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Q & A's for Testing Proposal

I. Goal of Proposal

Q. How did the President arrive at this decision to call for this voluntary national test?

- These tests target the basics -- reading well by grade 4 and mastering the basics of math and algebra by grade 8. The American public accepts that reading is the cornerstone of all future learning, and math is the cornerstone of preparing students to go to college and succeed in many other courses, fostering the nation's future economic growth.

- But the standards movement needs a jolt to inject rigor into the system -- quality of state standards is uneven, and only 12 states have benchmarked to world-class standards (AFT report).

- Public consensus on importance of standards of excellence in education: 48 states have developed or are developing their own academic standards. Currently, we have no way to compare how students are doing in Tennessee to how students are doing in Maine. Parents want to know.

- The test is VOLUNTARY, but we're urging every state and district to do it. Since many Americans move from district to district, and even state to state, a voluntary national test can help provide parents and schools a common basis on which to evaluate student achievement in these critical areas.

Q. What is so important about these tests?

- The public understands that if you can't read independently by the 4th grade, your learning will be undermined in all academic subjects for the rest of your school career. And, if you haven't mastered the basics of arithmetic and moved into algebra, geometry, and problem solving by the end of the 8th grade, you will be at a disadvantage when it comes to taking more challenging courses in high school and succeeding in high school and college.

- President Clinton is absolutely committed that every child should read independently by 4th grade and be internationally competitive in math by 8th grade.

- The assessments on which these national tests will be based reflect broad consensus in the nation. Both the Third International Mathematics and Science Study

(TIMSS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have gained professional and public regard as true measures of excellence. The new tests would be similar to these tests but designed for individual students to take and administered and scored locally.

- This test will reaffirm the importance of ALL American children being able to achieve these standards, and the test results will help states and districts identify areas of the system that need improvment if all children are to have the opportunity to do so.

Q. What kind of effect do you see this having?

- This will be the jolt needed for raising standards in our schools to inject rigor and provide a benchmark for schools, communities, and states to learn how well their students are performing on a national and international basis.

- These tests provide concrete examples of what are meant by national standards of excellence in education.

- President Clinton challenges all states to get their students ready for the new asssessment in 1999.

- TIMSS provides new insights into teaching and achievement in American education. This effort will help make the results more useful in all classrooms that participate.

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

- It is up to local school boards, communities and states to determine how they will utilize results of this test.

- The federal government is not dictating a course of action and will not collect individual test results.

- The test will provide parents, teachers, principals, communities, and states with a benchmark to find out how their students are performing compared to national and international achievement standards.

- This test will let every parent know how his or her child is doing compared to national and international standards of excellence and let every teacher know whether students are being adequately prepared to succeed in the future.

- As soon as tests are administered, the questions will be made public and put on the

Internet and available for public use so parents and teachers can use them as guides in improving teaching and learning.

- By focusing on high standards in reading and math for all students, this test is consistent with the America Reads Program and other programs, such as Title I, which respond to the needs of children in low-income areas.

Q. Didn't President Bush propose a national test that Congressional Democrats opposed? How is this proposal different from that proposal?

- The President agreed with former President Bush that a national assessment might be a good idea. He took issue with the other proposals in America 2000 such as using public taxpayer dollars for private school vouchers which would not move the country in the right direction.

- The President supports public school choice, and the 1997 education budget includes $51 million to support innovative new schools created by parents, teachers, and community leaders. And the 1998 budget will double this investment.

- Former President Bush's America 2000 called for American Achievement Tests, a voluntary nationwide examination system based on five core subjects. The plan was never implemented. President Clinton's proposal tests students on areas where there is a national consensus on standards of excellence. In other content areas, consensus has not yet been reached, which is why it is critical for local school districts and states to continue their work on standards in these areas.

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

- This proposal should not significantly increase the testing burden on students. In 1990-91 GAO found that testing took up only about 7 hours for the average student out of an approximately 1080 hours in the classroom. An additional 2 hours of testing in only two grades would amount to only 9 hours out of the school year in these 2 grade levels.

- By comparison 43 percent of 4th graders watched television 4 or more hours **daily.** The addition of 2 hours for testing during the school year is minimal (.2 of 1 percent of the school year).

- Moreover, if they choose, states and districts may use this test as a supplement or replacement to parts of their existing testing program if given the opportunity to participate in benchmarking against national and international standards.

- The benefit is well worth the small amount of additional testing time. Parents, districts, and states can use the test to compare how well students are performing compared to national and international benchmarks.

Q. Does this proposal mean that state education reform efforts have not been successful and the federal government has to step in?

- Over the past 5 years, states and local districts have been moving forward on standards at a rapid rate. Almost all states have content standards, and 45 states have statewide assessment systems.

- By independent judgment, the quality of state standards is uneven, and most do not compare to national and international benchmarks of excellence. The special report by Education Week gave only 22 states A's and 13 states B's for their standards and assessments. A recent AFT report says only 12 states have tried to compare their standards to the high expectations of nations with top-performing students.

- There are disparities between state and national evaluations of whether a student is proficient in the basics. For example, Louisiana reports that 85 percent of its fourth graders are proficient in reading, although on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 15 percent of its students scored at the proficient level.

