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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 4, 1997

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER WILMER S. CODY
ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL TEST PANEL

Washington, DC, September 25, 1997— "The National Test Panel's work is done. It is work of strong quality and provides a sound basis for guiding the development of the tests. The procedures and approaches taken for this effort were the same as those used to develop the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment frameworks for the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). We are completing the Panel's final report and will file it next week with the Secretary of Education for use by NAGB.

"I am confident that the other Panel members will join me in welcoming a review of the specifications by NAGB and support the pending assignment of the national testing program to NAGB. Given the strong likelihood that NAGB will have final responsibility for the national tests, I agree that work should not proceed until the specifications have been reviewed by NAGB.

"The Panel and its committees have been working with very complex decisions on the test specifications. Lengthy deliberations have occurred on such topics as the use of calculators in mathematics testing. The Panel was divided on this issue and the view of the majority prevailed. On other issues, there was strong agreement, and we know that NAGB will find that the specifications provide a sound basis for the test," Cody said.

1. Portland (Maine) Press Herald

October 10, 1997

Unum chief's ideas can aid our schools

Ask job applicants for transcripts, give parents time off and require national testing.

There are 51 million future high school graduates in America's public schools, and they're not all receiving a good education.

Even Maine, which ranks high on national tests, falls short of doing as well as it should with K-12 education. James F. Orr III, chairman and chief executive of Unum Corp., drew this picture starkly before the Chamber of Commerce of the Greater Portland Region on Thursday.

Though Maine ranked first in the nation in math testing, Orr noted that only 27 percent of the Maine students registered as proficient or better. Maine is leading a very slow pack.

The enormity of the education challenge can be intimidating. With so many students in need of so much more in the classroom, students, educators, business leaders and parents can easily grow frustrated.

However, during his talk Orr set out three simple things his colleagues in the business world could do to help. We strongly endorse them.

Ask all recently graduated job candidates for their transcripts. In what Orr and other business leaders hope will become a trend, companies are starting to take note of grades. Unum, which has always sought the grades of recent college graduates, now will seek transcripts from applicants who recently finished their education in high school.

Give employees with school-age children time off to meet with teachers. Orr suggests this could be either paid or unpaid and need not be more than a day or two a year. Such a policy at Unum costs the company less than accommodating jury duty, he said.

Back voluntary comprehensive national testing. These tests will provide a more detailed portrait of student performance than any test currently being done. They will allow schools to compare their performance with other schools across the nation and around the world. They should lead to efforts to improve that performance.

Orr's company has taken its commitment to education even further. It has family-friendly policies for employees, training for its workers and a program aimed at helping students make the transition to the working world.

Orr's comments Thursday, however, suggest that a business doesn't need the resources of Unum to make a difference. All Maine companies can adopt Orr's recommendations and help improve our education system. ■

The New Republic

September 29, 1997

GETTING TESTY

By The Editors

Six years ago, then-President George Bush announced his support for national education standards—a single, nationwide set of criteria to gauge the performance of students and schools. Congressional Democrats shot down the plan. New tests, they argued, would serve only to stigmatize poor performance.

TNR supported Bush's proposal in 1991, and we support the virtually identical national testing plan President Clinton proposed in this year's State of the Union address. But now, lo and behold, it's the Republicans who are lining up against the idea. Lamar Alexander, who led the fight for national performance tests as Bush's education secretary, now fulminates against them. Alexander's confusion seems to have permeated his party. Chester Finn, a former assistant secretary of education under President Reagan who serves as the GOP's eminence grise on the topic, first issued a ringing endorsement of Clinton's plan—"better than Bush's"—then later announced his modified, updated view that "the president's proposal would do more harm than good."

Confused? So, obviously, are the Republicans. Their excuses for opposing fourth-grade reading tests and eighth-grade math tests seem awfully, well, excuse-like. The tests would cost virtually nothing—\$15 million a year—but William Goodling, chairman of the House Education Committee, vaguely proposes to spend the money instead on "the classroom." New federal pencil boxes for every second grader!

House Speaker Newt Gingrich says that instead Clinton "ought to be focusing on local parents, local students and local teachers," but it's hard to understand what this phrase even means. There is no such thing as a parent, student or teacher who isn't local, since everyone resides in a locality. If Gingrich wants all initiatives to well up from the grass-roots, then President Clinton can't very well "focus" on them, since everything he proposes is by definition a national initiative. If Gingrich is trying to suggest that Clinton should not subject local government to federal regulation, his objection is groundless. Any school or state would have the right to opt out of the tests.

Perhaps the underlying reason for Republican opposition is that national tests will nationalize the debate over education. Currently, parents have no objective measure by which to compare the performance of their child's school district with any other. National standards would allow for inter-district comparisons, thus empowering parents to question the backward and inefficient practices employed by many local school boards. This in turn would expose conservatism's local control fetish. Critics of public education—those who wish to replace it with vouchers, rather than those who wish to improve it—point to the superior educational performance of foreign schools, while failing to acknowledge that all other major industrial countries have centralized, nationally run public school systems.

Of course, should national testing spark a movement for real reform, conservatives are not the only ones who would be threatened. Many administrators and teachers from poor, low-performing school districts resist national standards. Diagnosing the problem, they argue, is not a substitute for treating it. True. But the public will never face up to public education's inequalities and inadequacies until the consequences of those inequalities are laid out in hard numbers. National testing would not only spur reform, it would also serve as an essential condition of reform. Without testing, there's no way to know if reform is actually working.

Clinton's plan, then, has no appreciable downside and could even be a first step toward transforming the political climate on education. But the promise of reform is not the same thing as reform, and for this reason Clinton's education plan, taken as a whole, doesn't quite warrant the lyrical rhetoric with which the president has surrounded it. After all, education was supposed to be the cornerstone of Clinton's second term. But, in pursuit of a budget deal with the Republicans, he bargained away his highly touted plan to spend \$5 billion renovating dilapidated, inner-city schools.

The one portion of his education package that he refused to negotiate—tax deductions and credits for college tuition—is a transparent political bribe and a grossly inefficient method of increasing access to college. That Clinton put a higher priority on tax pork for the middle class than on far cheaper, and more urgent, aid for the truly needy belies his grandiose pronouncements. The only thing worse than Clinton's settling for modest reform is the Republicans' obtuse resistance to modest reform in education. ■

Beyond Lake Wobegon

BY DAVID GERGEN
EDITOR AT LARGE

American schools need tough national standards and tests to match.

History, Karl Marx once suggested, has a way of repeating itself, first as tragedy, then as farce. Incredibly, that dictum may just be right about American education. A few short years after a very good idea for education reform, Goals 2000, was crippled by a lack of leadership, another splendid idea may now be heading toward a similar fate.

The notion of national standards and testing holds rich promise for our schools. Mainstream reformers ranging from Chester Finn of the conservative Hudson Institute and Diane Ravitch of the centrist Brookings Institution to liberals like the late Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers have embraced standards and testing; so have Presidents Bush and Clinton. Surveys show that two thirds of the public would welcome them.

Standards and testing go hand in hand. Printed standards set forth what a child should know and be able to do in subjects such as math and reading. They can also ensure that teachers have clear goals and that communities will fight for the resources to meet them. Tests tied to those standards then help parents and students know how well Suzy and Johnny measure up. If your daughter's class is performing above the national average and she isn't, you can take it up with her; but if her whole school is below average, you can march on city hall.

Hit the books. We have ample evidence that world-class standards and testing can be developed nationally without threatening local control of schools. An organization called the National Center on Education and the Economy, working with many states and school districts, is publishing such standards. It recommends, for example, that an elementary school student read 25 books a year. The center provides a sample list but leaves it to the school, if it chooses, to select alternative books of similar complexity. A tough, well-respected test called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has long been used by the government to sample student performance nationwide. Together, these two approaches show the direction the country should take.

That's not the road we're on. Most states have established their own standards and tests but too often have watered them down, lulling the public into a false sense of confidence in their schools. In South Carolina, for example, 82 percent of fourth graders have met state reading requirements, but only 20 percent of them have passed the national NAEP test. Oklahoma has a 50-point gap in the pass rates between state and national testing, Wisconsin a 53-point gap. It's Lake Wobegon, where all the children are above average.

Lowering expectations for students to improve their self-esteem or to assuage parents may have short-term advantages, but over the long run, it is cruel. One day those kids will be thrown into real life, where they will rise or fall on their skills. We have a moral obligation to create world-class standards for them.

Early this year, President Clinton recognized that point, vowing a "national crusade for education standards." But since then he has quietly let the idea of standards slip away and is focusing only on national testing. Of course, it is politically controversial to declare what a child should know. But national tests alone are a weak substitute; as has been said, weighing a sheep won't make it grow.

And even the idea of testing faces trouble. Until recently, the president had bypassed Congress and told the Department of Education to develop the tests. An uproar followed as conservatives, alarmed by the prospect of the federal government intruding into local education, joined with civil rights groups, worried about the performance of minorities, in condemning national tests. Now, test development has been shifted to an independent board. National tests may yet pass Congress, but they risk being so mauled politically that few states will participate in them.

Clinton, who has a fine record in education reform, must now salvage all he can on testing. In coming months, he should rebuild a durable, mainstream coalition that will advance us toward national standards as well as testing. Parents and students want the best in education —and they certainly deserve it.

1. Business Week
September 22, 1997

A BENCHMARK FOR IMPROVING SCHOOLS

What's wrong with benchmarking? Everything, apparently, if it is used in our schools. The raging debate in Congress over President Clinton's plan to create two standardized math and reading exams pits Corporate America against fringe elements of the U.S. body politic. Congressional conservatives worry about a federal government takeover of local schools that would impose an alien curriculum on students, while liberal legislators fear testing will benefit suburban children to the detriment of city kids. This doesn't make any sense to chief executives who used benchmarking as a tool to revitalize American industry. CEOs such as IBM's Louis Gerstner are calling for the creation of voluntary standardized tests that parents anywhere in the country can use to see how their children measure up against national and international benchmarks. Chief executives within the Business Roundtable believe standardized tests can be a tool to improve employee skills for the Information Age. Republican and Democratic governors also welcome a chance to choose tests that allow them to evaluate their state's performance vis-a-vis other states.

Efforts to hold schools accountable across the country are stymied by a lack of comparable data. Each state is responsible for its own curriculum and its own testing. Standardized tests would simply gather data, establish a uniform baseline, and allow states and localities to make judgments about resource allocation. Nothing more.

To make it, Clinton should follow the advice of Governor John Engler (R-Mich.) and give the project to the independent National Assessment Governing Board. The NAGB should then develop two simple exams measuring basic math and reading skills by adopting one of many such tests already in use by the states. In the information era, pragmatism, not paranoia, should guide America's education. ■

1. Boston Globe

September 19, 1997

A test for the US House

This week's House vote against nationwide student tests in reading and math was based partly on a demonstrably wrong argument - that such tests are superfluous.

