not all, States' efforts to develop challenging content and performance standards in these subjects at the indicated grade levels. Moreover, the national tests will be developed according to the highest professional and technical standards; will be administered with accommodations for children with disabilities and limited English proficient children; will yield scores at three levels of performance; and will permit scores to be disaggregated in accordance with Title I provisions. The national tests thus can be an important resource to States in carrying out Title I's vital goal of holding students who participate in Title I to the same high standards expected of all students.

Q. Will use of the national tests by a State fully meet its assessment

obligations under Title I?

A. For most children, use of the national tests will meet a State's obligations under Title I to assess performance in reading at the fourth grade level and in math at the eighth grade level. However, consistent with the inclusion criteria for the national tests, some students with limited English proficiency or with disabilities may not be included in the national tests. Other appropriate assessments would need to be administered for these students in reading/language arts and math to meet the Title I requirements. Moreover, Title I requires annual State assessments in at least reading/language arts and math in at least one grade in each of the following clusters of grades: grades 3 through 5; grades 6 through 9; and grades 10 through 12. Therefore, other assessments would be needed for the grades 10 through 12 cluster if there are Title I programs in schools serving those grades. In addition, other State assessments in math in the grades 3 through 5 cluster and in reading/language arts in the grades 6 through 9 cluster would be required under Title I.

Q. Since the fourth grade national reading test will be given only in English, can it be used for Title I assessment purposes?

A. States generally are required by Title I to test all students—including children with disabilities and limited English proficient children—in reading/language arts in the grades selected for assessment. Limited English proficient children are to be assessed, to the extent practicable, in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what those students know and can do to determine their mastery of skills in subjects other than English. Thus, a State may use a particular test, such as the national reading test, for limited English proficient children for whom the test would be appropriate, and use other comparable reading tests that assess the State's standards, but would be more appropriate for children with less English proficiency.

We believe that the fourth grade test in reading English—with appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities and limited English proficient children—will be appropriate for most fourth grade children. Inclusion criteria for the tests will reflect that judgment. Limited English proficient students who do not take the national test of reading in English—i.e., children who have received instruction in English for less than three years—would need to be given for Title I purposes, another State reading/language arts test in, to the extent practicable, the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what they know and can do. Title I requires the States to make every effort to develop assessments in languages other than English as they are needed and directs the Secretary, through the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, to assist the States, at their request, in identifying appropriate assessment measures in other languages. The Department is prepared to provide that assistance.



Valena Plisko @ ed.gov
09/08/97 02:11:00 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Michael Cohen, William R. Kincaid

cc:

Subject: Re: Response to civil rights issues and national tests -- LC

Response to question re: Title I reporting attached as file and copied below.
Other responses to come. Val

Title I Assessment and Reporting Requirements

Q. How does Title I support accountability and public reporting of assessment results at the school, district, and State levels?

A. The Title I statute and regulations require each State to adopt a set of high-quality yearly student assessments that measure performance in at least mathematics and reading/language arts and determine and report out the yearly performance of each school and local education agency (LEA). Given that Title I serves 66 percent of public schools and 75 percent of public elementary schools, it provides a significant tool for parents of students served by Title I to assess how well their children are performing in relation to their school, district and State. Specific requirements follow:

The State's final assessment system must be in place by school year 2000-2001. Until then, States are permitted to use transitional assessments and report out results for individual schools and LEAs.

States are required to provide individual student interpretive and descriptive reports that include individual scores or other information on the attainment of student performance standards.

Assessments must enable the disaggregation of data at the State, LEA, and school level, by gender, major racial and ethnic group, English proficiency status, migrant status, students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged.

Each LEA is required to publicize and disseminate the results of the annual review of all schools in individual school performance profiles, to parents, teachers and other staff, students, the community and administrators.

This information will provide a powerful resource for parents in pressing for improved student and school performance. Under Title I parent involvement provisions, each school and local education agency are required to provide assistance to parents in understanding assessments and monitoring their children's progress. Individual student assessment results will be accompanied by an interpretation of such results, under Title I law.

Q. How are assessment results linked to school-level accountability, for Title I?

A. Schools that have not made adequate progress toward meeting the State standards for two consecutive years or are failing to meet the criteria the State has adopted through its transitional accountability mechanism for two consecutive years, are identified for school improvement. Schools must then develop or revise their school plan and implement appropriate changes.

Reply Separator

Subject: Response to civil rights issues and national tests -- LCCR I

Author: Tanya_E._Martin@oa.eop.gov at Internet

Date: 9/8/97 1:24 PM

Message Creation Date was at 8-SEP-1997 13:24:00

This didn't reach you the first time I sent it, so I'm trying again.

Tanya

----- Forwarded by Tanya E. Martin/OPD/EOP on 09/08/97 01:24 PM

Tanya E. Martin

09/08/97 01:16:30 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Art_Coleman @ ed.gov @ inet, Sue_Betka @ ed.gov @ inet, David_Stevenson @ ed.gov @ inet, Val_Plisko @ ed.gov @ inet

cc: Mike_Smith @ ed.gov @ inet, Michael Cohen/OPD/EOP, William R. Kincaid/OPD/EOP

Subject: Response to civil rights issues and national tests -- LCCR letter

The following are my notes from today's meeting with Mike Smith summarizing the materials that are needed to respond to the civil rights (LCCR) concerns about the national tests.

Please forward these to me as soon as possible -- per Mike, the deadline is today.

E-mail is: martin_t@a1.eop.gov

My fax number is 456-5581. Phone 456-5228

1. Accommodations -- clear statement of the type of accommodations that will be made available for special education and LEP students. Sue Betka.
2. Test Guidelines -- detailed description; what they are, when available, how implemented. What kinds of help will the Dept give to districts seeking to

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Under Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 4168, FOB10
Washington, DC 20202

FAX COVER SHEET

Fax Number: (202) 401-3036

**TO : Mike Cohen
Bill Kincaid
Tanya Martin**

**FAX NO.:
456-7028
456-7431**

(Number of pages, including cover sheet: 22)

FROM: Val Plisko

PHONE NO.:401-1958

Message:

Attached are attachments to the qs & as on the extent to which states currently require school level reporting of student performance. The qs & as are being sent over Internet. Hope they are helpful.

Val

cc: David Stevenson

DRAFT

STATUS OF STATE ASSESSMENT REPORTING SYSTEMS

State	District-Level			School-Level			State Requires or Uses School Profiles for Reporting
	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	
Alabama	✓			✓			✓
Alaska	✓	G		✓	G	✓	✓
Arizona				✓		✓	✓
Arkansas	✓	G		✓	G		✓
California							✓
Colorado							
Connecticut	✓	G, FRL, IEP, LEP		✓	G, IEP, LEP	✓	✓
Delaware							✓
District of Columbia							✓
Florida	✓			✓	G		✓
Georgia	✓	FRL		✓	FRL	✓	✓
Hawaii	✓			✓			✓
Idaho	✓			✓			✓
Illinois	✓			✓			✓
Indiana	✓			✓		✓	✓
Iowa							
Kansas	✓	G, FRL, IEP, LEP	✓	✓	G, FRL, IEP, LEP	✓	✓
Kentucky							✓

State	District-Level			School-Level			State Requires or Uses School Profiles for Reporting
	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	
Louisiana	✓	IEP, LEP		✓			✓
Maine	✓	G		✓	G		
Maryland	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Massachusetts	✓	IEP, LEP		✓	IEP, LEP		✓
Michigan	✓			✓			✓
Minnesota							
Mississippi	✓			✓		✓	✓
Missouri	✓			✓			✓
Montana							
Nebraska							
Nevada	✓			✓			✓
New Hampshire				✓		✓	
New Jersey	✓			✓			✓
New Mexico	✓			✓			✓
New York	✓	G, IEP		✓	G	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	G	✓	✓		✓	✓
North Dakota							
Ohio	✓	G		✓	G	✓	✓
Oklahoma	✓			✓			✓
Oregon	✓						✓

State	District-Level			School-Level			State Requires or Uses School Profiles for Reporting
	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	
Pennsylvania	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Rhode Island	✓			✓		✓	✓
South Carolina	✓						✓
South Dakota	✓			✓			✓
Tennessee							✓
Texas	✓	G, FRL, IEP, LEP	✓	✓	G, FRL, IEP, LEP	✓	✓
Utah	✓			✓			✓
Vermont	✓	G		✓			✓
Virginia	✓	G, IEP, LEP		✓	G, IEP, LEP	✓	✓
Washington	✓	G, IEP, LEP		✓	G, IEP, LEP	✓	✓
West Virginia	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Wisconsin	✓	G		✓	G	✓	✓
Wyoming	✓						
TOTAL	38	G = 13 FRL = 4 IEP = 8 LEP = 7 TOTAL = 16	6	37	G = 12 FRL = 4 IEP = 6 LEP = 6 TOTAL = 14	19	42
TOTAL OF 2 STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE NATIONAL TESTS	6	G = 2 FRL = 0 IEP = 1 LEP = 1 TOTAL = 3	3	6	G = 1 FRL = 0 IEP = 1 LEP = 1 TOTAL = 2	4	7 (ALL)

State	District-Level			School-Level			State Requires or Uses School Profiles for Reporting
	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	Reporting	Disaggregation	Individual Student	
TOTAL OF 11 STATES W/DISTRICTS PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL TESTS	9	G = 4 FRL = 2 IEP = 3 LEP = 2 TOTAL = 5	3	9	G = 5 FRL = 2 IEP = 2 LEP = 2 TOTAL = 6	6	10

BOLD - States participating in Voluntary National Tests.

ITALIC - States with districts participating in Voluntary National Tests.