- A national test will provide a common basis on which to evaluate achievement of students in these critical subjects.

Q. What will happen to students who fail?

- The uses, and consequences, of this test are **entirely under state and local control**.

- What we are doing here is merely providing reliable instruments for measuring our efforts to achieve high standards in reading and math in the U.S.

- Testing will occur early enough in students' educational development to allow time to help them overcome difficulties and guide students toward eventual success. In addition, other federal programs, like Title I, will provide additional assistance to foster success.

- If a student fails this test, it says more about the failure of some systems to educate than the failure of the student. States and districts can use information about

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student failure to identify areas of the system that need to be improved if all children are to have the opportunity they deserve.

- The U.S. Department of Education will work with states and school districts and provide resources to help them prepare their schools, teachers, students and parents to understand the level of mastery of the basics expected on this test.

Q. Why these subjects and grade levels?

- Reading and math are two of the most basic skills necessary to perform academically and to succeed as a productive and contributing member of the workforce and society. We have proposed reading in the fourth grade— the primary skill to acquire in the early years of school is the ability to read well and independently. Children spend a major portion of the first years of school learning to read so that they are then able to read to learn in all other academic subjects. If students fall behind in reading, it often has the effect of causing them to fall behind in school generally. There is a strong correlation between low reading skills, falling behind in school, disruptive behavior, and dropping out. Mastering reading opens the opportunity to successfully learn all other subjects.

- We have proposed a test in math in the eighth grade because the ability to perform basic mathematical skills is critical to enrolling in algebra— a prerequisite for college and for getting a job in today's high skill environment. Advanced math is the gatekeeper in high school for career and college choices in a technological age. Taking algebra and geometry is a strong predictor for whether the student will take the sequence of rigorous high school courses needed to be prepared to attend and succeed in college.

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

- There is no relationship between choosing to participate or not participate in these tests and having access to U.S. Department of Education funds for Goals 2000 or any other program.

- Goals 2000 funds should be used by states and local schools to raise and meet their own local and state academic standards. For Goals 2000 to be successful, the quality of standards and the accuracy of measuring student achievement is essential.

- The Department of Education will continue to upgrade the testing instrument and

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will revise it annually to ensure that it reflects national and international expectations of achievement.

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

- This test helps support the America Reads Challenge. President Clinton is absolutely committed to the notion that children should be able to read independently by the 4th grade.

- The America Reads Challenge mobilizes parents, teachers, reading specialists, tutors, Americorps, college students, early childhood programs, libraries, and senior citizens to help give parents the tools to improve their child's reading, and this test lets parents know how their children are doing.

- 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 efforts to improve math education?

- This test builds on existing federal efforts to improve math education and provides the necessary check to see whether efforts are succeeding, the stimulus for continuous improvement.

- 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 reinforce effective innovation in teaching and learning. The National Science Foundation also supports significant activities to enhance math and science education. **Statewide, Urban and Rural Systemic Initiatives** are designed to encourage higher standards and facilitate cooperation among states, cities, school systems, and other organizations in order to systemically improve science, mathematics, and technology education. The National Science Foundation's Teacher **Enhancement Program** supports the development of effective approaches and creative materials for the continuing education of elementary, middle, and secondary school mathematics and science teachers. The **Instructional Materials Development Program** fosters the design and creation of materials that address the new curricular standards in mathematics and science and enable all students to acquire sophisticated content knowledge, higher-order thinking abilities, and problem solving skills.

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- These efforts have helped improve math education for many students throughout the nation. NAEP results show slow but steady progress in math achievement since the early 1980s. At the same time, the TIMSS study indicates that we must do more to bolster curriculum and instruction in math if American students are to be competitive with their peers around the world.

- President Clinton has issued a "First in the World Challenge" to states and communities across the United States to administer the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test to their students in the next 2 years. States and districts that take up the challenge will help prepare their students for the new assessment in 1999.

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

Q. Why is the President proposing this national test in reading and math at this time?

- We are at a critical juncture in our nation's history—our schools will be a key factor in how we perform in the global economy. As we head toward the 21st century, our students must be able to demonstrate excellence in the basic skills of reading and mathematics.

- The President has determined that although there is wide public acceptance of the need for national standards of excellence in education, the system needs a jolt and a quality control check to ensure that students are being prepared to succeed in the Information Age and global economy.

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?

- The President is playing precisely the role in education that presidents should play—that is, he is exercising national leadership on an issue of critical importance to families, schools, and the development of the nation.

- If our students are going to be able to compete in an increasingly global economy, they must be able to measure up to international standards of achievement. This test provides us with a means of comparison as we strive towards standards of excellence.

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?

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- This is an issue that has always been closest to the President's heart. President Clinton has long been involved with the need for the nation to set standards of excellence in education, first as a governor and a leader of all the governors, and now as president.

- Over the past 4 years, President Clinton has galvanized activity throughout the nation on setting challenging standards for children and helping students achieve to those high expectations. Forty-eight states have developed or are in the process of developing their own academic standards, and most are also developing assessments to measure whether students are reaching the goals. Public consensus on the importance of national standards of excellence for education is broad and deep.