"We know where we are with our kids.... States already administer hundreds of tests," said Representative John Edward Porter, an Illinois Republican. "Further tests don't add anything."

Circle false on your answer sheet.

The testing currently done by states is a hodgepodge, including a handful of commercially marketed tests that compete with one another and tests developed within individual states and school systems and given nowhere else. The results can be useful locally but give little sense of how states, schools, and individual students compare with their counterparts nationwide.

Indeed, many states grade their tests with standards that exaggerate their own performance. This creates the so-called Lake Wobegon effect - nearly all the states are above average.

Such obvious bunkum is dangerous, since it allows teachers and administrators to avoid confronting their own mediocre results. Yet it occurs in state after state.

The closest thing to national testing is done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress - surveys that by law cannot include more than 3 percent of students. According to those surveys, 35 percent of Wisconsin fourth-graders read at a proficient or advanced level for their grade, but Wisconsin says 88 percent met the standards of its own reading test. Only 15 percent met the National Assessment standard in Louisiana, but 88 percent met the state standard. In math, state officials rated eighth-graders higher than the National Assessment did by 27 percent in Michigan and 65 percent in Georgia.

Universal tests are the only way to identify the schools and classrooms that need help.

Fortunately, the Senate approved President Clinton's modest proposal for voluntary national testing of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. The House, in conference, should agree. The results are not superfluous; they are essential. ■

1. Sacramento Bee

September 17, 1997

A national test: Clinton's assessment program deserves support

After a lot of haggling and, finally, some sensible compromise with the Legislature, Gov. Pete Wilson is getting the statewide academic skills test he had made a cornerstone of his agenda this year. Unfortunately for President Clinton and his equally high-profile effort to get a national testing program through Congress, there looks to be less room there for common ground.

If the president isn't able to convince Congress — a prospect that now looks unlikely in the House — parents and students will lose the chance for an objective comparison of their individual, school and school-district performance to their counterparts across the nation. That kind of measurement, developed and administered with care, has the potential to drive needed reform in public education.

The Senate has overwhelmingly approved the national test, to be given to fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math in districts that volunteer to administer it. But a growing number of critics in the House threaten to scuttle the plan altogether. They are an odd alliance of conservative Republicans, who claim a national test would constitute dangerous federal meddling in local school matters, and urban Democrats, who say the tests would unfairly stigmatize poor and minority schoolchildren who are relegated to impoverished schools that don't prepare them to perform.

It's hard to see how a national test could amount to federal intrusion when Clinton has stipulated it would be entirely voluntary. Those districts that don't see any value in the test simply don't have to participate. (In doing so, however, they may anger parents who are increasingly wary of inflated grades and want some objective assessment.)

The president has also agreed, at congressional urging, to transfer control of the formulation and administration of the test from the federal Department of Education, which conservatives complain is run by liberal partisans, to the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent body that enjoys broader trust.

As for the complaint about stigmatizing poor and minority children, wouldn't a national test, scored by school, finally expose the shameful inadequacy of so many impoverished urban and rural schools, thus making a powerful argument for the additional attention and resources they deserve? Is it OK to let children languish in such conditions as long as we don't attach any numbers to them?

Many of the test's details remain to be worked out — the kinds of questions the tests would contain, how they would be scored and so on — and more controversy will undoubtedly follow. But parents want and deserve concrete measures of their children's progress and the performance of schools their tax dollars support. Clinton is trying to give them that, and the House should get on board. ■

1. USA Today

September 15, 1997 Category: Editorial

Why fear national tests?: They just add information. OUR VIEW: This is no intrusion on local choice. Its a way for parents and educator's to evaluate their schools.

Thanks to the wonders of the Information Age, Americans can compare the performance of airlines, telecommunications companies, health plans and even mutual fund managers.

But when it comes to schools, meaningful comparisons are more difficult. Much as we value high-quality education tests don't tell parents how their children are performing academically compared to the students — nationally or abroad.

This week the House Republicans will try to maintain that sorry status quo.

They hope to block funding for a Clinton administration plan to introduce voluntary, national standardized tests beginning in 1999. The exams would measure reading skills in fourth graders and math progress in Grade 8 — two critical points when mastery of the basics is linked to future academic success.

Critics complain the national tests would threaten local control of schools, duplicate state testing efforts and stigmatize low-performing schools districts.

They're wrong on all counts.

As any sweaty-palmed student can attest, nearly every state and school district administers standardized exams. Yet federal comparisons show that states' home-grown tests are frequently less stringent than national tests. And the only national exams in general use measure just a sampling of U.S. students for broad international comparisons — useful for drawing a national picture but of no help to individual school districts.

As a result, students who are preparing for life in an increasingly global economy are denied a realistic picture of how their knowledge and skills stack up beyond their own state's borders.

Under Clinton's national testing plan, states could decide for themselves whether to use the voluntary tests. There would be no federal penalties for poor-performers. And thanks to a compromise worked out with Senate last week, an independent board, not the federal government, would develop the exams.

In school districts using the new tests, students would receive individual breakdowns comparing their performance to national and international standards. Parents, teachers and taxpayers would get their first clear look at which schools are teaching effectively and where there is trouble.

State exams are not equal to that task.

On recent state exams, 88% of Wisconsin students were ranked as proficient readers. A much smaller sample of Wisconsin students found only 35% were proficient. In Georgia, 81% of students passed the state math test, but the national sampling found only 16% made the grade.

The new national tests would be a warning system for academic weaknesses. From there. Though, it would be left up to local educators, students and parents to act.

In an age when information is knowledge, national tests promise a new measure of academic performance. That's the type of intelligence consumers need.

1. The New York Times

09/15/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; Editorial Desk; Page 22, Column 1 Category: Editorial

Evaluating Pupil Performance

President Clinton's proposal for a national test that would offer detailed comparisons among individual students, schools and states has run into heavy weather. The Senate has approved the idea and even strengthened it. But House Republicans argue that a new test is unnecessary and that a national test in any event would constitute a Government takeover of the schools. On the Democratic side, some black and Latino members warn that a national test would stigmatize minority children, who generally attend worse schools.

The Clinton Administration has done a miserable job at calming fears and building consensus. Even so, the objections raised by those who oppose the plan are minor compared with the benefits of a test that would allow parents to choose wisely among schools — and to know exactly where their children stand with respect to state, national and even world standards.

States now employ a patchwork of different tests, making comparisons among states and regions almost impossible. In addition, test scores are often reported in a manner that seems deliberately obscure, as though to prevent parents from finding out how well or poorly their schools are doing. The national tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress are sound but are given only to representative samplings of students. They can be used to rank states but give no information on individual students, schools or school districts.

Mr. Clinton's plan calls for 90-minute tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics to be given on a voluntary basis beginning in March 1999. It would cost \$27 million to develop the tests. Administering them would cost about \$10 to \$12 for each of the eight million fourth and eighth graders who would take the tests. Under the Clinton proposal, the Federal Government would pay costs in the first year, and states or local districts would pay after that. The Senate has insured that the test would be constructed in a nonpartisan fashion by giving responsibility to the National Assessment Governing Board, an independent body with a reputation for thorough and tough-minded analysis.

Detailed test scores would help teachers and principals strengthen instructional plans — and find out how well or how poorly the changes work. School-by-school rankings would allow the states to move promptly against failing schools and to replicate those shown to be successful. The goals and standards associated with the test would be widely publicized, so that students, parents and teachers would know what was expected of them.

Critics are right when they argue that the schools require more than just testing to do a better job. The General Accounting Office, for example, estimates that it would take \$112 billion just to put school buildings in reasonable working order. Initiatives to reduce class size and revamp teacher education could cost billions more. A strong comprehensive test would allow the country to judge which improvements made a difference.

A voluntary national test is far from the "Federal takeover" House Republicans suggest. On the contrary, the test would empower parents by allowing them to know how well their children and schools were doing — and to hold politicians and school officials accountable as never before. Perhaps that is why some in Congress want to abort the plan.

■

CNN Interactive September 12, 1997

National tests strengthen case for strong schools

An essay by CNN Interactive writer Emily Looney

(CNN) — Nearly everyone has clutched a No. 2 pencil in apprehension of a standardized test. But the proposal for national tests that was left in limbo by Congress this week is nothing to fear — if we're ready to cope with the results.

There appears to be little public debate about whether to set national educational standards for children. What is controversial is the idea that the tests — though voluntary — might be only the beginning of federal meddling in local school affairs.

The Senate on Thursday easily passed a modified version of President Clinton's proposal to give reading tests to fourth graders and math tests to eighth graders. But it attached an amendment the White House doesn't like that would curtail the role of the Department of Education in administering school aid. And the House, where a bipartisan alliance is bent on killing the testing plan, postponed its vote.

Politicians on both sides of the aisle like the idea of national standardized tests, and a recent Gallup Poll cited by the White House shows most other people do, too.

But the dispute over federal vs. local control has little to do with discovering if Johnny can read or add.

Skeptics are right in saying that the proposed tests would influence what's taught in what grades. But far from establishing federal control, the tests will only work with — not in spite of — local input.

Think globally, act locally

The proposed tests would give parents and educators a new tool to let them compare individual achievement, which current standardized tests do not provide in the same way.

The tests would do this, in part, by comparing test results against set standards, instead of average scores, which would allow for more accurate inter-state as well as international comparisons.

Clinton isn't interested in the details of what's taught when, or how — only that all students can read and do math at a defined level by a certain point in their schooling, said Marshall Smith, acting deputy secretary of education.

Even Smith acknowledged that would influence local curriculum decisions, and he wasn't apologetic about it. But he argued that the tests would only emphasize the "very basics."

And the White House insists states will not be forced to participate. States and school districts would be free to decide whether to give the tests, which would be introduced in March 1999.

Before this week's votes, seven states and 15 cities had volunteered to take part, according to the Education Department's Web site. But once some schools began giving the tests, others no doubt could feel peer pressure to participate.

And some educators are right to worry that the results may only further stigmatize disadvantaged schools and students, without providing a remedy.

That's where the tests can really earn their multimillion-dollar keep. Their national visibility would expand our awareness of floundering, underfunded schools in a significant and unavoidable way.

It would still be the local communities that are stuck with the hands-on work of fixing the educational inequities made plain by the test results. Students would still learn one-by-one, and need supportive parents, teachers and tutors.

With such tests, there could be no more broad-based dismissal of unequal results as the product of uneven standards. Local and regional inequities would become a national concern.

Don't worry, the students can't vote yet

Letting the federal government help define and measure what we need to learn, even if it's only with the basics, would give education — already a highly politicized issue — an even higher political profile.

The tests have all the makings of election fodder. But the potential for political manipulation of the tests and their results can, with voter willpower, be checked.

Already, in an effort to shield the tests from the whims of partisan dispute and political trends, Clinton agreed in a compromise to give oversight to the National Assessment Governing Board instead of the Education Department. And the Senate measure aims to adjust the makeup of the independent board, created by Congress to oversee national tests given only on a selective basis, to allow for broader input.

