

- Challenge every state to adopt higher standards for teachers and for schools. X

88% more favorable (67% much more + 21% somewhat more)

10% less favorable (6% much less + 4% somewhat less)

This would be a: 63% major advancement, 22% medium advancement, 15% minor advancement

- Put into place a set of national standards and recommended tests in core courses and provide incentives to states to adopt them. X

73% more favorable (40% much more + 33% somewhat more)

20% less favorable (11% much less + 9% somewhat less)

This would be a: 32% major advancement, 36% medium advancement, 24% minor advancement

- Put in place a national high school graduation standard and test and provide incentives to states to adopt them. X

75% more favorable (47% much more + 28% somewhat more)

20% less favorable (10% much less + 10% somewhat less)

This would be a: 46% major advancement, 28% medium advancement, 23% minor advancement

- Call for an end to "social promotions" -- where kids are sent to higher grades even if they haven't mastered the appropriate skills -- and call on every state to institute graduation exams so that high school diplomas mean something.

81% more favorable (58% much more + 23% somewhat more)

16% less favorable (11% much less + 5% somewhat less)

This would be a: 59% major advancement, 23% medium advancement, 16% minor advancement

January 7th Survey

- Do you think that in addition to the current grading and promotion system in our schools, we should also have national educational standards? D

78% yes/19% no

- Some people say we need national educational standards so parents can know that the learning expectations for their kids stack up well against what

kids in other states and communities are learning and what colleges, universities, and employers will demand. Other people say that national standards cannot be implemented successfully without imposing them in an intrusive way on states and local school districts. Which is closer to your view?

65% standards for context / 27% too intrusive

- Suppose the federal government were to try to implement higher national education standards by setting goals of achievement for schools that include what students should be taught at each grade.

70% support (42% strongly support + 28% somewhat support)
26% oppose (16% strongly oppose + 10% somewhat oppose)

- Suppose the federal government were to try to implement higher national education standards by establishing tests at key grades that measure educational achievement so we can determine the progress we are making.

74% support (49% strongly support + 25% somewhat support)
24% oppose (13% strongly oppose + 11% somewhat oppose)

- Should educational goals for grades and schools be set on the local, state, or national level?

43% national
29% state
25% local

- Should educational tests be developed and administered by the local school board, the state, or the federal government?

33% local school board
43% state government
21% federal government

- Suppose the federal government appointed a commission to determine national education standards and to create a test that could be given to the states to administer on a voluntary basis. Would you strongly support this decision, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or strongly oppose it?

75% support (40% strongly support + 35% somewhat support)
23% oppose (9% strongly oppose + 14% somewhat oppose)

- Some people say a national test is too much intrusion into local school boards' educational decisions; other people say this is too important a tool to

pass up and we need it to measure our national educational progress or we will fall behind other countries. Which is closer to your view?

35% too much intrusion / 59% too important

- Suppose President Clinton required each state to adopt a standardized test or create its own so that each state has at least some clear uniform measure of the educational achievement of its students

75% support (44% strongly support + 31% somewhat support)

21% oppose (11% strongly oppose + 10% somewhat oppose)

- Suppose the President announced a test project in educational testing where several states will participate in uniform standards and testing.

76% support (41% strongly support + 35% somewhat support)

21% oppose (12% strongly oppose + 9% somewhat oppose)

- What is the most important area for students to have standardized tests?

48% reading

36% math

2% science

1% history

Q& A's for Testing Proposal

I. Goal of Proposal

Q. How did the President arrive at this decision to call for these national tests? What is so important about these tests? What kind of effect do you see this having?

A. This new effort is consistent with all of the President's past efforts to raise standards. As a Governor he raised standards for both students and teachers. The President participated in the 1989 Education Summit with President Bush that led to establishment of our national education goals. When he became President his first education initiative was to ask the Congress to pass the Goals 2000 program.

As you look across the country you see progress when it comes to standards. More young people are taking the core academic courses. The trend line in terms of math and science scores has been going up for some time. More young people are going to college.

But the President's biggest concern is that we aren't making progress fast enough. We are leaving too many people out. 40 a% of our young people aren't reading as well as they should. Our students score below the international average when it comes to 8th grade math.

The President made the decision to offer these voluntary tests to the states because he is determined that every American child should master the basics once and for all. We owe it our children. We need to stop plodding forward and make a big jump when it comes to getting excellence into every classroom and we need to start earlier.