- This is part of a comprehensive strategy that President Clinton is pushing forward to improve our schools and make it possible for students who study hard and make the grade to go to college. This is not a legacy for the President, but one we will all achieve for the nation if we work together.

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 regularly consults with parents, teachers, principals, college presidents, and a variety of education experts as part of his comprehensive strategy in education. Secretary Riley made the call for reading more than a year ago. The READ*WRITE*NOW program and America Reads Challenge are both focused on making sure that students read well and independently by 4th grade. Both programs involve families, teachers, and community members in student learning, and this test will allow parents, teachers, and reading tutors to see whether their efforts are succeeding.

- TIMSS was a major effort of the Education Department in coordination with 40 other countries, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Science Foundation. The International Association for the Evalutation of Educational Achievement (IEA), a Netherlands-based organization of ministries of education and research institutions in its member countries, came to a consensus about what students need to know and be able to do in math and science in order to succeed in the global economy and the technological age.

III. Getting Teachers and Schools Ready

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

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- The President has confidence in the nation's teachers and schools to achieve these goals, but he also understands that they will need support and assistance.

- The President has made a high-quality teaching force a key priority. Both the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the report of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study conclude that much more is required to prepare and support teachers to enable them to teach to high standards. The President recognizes these challenges and has called on the states and local school districts to support teachers in their efforts.

- President Clinton has directed the U.S. Department of Education to focus on the most effective strategies to address the challenges in improving teaching quality and accountability, including recruitment, alignment with challenging standards, professional development, and rewards for excellence.

- The Department will provide fiscal support for these efforts through its programs, including Eisenhower Professional Development, Title I, and Goals 2000 funding, as well as by helping to identify and share best practices in the field.

- The Department is also providing teachers with materials that they can use as tools to prepare their students to meet these high standards. For example in reading, the Department has launched the America Reads Challenge and summer reading materials for Read*Write*Now! that teachers and families can use to develop young children's reading skills and their enthusiasm for reading. Additional expanded items to the national assessment will also be available to teachers to use in their classrooms to diagnose problems early.

- President Clinton has also challenged states and communities across the country to administer the TIMSS test to their students in the next 2 years. Those that do so will help prepare their students and teachers for the new assessment in 1999.

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, but we are supporting voluntary board certification through the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and other measures to upgrade teaching quality.

- We hope to encourage and support the board certification of over 100,000 master teachers, at least one teacher in each school.

- We are also supporting national accrediting organizations and encouraging states in their efforts to align their teacher entry examinations, licensing, and certification

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requirements with the challenging 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?

- The proposal recognizes that these tests will show the shortcomings in schools and curriculum and identify students and schools that need extra help. If the test identifies failure, it will be the failure of systems to educate, not students to learn.

- The President and the Secretary are committed to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to be successful learners. Through Title I and other elementary and secondary programs, the federal government targets additional funds to districts and schools that lack the resources to meet the needs of their students, particularly students with needs that may cost more to meet. Goals 2000 seeks to make challenging standards an achievable reality for all students. The America Reads Challenge will build on these efforts by supporting 30,000 reading specialists as they mobilize a million volunteers to enable 8-year-olds in the country to read independently by the 3rd grade. The National Science Foundation has focused attention on urban and rural school systems in its efforts to upgrade math and science teaching.

- At the present time, many schools offer children, especially disadvantaged students, a "dumbed-down" curriculum focused only on the most rudimentary skills. A watered-down curriculum denies children the challenge of meeting high expectations. Research by cognitive scientists over the past two decades tells us that in fact all children engage in higher-order thinking from the very beginning and can and will learn basic skills better if given more challenging material.

- Parents need to know how well their children are progressing in school and whether they will be ready for higher level work. Students' grades are not an accurate measure for parents, particularly in poor communities. 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, suggesting that students in high-poverty schools are neither exposed to nor held to the same high standards as their more advantaged peers

IV. FEDERAL ROLE AND STATE RIGHTS

Q. The President says that he does not intend to take power from local school

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boards yet this seems to be the first step toward a national curriculum?

A. No. The President's proposal is entirely consistent with the limited role of the federal government in education—one of leadership and support for states, communities, educators, and parents in providing the best education for their children. It also does not specify curriculum and instruction, matters for states and communities to decide.

Enabling teachers and parents to gauge how well their children are performing against national and international benchmarks provides them with a powerful tool in their efforts. Such benchmarks offer a North Star to guide improvement in areas where there is consensus on what should be learned. These tests will be administered and scored locally.

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 and challenging coursework in communities across the country. We also know that other schools are performing not as well and that all schools need to accelerate the pace of improvement and support all students in learning more. Our proposal offers individual communities and schools the opportunity to measure the performance of individual students against standards that are recognized as challenging nationally and internationally. This will suggest to local communities where their students are excelling and where they need to make curriculum and instruction more challenging. As in the case of Northbrook, Illinois, it will show where they are doing it right. For individual families, such an assessment will let them know whether their children are on the right track and where they need extra help. This is a vote of confidence that when given good information, schools and families 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 test, isn't this national test redundant?