G = Gender; FRL = Free/Reduced Priced Lunch; IEP = Students w/an IEP; LEP = Students who are limited English proficient

Sources: Council of Chief State School Officers. Annual Survey of State Student Assessment Programs, Fall 1996.

Westat, 1997

SCOTCHTOWN HILLS ELEMENTARY

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1996 Report

STUDENT POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Enrollment on September 30	1995	1996
Pre-Kindergarten	0	32
Kindergarten	0	71
Grade 1	0	79
Grade 2	0	66
Grade 3	0	78
Grade 4	0	72
Grade 5	0	67
Grade 6	0	68
Ungraded Special Education	0	0
Total Enrollment	0	552

Student Mobility	1995		1996	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Enrolls	0	0.0	74	14.4
Withdraws	0	0.0	83	18.1

STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL PROGRAMS

	1995		1996	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Limited English Proficient	0	0.0	0	0.0
Title I	0	0.0	0	0.0
Free / Reduced Price Meals	0	0.0	229	41.5
Special Education	0	0.0	93	8.0

First Graders with Kindergarten Experience	1995		1996	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	0	0.0	78	98.7

School Improvement Notes

Scotchtown Elementary School's total instructional program is designed around the tenets of the State of Maryland Learning Outcomes thus facilitating a unified approach toward school improvement. Science is a key component of the program. Because of this our students are engaging in additional performance-based, hands-on, real-life and cooperative learning opportunities where reading, writing, or statistical analysis and historical analysis are part of an interdisciplinary instructional approach. Our computer lab and commitment to art education serve to tap into the multiplicity of intelligences that our children possess thus exposing ALL children to a rich curriculum.

DISAGGREGATED DATA

Attendance Rate (Yearly)	Standard Percent		Race / Ethnicity and Gender										All Races	
			American Indian / Alaska Native		Asian / Pacific Islander		Black (not of Hispanic origin)		White (not of Hispanic origin)		Hispanic			
	Exceeds	Satisfactory	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grades 1-6	96	84	*	*	98.8	98.2	95.6	94.9	95.4	95.0	95.9	97.5	95.8	95.5

SCOTCHTOWN HILLS ELEMENTARY

(301) 497-3994

Scotchtown Hills Elementary School is a comprehensive school where achieving academic excellence is an expectation for ALL students.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

1996 Report

ASSESSED STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

MARYLAND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM	Standard Percent		1992 ¹ Percent		1995 Percent		Number Total	Number Absent/ Excused	Number EXL Compliments	Number Special Education Exemptions	Number Waived/Corrective Training	Percent		EXL	SAT	Not Met
	EXL	SAT	EXL	SAT	EXL	SAT						EXL	SAT			
Grade 3																
Reading	25	70			.0	.0	64		0			.0	20.8			✓
Writing	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	69		0			1.4	26.8			✓
Language Usage	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	69		0			4.2	35.2			✓
Mathematics	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	69		0			2.8	19.7			✓
Science	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	69		0			1.4	25.4			✓
Social Studies	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	70		0			1.4	11.1			✓
Grade 5																
Reading	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	83		0			.0	20.2			✓
Writing	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	84		0			12.5	34.4			✓
Language Usage	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	84		0			17.2	35.9			✓
Mathematics	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	84		0			.0	26.6			✓
Science	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	84		0			3.1	32.6			✓
Social Studies	25	70	.0	.0	.0	.0	83		0			7.8	32.6			✓

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

ATTENDANCE RATE (Yearly)	Standard Percent		1990 ¹ Percent	1995 Percent	1996			
	EXL	SAT			Percent	EXL	SAT	Not Met
Grades 1 - 6	95	94	0.0	0.0	95.8		✓	
Students absent fewer than 5 days				0.0	48.1			
Students absent more than 20 days				0.0	6.7			

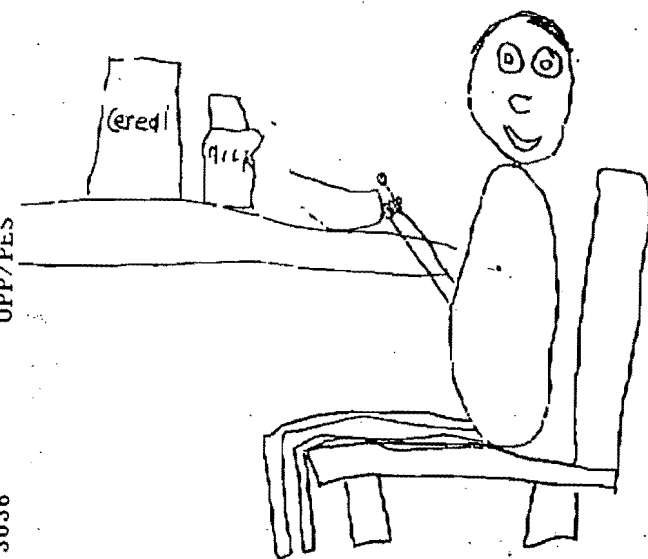
DISAGGREGATED DATA

MARYLAND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM	Standard Percent		American Indian / Alaskan Native		Asian Pacific Islander		Black (not of Hispanic origin)		White (not of Hispanic origin)		Hispanic		All Races	
	EXL	SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT	Male Percent at EX SAT	Female Percent at EX SAT
Grade 3														
Reading	25	70					0.0 0.0	0.0 23.5	0.0 18.7	0.0 31.3			0.0 6.7	0.0 31.6
Writing	25	70					0.0 5.3	0.0 35.3	8.3 25.0	0.0 31.3			3.0 16.2	0.0 36.9
Language Usage	25	70					0.0 21.1	0.0 41.2	8.3 25.0	8.3 43.8			3.0 24.2	6.3 44.7
Mathematics	25	70					0.0 0.0	5.9 11.8	0.0 60.0	0.0 25.0			0.0 18.2	5.3 21.1
Science	25	70					0.0 15.8	0.0 29.4	0.0 25.0	8.3 31.3			0.0 21.2	2.6 28.9
Social Studies	25	70					0.0 8.3	0.0 11.8	0.0 8.3	0.0 18.8			0.0 9.1	2.6 18.4
Grade 5														
Reading	25	70					0.0 17.9	0.0 23.5	0.0 16.7	0.0 21.4			0.0 18.4	0.0 21.2
Writing	25	70					11.8 35.0	0.0 23.5	16.7 41.7	21.4 42.9			12.9 35.5	12.1 33.3
Language Usage	25	70					23.5 35.9	0.0 23.5	16.7 33.3	28.6 67.1			19.4 32.3	16.2 39.4
Mathematics	25	70					0.0 20.5	0.0 11.8	0.0 41.7	0.0 35.7			0.0 32.3	0.0 21.2
Science	25	70					0.0 17.6	0.0 17.6	8.3 68.3	1.1 50.0			3.2 33.5	3.0 30.3
Social Studies	25	70					5.9 28.4	5.9 23.6	16.7 41.7	0.0 35.7			8.7 35.5	6.1 30.3

* Power Teacher Baseline ** Indicates Baseline Year of Data

KEY: EXL - Excellent, SAT - Satisfactory

Start the day calmly. Reassure your child again that it is ok (normal!) to feel a little nervous. In fact, he or she will probably do a better job and be more alert. Be sure your child has a good, nourishing breakfast each day of the test.



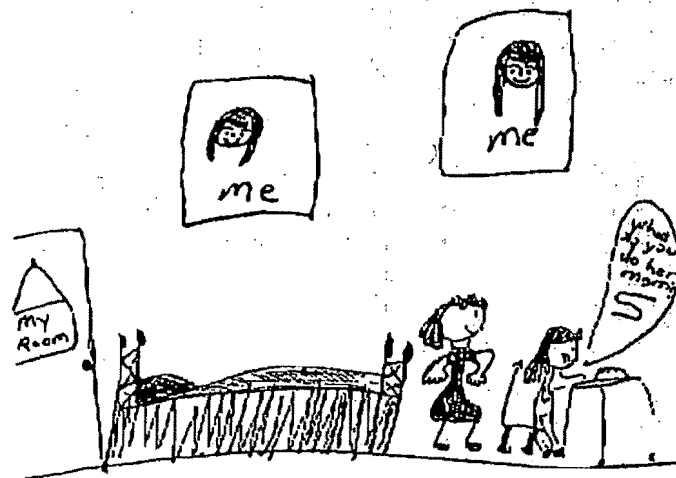
Test-taking is hard work and takes lots of energy. Pack a nutritious snack and/or lunch for later. Be sure your child is at school on time. Rushing, and worrying about being late could affect performance on the test.

Remind your child to follow directions carefully and that you know he or she will do the best possible. Don't overload the child with too much advice and words of wisdom.

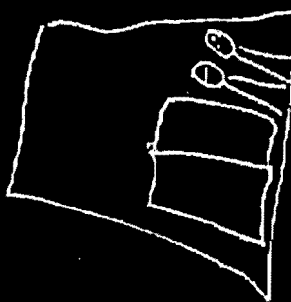
Ask the teacher if the test results are consistent with your child's classroom performance. Let the teacher know if you feel the results don't match what you feel to be your child's abilities. Pass along any information about unusual circumstances during the test-taking, illness for example.

Ask your child's teacher to suggest activities that will help improve any weak areas revealed by the testing. Share the results with your child in a matter-of-fact way. Point out your child's strengths as well as areas in which he or she is not as strong. Be careful not to give the impression that you are judging your child on the test results.