It's worth the political risks. Leaving it largely to states and schools to determine what children need to know doesn't

serve the children themselves well, either in our mobile society or a global economy.

Colleges and universities, admitting students across state lines, have long recognized the need to try to even out local inequities in evaluation methods. These schools widely rely on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, an independent exam for high school students.

The fundamentals of what we want our students to learn should be defined and refined in a national debate. New ideas about education are coming along all the time, and any national tests should be revised accordingly.

And however imperfect the means, the goal remains the same: improving local education.■

A TEST CONGRESS HAD BETTER PASS

DOCUMENT 2 OF 13

TRIB9725400060

* EDITORIAL

* A TEST CONGRESS HAD BETTER PASS

391 Words

2751 Characters

09/11/97

Chicago Tribune

NORTH SPORTS FINAL; N

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(Copyright 1997)

- Most Illinois parents probably would jump at the chance to
- * find out how their children's education stacks up against the
 - * education kids are getting in, say, Iowa, or Michigan, or Texas.

President Clinton's proposed national testing for reading and math would give them that chance, but Republicans in Congress are working furiously this week to block funding for the tests. It sort of makes you wonder what they're afraid of.

- Clinton's aim is to establish high academic standards and
- * allow school districts to test their students against them. In the process, districts also would find out how their kids are doing compared with others around the country taking the same tests.

The proposal is actually pretty modest, calling for 90-minute tests of 4th-grade reading skills and 8th-grade mathematics starting in 1999. No district would be required to give the tests; it's an opportunity, not a mandate.

- * Of course, districts that chose not to test their students would need to have some good answers for parents--and taxpayers--as to why they don't want to know how their students fare academically compared to their peers in other parts of the country. National testing, while not a definitive measure, will be a powerful tool for holding teachers, administrators and yes, politicians,
- * accountable for whether students are getting the education they need and deserve.

Six states and 15 large urban school districts, including Chicago, have signed on to participate in the tests, and many more have expressed interest. But if congressional Republicans succeed in blocking the \$16 million allocated for development, there may be no tests at all--even for districts that want them.

- House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) has tried to muddy the
- * issue by pushing a rival education plan that calls for vouchers and other measures to help expand a family's choice of schools. Nothing

wrong with that, but it's not an either-or proposition. There's no reason those measures can't exist alongside national testing.

More foolish still are the objections of special-interest groups claiming that national tests would stigmatize the poor and minorities or would be unfair to kids with limited English skills.

- * If poor and minority children are getting substandard education in this country, then their parents have a right to know it and to ask why.
- * In fact, that may be one of the questions test-shy politicians don't want to have to answer.

I0607 * End of document.

FROM the redwood forests to the Gulf Stream waters, two plus two equals four. But we have no way of knowing whether Carlos in California can do math as well as Mary in Mississippi.

President Clinton's proposed national assessment — a reading test for fourth-graders, a math exam for eighth-graders — is facing heavy opposition in Congress for a variety of reasons, most of them specious. Clinton has vowed to veto the education, labor and health spending bill if it passes with an amendment banning national testing.

This is a fight Clinton should win. While most states, like California, are working on their own standards, we need a national benchmark to show whether young Americans are learning the skills they need to succeed.

Critics on the right say the federal education bureaucrats will use a national test to meddle in local decisions. Some fear the exam will favor "whole language" over phonics, or "fuzzy math" over computation.

The answer to that is that the program is voluntary. So far, only six states and 15 big-city school districts have pledged to use the tests, starting in March 1999. If the national tests are based on poorly devised standards or don't measure achievement credibly, then they won't be used or heeded.

Critics on the left fear that black and Hispanic kids will earn low scores, and be shunted into low-level classes or stigmatized when they try to get into college or get jobs.

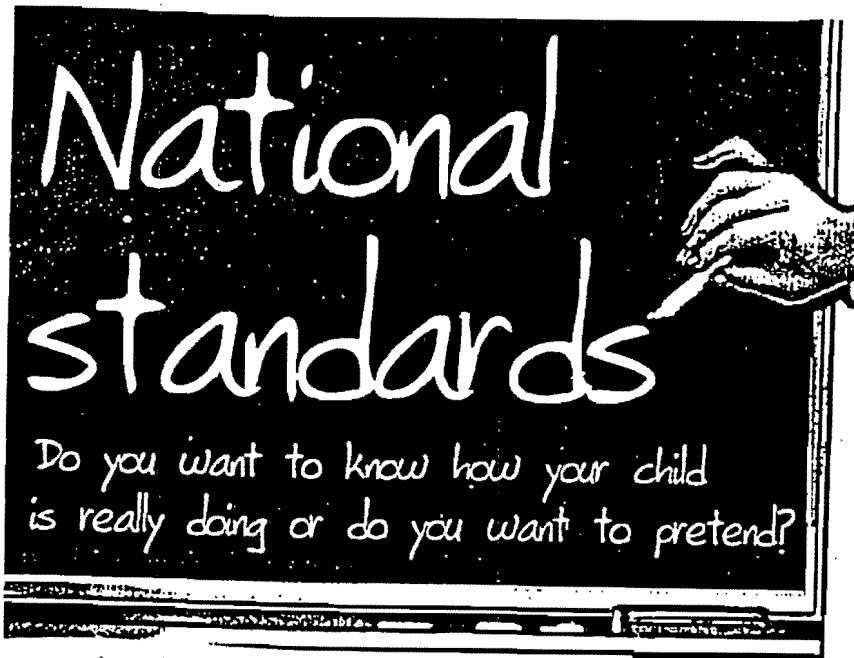
Many kids will do poorly. But a fourth-grade or eighth-grade test is meant to diagnose problems or discover success, not to decide a student's fate. The tests will give students the chance to improve their skills before they find out they can't read a college textbook or a job application.

A cellular phone user is at least as impaired as a drinker. Why should the laws be any different?

— Letter writer Ron Hall

The alternative is to lie to parents about how their kids are doing, hand out "student of the month" stickers like condoms, and graduate students with phony diplomas.

Hispanic groups oppose the reading exam because it will be



given in English only, handicapping students who aren't yet proficient in English. Los Angeles Unified backed out of the reading test for that reason. (Meanwhile, conservatives are upset that the math test will be given in Spanish as well as English.)

Again, the question is: Do you want to know how well students are learning, or would you rather play pretend? Reading in English is the goal for all students.

Let's find out how rapidly students from immigrant families are moving toward that goal.

California exemplifies the importance of national testing: When students earned abysmal scores on the National Assess-

ment for Educational Progress, the failure of the state's "whole language" reading program was exposed.

NABP tests sample students to create state rankings. Clinton's test also would produce scores for individual students, schools or school districts.

It should be possible to develop a test that measures adequate, good and excellent fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. If we can't agree on national benchmarks for the two fundamental subjects, we might as well give up hope of reaching world-class standards in education.

San Jose Mercury
News
9/11/97

Philadelphia Inquirer / Wednesday, September 10, 1997

A proficient plan

National tests would raise education standards.

Sound the alarm, hit the streets, man the barricades: Washington has found another way to exert control of the minds of innocent schoolchildren — a national test of how well fourth graders read and eighth graders do math!

That's been the reaction of many people to President Clinton's modest proposal to establish voluntary, national proficiency tests, to begin in March 1999. So far, six states and 15 school districts (only the city of Philadelphia in this region) have embraced the plan.

Just think what the tests could lead to: consistently collected data on what students need to learn to master these skills and what more adults can do, including higher academic standards. Shocking!

It strains common sense to view such a limited project as the thin edge of a federal wedge into the long-cherished local control of schools. (Of course, most local school boards grab for every dime of federal money they can get for extra books, aides and computers, but that's different, right?)

The price tag is modest: The President's program would cost an estimated \$16.5 million for two years to develop and implement the tests. It's not clear whether the federal support would continue after 1999.

The tests' value lies in their potential to build the case for continuing the struggle for higher academic standards by providing yet another link between standards and achievement. In international competition, American students are among the best in science and well above average in math. It's no accident that good news comes in the two areas where most schools have adopted standards developed by a national educational organization.

The project's most formidable congressional opponent is U.S. Rep. William Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who chairs the House Education Committee.

Rep. Goodling wants to kill the plan on the grounds that it is unnecessary. Over the last decade, he argues, 46 states have set higher standards and administered tests. His analogy is: "You can keep weighing a hog, but he won't get any fatter."

There's a flaw in that sound bite. State standards vary widely, and some are so weak they're meaningless to teachers and useless to parents. Consider Louisiana, where 88 percent of the fourth graders meet the state's standard — but only 15 percent show proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP).

Senate Republicans reportedly are ready to compromise. On Monday, negotiators said they were close to an agreement that the GOP withdraw its amendment to block the Education Department from developing the test. Instead the tests would be designed by the bipartisan, independent National Assessment Governing Board.

Testing goes hand-in-hand with accountability, which should resonate with promoters of choice, vouchers and competition. If public money is to fund such experiments, then the public — parents, especially — should be able to hold the schools accountable for results, using a common yardstick.

Coming on the heels of a bipartisan budget agreement that left partisans of both parties unhappy, this clash seems more like an effort to stake out turf for the 1998 congressional races than a crusade to save schools from the evil feds.

Measuring student mastery of basic skills across school districts and state lines is too vital to America's future to fall victim to political tomfoolery.

■ To comment briefly on these editorials, call 215-854-5060. The Editorial Board will respond to as many calls as possible.

New York Newsday

September 10, 1997

Failing the Exam / A coalition of liberals and conservatives lets down our kids by opposing national tests.

After all the complaints about the mediocre performance of American students and with a pile of evidence showing that scholastic rigor varies wildly from one school district to another, the Clinton administration is trying to accomplish something worthwhile. It wants national tests in reading and math to give parents, schools and even employers the basic information they need to determine if the kids measure up.

This should not be a politically arduous endeavor but a rallying point for everyone concerned about the nation's need to upgrade the schooling of all children to prepare them for the new work force.

Yet conservative Republicans including House Speaker Newt Gingrich

(R-Ga.), in an alliance of convenience with some liberal Democrats, are trying to beat back the plan by denying funding. That would be a triumph of ideology and politics over common sense.

No modern nation but the United States has such a fragmented education system, in which there are effectively no checks to ensure that schools perform as they should. Yet President Bill Clinton, mindful of the enduring attachment Americans have to local control of public schools, specifically has proposed to make the national tests voluntary. No district or state can be forced to administer them - but the more that do, the sharper the picture will be about where the failings are. Clinton also has wisely bowed to demands that the test be

developed by a bipartisan testing board.

Despite the conservatives' rhetoric that decries Clinton's plan as a federal power grab, no one proposes to have Washington bulldoze through the little red schoolhouse. Liberals worried that disadvantaged students will perform poorly are probably right in their assumption but wrong in their remedy. Not testing won't make things better, and testing could, once and for all, pinpoint the worst failings for remediation.