A. This short assessment is not a substitute for the tests states and local districts are developing; rather it is designed to supplement and anchor state and local assessments to national and international benchmarks for student performance. Indeed the assessment will be offered by test publishers and used by states and communities in conjunction with their own tests. It will provide two points of comparison, one for fourth grade reading and one for eighth grade math, without adding measurably to testing burden.

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

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A. No one governor or one state has the resources or capacity to develop this kind of internationally benchmarked assessment. Only the U.S. Department of Education has the capacity to regularly benchmark student performance with other countries.

The assessment is being offered as a support for state and local efforts to develop challenging standards and assessments by offering an external benchmark for student performance. **State assessments vary widely in how they define proficiency for their students,** according to an analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results and states' own assessments. The Southern Regional Education Board compared the percent of 4th graders scoring at the proficient level on NAEP with the percent each state reported for its state assessment and found wide variation, with the states generally scoring lower on NAEP. For example, under 35 percent of 4th graders in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin qualified as proficient on NAEP, while over 80 percent scored at the proficient level on their respective state assessments. (Southern Regional Education Board, 1996).

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 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 locally controlled, school districts would make provisions for families to opt out of participation, if they so desire.

No

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. The Department intends to pay for the test administration in the first year to encourage states, school districts, and schools to participate. 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. The American public sees the need for an external benchmark for performance; Six in 10 Americans (61%) say academic standards are too low in their own local schools. The public by a wide margin (87%) favors setting "higher standards than are now required about what students should know and be able to do" in "math, history, English and science for promotion from grade to grade." (Gallup, 1995).

Q. Can parents choose for their children not to be tested?

A. As these tests would be locally controlled, school districts would make provisions

up to locals — but they generally don't let kids opt out of tests

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for opting out for families.

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. The assessment is not a national curriculum. A curriculum specifies what subject matter is going to be covered, when it will be taught, and often how it will be taught. The assessment only sets a goal. Its value to parents, teachers, and students is measuring the performance of individual students benchmarked against national and international standards. It would provide states and locals with an independent check on the quality and rigor of their own tests.

Q. Will the federal government require teachers to 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 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.

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 such as the state NAEP. The tests would provide states and locals with an independent check on the quality and rigor of their own testing programs. There would be nothing to compel states and locals to participate, ever, other than responding to the desire of parents, local educators, 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 federal government needs to support the front-end work of test development that would be linked with assessment programs the government already funds. The two tests to which the assessment will be tied, the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Math and Science Study are accepted as providing national and international standards for student performance at critical transition points in reading and math. This linking is a logical extension of the work the U.S. Department of Education has undertaken to provide valid and accurate assessments that will be of use to

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parents, communities, and states.

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 individuals 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 challenging content.

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 successful math and reading teachers and pcontent 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. With regard to political correctness, an independent Board is proposed to oversee the development and implementation of the test.

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. These tests will represent state-of-the-art testing standards. That is, they will include both multiple choice and constructed response items (e.g., items requiring students to produce their own answers). Specifically, 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. Additional constructed response items will be available to teachers to integrate in their instruction and use in diagnosing potential learning problems.

VI. Technical Questions about the Proposal

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Q. Why will these tests be challenging? Are they better than the other tests being used by schools across the country? Who says?

The reading test will be based on the NAEP reading framework. This framework represents the agreement among teachers, educators, reading researchers, and representatives of the business committee. Over almost two years, this national consensus was built based on the best practices at the school level and the most recent developments in reading research. The framework developers emphasized reading performance, that is, they wanted to know what successful readers are able to do. They believed that a variety of approaches and programs can produce good readers and did not emphasize any one approach over any other. The framework emphasizes "reading literacy" and mastery of the basics. Successful readers know how to read and understand what they have read.

The mathematics test is based on the international framework and benchmarks set by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The TIMSS was developed through a consensus process of more than 40 countries examining what they expected there students to know and be able to do at the end of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade. The mathematics challenge is based on the 8th grade, but naturally reflects what is expected up to that point and what should naturally follow throughout a student's education.

The challenge levels have been set by examining how thousands of students actually performed on the 8th grade test. It sets the international benchmark for what 8th graders should know and be able to do by looking at what they are actually able to do.

Q. Does the test tell if students can spell, construct a sentence, or use a comma?

The reading challenge is looking at a 4th graders ability to read. There are many parts to being literate, including writing, spelling, grammar, and punctuation that are taught and measured in the Nation's classrooms. The reading challenge is focused on one aspect of literacy - reading - because we know it is the key to future learning. Without the ability to read and to read well, no student can succeed. Specific assessments to diagnose a student's reading difficulties would remain a responsibility of local schools and teachers.

Q. Will nonpublic school students be included?

A. Yes, at the option of the nonpublic 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. People who home school their children could give the released test to their children if they wanted to and score it themselves.

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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 test, all students would take every item on the test, and each student would take the exact same test booklet. *Second*, the proposed tests will yield an individual score—NAEP and TIMSS can only produce reliable group estimates (e.g., state and national data) about student performance. *Third*, 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. And *fourth* the new assessment would provide teachers with materials to help their students prepare to meet the challenging standards of the test.