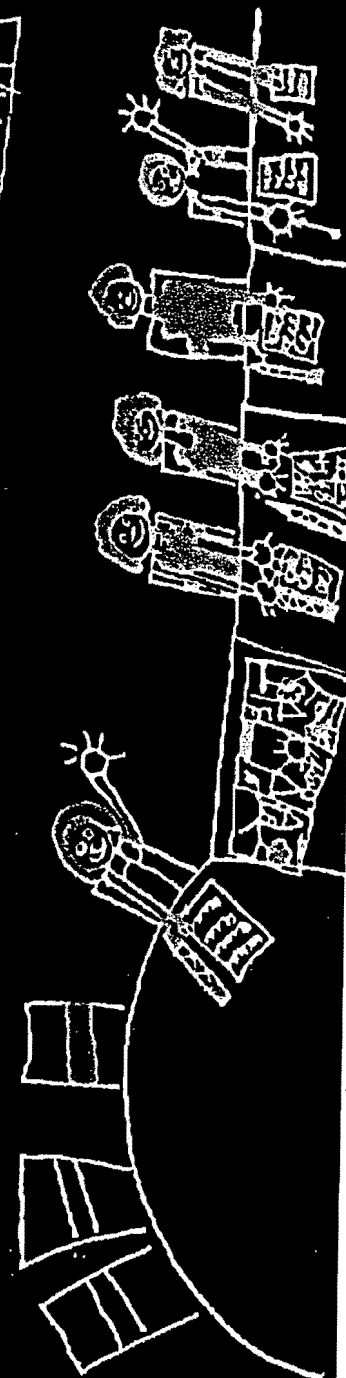
Tests are only one way to measure your child's progress in school. Remember there is no such thing as a bad test result. Every test-taking reveals important information about your child's progress in school.



Continue to show interest in your child's school and schoolwork. Continue to encourage your child's interest in learning new things. In fact, you should be all the things you want to be.



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING TESTS



CTB-McGraw Hill

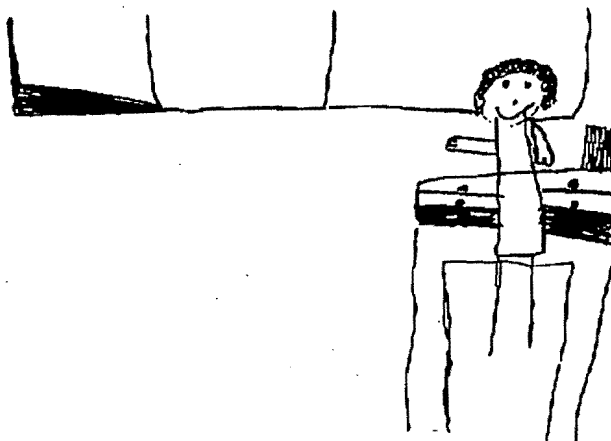
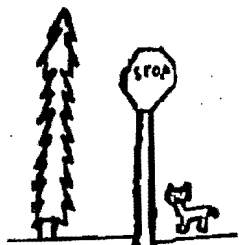


Schools test for several reasons, and with several different kinds of tests.

Teachers make and give tests to see if what they have been teaching has been learned, and if it is time to move on to something new. Teacher tests show which students are not keeping up and whether students have done their homework. Grades are often based in part on the results of teacher tests.

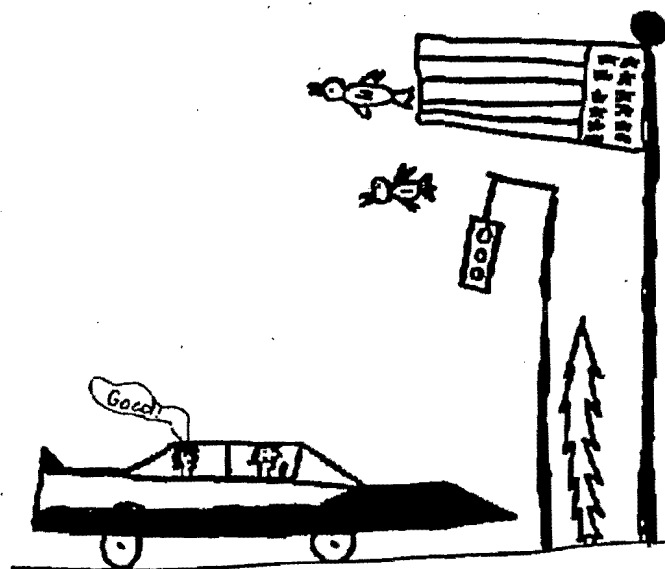
Some textbooks used in school contain tests to see if students are ready to go on to new material, and to see what students already know about the subject. Textbook tests show if what was in the chapter was really learned, and give students practice in finding the main topics or skills presented in the chapter.

Other tests are given throughout our lives. We are tested for driving skills, for clerical skills, for college entrance readiness, etc.



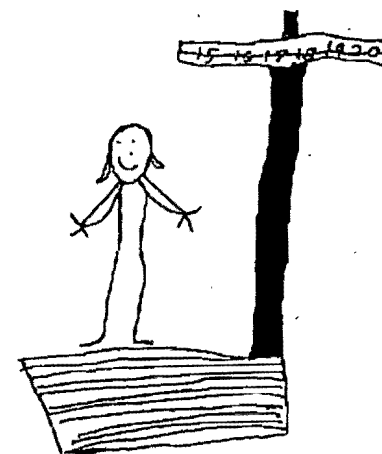
Publishers produce different kinds of tests, too...

Publishers' standardized achievement tests (also called norm-referenced tests) are given to measure students' progress compared to a national standard. That is, each student and each group of students is compared with thousands of other students who took the same test under the same conditions.



criterion-referenced test (sometimes called "curriculum-referenced tests"). These tests are given to see how well a particular student is doing in a specific skill, and do not compare that student with others.

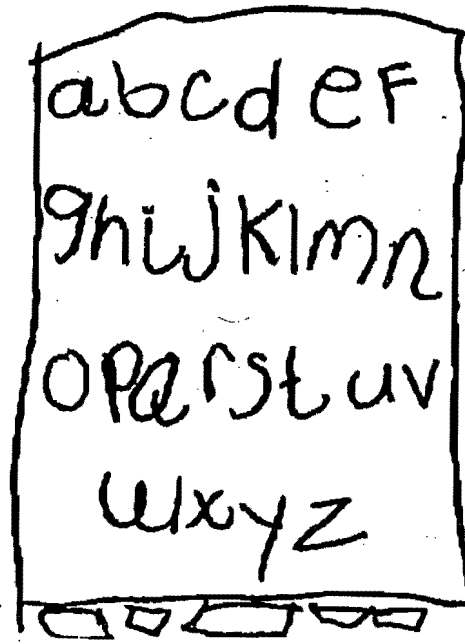
Publishers' tests are designed to ensure the best educational experiences for every student. They are not traps and they have no right or wrong questions. Think of them as weighing a child. The child steps on the scales and a number—the weight—is shown. You can then compare that number with charts that show ranges of weights for all children all over the country. Publishers' tests "weigh" your child's school progress.



Publishers' tests give a "snapshot" picture of each student's progress, giving the teacher and the parents a checkpoint in what skills and knowledge the student now has.

Publishers' tests show where the child needs more help—what has not yet been learned as well as what has not yet been taught. They show if what has been taught has been learned well enough to become a skill the child can demonstrate.

Publishers' tests help the teacher to keep track of each student's progress and of the student's needs for the immediate future.



How Are Test Results Used?

Publishers' test results are NOT used by the school to give grades, nor to give punishments and rewards to students.

These test results ARE used to help teachers improve instruction in the classroom. They are used to show teachers which students need extra help, and in which particular areas.

Publishers' test results may also be used to help schools decide which students are eligible for special classes. Some government funds are provided to schools based on test results, particularly funds to help children with greater than usual learning needs. In some schools, funds for enrichment classes for mentally gifted children may also be given based on test results.

Publishers' test results are used to show the student's progress over his or her whole school life, not just one or two years. If a child moves to another school, even in another state, the record of that student's test results usually goes along. The new school can then see immediately which class best suits that child. (This is just one of the benefits of taking a nationally standardized test. All students are compared against the same standard.)

It is important to remember that standardized tests are only one measure of your child's progress. Teacher observation and class participation, for example, are equally important ways of keeping track of students' school progress.

For more details on test scores and what they mean, see CTB's A Parent's Guide to Understanding Test Results.

What Does a Test Question Look Like?

Here are examples of test questions: This is a question that would be in the Language section of an achievement test given to students in the sixth or seventh grade.

1. Pat and I _____ to write to each other.

- a. am agreed
- b. has agreed
- c. have agreed
- d. is agreeing

The student decides which of the four phrases is the best one to fill in the blank. He or she then would in this case mark (c) to be correct.

Sometimes no right answer is given, but one of the choices is "none of these". This is an example of a question in the Mathematics section of a test given to students in the fifth or sixth grade. In this case the student would mark the answer (d) to be correct.

2. $\frac{1}{7} + \frac{2}{7} =$

- a. $\frac{1}{7}$
- b. $\frac{3}{14}$
- c. $\frac{8}{9}$
- d. None of these

As you can see, there are no traps in these questions. Students should follow directions and read the questions carefully. If a student is stuck and really doesn't know the answer, or she should simply move on to the next question.

Words

Child...

Standardized means that the test is always given the same way. The same questions are asked, the same directions are given, and the same time limit is imposed. This means that each student can be compared with other students taking the same test, no matter when or where they took it.

Norm-Referenced means that each child's achievement in a broad area, such as Language or Mathematics, can be compared with other students' achievement in about the same grades.

Achievement means just that--the test provides "snapshot" of how much learning the student has achieved so far.

The *California Achievement Tests (CAT)*, and the *Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS)* are norm-referenced, standardized achievement tests.)