Children can't do much of anything in school if they can't read English by the 4th grade. And 8th grade math is a pivotal point in terms of making sure that a student is ready for high school work so they can go to college.

Q. How much will this proposal cost?

We currently estimate a five year price-tag of about 90 million dollars. Much of this is to pay all the costs associated with giving the test "free of charge" in 1999 to states and local school districts that want to participate.

After 1999 we would pay for development costs and technical assistance but not for the administration of the exam, which will be made available through licensing arrangements to commercial test publishers, states, and others.

Q. Will you need legislation to implement this?

A. The Department has the authority to conduct this new assessment under its current legislation, however Secretary will certainly be consulting Congressional leaders for broad-based bi-partisan support.

Q. Didn't President Bush propose a national test that Democrats opposed? Isn't this just a warmed over version of the Bush proposal, basically a gimmick?

A. The President agreed with former President Bush that we needed some sort of national indicator of progress. He took issue with other proposals in the Bush proposal such as vouchers which would not move the country in the right direction. The President supports public school choice, and the 1997 education budget will double our investment in charter schools by adding an additional \$51 million.

Under President Bush's plan there would have been a voluntary nationwide exam in five core subjects. Under President Clinton's proposal we will just focus on the two key basics of reading and math.

We will help schools prepare for these tests in several ways. The President has made major new investments in education including our Title I program that helps children in high poverty schools learn their basics. The President's Reading Challenge will support 30,000 reading specialists and one million volunteer tutors.

The President doesn't think this is a gimmick and neither does Secretary Riley. It's a sin to allow kids to drift through school who can't read as well they should and do basic arithmetic. As a nation we have to get our children ready for the future, which begins with teaching them the basics.

Q. Do you have any plans to test other subjects like science or history?

No. We want to keep a sharp focus on the basics and we think that the American people will agree with this approach. If a child has their basics down everything else follows.

Q. Why didn't you include writing as part of this test, isn't that one of the 3R's?

There is a very strong consensus to focus in on reading and math. We have a very good idea about how to test these two subjects. We are not discounting the importance of writing.

Q. Won't this proposal add to the testing burden students face?

A. This test will take less than 2 hours for 4th and 8th graders once a year. That's not a lot. Consider it this way -- 43 percent of 4th graders watched television 4 or more hours *daily*. If they are studying for these tests they might be watching less television and I don't see any harm in that. States and districts can use this test as a supplement or as a replacement to parts of their existing testing programs. I think Governors and education leaders in the states are going to want to know how their students compare to national and international standards. It's a great selling point if you're doing well and a great incentive to improve.

Q. Why these subjects and grade levels?

A. Children go to school for the first three years to learn how to read so they can spend the rest of their school years reading to learn. Reading is the very first basic. Every child simply has to have this basic down pat.

Compared to the rest of the world we do quite well in teaching our children to read. There is, however, a strong link between low reading skills, falling behind in school, disruptive behavior, and dropping out. Too many young people are struggling given the increasing demand for higher levels of literacy. We want to close that gap.

When it comes to math -- algebra and geometry are strong indicators of whether or not the student will take the core courses that lead to college. And we do know that compared to the rest of the world we are behind when it comes to math at 8th grade. We are below the international average. We just need to do better.

Q. How will schools, communities/districts, or states be expected to use the results?

A. It is up to local school boards, communities and states to determine how they will use results of this test, consistent with civil rights requirement regarding valid use of tests.

The test will certainly identify students and schools that need extra help. The test will give parents, teachers, principals a clear standard of how their students are doing compared to national and international achievement standards.

And it will give parents as they move from place to place around the country a very good sense of how their children are doing in the basics wherever they live. But ultimately local school boards, principals and teachers have to decide how to use the results to improve their schools. The federal government will not dictate a course of action and will not collect individual test results.

Q. Does this proposal mean that state standards aren't strong enough and the federal government has to step in?

A. States are moving forward at a very rapid rate. Governors like Jim Hunt, Roy Romer and Christy Todd Whitman are national leaders. Almost every state in the country is well on their way to thinking through the standards process. (According to the National Education Goals Panel in 1996, 45 states have statewide assessment systems.) It's not easy.