Q. Will children with disabilities and limited English proficiency be included in these tests?

A. Yes. Consistent with civil rights requirements that apply to most schools that would participate, reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or with limited English proficiency would be provided by school administrators of the test. These responsibilities will be specifically addressed in the development and distribution of the test. Such accommodations may include extended response time for students with disabilities or access to an English dictionary for the math test for students with limited English proficiency.

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, including successful local math and reading teachers, parent representatives, and state and local leaders, will be created to advise on the development and implementation of the test.

Regarding administration, the test will be made available through school district and state testing coordinators. It would also be used by test publishers for obtaining recent national norms in reading, or national and international norms in mathematics. The test will be administered and scored by local teachers using training guides and scoring guides provided by the test developer.

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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. Thus, state directors, school districts, and schools will be expected to follow their local laws and regulations, as well as the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, regarding privacy rights of individual students. Also, at the national level, when separate studies are conducted to link student responses on the new test 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. Persons who violate the confidentiality law by disclosing the identifies of any respondent are subject to penalties, including fines and prison terms. In addition, it should be noted that the Federal Government does not retain names of any students once 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 U.S. Department of Education will support the development of the test. In 1999, the Department will reimburse states, districts, schools, testing companies and others who wish to administer the new test. After 1999, it 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 for individual students will be reported to parents, teachers, and schools. 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?

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A. The new test will ***not*** use matrix sampling. In each participating school, individual students will take the same test, yielding individual scores available to the teacher and parent, consistent with applicable privacy protections. 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. Some publishers who have been licensed will carry out their own scoring of the core tests. Teachers, in this case, will use guidelines for judging the supplemental questions (which will not count in the scoring of the test). Teachers may use these supplemental items as part of their instructional program.

In other instances the teachers will have the training necessary to score the main body of the test as well as the supplemental items.

The time demands will not be great or excessive under either condition -- and in both conditions the actual activity of scoring should inform the teacher about the strengths and weaknesses of students.

In terms of compensation, this would normally be seen as part of a teacher's regular responsibilities.

Q. Can you trust teachers at the local level to score their own students' tests?

A. If trained, yes.

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 prototypic 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 accomodations 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. We would expect all schools and districts to follow

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our guidance.

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, and some political and business leaders and some educators other than teachers, including testing experts. We have not settled on who would do the appointing. The board would have advisory authority over the general policies of the development and implementation of the testing.

VII. Budget and Legislation

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 letting every fourth grader in America take the reading test in the Spring of 1999, and every eighth grader take the math test that Spring. 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 ample authority to conduct this new assessment under its current legislation, however Congress will certainly be consulted.

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

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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 underrepresented 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.

- The federal government is paying for administration of the test in the 1st year.

FEB-03-1997 04:29 FROM TO 94567028 P.21

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

600 Independence Avenue, SW
FOB-10, Room 5164
Washington, DC 20202-8100

Telephone Number: (202) 205-0704
Alternate: (202) 401-3389

FAX Number: (202) 401-4353
Alternate FAX: (202) 401-3095

FAX COVER SHEET

TO: Mike Cohen

FAX: 456-7028

FROM: BILL KINCAID

THIS FAX INCLUDES THE COVER SHEET PLUS 1 PAGES.

IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE THE COMPLETE FAX, PLEASE CALL (202) 205-0704.

MESSAGE:

Testy budget — attached.

B

	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY 2000+
Development	2400	3600	3600	3600
Field test/analysis	1000	1200	1200	1200
Test specifications	400	0	0	0
Advisory panel	600	600	600	600
Technical panel	700	700	700	700
NCES Linking Study NAEP/ARC (100 schools*$2500)		250	500	500
NCES Linking Study TIMSS/AMC (150 schools*$2500)		375	750	750
Management/coordination/ monitoring	1500	1500	1500	1500
Printing	0	0	800	200
Reimbursement for Admin/ scoring/ reporting for ARC/AMC		1000	32000*	
Scoring for extended constructed on ARC/AMC			9600	9600
Security			1000	1000
	=	=	=	=
	6600	9225	52250	10050

*** Assumes 80% of the nation's fourth and eighth graders take the exams.**

The U.S. Department of Education will fund the test under existing research and improvement authority beginning in 1997. Funds for the linking studies will come from the National Center for Education Statistics. A specific appropriation request for administration of the test will be needed for FY 1999.

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Overview of Plans for the Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Mathematics

Gary Phillips
5/19//97

Overall Design

- Voluntary
- The tests will provide an *annual indication* of *overall individual student proficiency* in *reading in English (grade 4)* and *math (grade 8)* that can be reported to *parents* and *teachers*.
- Reading and math will provide national standards from NAEP and math will provide international standards from TIMSS.
- Items will be released to the public every year.
- The first administration of the tests will be in 1999.