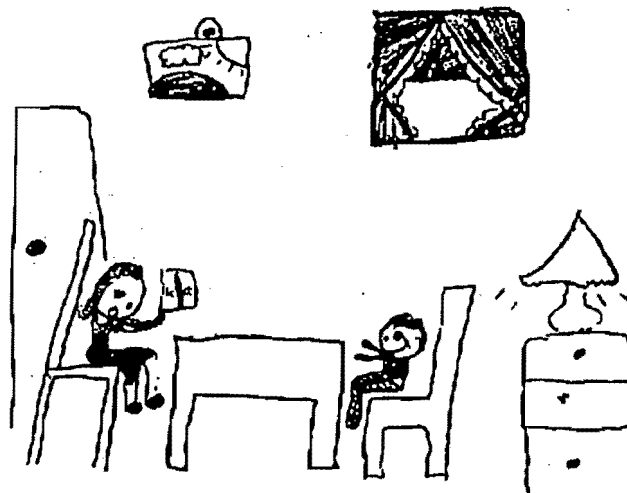
Criterion-Referenced tests show whether a child can or can not do a specific task, for example, identify the main topic of a story, or divide one whole number by another.

Who Makes The Tests?

The *California Achievement Tests* and *Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills* are produced by CTB/McGraw Hill at their headquarters in Monterey, California.

Founded in 1926, CTB is the nation's largest publisher of standardized achievement tests. CTB continues to set the standards for products and services to schools, always with the best interests of your child in mind.

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...before the Test

The best way to help your child is to be encouraging and supportive all year round, not just at testing time. Make sure your child attends school regularly, eats well-balanced meals, gets enough sleep, and completes all homework assignments.

Provide books and magazines for your child to read at home, and be interested in what the child has to say about them. Be generous with praise for the things your child does well. A child who feels good about himself or herself will always do better than a child who is afraid of failing. Encourage the sort of good work habits that are useful in test taking as well as in other work. These habits include following directions carefully, avoiding careless errors, and looking over the work.

Let your child know that you consider the test important, but try not to be too anxious. Be matter-of-fact about it; testing is a way of life. Don't lead your child to expect a reward for doing well, nor punishment for doing not so well.

Let your child know that the test is not a trap, but a "snapshot" of what the child has learned so far. Studying at the last minute for the test won't help very much because the tests will cover more schoolwork than can be learned in a few extra hours.

Find out from the school as much as you can about the tests. Find out what day or days the tests will be given, and about how long the testing will take. The more you know, the better you can prepare your child. We all do better when we know what to expect.

Let your child know you expect him or her to do the best he or she can. Encourage your child to try to answer each question without lingering too long on any one question. Let the child know that students might not finish every part of the test.





Teacher's Guide to *TerraNova*

TerraNova 
CTB McGraw Hill

Communicating Test Results

Students and parents/guardians can help use test results to improve the educational process. Therefore, the manner in which the test results are communicated to them is very important. Students are likely to be unresponsive to a teacher's efforts to use test results to help them learn if they have little understanding of the purpose of the test and fear how the results may affect them. Parents/guardians are not likely to be supportive of the teacher's efforts either, if they sense negative reactions in their children and if they have inadequate or incorrect perceptions of the purposes of testing. It is essential to communicate test results to both students and their parents/guardians in the clearest, most positive way possible.

► **Discussions with Students**

After Receiving the Test Results. Remind your students about the purpose of the test they have taken. Tell them that the test results are meant to help identify skills and knowledge that they have already attained and those that they still have to attain.

Having Individual Student Conferences. Set aside a time to talk individually with each student about her or his test results. Depending on the age and maturity of the student, you may use the actual test report in the discussion or you may choose to discuss only portions of the test information. It is not necessary to discuss test scores such as grade equivalents or scale scores unless the student is particularly interested. Discussion of

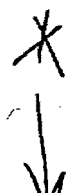
performance in terms of familiar content and skills is more readily understandable and will probably have greater meaning.

To begin a discussion about test results in a positive way, point out specific examples of skills and concepts that the student did well on. Then discuss content knowledge and skills that the student did not demonstrate. Throughout the discussion, give the student a chance to express his or her feelings, opinions, and perceptions about the test. The end result of this discussion should be an agreement with the student on some instructional goals. For example, you can identify one or two skills in each content area as needing special attention.

► **Discussions with Parents/ Guardians**

Schools communicate with parents/guardians about their children in a wide variety of ways and with varying degrees of success. Communication about standardized testing is no exception. A school may or may not regularly inform parents/guardians about the purpose of a testing program, the logistics of test administrations, and the meanings and uses of test results. When information is shared, a teacher's communication with parents/guardians becomes easier.

Parent/Teacher Conferences. The individual parent/teacher conference can form the basis for initiating or continuing communication with parents/guardians about testing. Usually, in this type of conference, all areas of a student's school experience are explored. As a result, the



student's performance on a particular test and questions about testing in general are put in perspective. It is important for parents/guardians to understand that the information produced by testing is only one of the many variables that contribute to improved learning.

The content of the parent/teacher conference will depend on the specific needs and concerns of the individuals involved. In any discussion devoted to testing and test results, you may want to address these three basic concerns: interpretation of the student's test scores, decisions about the student made on the basis of these scores, and the extent of parental participation in the student's learning.

Confidentiality of Test Results. Before talking with the parents/guardians, become thoroughly familiar with the student's test performance. Your discussion can often begin with showing the student's actual test report to the parents/guardians. The Individual Profile Report or the Home Report may be appropriate. If you use class or group reports, you should cover up all names and scores except those of the student in question. Test scores must be considered confidential.

Putting Test Results in Perspective. Emphasize to the parents/guardians that test scores represent achievement in particular areas at only one particular time and must be reviewed together with the student's actual classroom work and other factors. The parents/guardians should also understand that the test measures the basic content and skills that

are most common to curricula throughout the country. It cannot possibly measure, nor should it attempt to measure, the full curriculum of a particular classroom, school, or district. As you review the test results with the parents/guardians, explain how the results will be used. Emphasize the positive function of test results in helping students learn.

Test Scores. Explain test scores in general terms. Explain how a student's performance compares to that of students in the norm group, using performance levels, stanines, and percentile ranks as references.

As you make more specific references to strengths and needs in various content areas, use information about the test objectives and performance level descriptions. You might find it helpful to illustrate how test content relates to the classroom curriculum. For example, select one test objective and briefly explain its content. You can examine and discuss actual samples of the student's work that tapped some of the same skills. You might review the objectives that the student has not mastered and comment on those that need immediate attention. Then you can outline specific plans for further diagnosis and for individual or group instruction.

How Parents/Guardians Can Help. Schools vary considerably in the degree of parental involvement they encourage. Parents/guardians differ, too, in the amount of time they have for participating in school activities. Parents/guardians who participate in parent/

teacher conferences usually become more actively involved in their children's education than those who do not.

You should examine the individual needs of both the student and the parents/guardians before you suggest ways the parents/guardians can help. Many parents/guardians need only to be encouraged to maintain their present interest and concern for their children's well-being. Others may need more specific direction. For example, you might want to encourage some parents/guardians to read with their children and actively converse with them—two of the most important ways parents/guardians can help their children learn. You might also suggest materials or activities designed specifically to help children learn particular skills.

It is important that parents/guardians feel they understand both what is being done at school and what they can do at home. Becoming aware of some of the ways test information helps children learn can contribute to that understanding.

► **Some Typical Questions Asked by Parents/Guardians**

Here are some sample questions to illustrate the kinds of issues that might come up during your meetings with parents/guardians to discuss test results.

"How is a standardized achievement test different from classroom (teacher-developed) tests?"

Standardized achievement tests are different from teacher-developed tests because of the extensive development

and standardization procedures. Knowing how a standardized test is developed can clarify its characteristics, values, and limits. There are four main stages: planning the test, writing the test items, trying out the items and selecting the ones to include in the final test, and norming the final test.

The first two stages include the combined efforts of test experts, teachers, and curriculum specialists. The test content is defined so that it reflects the skills and concepts that are common to most curricula throughout the country. Then items are developed to measure the specified content. In the third stage, the items are tried out to see how they work in the classroom. The statistical characteristics of the test items from this tryout are analyzed to ensure that the items are appropriate for the intended grades. The best items are selected to be included in the final test. In the fourth stage, the final test is normed. That is, a sample of students who represent the characteristics of the national school population take the test under controlled conditions. Then, when a student takes the standardized test in the classroom, the results can be compared with the scores of the students in the national sample.

"Why should my child take a standardized achievement test?"

Standardized tests give objective information about a student's progress. Comparing students with a norm group provides a common frame of reference for assessing their abilities. The tests give information that can be used to identify a

student's strengths and instructional needs. This information can be used for instructional planning and program evaluation.

When achievement test batteries are administered over extended periods of time, a long-range picture of the student's progress can be seen. Standardized tests are better suited for this than other types of tests because the measurements can be compared from one testing to the next.

Standardized tests may also help in vocational and educational planning because students can compare themselves with students beyond their own school environment. Standardized test results may help high school students make decisions about what courses to take, what curriculum to pursue, and what type of schooling or occupation to enter when they leave school.

"How will the test results be used?"

Parents' anxiety will lessen if they understand that test scores are only one way of finding out what students have learned in school and what they still have to accomplish. The test results are used primarily to help students understand educational needs, to help improve their learning, and to help plan for their future. It is important that parents/guardians view testing in a positive light. A positive and supportive atmosphere will help reduce anxiety concerning the test and will increase each student's desire to work toward educational goals. After the test, it is important that parents/guardians continue to offer encouragement, telling their child about particular strengths and

accomplishments as well as areas needing improvement.