However, states' standards and assessments vary. The special report by Education Week gave only 22 states A's and 13 states B's for their standards and assessments. We can give every state a national standard in these two key basics that they can shoot for -- that reflects the best when it comes to excellence. And we want to give parents the opportunity to understand where their children compare when it comes to national standards.

Q. What will happen to students who fail?

A. If a child doesn't do well that means parents and teachers are getting an early warning that the child needs help. That's the advantage of these tests. They send a message to get help early.

A child who can't read may have vision problem or dyslexia, or a hearing problem that has gone unnoticed. Getting children the help they need early is so important. But how to help a student is something for parents and the teachers. We are not going to dictate or tell parents what is best for an individual child.

Q. What is the relation of this to Goals 2000?

A. Both have the same goal -- high standards -- and we are encouraged by the number of states that are using their Goals 2000 money to focus in on mastering the basics. Pete Wilson in California has a major reading initiative underway using \$33 million in Goals 2000 money. Governor Bush in Texas is using his Goals 2000 money for the same purpose.

States can use their Goals 2000 money in the way they see fit. We don't dictate direction here. The Goals 2000 program has no new regulations. In fact, we have spent the last four years cutting federal education regulations -- 79% of all education regulations for elementary and secondary education have been cut. (this excludes civil rights regs). We want schools to have more flexibility not less so they can find the solutions that work for them.

Q. What is the relationship between this test and the America Reads Challenge?

This test will help us target the resources from the President's Reading Challenge to the schools and communities that need the help the most. If a child does badly on this test it may give parents a very strong incentive to put them into this tutoring program or get them some other form of help so they can get the individual attention that they need.

America Reads will give grants to local reading partnerships to help low-achieving students get after-school, weekend and summer help to read better. America Reads will provide extra support to communities where children may not at first be reaching standards of reading proficiency.

Q. *What is the relationship between this test and other federal education programs?*

This test will not be required of any school that is participating in any federal education programs. There are no strings attached. This test is completely voluntary.

Q. Will there be any special effort to help schools prepare for these tests?

We will do all we can to help schools get ready. The President has made major new investments in education. In the past decade, the federal government has spent millions of dollars to strengthen math and science education.

Programs such as Goals 2000, Title I, and the Eisenhower Professional Development Program have a strong and constant focus on improving teaching and learning. Title I is our major effort to help young people learn the basics. This is a \$7 billion program that gets help to the most impoverished schools.

The National Science Foundation also supports significant activities to enhance math and science education. As a result, math and science scores are now up one full grade level. That is a significant achievement. But we need to do much more to be international competitive.

II. Questions about the President's motives and putting the proposal together

Q. Why is the President proposing this national test at this time?

A. We are at a critical juncture in our nation's history—our education system will be a key factor in how we perform in the global economy. As we head toward the 21st century, our students simply have to have their basic skills down. There is no other way around it.

A student who can't read isn't going to be able to use or cruise the Internet. An 8th grader who can't add or multiply or do basic algebra isn't really learning the skills they need to take a the college prep courses they need to get ahead. The President wants to make sure that every American child has mastered the basics once and for all. We have too many young people coming out of high school who are taking remedial courses when they get to college. That's got to change.

Q. The President is the leader of the free world yet he seems to be running for school board chairman? Given the fact that the federal government has little if any role in elementary school education isn't this really an over-reach?

A. The President is playing precisely the role a President should play in the middle of the Information Age -- he is exercising national leadership on an issue of critical importance to the future of our country. If our students are going to be able to compete in an increasingly global economy, they need to be able to measure up.

Secretary Riley isn't trying to over step the boundaries of state and local control. The President and the Secretary are both very sensitive to this issue given their experience as former Governors. The solutions are at the local level. These tests are an opportunity not a requirement. The Department's funding is limited but it is targeted to those young people who need the help the most in doing well on these tests.

Q Isn't this just a way for the President to create a "legacy" for himself since he failed to get national health insurance passed? Why should people take this idea seriously when the federal government right now plays such a minor role in financing education?

This is an issue that has always been closest to the President's heart. He has a very solid record of achievement in education over the last four years. He has consistently called for higher standards. He stood up for education during the budget battle. He is making major new investments in this year's education budget. This not just a test for children but a test for our nation. Are we willing to prepare our children for the 21st century.

Q. Did the President consult with any education experts before he decided to make this proposal and if so who? Who are the people behind this new proposal?