No matter how much the two extremes argue, there's no running from the consensus that exists among hundreds of businesses and most educators: It's time to get serious about demanding high-quality educational outcomes. Clinton is right to push toward it. ■

1. Portland Press Herald

September 8, 1997

PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL: With national testing, schools will improve

Changing times challenge American schools. Testing should be part of the response.

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The United States has the most decentralized education system in the industrialized world. Unlike Europe or Japan, Americans leave decisions about education standards and curriculum largely to local school boards, usually with some state input.

This system has served the nation well, but it is being challenged by changing times. Those challenges can be met, in part, through nationwide standardized tests.

Local control of education policy has traditionally given our schools an ability to respond to the local needs. Rural schools could relate their courses to farming. Urban schools could have courses geared to factory work.

More importantly, local control has given parents a greater voice in their kids' schools. This has created school systems that reflect local values. It has also drawn parents into the system, something which can greatly enrich a child's educational experience.

In recent years, though, a changing economy has strained the system.

Distinctions between local economies have diminished as new technology and freer trade practices have allowed goods, services and capital to flow more freely from place to place. To succeed in today's economy, graduates of every school system need basic skills. Work on the farm or factory floor is highly technical, and any good-paying service job also requires a good education.

That's why President Clinton's proposal to create national testing makes so much sense. Such testing will give school systems, parents and kids an idea of how they stack up in a competitive world. As a result, the testing will be a powerful incentive for teachers and administrators to raise standards when needed.

Clinton's testing program is also worthy because of what it will not do. The president does not propose a comprehensive test that would lead to a national curriculum, but a basic test that will measure math and reading skills. Rather than have the test developed by the party in power, Clinton proposes a bipartisan, independent panel draw them up. This will assure that the test focuses on the basics.

This approach will leave local school boards in charge of vast areas of the curriculum, keeping intact the ability of parents to have an impact on their schools. At the same time, it will set standards that, in our global economy, all schools should be meeting. ■

1. Boston Globe

September 8, 1997

Worthwhile tests

By Globe Staff

President Clinton's push for national testing in the fourth and eighth grades deserves enthusiastic support. In a broad national commitment to improve the nation's schools, testing is only one part, but a part that is crucial in two ways:

Evaluating the myriad attempts at reform.

Identifying states and districts that are performing poorly, often without realizing just how poorly, and giving them a swift kick.

An odd mix of liberals and conservatives opposes national testing, but with different arguments that have ready answers.

Some liberals feel that testing detracts from learning - that teachers interrupt their own classroom strategies to prepare for standard exams. But limited testing of accepted material does not dictate teaching methods. The American Federation of Teachers supports Clinton's plan.

More troubling is the fact that testing can accentuate the weak performance of many poor, often minority, students, potentially widening the learning gap. This problem can be overcome if it is faced head-on with special programs for those who do not test well.

From conservatives, the chief complaint is that national testing will lead to national curricula, with big government in Washington dictating politically correct course materials for classes across the country. This worry bears no relation to the proposal from Clinton, who is only recommending a single reading test for fourth graders and a math test in the eighth grade. No ideology is needed to solve an algebraic equation or to agree that every eighth-grader should have that skill.

In fact, Clinton is proposing that the tests be voluntary, while universal testing would provide much more useful information.

Americans treasure local control of schools and should not give it up, but it has failed millions of children because of too little oversight. In many states, only the courts have saved the poorest districts from the dust bin.

Tests do not teach, but they help identify what teaching works and where it is needed. ■

Test of wills President Clinton gets high marks ...

DOCUMENT 8 OF 44

SFEX9724900071

NEWS

- Test of wills
- President Clinton gets high marks for backing national exams; the Republicans need remedial work to grasp the concept
- EXAMINER EDITORIAL WRITER
- 619 Words
- 4059 Characters
- 09/05/97
- San Francisco Examiner
- SECOND
- A-18

- EDITORIAL
- (Copyright 1997)

WITH the kiddies tucked safely - or not so safely - back in their classrooms for another school year, questions about education policy are up for discussion. Raise your hand if you want to speak.

American schools are a terrible failure, critics carp. We're submerged in the international rankings. Maybe there's no longer a Sputnik gap, but there are plenty of other reputed scholastic chasms showing our kids to be dumber than Korean kids, Irish kids or Slovenian kids. Horrors abound - not enough books, too many drugs. Our kids can't read, they drop out and they don't have a clue who the secretary of Energy is (do you?). Employers complain that high school grads have to be trained all over again in basic skills.

Such dire analyses seem strange stacked next to the fact that the United States leads the world in technology, biomedical research, space exploration and dozens of other fields. Americans win more than our share of Nobel prizes.

Still, the suspicion sticks that American education is not all it could be. Millions of children aren't learning to read, write and do sums well, and millions more are deprived of a truly excellent educational experience.

What to do?

President Clinton is pushing hard for standardized

- * national tests, much to the horror of Republicans who aim to safeguard local control of schools. To us, the

president's plan makes sense. Why, in an age of global competition and instantaneous communication, would we expect - or want - students in San Francisco to learn a totally different set of skills from kids in Red Bank, N.J.?

Then there's the issue of accountability. School administrators, teachers and students ought to be held to answer for what is, and isn't, learned in the classroom. Failure should be recognized and dealt with. Sometimes there are so much fuzz and feel-good that the real business of school - educating students - is demoted.

- * National tests are a good way to get back to basics.

What's at stake here are not moral values. No one's talking about teaching witchcraft, or even birth control - just hard-nosed math and science and reading.

When Johnny can't read, we often find about it through tests. California went back to phonics after testing showed that fewer students were learning to read proficiently in the early grades using the trendy whole language method.

Local control isn't a bad idea. And the president doesn't disagree. He's glad to leave course content and teaching technique up to local educators. But it's fair to everyone, especially parents, to see how well the curricula and methods fare in comparison with other programs around the country. Then, ideally, the rest would learn from the best.

- * Clinton has agreed to make the tests voluntary and to leave their composition up to a bipartisan panel of experts independent from the U.S. Department of Education, a GOP candidate for extinction.

The only thing that really makes the president's proposal disagreeable to Republicans is the slippery-slope argument: Let the feds get a foot in the schoolhouse door and pretty soon they'll be running the place. But by that time, the GOP will have everyone in private schools courtesy of government vouchers. Ah, well.

Dread not. The more probable consequence of standardized

- * national tests is that more kids will learn more. The GOP should appreciate the wonderful marketplace competition that will help make this happen. Everyone will want to keep up with New Trier High School.

It's said we learn from our mistakes, and one of our

- * mistakes has been not having national tests to act both as a gauge of how well we are educating our youth and as a stimulus to doing the job better next term.

THE MONITOR'S VIEW

"First the blade, then the ear,*then the full grain in the ear."*

Put Schools to the Test

A MERICAN children won't notice, but the public schools they return to this fall lack something important: a reliable, uniform means of assessing how well they're doing their job.

Erasing that lack is what President Clinton has in mind when he calls for national tests, at the fourth and eighth grades, to assess students' performance in reading and math. The Department of Education has hastened the response to that call, letting a \$13 million contract for development of such tests.

Administration planners hope the tests will be ready by 1999. Though use of the exams will be voluntary, it's assumed most school districts will participate. Opting out might be tacit admission that the local schools don't measure up.

But the administration's time frame could run into problems. The move to institute voluntary national tests faces opposition from a number of directions. Some Republicans in Congress hope to block any funding for test development. They are concerned about federal intervention in local school decisionmaking, and worry that a national test, even if voluntary, is a step toward a federally set curriculum. They are distrustful of anything conceived by the federal education bureaucracy.

On the other side of the political spectrum are liberal critics who see standardized tests as inherently unfair to ethnic and cultural minorities. There are already efforts, for instance, to have the math, and even the reading, tests administered in Spanish as well as English.

Countering these arguments is the need to bring a degree of consistency and accountability to American education. The slowly progressing move toward national standards, and the related effort to develop uniform testing, address this need. Such steps have strong backing from business leaders, who rely on public schools to produce workers who, at the least,

math. Many big-city educational leaders are squarely behind national standards and tests, too, seeing them as a way of raising community involvement and student performance in their often-blighted school systems.

There are, of course, various ways of taking these steps. Some education analysts say the approach being taken by the administration, having the Education Department guide the development of the tests through its contract with an alliance of publishers and education groups, will heighten the chances of political and bureaucratic manipulation.

Why not simply expand the already existing – and highly respected – National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program?

Currently, that program is restricted by law to sample testing that can be used to compare educational performance among the states. The Department of Education has announced that its tests will, in fact, be based on the NAEP model.

No matter how carefully conceived, and no matter how focused on the fundamentals of reading and math, the tests are likely to generate controversy. Both fields have deep philosophical divides, between new math and old math, whole language and phonics. The debate should, however, be much less heated than the eruption over proposed national history standards a few years ago.

For the sake of America's students, the political and philosophical hurdles have to be cleared. Reliable national tests won't in themselves rebuild public education, but they're an important foundation stone. Secretary of Education Richard Riley has it right: "Raising expectations and standards in education motivates students to learn more and work harder. For the first time, the tests will inform parents, teachers, and students themselves about what it takes to reach national and even international standards of achievement in this great country – something no other test currently

**Reliable
national tests
are a key
element in
rebuilding
public
education.**

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Yes on Tests

PRESIDENT CLINTON wants to create a national reading test for fourth-graders and a math test for eighth-graders. House Republicans propose to deny him the funds. They say the tests aren't needed, won't help raise achievement levels and may in fact do harm if they lead to a national curriculum or cause underperforming students, schools or school districts to be written off. The critics are wrong. The funds should be provided.

The critics create the specter of federal control of education. That's what gives the issue its political resonance. The tests become a symbol of the big government that Republicans like to say Democrats are for and they are against. But things are a long way from that. The president and Education Secretary Richard Riley both are former governors; neither seeks to encroach on traditional state prerogatives in education. The testing they propose would be voluntary. No federal aid would be conditioned on participation.

Under a compromise just offered to assuage the critics, the tests would be developed and administered by an independent national board that is successfully administering some national tests already. The main difference is that the results of the new tests would be available for individual students, classes, schools and school districts, rather than expressed in broad national or regional terms. The idea is that, yes, they might then become instruments for change, but not dictated from above. Rather, parents and others would use them as a standard for comparison, and for demanding

improvement on the ground, at the local level.

The subjects were chosen to avoid the controversy that has sometimes, rightly, surrounded other efforts to develop national tests. There are great disputes about how best to teach reading and math. Sometimes these become surrogates for the deeper disputes about going back to basics, imposing stricter discipline, etc. But reading and math aren't value-laden subjects like, say, national history or literature. They are basic, measurable, necessary skills in the democracy and work force alike. Business groups are among those seeking the improvements in the schools that the national tests are meant to help bring about. Their concern is with the quality of the work force of the future: Will it be competitive?