"Will the results of this test determine whether my child will pass or fail this year in school?"

TerraNova is not designed to determine whether a student will pass or fail a year in school. Teachers look at the results of an achievement test, noting areas of strength and areas of need, to plan instruction. It is impossible for standardized achievement tests to measure all aspects of the curriculum for a school, grade, or classroom; they can measure only a set number of desired learning outcomes in any school program. Standardized test results are supplemented with a teacher's own tests, evaluation of class work and homework assignments, and similar methods of appraisal to adequately assess what students have learned.

"Did the test include material that my child has not been taught?"

Since each test measures a range of abilities, students might be tested on some unfamiliar skills and concepts. This may happen especially if the test is administered at the beginning of the school year. To be sure that the content of *TerraNova* reflects what is typically taught in schools, however, the development of the tests included a careful review of current curricula. The test editors studied the most widely used textbooks, obtained recommendations from curriculum specialists, researched the literature pertaining to content, and carefully

reviewed state and district curriculum guides. Therefore, *TerraNova* measures skills that are common to most curricula. In choosing a standardized achievement test, the school's administrators look for a test that most closely parallels their educational goals. This minimizes the testing of inappropriate content and ensures that the test will provide valid information concerning the school program and student achievement.

"Was my child at a disadvantage when taking this test because we are members of an ethnic minority?"

During the development of *TerraNova*, educators representing different ethnic groups were asked to review the content of the test to identify any items that might contain possible bias in language, subject matter, or representation of people. Comments and suggestions from these reviewers, along with the publisher's own strict editorial policies, helped to identify and eliminate any material that might be a source of ethnic bias.

Students who participated in the norming process for the test represented the entire United States school population. This means that the norms represent students from public and private schools, both large and small; students from all geographic regions of the country; students from urban, suburban, and rural communities; and students from all ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels.

"As a concerned parent/guardian, what else should I know about test scores?"

Results of standardized testing provide teachers and school administrators with valuable information. Test scores on a standardized achievement test are an objective estimate of a student's achievement in certain areas. They provide one important source of information for assessing the student's progress. A teacher's judgment of the student's strengths and needs, however, is based on many kinds of information, not just standardized test scores. For instance, the teacher also considers classroom tests and quizzes, evaluation of homework and classroom exercises, records of assignments completed, and observation of the student's work and study habits.

Test scores describe performance on one particular test at one particular time. From these descriptions, inferences are made about a student's abilities. Even though standard testing conditions are maintained, there may be reasons why the test performance is not typical of the student's usual performance. For reasons apart from the test itself, some measurement error is probably associated with any test score. A statistical procedure takes this into account by calculating the range that is likely to include the student's test score. Test scores, therefore, should not be regarded as absolute values, but as approximations or general indications of the student's level of achievement. If the test covers some areas that the student has not yet studied, low scores in those areas would not be a sign of poor school achievement.

Message to Parents • Iowa Tests of Basic Skills • Complete Battery • Grades 3-8 • Form M

ITBS[®]

Riverside Publishing



A Message to Parents

Grade
3-8

Dear Parents,

In the next few weeks, your daughter or son will be taking the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*® (*ITBS*®). These are standardized achievement tests that are taken by children all over the nation. The main purposes of the *ITBS* are to provide the school with information that can be used to improve instruction and to help teachers make sound educational decisions about each student's learning. The scores allow teachers to check each student's year-to-year growth and to identify some of each student's strongest and weakest areas of achievement. The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* cover many of the fundamental skills your child is learning in school in the areas of reading, language, and mathematics.

In the rest of this booklet, sample questions show what the test questions are like, and sample directions for each test indicate what students will need to do to answer the questions. These questions are presented mainly to inform parents about the nature of the tests rather than to provide practice questions for students. Students will have ample opportunity for practice at the beginning of each testing period. Consequently, these questions might best be used by parents to discuss with their children what the tests are like. These few sample questions do not adequately represent the range in content and question difficulty that is actually presented on the tests at any single grade level. They are geared more toward grades 3-5 than grades 6-8. The correct answers to the questions are on the last page.

The results from the *ITBS* will not be used to determine report card grades of students. Instead, teachers, counselors, and administrators of your school will use the results to monitor students' learning of some of the important skills taught in school. Of course, the results will also be useful to you and your child. Scores from tests like the *ITBS* cannot replace a teacher's observations and judgments, but they can provide useful supplementary information for the teacher, the parent, and the student. When test results are used in conjunction with other information from both the classroom and the home, teachers and parents can work together to identify and address the educational needs of each student.

Students should be encouraged to do their best on the *ITBS*, as they should for all of their school activities. But it would be harmful to place too much emphasis on the importance of the tests, to make students feel anxious or stressful about the outcomes. By maintaining a typical schedule and atmosphere at home during the period of time when testing occurs, you can help your child have a positive testing experience.

Sincerely,

Authors and Editors

Reading Comprehension

The Reading Comprehension test measures students' ability to understand fiction, poetry, subject-area reading materials, and other nonfiction. Some questions emphasize the understanding of stated information, but most questions require students to make inferences or draw conclusions.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Read each passage and then answer the questions. Choose the answer that you think is better than the others.
- 2 Then, on your answer folder, find the row of answer spaces numbered the same as the question. Fill in the answer space for the best answer.

Pretzels were invented hundreds of years ago in Europe. A man was baking bread, and he had a little dough left over. Being thrifty, he cut it into strips, twisted the strips into odd shapes, and baked them along with his loaves of bread. Then he gave them to the children in his neighborhood. They thought the new treat was delicious.

Settlers brought the recipe to America with them. In those days, pretzels were soft and chewy. Then, as one story goes, a baker's helper fell asleep while a batch of pretzels was in the oven. They baked so long that they were shrunken and hard. The baker thought the pretzels were ruined, until he tasted one. It was even better than a soft one!

Which is the most likely reason why the baker gave the children pretzels?

- A He didn't have any bread.
- B The children didn't like bread.
- C The children had nothing to eat.
- D He wondered if the children would like pretzels.

What is this story mostly about?

- A The first pretzels
- B How to bake pretzels
- C Recipes of long ago
- D The uses of bread dough

I meant to do my work today—
But a brown bird sang in the apple tree,
And a butterfly flitted across the field,
And all the leaves were calling me.
And the wind went sighing over the land,
Tossing the grasses to and fro,
And a rainbow held out its shining hand—
So what could I do but laugh and go?

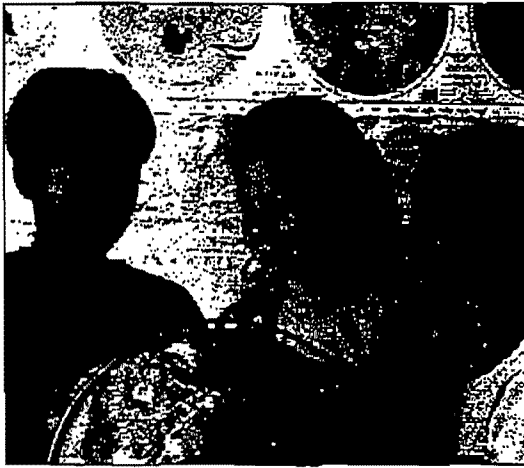
—Richard Le Gallienne

What is "calling" to the poet?

- A Nature
- B Work
- C Home
- D A friend

At the end of the poem, the poet decides to

- A work with a smile.
- B work in a new place.
- C put off work and have fun.
- D find new work.



Report to Students and Parents

ITBS® COMPLETE BATTERY Grades 3 through 8

This pamphlet can help you and your parents understand your scores from the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills® (ITBS®)*. It provides information that can help you take advantage of the opportunities to learn that are available at your school. You should take this pamphlet home to share the information in it with your parents.

The Skills Tested

The *ITBS* is a series of tests that cover some of the important skills students learn at school. The descriptions below tell which skills are measured by the separate tests and how the scores are computed.

The *Reading* score is based on the average of the scores from the Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension tests. The Vocabulary test measures how well you know the meanings of written words, and the Reading Comprehension test measures how well you understand what you read.

The *Language* score comes from the average of four separate scores that are measures of skills used in standard written English: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage and expression.

The *Math* score is based on scores from two tests: the Mathematics Concepts and Estimation test and the Mathematics Problem Solving and Data Interpretation test. For some schools, the Math score is based on scores from three tests, the third being Mathematics Computation.

The *Core Total* score is based on the average of the scores from reading, language, and math described above. It helps describe your overall achievement in these three main areas.

The *Social Studies* test measures how well you understand and can use ideas from such areas as history, geography, and government.

The *Science* test measures how well you understand methods and procedures of scientific research and ideas that come from life science, earth and space sciences, and physical science.

The *Sources of Information* score is based on the average of scores from the Maps and Diagrams test and the Reference Materials test. The first test measures your skills in using visual materials, and the second one tests your ability to use library materials to get information.

The *Composite* score is based on the average of the scores listed above: reading, language, math, social studies, science, and sources of information. It helps describe your overall achievement if you have been tested in all six areas.

If you or your parents want more detail about the topics covered by the tests, your teacher or counselor can probably provide it.

The Purposes of the Tests

These tests were given to provide your teachers with information they can use to meet students' individual learning needs. The tests can help identify your strongest areas and the areas in which greatest improvement is needed. Your teacher can use this information to choose materials and methods of teaching that might best help you learn.

The tests also help teachers and counselors look at your learning from one year to the next. Just as a doctor might sometimes measure your height and weight and make a record of your physical growth, your school establishes records and reviews your growth in the basic subject areas. Tests like the *ITBS* are designed to make it possible to measure year-to-year growth in such areas as reading, language, and mathematics.