The President is always talking to education experts. It's an ongoing conversation.

Secretary Riley issued the call for a greater national focus on literacy over a year ago in his annual state of education speech. The President joined Secretary Riley in that call last August when he announced his new reading challenge.

The recent results of the Third International Math and Science test were quite dramatic and the President was really struck by the results. He wants to make sure our young people are meeting the international standard. Being below the international average just isn't good enough.

III. Getting Teachers and Schools Ready

Q. How will you ensure that teachers are prepared to help students meet these high standards?

A. We have the best teachers in the world here in America. But they need our help.

Two recent reports -- the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the report of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study -- have told us -- in no uncertain terms -- that we need to do a lot more to prepare new teachers and give teachers in the classroom now more of an opportunity to keep learning.

President Clinton issued a directive to Secretary Riley last year to review what the Department can do to improve teacher quality. Secretary Riley is working on that now, and he will make some recommendations as part of the Administration's effort to reauthorize the Higher Education Act this year..

The Department also has several programs that focus in on teacher quality -- including Eisenhower professional development, Title I, and Goals 2000.

Q. If you have a national test for students, why not a national test for teachers?

A. We are not advocating a national test for teachers.

We support the goals established by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. We want to encourage and support the board certification of over 100,000 master teachers -- at least one in every school in the next ten years.

We also encouraging states to set high standards for new teachers. We need hundreds of thousands of new teachers because of the baby-boom echo. They need to teach to high standards. States need to make that happen. They should align their teacher entry examinations, licensing, and certification requirements with the standards that they are developing for their students.

Q. How can you have these types of tests when students in poorer schools don't get the trained teachers and other resources they need to be able to meet these standards? What is the administration doing to help poor schools to get ready for these tests? What will you do to help schools that do badly on these tests?

Some schools that take this test will have students who will do poorly. We expect that. We intend to help them. The President has been making major new investment in our Title I programs for the last four years.

This is a \$7 billion program that goes primarily to schools with high levels of poverty. The entire program was completely revamped four years ago to set high standards and we are starting to see results.

We don't believe in dumbing down the curriculum. Given young people in poor schools a watered down curriculum really is a statement that you are writing them off. That's not acceptable. We will also use the President's Reading Challenge to get help to schools that need it most.

Parents need to know the truth about what type of education their children are receiving. Students' grades are sometimes deceptive. We know for example that on average, "A" students in high-poverty schools in math perform about as well as "C" students in low-poverty schools on the same math test. That tells you some schools have standards that are too low.

IV. FEDERAL ROLE AND STATE RIGHTS

Q. The President says that he does not intend take power from local school boards yet this seems to be the first step toward a national curriculum?

A. No. The President's proposal is entirely consistent with his idea that the best solutions are solutions that the American people by themselves. We are setting a national priority, not a national curriculum.

We will offer these high quality tests to the states and local school districts. It's up to local school officials to decide whether they want to take the test. The test will be locally administered and the individual scores will be used by parents and teachers. The federal government will not collect individual scores.

Q. Isn't this a vote of no-confidence that our public schools can't even teach the basics and the federal government has to step in?

A. Not at all. We know that many schools are successfully teaching the basics. The President visited a group of public schools in Illinois a few weeks ago that were the best in the world when it comes to math and science.

We simply want to give other schools the opportunity to test themselves against national and international benchmarks. This is a vote of confidence that when given good information parents, teachers, principals and parents will act on it.

Q. Will this proposed national test take the place of state tests that are already being administered? If so many states are already giving these types of tests isn't this national test redundant?

A. This short test will be a supplement that allows states to benchmark their tests against national and international standards of excellence. We are going to offer this test to test publishers so that it can be used by states and local schools in conjunction with their own tests.

Q. You seem to be saying that the federal government knows more about improving education than Governors and you seem to imply that state standards aren't strong enough and that the federal government has to step in?

A. One of the clear and very established roles of the federal government when it comes education is do the research that states by themselves can't do. We spent over \$25 million dollars, for example, so that the United States could participate in the recent TIMSS test.

Our research tells us that getting children to read well by the 4th grade and taking more difficult math subjects like Algebra in the 8th grade is absolutely the right way to prepare our children for the future.