Nor does it make much sense to look on tests as a threat to students or districts or schools that don't score well. In the long run, it seems to us that it can only help to have it known how well or poorly a school or its students are performing. Tests don't tell you everything, but they are what the schooling is, or ought to be, about. You balance risks in enterprises such as this. The danger is not that the federal government is going to take over the nation's schools. The danger rather is that poor performance will continue to be tolerated and obscured. A high, albeit voluntary, national standard embodied in tests such as contemplated here will help combat such performance. It was conservatives who early on proposed such tests as a kind of discipline for the schools. They should pocket their victory and move on.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Get On With Student Testing

IN FEBRUARY'S State of the Union address, President Clinton challenged states to go further than the familiar call to adopt high education standards. "By 1999, every state should test every fourth-grader in reading and every eighth-grader in math to make sure these standards are met," he said. Six months later, the bureaucracy is revving up to create the envisioned voluntary national test, but the plan has bogged down in politics and process.

National testing for individual students of the type used by our trade competitors in Europe and Asia is a good idea. Currently, the only available "nation's report card" is the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a sampling of student achievement in groups. Families and schools need uniform measures with which to identify a child's academic weaknesses and plan improvements. The entire movement for national standards over the past decade always included the eventuality of some kind of assessment, discussed most frequently as curriculum-tailored and voluntary.

But so far the Education Department has attracted only six states to its testing plan. Home-schooling advocate Michael Farris warns that testing is "the last nail in the coffin of local control." Some in the minority community fear testing merely will embarrass low-performing

students. The most active opponents—rallying around House Education chairman Bill Goodling (R-Pa.)—will seek in September to block funds for development of testing. They see it as a power grab by the Education Department and educators whom they accuse of ignoring Congress and favoring hazy "critical thinking" skills rather than a back-to-basics philosophy.

The "process" question is whether the tests should be created and run by a contractor, an approach the Clinton team is already well into preparing, or whether a new statute should be enacted to permit administration of the tests by the National Assessment Governing Board, the politically independent board that runs the NAEP tests.

That's hardly a debate to stir the hearts of parents, educators and local officials who approach the issue with a vocabulary of test scores, achievement and progress. Rather than cut off funds, Congress should sit down and work with the administration to come up with a suitable role for the governing board. Given that many states are waiting to see some pilot testing before committing, there is more interest in testing than Mr. Clinton's meager score of six takers would indicate.

Student achievement // National standards are ...

DOCUMENT 17 OF 44

MSP9721900035

NEWS

- * Student achievement // National standards are needed

467 Words

3236 Characters

08/05/97

Star-Tribune Newspaper of the Twin Cities Mpls.-St. Paul

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If Americans are really serious about educating all students well, they must get serious about setting strong academic standards, developing curricula that match, and stringently testing students' progress. That is why President Clinton is right to urge states and

- * school districts to participate in a national testing program.

His administration is developing tests that would assess performance in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math. Being able to read independently by age 8 is a prerequisite for all other learning. Doing well in math at age 12 is a second crucial educational milestone; algebra and geometry are the gateways to high school and college courses.

- * Last week, Clinton criticized governors at their national meeting for "dragging their feet" on national tests. So far, only six states and about 15 school districts have agreed to take part in the voluntary program. All should sign on, including Minnesota and its school districts.

Some governors, as well as some educator groups, expressed concerns about excessive testing and fears about possible harmful uses of the results. Lamar Alexander, former education secretary, argued that governors should be setting rigorous standards and allowing more parents to send children to alternative and home schools.

Trouble is, states' standards are all over the map. A recent yearlong Education Week study found that state standards vary widely. Calling U.S. schools "riddled with excellence and rife with mediocrity," the report points out that fewer than half of all U.S. students can do challenging work in reading or math at their grade levels.

- * In addition, many of the tirades against national standards sound much like the tired arguments used a few years ago against statewide testing. Today they get a much less sympathetic reception

from a public dissatisfied with schools and demanding reform. The case for state standards and testing has been made.

- The same case can be made in favor of national assessments. There need not be a complex maze of tests for students to take each year. As states design and refine their own tests, they can
- coordinate them with national standards. With a complementary system
- of local and national standards, students should be able to attend any U.S. school and be assured of learning to read well and do basic math.

To be sure, taking tests does not, in isolation, enhance learning or teaching environments. But it is a valuable tool to help teachers and parents understand the academic strengths and weaknesses of students.

In a global economy dominated by information, what you learn determines what you earn. U.S. students must know how they compare to their peers, not only in other states but in other countries. In order to do better, American schools and their students need to know

- where they stand, and what they need to do to compete. National standards and tests can help.

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1. Orlando Sentinel

July 30, 1997 Category: Commentary

National education standards make sense for 'united' states

By Myriam Marquez of The Sentinel Staff

The little, red schoolhouse was fine for an agrarian country in the 1800s, when each little American town decided what to teach its children in between the summer plantings and fall harvest.

But now we're entering the fast and furious global economy of the 21st century, and kids in, say, Florida won't be competing only with children in Iowa or California for jobs of the future. They'll be competing with children taught in industrialized countries from Europe to Asia. They'll be competing in an international environment, with men and women whose nations hold up national standards as the key to their success.

Why, then, do so many conservatives find President Clinton's idea for national education standards and testing so abhorrent?

A majority of Americans certainly don't agree with such horse-and-buggy thinking. The latest scientific survey I saw of American attitudes toward public education — a Gallup poll in February — showed that a majority of Americans supported President Clinton's call for national education standards. Those standards would spell out clearly what children should know in key subjects at each grade level.

Conservatives say that education is the responsibility of the states and that the federal government should stop trying to dictate one set of standards in a country where each region, each state, has its own identity.

Oh, please. English may be spoken with a twang in Texas or rushed along at mega-urban speed in New York City, but the rules of the language are consistently the same anywhere in this country. Addition, subtraction, algebra and geometry are no different in any language. And American history certainly can be taught in a way that takes into account the different perspectives of the people who struggled through this nation's turmoil and still be based on factual dates, names and places.

So what is all the fuss about?

The national standards that Clinton wants states to adopt wouldn't be dictated by the federal government. The president has called on each state to draft standards that would measure the outcomes of what is being taught in the public schools. How could conservatives, who often criticize public school systems for focusing on gimmicks to teach kids instead of on the outcomes of such teaching, be against such a common-sense approach as the measurement of outcomes?

Each state can decide whether to involve, say, parents, business people and educators in crafting those standards. That certainly would answer conservatives' concerns that public education is too focused on hoity-toity teaching techniques developed by academics who have little to do with thereal-world skills necessary for a high-technology society.

Haven't underprivileged children stuck in poorly financed inner-city schools suffered enough from a lack of standards?

That's the point that the American Federation of Teachers, a 900,000-member teachers union, made this week when it unveiled its annual progress report on state-by-state standards.

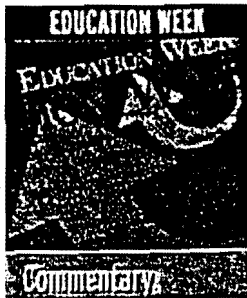
The good news is that most states already have drafted standards for each grade level, but fewer than half of those states have defined clearly what kids should know in four key subjects — reading, writing, mathematics and social studies. (Florida is among 17 states that have endorsed clear standards for the four subjects. Another 29 states have approved specific standards in at least three of the core subjects.)

And as many as 12 states endorse the concept of having a national test to measure how students fare, whether they live in Alaska or Florida.

Last time I checked, this is the United States of America — emphasis on united. That's hardly the dirty word that some conservatives make it out to be when talk turns to the need for national education standards. ■

APRIL 9, 1997

TEACHER MAGAZINE on the WEB



IN CONTEXT	THE ARCHIVES	TEACHER MAGAZINE	THE DAILY NEWS	SPECIAL REPORT
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Stumping for Standards

By Christopher T. Cross and Scott Jofus

Two recent surveys by the nonpartisan foundation Public Agenda found that a vast majority of the general public, business leaders, and students support academic standards, descriptions of what all students should know and be able to do at specified grade levels. President Clinton has tapped into this general support for standards by proposing the adoption of voluntary national standards and reading and math tests. Not surprisingly, the president's proposal has met with wide approval. The American Association of School Administrators found that a majority of superintendents, administrators, and school board members support the proposal, and the Business Roundtable's education task force--chaired by the Lockheed Martin Corp.'s CEO, Norman R. Augustine--has declared its support as well.

In a society as mobile and concerned with equity as ours, location should not determine the type or the rigor of the reading or math students learn.

Despite the strong consensus for standards, many people are confused about President Clinton's proposal to adopt the standards and tests. What are the standards? What did the president mean when he said that the standards would be "national, not federal"? Why are they voluntary? The president has suggested very straightforward standards: All students should read at grade level by the 4th grade and master basic mathematics and algebra by the 8th grade. The standards would be defined by national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math. The standards would be national and not federal because they would be developed by experts in the field, not federal bureaucrats. Moreover, although every state and district would be encouraged to use the tests to assess all students, they would not be required to do so. Furthermore, the federal government would merely report the scores; states, districts, and schools would be free to use the information as they wished. Finally, President Clinton encourages states and districts to continue to create their own specific standards in reading, math, and other subjects.

Some people have also expressed concerns about the president's proposal. One concern is that national standards may hurt low-performing students, especially those in high-poverty schools. In fact, these students suffer the most in the absence of standards. Students in high-poverty schools often receive high grades despite low skills. A 1994 U.S. Department of Education study concluded that students in high-poverty schools who receive mostly A's in English read only as well as C and D students in affluent schools. Similarly, students receiving mostly A's in mathematics in high-poverty schools perform in math about the same as D students in affluent schools.

Shouldn't students in poor schools be pushed to improve their skills so that they will succeed in college or a demanding career? Shouldn't their

Read our story, "Political Shift Emboldens Clinton To Urge Tests," Feb. 19, 1997.

Read our story, "Focus on Basics Key to Clinton Call for Testing," Feb. 19, 1997.

Read the Standards and Assessments section of "Quality Counts," our January 1997 special report on the condition of public education in the 50 states.

Read the related story from "Quality Counts," "Compact for Change," about a community-based project that embraces high standards for all students.

Read our story, "Math, English Standards Released in Calif.," Nov. 27, 1996.

Read our story, "Survey Seeks To Identify 'Essential' Standards," Nov. 6, 1996.

schools be held accountable for teaching those skills? Public Agenda found that students think so: Three out of four said students should be promoted only when they have learned everything they are supposed to have learned, and almost nine out of 10 said the standards should be as high for inner-city schools as for those in middle-class and affluent suburbs. ("Survey Reveals Teens Yearn for High Standards." Feb. 12, 1997.)

Another concern voiced by critics is that the national tests represent federal government intrusion into education. These critics fear the thought of federal bureaucrats developing tests that set standards for all students. On the contrary, the proposed tests would be based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a highly regarded exam that has been created through consensus by teachers and subject specialists and used by states for 27 years. While NAEP would set expectations for student learning and measure student achievement, it would not dictate how schools should teach.