Scores from tests like the *ITBS* can also be used to compare your performance with the performance of other students in the same grade throughout the nation. However, this is not the most important use of the scores. Instead, the main uses should be (a) to help identify which of your skills most need improvement and (b) to see how much you have grown in each skill area since last year.

The Percentile Rank Chart

On the last page of this pamphlet there are some score boxes that show the scores you earned on the *ITBS* this year. These scores are called percentile ranks.

Your percentile rank for any test is the percent of the students in a certain group who got lower scores on that test than you did. For example, if your percentile rank for Math is 65, that means 65 percent of the group scored lower than you, and 35 percent got higher scores than you. In other words, if 100 students in your grade took the Math tests, 65 of them got scores lower than yours and 35 got higher scores. The lowest possible percentile rank is 1 and the highest possible percentile rank is 99. The shaded area of the chart on the last page shows the percentile rank scores that are in the "average" range.

To determine your percentile ranks, your test score was compared with the scores of students in a certain group who are also in your grade. Since you belong to several groups, it is important to know just which group was used to figure your scores. The group could be all students in your grade in the country, in your state, or in your school. The box on the far left in the row of scores has an abbreviation that shows which group was used to determine your scores. *NPR* means *national percentile rank* and indicates that the group was from the nation. *LPR* means *local percentile rank*, indicating that the group was from the schools in your school district.

You can use your percentile rank scores and the chart on the last page to make a line graph of your skills. To begin, find your Reading score in its box and then follow the arrow down to the number line below that box. Then find your score on the number line and make a dot with your pencil at that place on the line. Do the same thing for each of your scores. Then draw lines from dot to dot to make a line graph that describes your skills.

The line graph can help identify your areas of greatest strength. These are the highest points on your graph. It can also help you see the subjects in which the most improvement may be needed. This skills graph can help you decide (1) whether you should work harder in some areas and (2) whether you need to ask your teachers and parents for more help in some subjects.

**The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights'
Fairness in Testing Guidance**

Background:

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights [OCR] has issued **guidance for its enforcement (regional) offices** to assist in the evaluation of cases in which issues surrounding the discriminatory use of tests arise. The guidance, issued in draft in March of 1995, has subsequently undergone refinement based on an extensive **National Academy of Sciences** review, as well as additional Department of Education review. Editing is in its final stages, with refinements at this stage designed to ensure that the document is more circumspect. (The March, 1995 draft version of the document, relied on by OCR staff in investigations, has been made available to the public upon request since that time.)

Summary:

The guidance sets forth well established (federal) legal and technical standards relating to the use and misuse of high-stakes tests. It is designed to guide OCR decisionmaking when allegations of discrimination based on **race, national origin, and sex** are the subject of an OCR complaint or inquiry (under Title VI or Title IX, respectively). The guidance sets forth a suggested analytical framework under "**disparate impact**" and "**disparate treatment**" theories, long recognized by the courts. It incorporates key court decisions in the area of testing, as well as technical standards and definitions that should guide any inquiry. Citations to the **American Psychological Association Standards (1985)** pervade the document.

The guidance includes a substantive discussion of governing principles, a compendium of legal and technical resources, guidance on the use of statistics in the analysis, sample investigative questions, and a glossary and bibliography relating to validity terms and principles.

Designed to assist OCR staff (and, secondarily, as a resource tool for educators and others seeking information regarding such information), the guidance will be issued in memorandum form to OCR staff, and made available to others upon request. There is **no plan** to publish the guidance in the **Federal Register**. The guidance does not set forth new legal principles or theories; it articulates the existing principles of law that should guide any decision regarding the discriminatory use of tests under Title VI or Title IX. As a result, the guidance may not be deemed to have the "weight" of regulations. However, it should be noted that nothing would preclude a court from relying upon the guidance in its decisionmaking; in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court in Lau v. Nichols relied upon a similar "informal" memorandum in confirming the rights of limited English proficient students under federal law.

9/8/97

Ac

Smith 10/6/97

National Test Issues and proposals

A. High Stakes Testing

1. OCR: Develop a strategy and plan for technical assistance and for monitoring compliance with Title VI. Widely disseminate existing guidelines and the new guidelines that are in final stages of preparation. Underscore that the guidelines follow the APA/AERA/NCME standards that, among other things, hold that single tests should not be used alone for making high stakes decisions for students such as promotion, tracking, or graduation. OCR should also put out a clear, readable statement that sets out their guidelines in a few pages.

2. NAGB: Specify in conference report language that NAGB should put out clear guidelines for use of the national tests in high stakes situations for students. The guidelines should follow (take into account) the APA/AERA/NCME guidelines.

3. The Secretary might issue a statement of support for the APA guidelines and the OCR guidelines.

4. OBEMLA and OESE would publish a clear brochure for parents about the uses of the test and how they can be used by parents. There also are MOUs for the development of materials on the use of the tests with NSF. In addition, the test contractor will be putting out materials on the use of the tests.

B. LEP: Alternative Tests: Estimate nationally between 40,000 and 100,000 students who would be eligible for a Spanish reading test. If all 4th graders were taking the test, this would be a cost of roughly 500,000 to 1.2 million dollars.

1. Propose the use of private sector developed alternative reading tests in Spanish. Federal government to pay for administration of these tests in 1999. There are a few tests available but only two or three that would be really useful. The test would be given simultaneously with the national reading test to Spanish speaking students that have not been in US schools for three years. Government would provide supportive information through some vehicle or other. Test would not be reconstructed each year.

2. Technical assistance: Federal government would plan and implement a strategy for providing technical assistance in the area of testing LEP students and preparing them for testing.

3. Secretary could announce the alternative testing approach on Oct. 9.

C. Reporting Requirements:

1. NAGB in conference report language would be required to develop reporting requirements for the use of the test. The reporting requirements should meet the conditions set out in Title I so that districts could use the national tests for Title I purposes.

2. NAGB would be required in conference report language to work with states to report state data.

3. Testing report materials would be developed to be as readable as possible by parents and teachers and others unfamiliar with testing. Focus groups, document design people, etc. would be used to insure that the materials are understandable and useful. R&D would be carried out on this to determine that the materials are in fact useful.

D. Accommodations:

1. Conference Report language should make clear that NAGB will insure that all feasible and useful accommodations are made available for students that need them (LEP and disabled and others?).

2. The Department will develop a clear list of accommodations that have a core of must include accommodations, a set of desirable ones, and a set of possible accommodations that require research. The core of accommodations set must be equal to or exceed the highest standard set for a nationally available test.

FOR MIKE COHEN



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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September 4, 1997

The Honorable William J. Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned members of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights write to urge you to adopt several important changes in your plan for voluntary national tests in reading and mathematics. If these changes are made, it would enable many of our member organizations to support implementation of the national test proposal.

At the outset we wish to express our appreciation for the attention you have given to the improvement of public education and our support for the broad goals contained in the proposals you have made. Our organizations oppose discrimination in the schools based on race, national origin, sex or condition of disability. We represent many children of color, children with limited proficiency in English and children with disabilities and girls — all of whom have suffered discrimination and stereotyping in the public schools, have been denied critical teaching resources and have had their life chances impaired by the failure of the schools to offer them a chance to succeed.

Thus, we feel we have much at stake in the battle to make the public schools responsive to the children with the greatest needs. And we agree with what we understand to be the central tenets of the Administration's proposal: 1) that *all* children can learn and that high standards should be established for all children; 2) that schools, school districts and states should be held accountable for children achieving these standards; and 3) that active, well-informed parents are key actors in achieving accountability.

Our concern then is not with the Administration's goals but with whether your testing proposal will help achieve these goals. For the major reasons we will now set forth, we are convinced that in its present form, the national test proposal

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National Council of Churches
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National Women's Political Caucus
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National Urban League
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**COMPLIANCE/ENFORCEMENT
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(¹Deceased)

"Equality In a Free, Plural, Democratic Society"

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will not serve the children most in need of educational opportunity:

1) The Administration's Proposal Allows School Authorities to Exclude or Refuse to Accommodate Students Who Have Limited English Proficiency or Have Disabilities.

With respect to children with limited proficiency in English, the most serious failure is the Administration's refusal thus far to require that the fourth grade reading assessment be given in languages other than English. Much research informs us that children who are able to read in a foreign language will soon be able to read in English. Similarly the math test should be given in languages other than English and Spanish.

Similarly, large numbers of children with disabilities are likely to be excluded based on inappropriately low expectations in their education plans. Nor for that matter does anything appear to prevent school authorities from inducing minority or children from low-income families to stay home on the day of the assessment. If the purpose of the Administration's proposal is to assure accountability, it must come to grips with the fact that children who are not permitted to participate will become non-persons with no accountability by school authorities for their progress. These accommodations will in no way compromise the high standards that should be expected of all students.

2) The Administration's Proposal Fails to Provide Safeguards Against the Invalid and Inappropriate Use of Test Results. Absent firm action by the Administration, there is every reason to believe that the results of the national test will be used by many school officials for high-stakes purposes such as ability grouping, tracking, retention in grade and graduation. Any such use would be harmful to the children we represent and would be totally inappropriate since the tests have not been and will not be validated for any of these purposes. One among many inappropriate uses would be the use of tests for high stakes purposes where children have not had an opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge being tested. The Administration must take steps to prohibit these harmful and inappropriate uses.

3) The Administration's Proposal Fails to Hold School Authorities Accountable by Requiring Public Reporting of Results so that Parents and Others can Take Informed Action. Administration officials have told us on numerous occasions that the most important rationale for testing all students in a participating district is to galvanize parents into action. But the current proposal will not achieve that result. A parent will know the scores of her own child, but will not know how her child's school is performing compared to other schools or how her school district is doing compared to other districts. Unless school authorities choose voluntarily to disclose this information, parents will be left in the dark and without the facts that would enable them to secure accountability. Many of our groups have worked for years to empower parents to compel responsiveness from public officials. We believe we speak from experience in advising you that in its current form, your proposal will not achieve its objective. And, as noted later, this is a problem that is correctable.