The President has enormous respect for the many effort at the local level and the effort that so many Governors have been making to improve standards. He attended the last Governor Summit on education and he will do all he can to work with the Governors to improve standards. Governor Romer, Hunt, Engler and Christy Todd Whitman are just a few of the Governors that are setting the agenda in their states when it comes to high standards.

But we do know that standards vary from state to state. The Southern Regional Education Board did a recent comparison of 4th grade standards in the South and how the those standards matched the results of our recent 4th grade NAEP test. The SREB found a wide variation in the results. Some students did very well based on the state standards but less well on the NAEP test.

So this test will give parents a very sound way to compare results. Parents will be able to match local results to states results to national results and even international results. That really will be quite powerful.

Q. Are these tests voluntary for states, districts, students? If they don't participate, will they lose funds? Even though you say these are voluntary, won't you be tying federal funding or other strings to these tests making them essentially mandatory?

A. These tests are completely voluntary for states and districts and are not tied to any federal program or funding. Districts will not lose funds if they choose not to participate. As these tests would be state and locally controlled.

Q. How many states and districts do you think will choose to use this test? Have you spoken to many already? What kind of response are you getting?

A. We believe that the response will be positive. Secretary Riley has received very strong support in the last year in setting the goal of making sure that every child can read well by the end of the third grade. There is really a lot of movement in that direction at the local and state level. This is not something out of the blue. Most experts will tell you that this type of early intervention is exactly what we need

Some states and locals may choose to adopt this as their own assessment system, others may choose to supplement assessments they are developing in additional grades and subject areas. But it is very clear that the American public wants to see movement when it comes to improving American education. Six in 10 Americans (61%) say academic standards are too low in their own local schools.

Q. Won't this lead to a national curriculum? Doesn't this undermine the work states and districts have already done to develop their own standards and assessments?

A. This test will not lead to national curriculum. We are setting a national priority, not a national curriculum. There is a big difference.

Over a decade ago the Dept of Education issued its "Nation at Risk report" and urged states to make sure students take a core academic curriculum. Many states have done just that. We set the goal. Every state out to meet that goal. It is the same thing with this test. The President is setting a goal. He will support the states in any way he can and he is making major new investments in education.

But it is up to the states to find the solutions at the local level. What is taught in the classroom is a state and local decision. We are simply offering states and local school districts and independent check on the quality and rigor of their own tests.

Q. Will the federal government require teachers teach to a specific curriculum? For example, will teachers teach either phonics or whole language when it comes to preparing for the reading section of this test?

A. No. Curriculum is a state and local matter. The national and international assessments from which the tests derive broadly cover curriculum that are used across our country and indeed in other countries as well. They take a balanced approach in testing the kinds of skills

students will need to be successful in reading and math and school generally. They borrow from the best research on successful strategies for teaching reading and math that combine multiple approaches to produce high performance.

Q. So you say participation in this test is voluntary. That's fine for now, but what will you say next year or two years from now? Isn't this the first step to the federal government setting standards and requiring tests?

A. States and locals would decide if they wished to use these tests, just as they make decisions about other assessment programs. The tests would provide states and locals with an independent check on the quality and rigor of their own educational testing programs. There would be nothing to compel states and locals to participate, other than responding to the desire of parents, teachers and communities to know how well their students are performing.

Q. If there is such a need for a new test, why are the test publishers not developing such a test. Why does the federal government need to get involved?

A. The U.S. Dept of Education supports the front-end work of test development and would link these test with assessment programs that Department already funds. This linking is a logical extension of the work the Department has undertaken to be provide valid and accurate assessments that will be of use to parents, communities, and states. What the Department can offer which is quite exciting is the link between local, state, national and international levels of achievement.

V. Test Quality and Fairness

Q. Who determines the standards -- the knowledge and skills -- that will be measured by this test?

A. The knowledge, skills, and abilities measured in this test will be based on well developed content frameworks already in use at the national and international levels. In the case of reading, we will use the framework developed by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). It was developed through a national consensus effort in which ideas were

sought from hundreds of teachers, parents, and others involved and interested in this country's reading education. The mathematics framework of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) was similarly developed at the international level. Both frameworks are based on high standards.

Q. How will we know that these tests are fair? For example, how will we know that these reading tests are "good?" How will we know that they balance whole language and phonics? How will we know that these tests are not culturally biased or too politically correct?