Yet another concern is that the proposed budget for the tests--\$90 million over the next five years--could be better spent helping students meet existing standards. Indeed, according to *Education Week*, all states except Iowa and Wyoming and many districts (including the District of Columbia) have either adopted or are in the process of adopting academic standards, and most states already test their students in math and reading. (See *Quality Counts*, *Education Week* special supplement, Jan. 22, 1997.) These tests, however, have two main problems. First, a vast majority of the states with assessments have set very low expectations for their students.

Parents, armed with data on student achievement in comparable schools across the country, will be empowered to hold schools accountable.

Second, state assessments prevent comparisons of students and schools in one state with those in another. State assessments also allow for vastly different standards in subjects like math and reading that should be comparable in every state. The Southern Regional Education Board found that while many states report that 70 percent of their students meet their own standards for student achievement on the state tests in mathematics and reading, only about 30 percent of the students in these states are actually

proficient in these subjects.

Shouldn't the math and reading learned by Washington, D.C., students compare in content and rigor with the reading and math learned by students in Virginia, Maryland, and California? In a society as mobile and concerned with equity as ours, location should not determine the type or the rigor of the reading or math students learn. National tests would set the same high expectations for all students and allow for comparisons of students and schools across the country.

A final concern about the national tests comes from those, including *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, who believe that President Clinton is not going far enough. Mr. Broder notes correctly that the proposed budget is sufficient only to develop the tests and administer them once, in 1999. He also suggests, again correctly, that two tests in two

subjects fall far short of a systematic set of standards. Finally, Mr. Broder questions the administration's decision to make the tests voluntary, asking whether "superintendents and principals who think their kids will not measure up [will] volunteer for the embarrassment of testing."

Mr. Broder is absolutely correct: President Clinton's proposal is modest, almost to a fault. The president recognizes (as does Mr. Broder) the political realities that require starting small, focusing on uncontroversial subjects, and avoiding a new federal mandate. We can hope that the president will be able to encourage all states to participate in the test and to build enough momentum that tests will continue after 1999. But Mr. Clinton should not attempt to include other subjects in the national testing program at this time; there is simply not enough consensus over what all students should learn in subjects such as science and history, and such a debate would detract from the wide consensus that exists in reading and math.

Moreover, testing 4th grade students in reading and 8th grade students in math makes sound academic sense. Research shows that students unable to read well by the end of the 3rd grade are more likely to become dropouts, struggle in later grades, and have fewer good job options. Developing math proficiency in junior high school enables students to succeed in rigorous math and science courses in high school, which have been shown to increase scores on college-entrance exams and prepare students for the intellectual challenges of college and careers. Programs such as the College Board's Equity 2000 are showing that all students can succeed in challenging math courses that expand both students' minds and their options.

Testing students in these "gatekeeper" subjects during key points in their educations will provide invaluable information to students, parents, and educators. Students will be pushed to learn essential information and skills and receive feedback early enough to improve. Parents, armed with data on student achievement in comparable schools across the country, will be empowered to hold schools accountable for providing a high-quality education. Educators will be able to use this same information to identify and then replicate successful schools and programs.

Just as education is the key to our children's future, information about education is the key to improving the quality of schools and increasing student learning.

Christopher T. Cross is the president of the Maryland state board of education and of the Council for Basic Education, a nonprofit organization in Washington that advocates high academic standards in K-12 education. Scott Jofus is a policy analyst at the CBE.

On the Web

Read Point One of the president's 10-point plan: National Standards of Academic Excellence.

Read background materials for the president's initiative on national standards, including,

"Mastering the Basics Once and for All: Reaching for High Standards in Reading and Math." and "Technical Information on the National Reading and Math Tests." See "A Survey of State Standards-Setting Efforts," from the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory Web site. "Standards and Education: A Roadmap for State Policymakers." This briefing from the Education Commission of the States describes how states should go about raising educational standards.

In "50 Ways To Teach Them Grammar," Diane Ravitch writes that the governors --Democratic and Republican alike--who oppose national standards are all wrong. From April 1996.

"What Should Children Learn?" Paul Gagnon in *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1995. Starting school reform by first deciding what every child should learn strikes most people as only common sense, writes the author. Only the vastly inertial educational establishment considers it radical, he says.

"Performance Standards: How Good Is Good Enough?" A brief for the 1996 National Education Summit by Ann Borthwick and Kate Nolan of the New Standards Project.

"Improving America's Schools: Standards." This newsletter, one of a series of Newsletters on Issues in School Reform from the U.S. Department of Education, provides an overview of the variety of standards-setting activities occurring in elementary and secondary education in this country.

"Developing Content Standards: Creating a Process for Change." This October 1993 brief from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education outlines some lessons suggested by past and current efforts to develop ambitious standards.

"State Responsibility for Student Opportunity: Commitment and Issues." A November 1995 policy statement from the Council of Chief State School Officers. Schools must change so that all students meet higher standards--and states must provide leadership for this process.

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A Yardstick for American Students

By Chester E. Finn Jr. and Diane Ravitch

Tuesday, February 25, 1997; Page A17

Opinion

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

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

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

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

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

Most important, they're good tests, incorporating standards far more rigorous than most states are now using. The reading test is based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which has been around for almost three decades but has never been used by districts or schools to report the progress of individual students. The NAEP reading test is solid, multi-faceted

(not just multiple choice) and has rigorous standards built into it.

For eighth-graders, the White House proposes to make available the math part of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), which was given to a half-million youngsters in 41 countries. The standards of TIMSS are built into the international comparisons. It's TIMSS results that enabled us to see that our eighth-graders perform poorly in mathematics compared with their peers in many other industrial countries.

Consider how powerful it will be for parents and teachers to compare the math prowess of their eighth-graders in, say, Phoenix or Minneapolis, to the performance of their peers in Korea and the Czech Republic. Consider the impact of parents in Denver or Boston actually seeing how well their fourth-graders read in relation to a national standard of proficiency.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Toward a national standard math will givethe ...

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Toward a national standard math will givethe states useful information about their schools.

489 Words

3385 Characters

02/09/97

The Fresno Bee

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- * President Clinton's call for national test to measure the reading and math skills of American schoolchildren, even if heeded by Congress, won't cure the well-documented ills of public education in this country.

It could, however, enable parents and educators in the disparate states to better measure the progress of their students against those in other parts of the United States, and that could in turn drive the laggards to keep up. In an increasingly mobile society, in which students in California ought to know whether their math skills hold up against their peers in Connecticut and elsewhere, national standards and assessments make all kinds of sense.

That doesn't mean that this modest effort -- which would only address reading skills of fourth-graders and the math abilities of eighth-graders, and in which states would only participate if they volunteered -- won't be controversial.

- * Some critics charge that a national test, with results for individual students, will unfairly stigmatize poor children in struggling districts by comparing them to their more successful counterparts in privileged neighborhoods. But ignorance of the stark disparities in opportunity and achievement between students of different means is surely no way to bring them closer together.
- * And past claims that national tests are a federal government attempt to wrest control of children's education from states and local school districts are already being revived, though the fact that any test would be voluntary seriously undercuts the argument.

By whatever name, the test would be formulated by a group of education leaders chosen by the Department of Education. They will base the test on the already established and reliable National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which are given to fourth- and

eighth-graders every four years.

Unlike those tests, which only inform states about the percentage of their students who read or do math above, at, or below grade level, the new national exams would be administered annually and would provide individual scores to all students, enabling school districts and parents to see where each child stands nationally.

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

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

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Toward a national test

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

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

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

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Hathaway Shurt
Richard L. Meade
Arthur Andersen
Norman E. Rickard, Jr.
Xerox Corporation
Ludy Wynne Wiley
NAPIC
Bern C. Roberts, Jr.
MCI Communications Corporation
Edward B. Rust, Jr.
State Farm Insurance Companies
Richard F. Schubert
Drucker Foundation
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Kegon-Reggie, Inc.
Roger F. Staubach
The Staubach Co.
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IBM Corporation
A. William Wiggenshorn
Macorale, Inc.
Alan L. Wurzel
Circuit City Stores, Inc.
Sam Ybu
National Education Corporation
Paul Younglove
National Council of La Raza

COUNSEL
Rodrick A. DeBartment
Covington & Burling

October 16, 1997

Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
Committee on Appropriations
Room SD-184 Dirksen Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

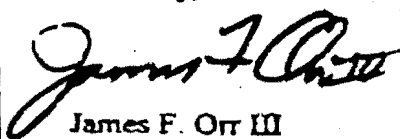
Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you work to resolve differences between the House and Senate bills that would fund Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education priorities, I want to reaffirm the importance placed by the Alliance and other business organizations on developing voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics.

It is important to establish objective benchmarks against which parents, teachers, schools, and business can see how our children are doing in these core subjects. The information would help ensure that students are receiving an education commensurate with the requirements of the emerging American workplace and the global economy. Such information would help target aid and expertise where improvements need to be made. It would let us know how our schools are doing compared to other communities, other states, and other countries.

The business community has consistently supported the development of an independent, voluntary, national test that would provide this kind of information to parents and teachers as part of a larger effort to improve academic achievement.

Sincerely,



James F. Orr III
Chairman and CEO
UNUM Corporation
Chairman, National Alliance of Business



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 10, 1997

Contact: Johanna Schneider
(202) 872-1260

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

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

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

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

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

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

April 2, 1997

More than two hundred of America's technology industry leaders have joined today in a bipartisan call for national education standards — not federal government standards, but national standards. These should represent what all our students must know to succeed in the new knowledge economy of the 21st century. Every state and school must shape the curriculum to reflect these standards, and train teachers to lift students up to them.

To help schools meet the standards and measure their progress, we need an effort over the next two years to develop national tests of student achievement in reading and math. Every state should adopt high national standards, and by 1999, every state should test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met. The states have responsibility for setting challenging academic standards and for measuring student progress toward these standards. President Clinton's national testing initiative offers a new opportunity to use widely accepted national benchmarks in reading and math against which states, schools districts and parents can judge student performance.

Raising standards will not be easy, and some of our children will not be able to meet them at first. The point is not to put our children down, but to lift them up. Good tests will show us who needs help, what changes in teaching to make, and which schools need to improve. They can help us to end social promotion. For no child should move from grade school to junior high, or junior high to high school until he or she is ready.

Jim Barksdale
CEO & President
Netscape Communications

L. John Doerr
Partner
Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers



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

Media Relations Department (202) 463-5682

NEWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

###

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE
OF BUSINESS**

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: Immediate

Contact: Milt Goldberg
202/289-2944

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

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

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

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

###

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

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN
James F. Orr III
UNUM Corporation

PRESIDENT & CEO
Roberts T. Jones

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K-III Communications

Brian D. McAuley
Nextel Communications Inc.

Jewell Jackson McCabe
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

John R. McKernan, Jr.
McKernan Enterprises

Richard L. Measelle
Arthur Andersen

Norman E. Rickard, Jr.
Xerox Corporation

Bert C. Roberts, Jr.
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Circuit City Stores, Inc.