Gary Phillips
5/19/97

Technical Design

- No individually identifiable data from the test administration is given to the Federal Government
- Tests will be consistent with Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (APA, AERA, NCME)
- Inclusion criteria and appropriate accommodations will be required
- Comparable forms from year to year
- Report in a metric easily understood by parents and teachers
- NAEP framework but with different item and test specifications
- Linked to NAEP and TIMSS - Provides a reading and math score plus a predicted NAEP (reading and math) and TIMSS score (math)
- Up to 90 minutes of testing time
- About half of the testing time will be spent on the non-multiple choice items
- Approximately 80% multiple choice and 20% constructed-response (including one extended constructed-response)
- Special booklet of extended constructed response items
- Sample test in 1998
- Test and scoring guide released to the Web every year
- Results will be reported within the same school year
- Ongoing research component
- Ongoing evaluation component
- Advisory structure
- Three year assessment cycle (see attached graph)

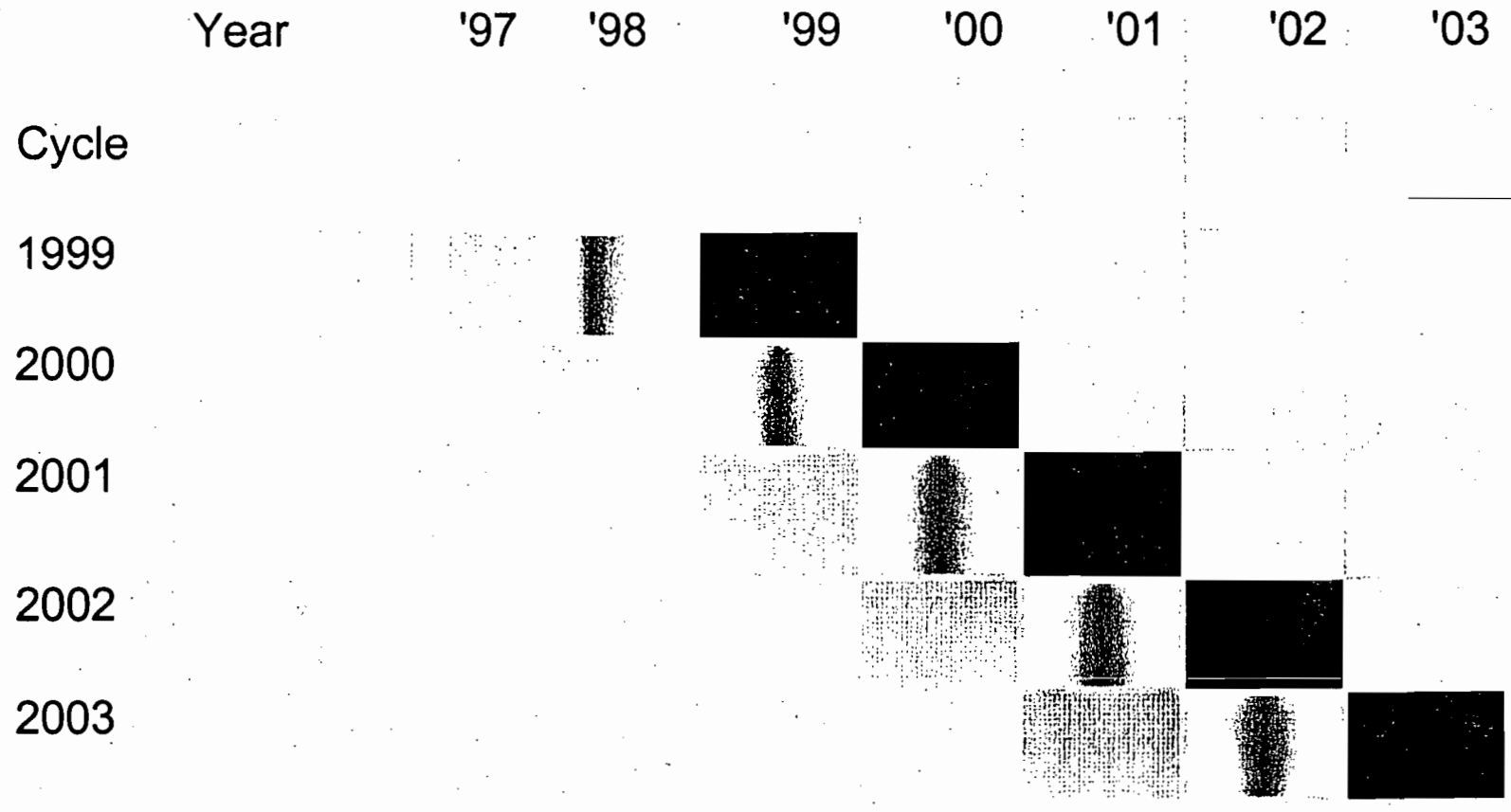
Gary Phillips
5/19/97

Administration, Scoring, Analysis, and Reporting (conducted by licensed organizations)

- First administration in March, 1999.
- Scoring, analysis, and reporting will be carried out by licensed organizations (test publishers, states, school districts, etc.).
- A random sample of test administrations and activities of licensed organizations will be monitored.
- During the first year of administration (and possibly in subsequent years) the licensed organizations will be reimbursed for their costs.
- Test administration will be consistent with civil rights laws and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Test reporting strategies are local options.