A. As with any standardized test, during the test development stage, a considerable amount of time will be spent on the review and revision of the items by teams of content experts. They will focus on curriculum relevance, as well as cultural bias. Then using large samples of students, the test will be undergoing rigorous field testing to determine the technical soundness of the items, and to verify the absence of subgroup bias through statistical tests. In addition, once released to the public, the test will be monitored for its applied integrity using meaningful external standards as a measure of validity.

A independent Board is proposed to oversee the development and implementation of the test. This board would be broadly representative of the best reading and math teachers in the country, parents, local and state education leaders, Governors, and test experts.

Q. How does this test compare to the types of tests that most students take now? Will the test be multiple choice, true and false, and fill in the bubble? Or will it require students to write?

A. They will be challenging in the sense that they will set a high standards. But that is the point of it all -- to set a goal that our children can reach if they work hard. We shouldn't underestimate the ability of our children.

These tests will include both multiple choice and constructed response items (e.g., items requiring students to produce their own answers). Specially, the test will include about 80% multiple choice and about 20% constructed response questions. At least one of the constructed response items will require an extended response. These tests will represent state-of-the-art testing standards

Technical Questions about the Proposal

Q. Will non-public school students be included?

A. Yes, at the option of the school. The test will be available to non-public schools as are any released items produced with Federal funds. Similar to NAEP and TIMSS, we will work with non-public school organizations and interest groups to ensure comprehensive distribution of

the test along with training and scoring guides. In addition, after each administration, the test (along with answers, scoring guides and other materials) would be released to the press and placed on the Internet for access by anyone.

Q. How does the test differ from the current NAEP and TIMSS tests?

A. The test will differ from NAEP and TIMSS in several ways.

First, not every student takes every item on the NAEP and TIMSS tests. Students' knowledge and abilities are sampled across books containing different sets of items. In the proposed new tests, all students would take every item on the test, and each student would take the exact same test booklet.

Second, the proposed test will take about 30 minutes longer to administer than the NAEP or TIMSS tests. The proposed test will take about 90 minutes to complete, while NAEP and TIMSS typically take about 45-60 minutes.

Third, the proposed test will yield an individual score—NAEP and TIMSS can only produce reliable group estimates (e.g., state and national data) about student performance.

Fourth, all items from the proposed test will be released annually following each administration. NAEP and TIMSS typically release only a few items following each administration. The rest of the items are retained for future assessments.

Q. Why is the reading test only in English?

A. Developing the ability to read in English is a basic that every child simply has to have to be part of the American experience. We are not making a judgment here about the value of bilingual education that helps children transition from their native language to English. In fact the President is asking the Congress for a bigger investment in bi-lingual education.

This test is simply one of many measures that schools can and should use to determine the performance of their students. Schools need to be especially sensitive to this principle in assessing children with limited English proficiency. The Department plans to develop a Spanish language version of the math test and to provide accommodations to facilitate the taking of the math test by eight graders who use other languages.

Q. Isn't your decision to test reading only in English inconsistent with Title I requirements that State assessments provide for the assessment of limited English proficient children, to the extent practicable, in the language most likely to yield reliable information on what the students know and can do?

No, there is no inconsistency. The subject requirements on testing in Title I relate to testing limited English proficient children to determine their mastery of skills in subjects other than English. Our proposed reading test does not fall into that category. Rather, its very purpose is to determine English reading skills.

I previously described the reason for that purpose. I should note our hope that in the future, with further developments in correlating assessment results, it may be possible to link results on reading tests in other languages to those in English, so that any Title I or other assessments that may be given in other languages can be correlated to our proposed test.

Q. When will these tests be ready? Who will develop them? Who will administer them? How will they be made available to states and districts? Why aren't they available now?

A. The new test will be developed during 1997 and 1998 with a full administration planned in the spring of 1999. The development of the test will be funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

A public or private organization will be competitively selected to develop the test and make it available to test publishers and schools for their use. It is also expected that a representative, independent Board will be created to oversee the development and implementation of the test.

Regarding administration, the test will be licensed to states, local school districts and test publishers. Organizations that have such a licence will be responsible for administering and scoring the test to insure that standards of validity and reliability are met.

Q. How will you protect the privacy rights of individual students? Will the Federal government keep a record of how students do on these tests?

A. Individual results of the tests will not be reported to the Federal Government. The test users will have the responsibility for test administration, scoring, analysis, and reporting of this new test.