Sam Yau
National Education Corporation

Raul Yzaguirre
National Council of La Raza

COUNSEL
Roderick A. DeArment
Covington & Burling

PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS

Norman Rickard, President of Xerox Business Systems and Chair of the Education Committee for the National Alliance of Business, sent a letter asking about 100 of our leadership companies to express their opinion regarding the Administration's proposal for the development of voluntary national tests. The overwhelming majority of responses indicated support for these tests. The only three negative responses we received focused on the potential problems of the relationship of these tests to state-based tests. Among the positive responses, a number of corporate leaders sent in additional comments.

"National testing has been very successful in the global market. We support it as a validation tool."

"National standards and tests will hopefully increase the pressure and up the stakes for local education agencies to meet the challenge of fundamental literacy for all students."

"This will provide a basis for comparing result and progress across the nation. We can also expect increased collaboration across districts and states based on 'Best Practices.'"

"We favor local state control, but the national model tests are an important step in establishing measurable minimum competencies for all students."

News...News...



News...News...

Council of the Great City Schools

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. ♦ Suite 702 ♦ Washington, D.C. ♦ 20004

FOR RELEASE

July 25, 1997 (Embargoed)

CONTACT: Henry Duvall

(202) 393-2427

Major Urban School Systems Step Up to Clinton's Voluntary National Tests

WASHINGTON, July 25—Many of the nation's largest urban public school systems indicated their intent today to participate in President Clinton's voluntary national tests for 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, setting the pace to raise standards and performance in schools everywhere.

President Clinton—before superintendents, school board members and teacher organization heads from 15 major urban school districts across the country—announced the likely participation of the districts in his testing initiative unveiled during his State of the Union address in February.

The willingness of these districts to participate in the Spring 1999 national testing signaled an important commitment by the nation's major urban public schools to the highest academic standards and to assessing their progress on them. "Urban public schools are driving their own improvement and reform at a pace that should encourage the American public," said Michael Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban school systems, which assisted in organizing today's event for participating districts.

"Let our presence here today dispel any notion that urban educators are committed to anything but high performance and quality schooling for children in our inner cities," stressed Casserly.

City school systems everywhere are making major efforts to raise standards and improve performance. This year many urban school districts saw test scores increase; for example, in New York City, Houston, Chicago, and San Francisco—all the result of higher standards and greater focus on student achievement. In addition, the public is beginning to show greater confidence in these school systems by passing a large number of construction bonds and increased operating levies (e.g., Cleveland, Minneapolis, Oakland, Las Vegas, Los Angeles).

(more)

Many Great City Schools across the nation are becoming centers of innovation, collaboration and effort—despite the many challenges they face and the distance they still need to travel. Atlanta's *Teaching All Children to Read* program is a unique partnership of the Atlanta Public Schools and Georgia State University to boost reading achievement. Houston's *MOVE IT MATH* program is an innovative effort in grades K-6 to introduce algebra in the early grades. Chicago has moved aggressively on a number of fronts, including a collaboration—*Teacher for Chicago*—of nine colleges and universities in the metropolitan area to recruit, train and retain high quality teachers.

The New York City Schools are pursuing a relentless campaign to reduce school size and boost academic standards of students. The Philadelphia School District is pursuing one of the most ambitious systemic reform programs in the nation, *Children Achieving*. And El Paso's *Focus on First Graders* program works to build academic success for early grade students coming from low-income families.

The urban school districts assembled here today with the President collectively enroll some half-million 4th and 8th grade students, 20% of whom are limited English proficient and 66% free and reduced price lunch eligible—rates over twice the national averages.

"Attaining the standards measured by the yet-to-be developed tests, however, will require a substantial commitment by the American public to urban children," added Casserly. "Our urban children deserve the same opportunities for a bright future as any other child, no matter where they live in this nation."

"America needs to invest in urban public education—the federal government, states, parents, and business," noted Casserly.

Following the announcement with President Clinton, the urban school leaders met with senior Administration officials to review draft features of the tests and to discuss issues about test implementation and use.

Participating in today's event were school leaders from New York City, El Paso, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio, Philadelphia, Fresno, Omaha, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), Houston, Long Beach, Seattle and Detroit.

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of some 50 of the nation's largest urban public school systems working to improve the quality of public education in the nation's major cities.

###

PURPOSES FOR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

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

September 2, 1997

SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

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

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

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

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

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

Letter signed by the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Education Task Force of the Business Roundtable

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

National Alliance of Business

more

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

August 29, 1997

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

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

August 29, 1997

RESPONSES TO CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL TESTS

1. We don't need another test.

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

2. Tests don't generate higher academic performance.

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

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

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

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

September 2, 1997

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

STATES

Alaska
Kentucky
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
North Carolina
West Virginia

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

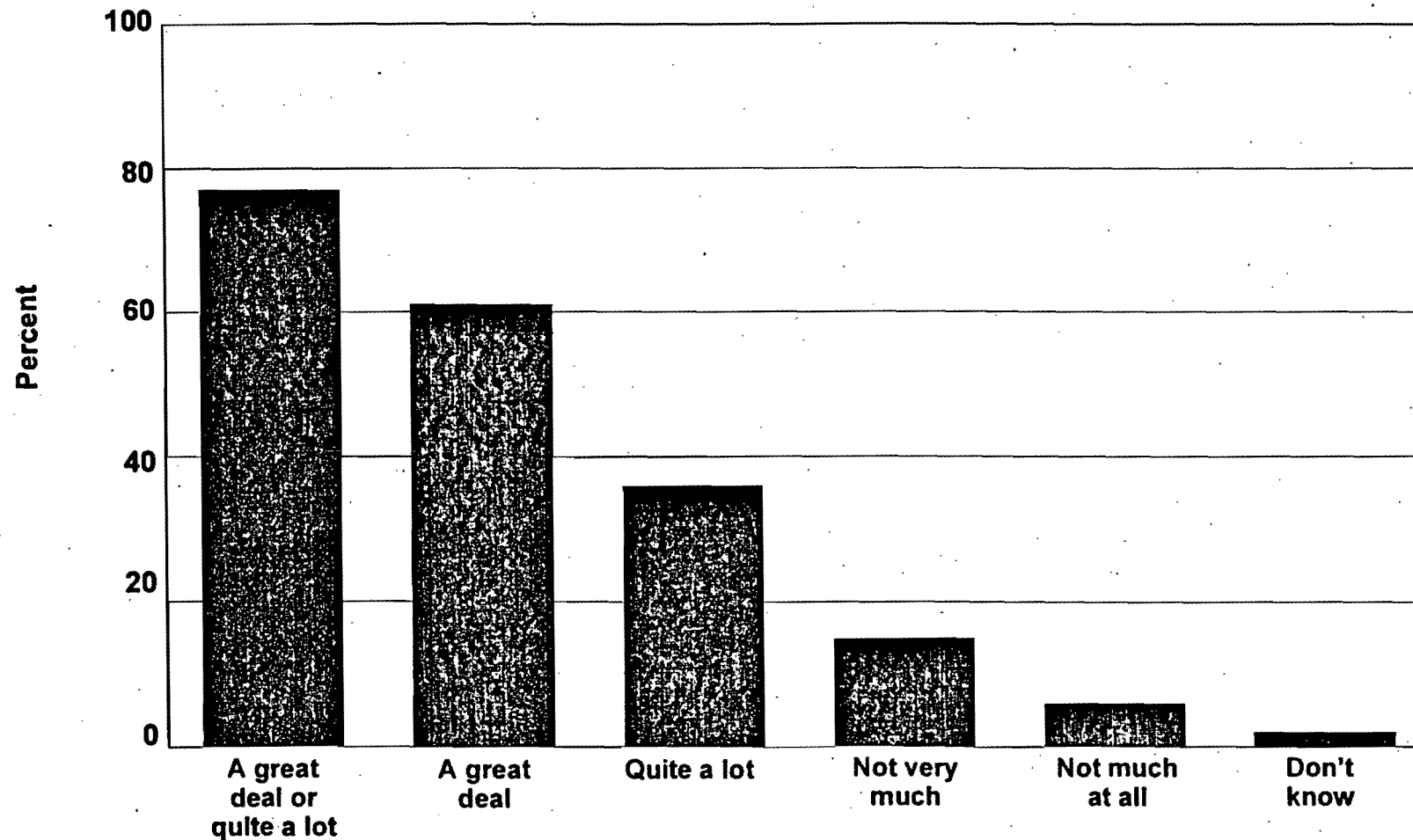
Atlanta, GA
Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), FL
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
Fresno, CA
Houston, TX
Long Beach, CA
Los Angeles, CA
New York City, NY
Omaha, NE
Philadelphia, PA
San Antonio, TX
Seattle, WA

The Department of Defense schools will also participate.