Gary Phillips
5/19/97

Testing Cycle for the Voluntary National Test in Reading and Mathematics



1 Item Writing (Jan.-Feb.), Item Pilot (March)

2 Field test (March) and equating old test to new test (March); linking NAEP/NTR (Feb., March) and NAEP/NTM (Feb., March); linking NTM/TIMSS (March)

3 Administration (March)

Gary Phillips 5/19/97

RFP and Timelines for Voluntary National Tests in Reading and Mathematics

	1997	1998	1999	2000+
Item and test specifications	May-August			
Contract award - Reading and Math develop.	September			
- Technical Panel	October			
- Linking	October			
- Evaluation	October			
- Certifications/Licensing	November			
Item writing	Oct-Nov	Jan-Feb	Jan-Feb	Jan-Feb
Item pilot		March	March	March
Field test and equating study		March	March	March
Administer reading and math test			March	March
Linking study NAEP/reading and math test*		Feb/Mar	Feb/Mar	Feb/Mar
Linking study TIMSS/math test*		Mar/Apr	Mar/Apr	Mar/Apr

* linking study done a year in advance to be used in the year the test is administered

5/19/97

Advisory Structure

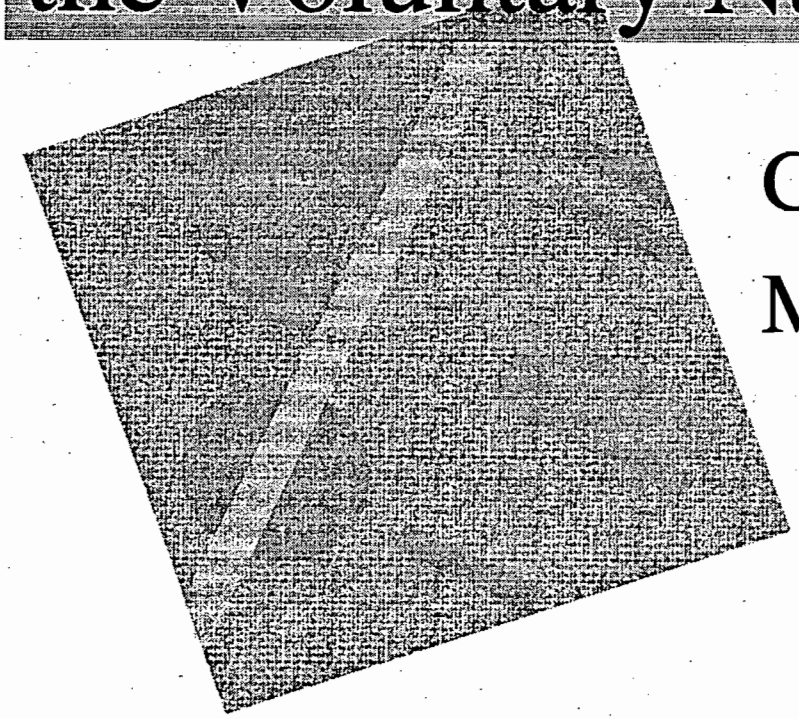
- Overall Advisory Committee
- Technical Advice
- Content and testing experts for each development contract
- Evaluation

Department of Education Web Site

- http://www.ed.gov/nationaltests

Gary Phillips
5/19/97

Item and Test Specifications for the Voluntary National Tests



CCSSO

MPR

National Test Panel

- Chair: Wilmer Cody, Commissioner, Kentucky State Department of Education
- Vice Chair: Patricia Hayes, President, Colorado State Board of Education

- Sharon Lewis, Council of Great City Schools, Washington, DC
- Carole Kennedy, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Columbia, MO
- Mike Nettles, Professor, University of Michigan
- Diane Ravitch, Professor, New York University
- Edward Haertel, Professor, Stanford University, CA
- Susan Galletti, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, VA
- Sister Dale MacDonald, National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC
- Eddie Davis, National Education Association, Durham, NC
- Arnie Fege, National PTA, Washington, DC
- Antonia Cortese, American Federation of Teachers, Albany, NY
- Delegate Henry B. Heller, Maryland House of Delegates
- John Barth, National Governors' Association, Washington, DC
- Daniel Domenech, Superintendent, Dix Hills, NY

- Meeting I: May 23, 1997, Washington, DC
- Meeting II: July (date tba), Washington, D
- Meeting III: August (date tba), Washington, DC

Mathematics Committee

- Chair: John Dossey, Professor of Mathematics, Illinois State University
- Vice-chair: Gail Burrill, Mathematics Teacher and Researcher, University of Wisconsin

- Hyman Bass, Professor of Mathematics, Columbia University, NY
- Bettye Forte, Director for Mathematics, Fort Worth Independent School District, TX
- Ana Maria Golan, Director, Mathematics Renaissance Project, Fountain Valley, CA
- Joan Grampp, Mathematics/Science Teacher, Milwaukee Public Schools, WI
- Edward Kifer, Professor of Education, University of Kentucky
- Donald Kreider, Professor of Mathematics, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
- Steven Leinwand, Mathematics Consultant, Connecticut State Department of Education
- Debra Paulson, Mathematics Chair, Dr. Hornedo Middle School, El Paso, TX
- Marjorie Petit, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont State Department of Education
- Edward Silver, Professor of Mathematics Education, University of Pittsburgh, PA
- Kris Warloe, Teacher, Cheldelin Middle School, Corvallis, OR
- Patricia Wilson, Professor of Mathematics Education, University of Georgia