State directors, school districts, and schools will be expected to follow their local laws and regulations, as well as the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, regarding privacy rights of individual students.

Also at the national level, when we separate studies are conducted to link student responses in the new tests to NAEP and TIMSS scores, special Federal confidentiality laws apply. All government and contractor employees who will work on these studies will be sworn to uphold confidentiality and are subject to criminal penalties if they fail to do so.

In addition, it should be noted that the Federal Government does not retain names of any students of any student once these linking procedures (e.g., to teacher, school, or other tests) have been completed at the local level.

Q. Will this test be administered every year?

A. Yes, the test will be administered annually.

Q. Who will pay for the development of the test? Who will pay for administering the test? Who will pay for analysis and interpretation of the test?

A. The test will be given free of charge in 1999 with the Dept. of Education picking up all the expenses.

After 1999, the Department would fund continued development, as well as provide the technical support and assistance needed to continue annual testing, but the test users would be responsible for the test administration, scoring, analysis, and reporting.

Q. At what level will results be reported? By state? By school district? By individual schools?

A. Results of individual students will be reported to parents, teachers and schools. The federal government will not get these scores.

Assuming appropriate statistical, methodological, and administrative standards have been upheld, test users at the state, district, and school levels could report on their own data.

Test publishers could report national norms, and the Department could report national and state data linked to NAEP and TIMSS.

Q. Will this be some kind of matrix sampling, or will every 4th grader in a participating district be tested? If the latter, will results for individuals be available?

A. The new test will *not* use matrix sampling. Every student will take the same test, yielding individual scores available to the teacher and parent, consistent with applicable privacy protection. There will be a continuation of NAEP and TIMSS each year to norm the results and maintain trend data.

Q. How much additional teacher time will be required to score the tests, and how will this time be compensated? Aren't teachers overburdened already?

A. The time demands will not be great or excessive. States and local school districts will decide how to carry out the scoring and analysis of the test data.

Q. How will you ensure that there will not be objectionable material (e.g. reading passages) on the test? Will parents be given information about the type of passages and math questions before deciding to have their child participate?

A. The tests will be reviewed by samples of teachers, test experts, and parents prior to delivery. Every test will also be released directly after it has been administered so all parents will have access to all previous year tests. This includes the trial tests given in 1998 which will be released so parents can review these items before the tests given in 1999.

Q. Can districts and schools opt to give the test to only some of their students rather than all?

A. We will strongly urge districts and schools to include as many students as conceivably possible in the administration of the test. We will build in time accommodations for disabled students and whatever accommodations are possible for limited English proficient students (such as English-Spanish dictionaries). Guidelines from test publishers will urge the same thing.

Q. What is this "independent board" that will oversee the development and implementation of the tests? Who will sit on it and how and by whom will its members be appointed? Is this another NAGB? What will the Board's authority be?

A. Our thinking about the board is only just firming up. We expect it to be made up of at least 51% math and reading teachers, and include parents, state and local leaders, Governors other education leaders and testing experts. The board would have advisory authority over the general policies of the development and implementation of the testing.

VIII. Background on Math/Reading

Q. How do our students fare in international comparisons of reading and math? Isn't the reason that our students perform poorly on international comparisons of reading and math because we educate more of our students and have a more diverse student body?

Our students do *not* perform poorly on international comparisons of reading. The recent IEA International Reading Literacy Study found that U.S. fourth and ninth graders are exceeded only by their counterparts in Finland. But given today's literacy demands, the U.S.

must do better. The IEA TIMSS study showed that our eighth-graders do perform below average in international comparisons of mathematics. TIMSS data on fourth-grade mathematics performance will be announced in June, 1997.

- In both the reading and math international assessments, virtually all of the nations that participated educate all of their students through the ninth grade. It cannot be said that at these age levels the U.S. educates more of its students than other industrialized countries. Student diversity is also regarded as a major challenge by teachers in England and Germany. For example, unlike typical U.S. practice, Japanese eighth-grade teachers instruct both high and low achievers in the same classroom.
- The recent TIMSS study comparing our eighth grade math achievement with that of forty other countries reveals the US to be below the international average. We are also under represented in the percentage of our students in the international top 10% of achievement. NAEP results do show that the nation has made slow but steady progress in math since the early 1980s, but evidently such progress has not been fast enough to propel us to be among world's highest performers.