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

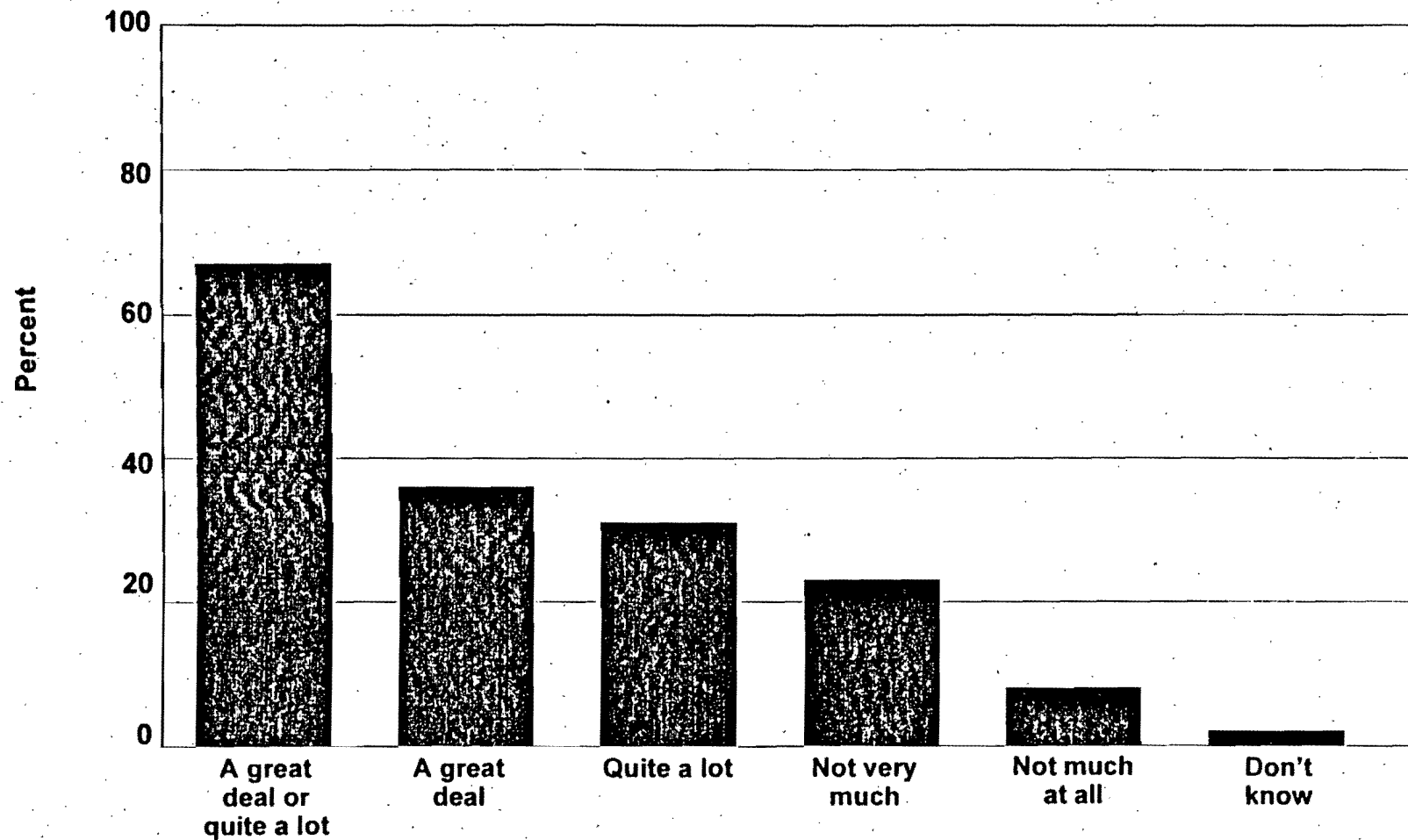
August 29, 1997

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



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

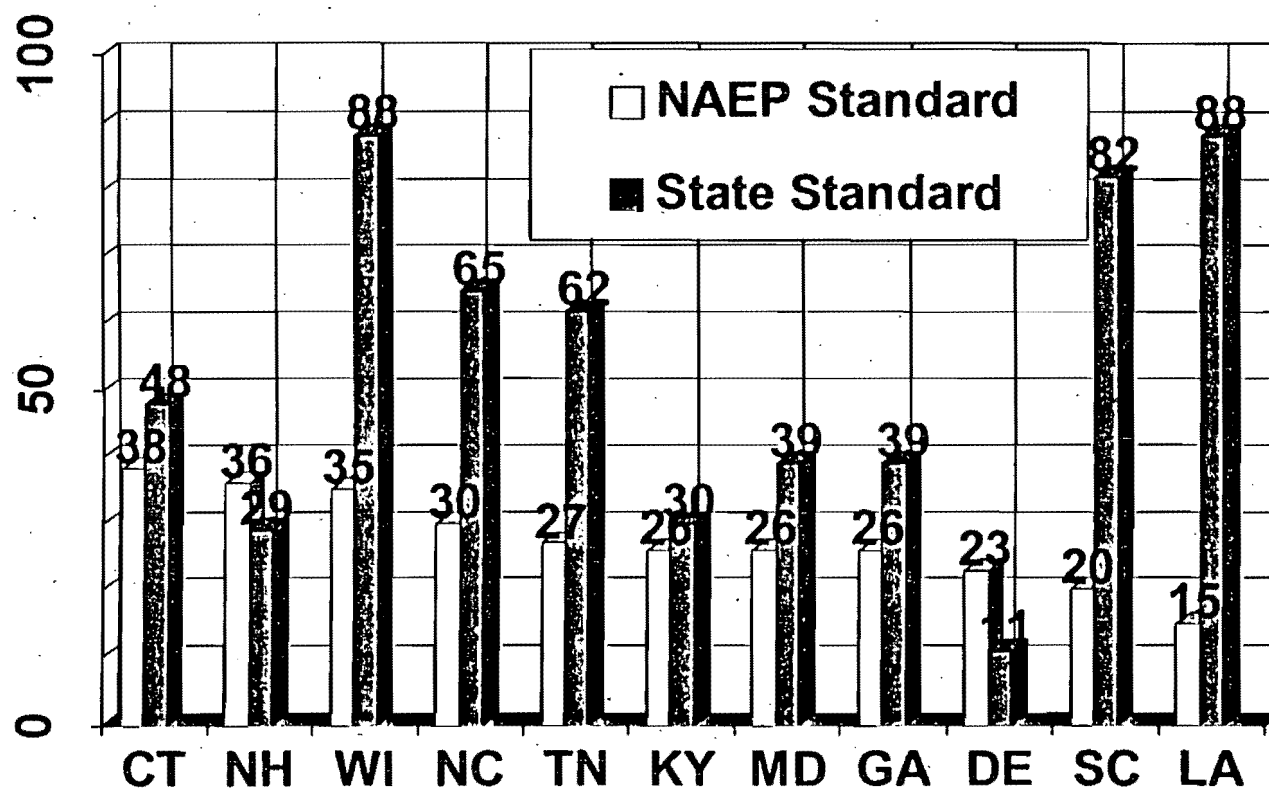
Using standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students



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

NAEP MEASURES HIGH STANDARDS:

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



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



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

Media Relations Department (202) 463-5682

NEWS

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

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**NATIONAL ALLIANCE
OF BUSINESS**

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: Immediate

Contact: Milt Goldberg
202/289-2944

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

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 10, 1997**

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

**STATEMENT BY NORMAN R. AUGUSTINE, CHAIRMAN AND CEO
LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION AND
CHAIRMAN, EDUCATION TASK FORCE OF
THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
ON PRESIDENT CLINTON'S CALL FOR NATIONAL TESTS IN
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Washington, DC--The Business Roundtable applauds the President's continued efforts to make achievement of high academic standards a top priority--a goal the Roundtable itself has been pursuing. The Roundtable supports voluntary national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics. These tests will provide a national benchmark in reading and an international benchmark in mathematics that parents and educators can use to learn how their own children and students are performing.

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

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

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

Gale Aguillar
Paul Allaire
Joseph Ambrosio
Dr. Gilbert Amelio
Marc Andreessen
Vincente Anido, Jr.
Sherry —
Eric Archambeau
Howard Asher
Mel Badgen
Naren Bakshi
Jim Barksdale
Carol Bartz
Gary Beach
Geroge Bell
Eric Benhamou
Charles Berger
Philip Berman
Jeff Bezos
David Binkley
Philip J. Biola
Jalech Bisharat
Julie Blanchard
Charles Boesenberg
Shelby Bonnie
Jerry brenholtz
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COALITION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

August 27, 1997

Members of the United States Senate

Dear Senator:

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

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

Why develop voluntary national tests?

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

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

Design of the tests

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

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

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

Safeguards in test development

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

Urgency for test development in 1997

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

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

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

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

September 3, 1997

Dear Representative:

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

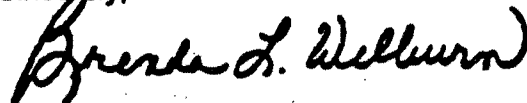
Development of these tests, which will be patterned after the widely acclaimed National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is consistent with the Department of Education's traditional role in research and development and should not be impeded. In addition, for those states opting to participate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

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

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

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

Sincerely,



Brenda Lilienthal Welburn
Executive Director

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Brenda Lilienthal Welburn
Executive Director

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Measuring Success in School

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

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

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

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

As former governors, President Clinton and I strongly support the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

get a good education."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

U.S. Is Seeking More Influence Over Education

By PETER APPLEBOME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By PETER APPLEBOME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

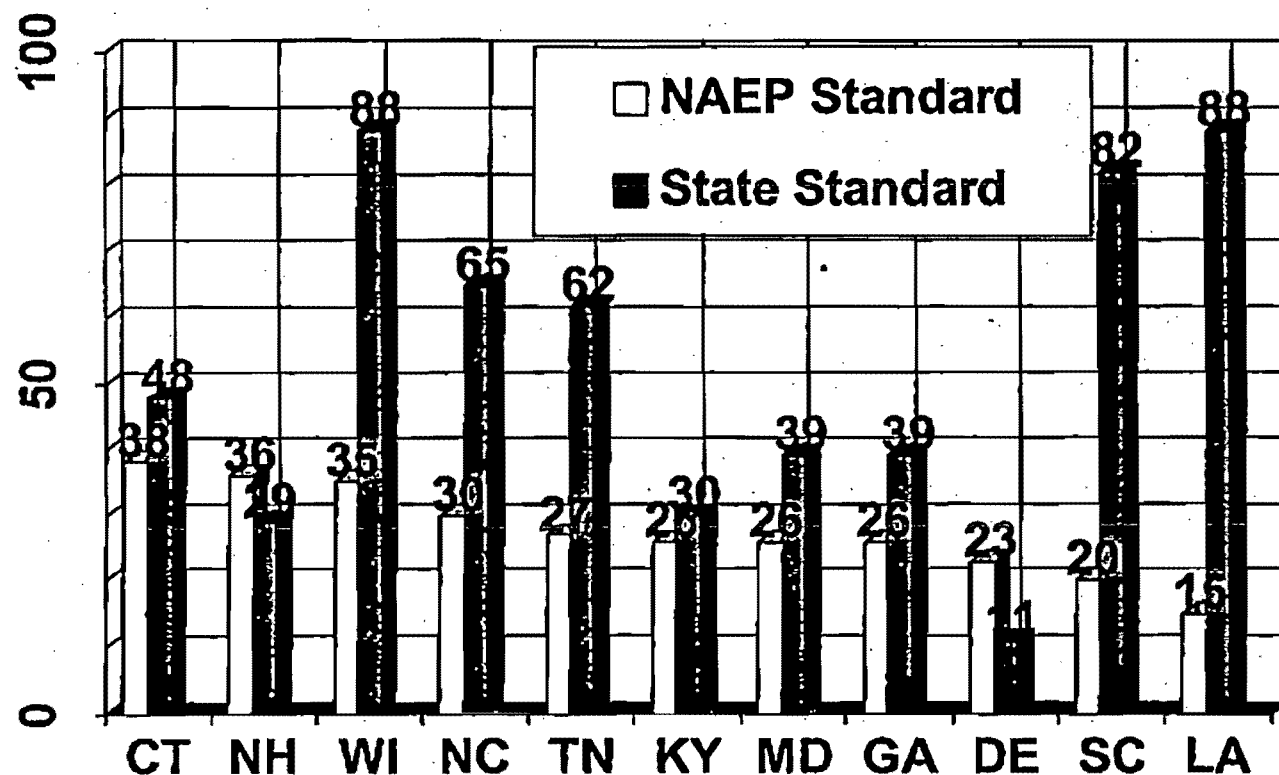
Scores on the College Board's tests, taken by 1.1 million students, rose in math to the highest level in 26 years but were flat in English. Officials say the results, released last week, take into account the recentering of test scores that produced a rise in scores two years ago.

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

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

NAEP MEASURES HIGH STANDARDS:

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



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