4) The Administration's Proposal Does Not Take Even Modest Steps to Identify Denials of Critical Educational Resources that Have a Significant Impact on Test Results. We recognize that the Administration's test proposal cannot realistically serve as the vehicle for redressing the vast inequities in the distribution of education resources that deny the opportunity to learn to millions of poor and minority children throughout the nation. At the same time the Administration must recognize that unless these resource barriers facing so many poor and minority children are recognized, identified and ultimately addressed, the national test will fail to improve educational opportunity for the children who are most in need of assistance. One modest step would be to include with the test some basic questions —concerning the teacher's certification and other qualifications in mathematics and reading, class size and the availability of books in the classroom— that licensees would be required to answer. Such information is now collected on a sample basis by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. While modest, gathering this data would be consistent with provisions of the Title 1 reform that the Administration sponsored calling on school districts to deliver such critical resources to poor children and calling upon states to assure that local districts have the capacity to meet the responsibility.

5) The Administration Must Take the Necessary Steps to Assure that the Laws and Policies According Rights to Equal Educational Opportunity Will Be Effectively Enforced. As presently proposed, the Administration's plan will be implemented by a complex and interlocking network of largely private test developers, management contractors and licensees. It does not appear that the Administration has thought through how it will assure that civil rights, often spottily enforced even when only government agencies are involved, will not be denied and that where violations occur there will be prompt redress. The Administration must develop a plan for enforcement. It will not suffice to leave this problem in the hands of private civil rights groups which do not have adequate resources to cope with the violations that are likely to occur.

If you agree that fundamental guarantees of fairness and equality of opportunity should be part of any plan for a national test, it will not be difficult to devise appropriate language to accomplish the task. Indeed, specific provisions of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 deal with many of the same issues of inclusion and accommodation of limited English proficient and disabled students and with the public reporting of the results of assessments. And, as noted, NAEP already has some experience in gathering basic information about the distribution of vital educational resources. Our organizations would be willing and eager to work with your Administration in developing suitable language to carry out these basic ground rules.

We recognize that there will be some elected officials and school authorities who will view the steps we have called for as the intrusive hand of the federal government interfering with state and local control. There may even be a few states or districts that will base their refusal to participate on the existence of

these requirements. But such opposition is not different in character from the resistance over the years by some to any step to implement the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Where Presidents have stood firm, such resistance has ultimately melted away.

We believe that if you are prepared to fight to assure that the least advantaged and most discriminated against children in the nation reap the benefits of your national test and other education proposals you will prevail and leave a legacy of which we can all be proud.

We of course stand ready to meet with you or your designees at your convenience to pursue these matters further.

Sincerely yours,

Antonia Hernández
President and General Counsel
Mexican American Legal Defense
& Education Fund

Elaine Jones
Director Counsel
NAACP- Legal Defense & Education Fund, Inc.

Raul Yzaguirre
President
National Council of LaRaza

Barbara Arnwine, Director
Thomas Henderson
Deputy Director, Director of Litigation
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Marcia Greenberger
Co-President
National Womens Law Center

Mike Lux
Senior Vice President
People For the American Way

Nancy Zirkin
Director of Government Relations
American Association of University Women

Paul Weckstein
Co-director
Center for Law and Education

by: Wade Henderson *Wade Henderson/te*
Executive Director
William L. Taylor *Bill Taylor*
Vice Chair
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

cc: Secretary Riley



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

September 11, 1997

Mr. Wade J. Henderson
Executive Director
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
1629 K Street, NW, Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Henderson:

President Clinton has asked me to respond to your letter of September 4, 1997, regarding our proposal for national standards and national tests. Before turning to the specific issues you have raised, let me first share my view of the larger context in which the debate about national standards and tests is occurring.

President Clinton and I are firmly convinced that one of the biggest obstacles to improved educational opportunities and results for low-income and minority students has been the widespread and mistaken belief that students from these backgrounds cannot learn to the same high levels as other, more advantaged students can. This belief -- the foundation of what I have called a tyranny of low expectations -- has pervaded the schooling experience of our most disadvantaged youngsters, resulting all too often in watered down curricula, poorly prepared teachers and under investment by the public in their schooling.

Challenging national standards and tests are a fundamental tool for overcoming these obstacles. They will help raise expectations for all of our students in the basic skills. They will provide parents and communities with accurate, reliable information about student and school performance. They will make it impossible for schools to mask inadequate performance and to claim that students and schools are performing satisfactorily when in fact they are not. And they will help mobilize parents and community leaders in serious national, state and local efforts to raise student achievement in the basics, including through the commitment of additional, needed resources.

Student testing has often been a difficult and controversial issue. I know that tests have all too often been used to penalize rather than expand opportunities for minority students, and that there is great fear that these national tests may also do more harm than good. But they can, and I believe will, ultimately help lead to increased student achievement and greater opportunities for the students we all care about.

The President and I are aware that not everyone will do well on these tests the first time around and that some will need extra help to master the basic skills. But, difficult as this may be for students, teachers and schools, we believe that there is far greater risk for our most disadvantaged

students in accepting the status quo. These tests will empower parents and communities, and challenge students to realize their full potential. Denying these tests to parents and students will simply perpetuate lower expectations, limited accountability, and continued poor results for the most vulnerable young people in our society.

Raising standards and measuring student and school progress toward meeting them works. Last week I was in Philadelphia when Superintendent Hornbeck announced the results of such efforts. One year after instituting a program of higher standards and tough tests, Philadelphia students made significant gains in reading, math and science at the 4th, 8th, and 11th grades. They were able to achieve these impressive gains at the same time that student participation in the tests also increased substantially, with some 40% of the increased participation brought about by increasing the number of students with disabilities, limited-English-proficient students, and low-income students taking the tests. This is a tribute to the parents, students and teachers in Philadelphia who were willing to make real, constructive reforms that made progress possible.

We have similar evidence from Milwaukee, where only 21% of the school district's eleventh grade students initially passed a rigorous mathematics proficiency examination required for high school graduation. The next year, students, staff, and the community, including business groups, worked together to help students pass the tests, by providing special classes before and after school, instituting Saturday academies, utilizing business volunteers, upgrading teaching, and increasing parental involvement. As a result, 98% of the seniors in the class of 1996 passed the test. This shows that high standards and rigorous tests can indeed mobilize whole communities to support student achievement.

In this context, let me address a number of the issues you have raised:

Safeguards against invalid and inappropriate use of test results: The President and I have strongly encouraged states and local school districts to institute policies that require students to demonstrate they have met challenging academic standards before moving from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school, and in order to graduate from high school, and that require schools to provide students who need it extra help in order to meet the standards. Such policies would help make standards real in every school and classroom, underscore the seriousness of increased expectations, better focus and increase the efforts of both students and teachers, and strengthen each school's accountability for the success of every child.

Decisions about promotion and graduation policies are and must remain primarily state and local matters. We believe it would be a mistake to institute policies with respect to the national tests that would limit the ability of state and local policymakers to incorporate student performance on the national tests into sound, non-discriminatory promotion policies.

However, we believe just as strongly that promotion policies must be sound and fair, and that test results should not be used for high-stakes purposes -- such as for school-to-school promotion or graduation -- unless they have in fact been validated for those purposes. Because test validity for

high-stakes purposes depends heavily on the extent to which local curriculum prepares students for the test, it can only be demonstrated in the specific local or state context in which the tests will be used. Therefore, it is the responsibility of state and local school systems wishing to use the national tests for high-stakes purposes to first demonstrate their validity for these purposes, prior to implementation.

To support state and local school systems in making sound and appropriate decisions about the use of national tests, and to avoid the misuse of tests, the Education Department is developing a strategy designed to eliminate potential problems before they occur. Our approach will include the following steps:

- o Guidance from the Office for Civil Rights: Within the next three months, the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education will issue final guidance for its regional enforcement offices to assist in the evaluation of cases surrounding the discriminatory use of tests, including but not limited to the national tests. The guidance will set forth well-established federal legal standards relating to the use and misuse of tests, and will clearly articulate the existing principles of law that should guide any decision regarding the use of tests under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

This guidance has been made available to the public in its draft form, and the settled legal principles set forth in the guidance have established the basis of OCR's test-related work. When the guidance is issued in final form, it will reflect extensive Department of Education review, as well as that of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Testing and Assessment. In addition, we plan to make it widely available to school systems and the public, so that educators, policymakers, parents and community groups can all be well-informed about the requirements a test must meet in order to be used for high-stakes purposes. I believe that this approach will go a long way toward helping state and local school systems make appropriate judgments about the use of tests, and ensure that they take the steps necessary to validate the tests as needed. The Department welcomes your continued input regarding this guidance prior to its issuance in final form.

- o Technical Assistance to State and Local School Systems: The Office for Civil Rights will offer technical assistance to state and local school systems based on the guidance discussed above. OCR regional office staff will work with school systems to ensure they understand the practical implications of the legal principles set forth in its guidance, and can incorporate them into their own efforts. Moreover, relevant offices within the Department, including the Office of Educational Research and Improvement and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, along with OCR, will also work to identify and disseminate best or promising practices with regard to the validation and use of tests, and will offer information about "what works" in specific cases where feasible. Along with the guidance, this technical assistance strategy can help prevent potential misuse before it occurs. We welcome your thoughts and strategies for ensuring that the best information regarding model practices is widely available.

o Enforcement: The Office for Civil Rights will continue to conduct compliance reviews and conduct investigations to ensure that the nondiscrimination requirements of the law are met. While we do not oppose use of the tests for high-stakes purposes, we will do everything within our power to ensure that such uses comply with all legal requirements.