- Meeting I: May 29-30, Washington, DC
- Meeting II and Public Hearing: June 17-19, 1997, Denver, CO
- Meeting III: July 8-9, 1997, Washington, DC
- Meeting IV and Public Hearing: August 1997 (date tba), San Francisco, CA
- Meeting V: August 1997 (date tba), Washington, DC

Reading Committee

- Chair: Dorothy Strickland, Professor, Rutgers University
- Vice-chair: Marshe Horton, Associate State Superintendent, Delaware Department of Public Instruction

- Suzanne Clewell, Coordinator of Reading Language Arts, Montgomery County Public Schools, MD
- Gloria Johnston, Superintendent, Banning Unified School District, CA
- Janet Jones, Reading Teacher, J.C. Parks Elementary School, Waldorf, MD
- Connie Juel, Professor of Education, University of Virginia
- Judith Langer, Professor of Education, State University of New York, Albany
- Alice Lopez, Bilingual and Special Education Teacher, Western Hills Elementary School, Denver, CO
- Margaret McKeown, Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburg, PA
- Sharon O'Neal, Director of English Language Arts and Reading, Texas Education Agency
- Alba Ortiz, Professor of Education, University of Texas, Austin
- David Pearson, Professor of Education, Michigan State University
- John Pikulski, Professor of Education, University of Delaware
- Audrey Qualls, Professor of Education, University of Iowa
- Virginia Schroder, Teacher and Curriculum Development Specialist, Manhassett Public Schools, NY
- Jay Sugarman, Teacher, Runkle School, Brookline, MA

- Meeting I: June 9-10, Washington, DC
- Meeting II and Public Hearing: June (date and location tba)
- Meeting III: July (date tba), Washington, DC
- Meeting IV and Public Hearing: August (date and location tba)
- Meeting V: August (date tba), Washington, DC

Technical Advisory Group

- Peter Behuniak, Director of Testing, Connecticut State Department of Education
- Linda Crocker, Dean, College of Education, University of Florida
- Edward Kifer, Professor or Education, University of Kentucky
- Robert Linn, Co-Director, Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST), Los Angeles, CA
- Ina Mullis, Co-Deputy Director, TIMSS International Study Center, Boston College, MA
- Michael Nettles, Professor of Education, University of Michigan
- Audrey Qualls, Professor of Education, University of Iowa

- Meeting I: June 11, Washington, DC
- Meeting II: August (date tba), Washington, DC

LICENSING of THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TESTS

Gary Phillips

May 19, 1997

The Licensing Management Contract (or Management Contract) is one of five awards for the Voluntary National Tests

Item Specifications: CCSSO and MPR

Test Development (September, 1997)

Evaluation (October, 1997)

Linking (October, 1997)

Licensing (November, 1997)

Gary Phillips

May 19, 1997

Bidders for the management contract must submit draft standards of acceptable performance for the four different functions:

- Printing
- Distribution/Retrieval
- Scoring
- Reporting

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

Test security will be a major component of all four functions

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

The management contractor shall monitor a random sample of test administrations and organizations responsible for printing, distribution, scoring, and reporting

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

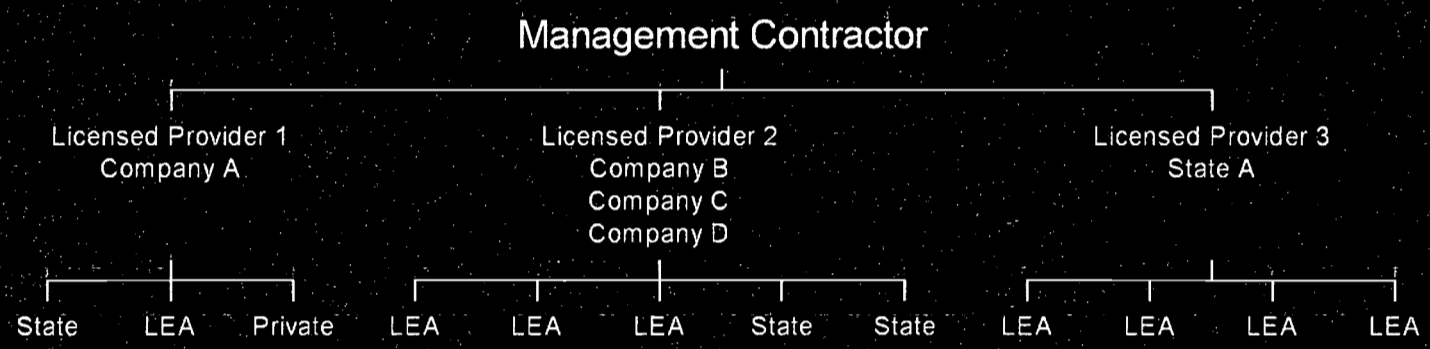
The management contractor shall propose a reimbursement procedure for 1999 (and possibly in future years)

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

Each license from the management contractor will be given to an organization (or set of organizations) which collectively can carry out the four functions.

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

Hypothetical Licensing Management Schematic



Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997

Time Lines for Award

Statement of Work - Drafted: May, 1997

Placed on Web Site for Comment: 2 Weeks

On the Street: July, 1997

Proposals Due: September, 1997

Awarded: November, 1997

Gary Phillips
May 19, 1997