As you know, we are working to ensure that the President's request for funding for OCR in FY 1998 -- a \$ 6.6 million increase -- is supported by Congress. Without adequate funding, much of the core work of OCR -- enforcement of antidiscrimination laws at our schools and colleges nationwide based on complaints of discrimination -- will be in jeopardy. If all students are to achieve to high standards, they must be able to learn in environments free of discrimination.

o National Tests -- Guidelines for Test Use: The Department plans that guidelines for test use -- which would acknowledge the need to validate the national tests if they are to be used for high-stakes purposes -- will be developed by the test contractor and approved by the National Assessment Governing Board. These guidelines will be used by school districts and states as part of their participation in 1999.

o National Tests -- Independent Evaluation: Our proposal includes an overall evaluation of the national tests to be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences. The Academy will report on how states, districts and schools are using the tests, along with how they have handled test administration and reporting. This evaluation will provide objective and independent information that will help determine if the tests are being used appropriately.

Public Reporting and School Accountability: I believe we are in complete agreement that the tests will accomplish their intended purpose only if they are reported to the public on a school-by-school and school-district-by-school-district basis, and only if these reports show the performance of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups and of males and females, as well. Such public reporting is at the heart of increased public accountability for results. I will urge NAGB to require testing contractors to provide states and school districts with aggregate results for districts and schools, and to provide disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, and other populations. This will go a long way toward facilitating the provision of this information to the public.

Further, states and school districts throughout the country are already well on the way to reporting all test score results in this fashion. For example, according to a recent study by the Council of Chief State School Officers, 42 states already require or use school profiles or school performance reports to make public the results of student assessments, and 38 also require district level reports.

At present, some 17 states require the disaggregation of results at the school- or district-level for at least one demographic subgroup. While this is a good start, it is not enough, and we must do better if schools are to be held accountable for the performance of all students.

An important tool to improve the current situation is through the implementation of the Title I assessment and reporting requirements, which have historically had a powerful impact on state and local practice. Title I requires states to fully implement their assessment systems by school year 2000-2001. By that time, state assessment and reporting systems must enable the disaggregation of test data at the State, local school district and school levels, by gender, major racial and ethnic group, English proficiency status, migrant status, students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged. In addition, each local school district is required to publicize and disseminate the results of the annual review of all schools in individual school performance profiles to parents, teachers and other school staff, administrators, students, and the broader community.

Because Title I funds are received by every state, nearly every local school district (and every school district serving significant numbers of low-income and minority students) and two thirds of all public schools, the Title I requirements in this area will affect the reporting of test results in virtually every school and school district in the Nation. And, with respect to the public reporting of test results, they will accomplish exactly what we agree is needed.

In order to accommodate and support state and local efforts to raise academic standards and implement assessments aligned with the standards, Title I appropriately provides states with ample time to implement the testing and reporting requirements. Once the implementation deadline is reached, this Department will vigorously enforce compliance with it.

Based on experience and on conversations with state and local officials around the country, I am convinced that jurisdictions that participate in the national tests will report the results in a fashion consistent with how they will report the results of other test scores. The Council of Great City Schools has recently indicated that the cities participating in the national tests have pledged to do precisely that. Indeed, enhanced public accountability for schools compared with national standards and international benchmarks is clearly one of the main reasons for state and local interest in the national test initiative. State and local school officials in jurisdictions participating in the tests would be hard-pressed to justify a more restrictive and less informative reporting policy for national tests than for state and local tests.

Appropriately reporting individual test results to parents is as important as reporting aggregate results to the public. The Department of Education will undertake an aggressive campaign to help parents understand the reading and math standards on which the tests will be based, so they can have a very clear understanding of the kind of work expected of their children. Test publishers that provide the tests to states and local school districts will be required to provide the results to parents in easily understandable formats, including providing the test results and other appropriate information to parents in languages they understand. And the Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs will work with a group of urban school districts that enroll large numbers of LEP students to develop strategies and materials to help inform parents about the purposes of the tests, and to help prepare students to meet the standards.

Title I requirements will reinforce these efforts. Under Title I parent involvement provisions, each school and local school district is required to provide assistance to parents in understanding assessments and monitoring their children's progress, and to provide appropriate interpretations of individual student assessment results.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: I must respectfully disagree with your assessment that large numbers of students with disabilities are likely to be excluded from the assessment. We are working hard to make precisely the opposite the case, and I am committed to seeing these tests as a model for inclusion of students with disabilities.

Under our proposal, final decisions on inclusion guidelines as well as on the type and format of accommodations will be made by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), after broad public participation and input. Our intention is that the national tests be a model for how to best accommodate students with disabilities and to be as inclusive as possible. I will urge NAGB to act in accord with this intent. And test publishers that provide the tests will be required to incorporate the approved accommodations and inclusion criteria into the tests.

The test development contractor, in consultation with test advisory committees and others will develop draft guidelines for the inclusion of students with disabilities, as part of the development and field test process. Studies of accommodations for students with disabilities will be conducted by the test development contractor, and will be included in the evaluation by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). These studies will include examinations of the validity of the test results for students with disabilities tested with accommodations, using data from the 1998 field test. The NAS evaluation will examine the actual accommodations offered, and adherence to the inclusion guidelines during test administration.

The development and refinement of accommodations will also be informed by National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) research on the most effective types of accommodations. Accommodations that will be considered during the test development and field test process include extended time and/or multiple testing sessions; one-on-one testing or small group sessions; the use of a scribe or computer; assistance with test directions (though not with test items); an audiocassette version of the mathematics test; a sign language interpreter; a microphone worn by the test administrator; the use of magnifying instruments; or other appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities will receive accommodations as specified in the student's Individualized Education Plan developed under IDEA. Under the IDEA Amendments of 1997, students with disabilities must be included in assessments and each student's IEP must state the accommodations the student needs to participate in assessments.

Accommodations for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students: Similarly, we will strongly encourage NAGB to develop appropriate accommodations and inclusion criteria for LEP students.

Our proposal includes the development of a bilingual Spanish-English version of the mathematics test by 1999, and bilingual versions in languages other than Spanish in subsequent years. This will enable students to demonstrate their competency in mathematics regardless of their English language proficiency.

As you know, we have a difference of opinion regarding the language of testing for 4th grade reading. As I indicated in my September 3, 1997, letter to members of the Hispanic Caucus, in our proposal, the purpose of the 4th grade test is to test student proficiency in reading in English, not general reading comprehension. Therefore, we do not propose to develop the 4th grade national test in other languages.

As I also indicated in that same letter, we will work vigorously to assist states and local school districts in meeting the LEP-related assessment requirements of Title I, including assessing general reading comprehension in the language in which students can best demonstrate competency.

There are a number of high quality native language reading tests, and at least one that, according to its publisher, is by design based on the NAEP 4th grade reading framework and achievement levels and yields individual scores reported in terms of the NAEP achievement levels. Any district that, at its option, wishes to test LEP students in reading comprehension in terms that are consistent with NAEP, and would like to do so in coordination with its administration and reporting of the national reading test, already can do so.

In addition to these specific responses, let me also point out that President Clinton and I see these national standards and tests as an integral part of an overall strategy of improving education by raising standards and increasing our federal investments in education where they can do the most good. Since the beginning of this Administration, we have increased federal investments in elementary and secondary education by \$4.1 billion, some 30%.

For example, since the beginning of the Clinton Administration, we have increased Head Start funding by 55% including the increase secured in the Bipartisan Budget Agreement. Title I and IDEA have both increased by more than \$1 billion. We have initiated significant new funding for education reform in support of higher standards, with a total of \$1.3 billion for Goals 2000 since its enactment in 1994, and we will continue to urge Congress to fully fund the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. We have provided substantial new resources to help schools use computers in the classroom, with \$425 million secured this year toward a goal of \$2 billion over five years. In addition, the FCC has approved a plan that will provide discounts worth \$2.25 billion annually to help schools and libraries bring technology into the classroom and gain access to the Internet at a fraction of the full cost — meaning a discount of up to 90% for our poorest schools. We are working to help ensure that these funds go to schools and classrooms most in need.

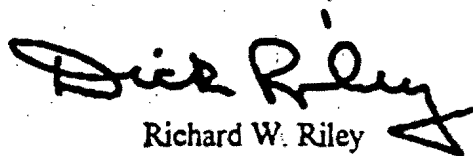
Page 8 - Mr. Wade J. Henderson

We have also made significant increases in higher education spending as well, including record increases in Pell Grant and work-study funding and \$35 billion in tax cuts to help families pay for college.

In addition, for the coming fiscal year, we fought to ensure that the Budget Agreement included an effort specifically targeted to children who need extra help in learning to read, as well as a 27% increase in funding for bilingual education, to nearly \$200 million, and a 50% increase, to \$150 million, for immigrant education. We will continue to propose increases in the federal investment to strengthen education, including new initiatives such as President Clinton's five-year, \$350 million initiative to attract and prepare nearly 35,000 talented people of all backgrounds for teaching at low-income urban and rural schools across the nation. The Administration will continue to push Congress to help address the serious need for renovating and building schools nationwide.

All of these investments are important, because they provide families and schools with resources to help all children achieve high standards. We need to challenge our students to reach high standards and challenge our schools to respond to their needs. At the same time that we press forward to raise standards for our nation's students, we will continue to fight for the necessary investments as well.

Yours sincerely,


Richard W. Riley